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MOUNT GREYLOCK REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT LISTENING AND LEARNING PROJECT

CKT LLC

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GOALS

The question isn't "is there bias in MGRSD?"

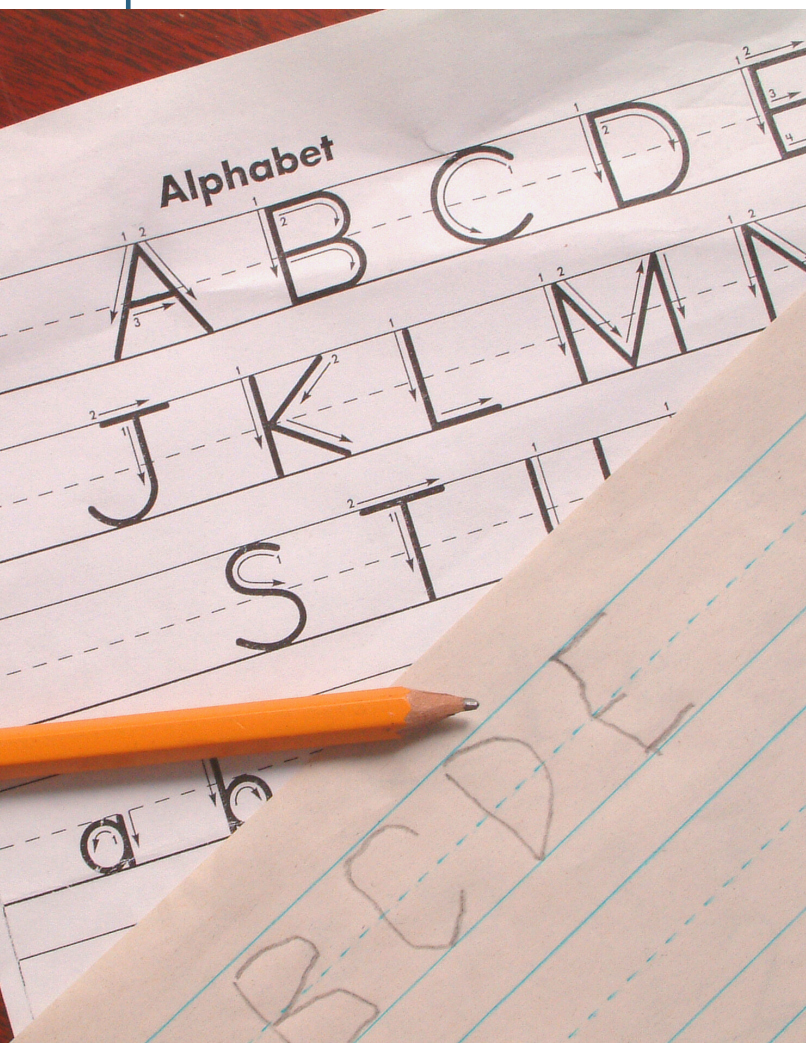
The question is "how does bias show up in MGRSD?"

This report seeks to reveal the ways in which bias shows up in the Mt. Greylock Regional School District (MGRSD). This report does not seek to answer the question "is there bias in the Mt. Greylock Regional School district?" It is taken as a given that various types of bias exist in the school system. Instead, this report seeks to reveal how those biases show themselves to students and families, and what the affects of those biases are on the MGRSD community.

Using information gathered by surveying, interviewing, and digital storytelling, this report will focus on the stories, incident descriptions, and observations made by students, families, and educators in MGRSD, and those who have opted to seek alternative educational opportunities. Storytelling is a powerful tool to illuminate the specific contours of a situation. Here, the stories of the MGRSD community provide a rich accounting of the various ways bias is present in the district.

With the information contained in this report, MGRSD can continue to fight for diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB) equipped with a better understanding of the specific ways biases impact their various stakeholder groups.

Generous participation from many members of the MGRSD community made this project possible, and their accounts and stories are the central basis of this report.



BACKGROUND

Assessing diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB), and bias - both conscious and unconscious - first requires an understanding of each of these terms.

Definitions adapted from the National Center for Cultural Competence at Georgetown University, and YW Boston.

DIVERSITY

describes the variety of characteristics that make people different from one another. Characteristics often cited when talking about diversity in schools include race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion and more. An individual encompasses many different characteristics, and this may be similar or different from others or groups across different parts of their own identity.

EQUITY

is providing everyone with what they need to succeed, while working to eliminate barriers that inhibit success. Equity should not be confused with equality. Equality is the practice of treating everyone the same, and offering everyone the exact same resources. Equity, rather, takes into consideration the diversity of people, and assesses needs and opportunities based on the individual circumstance.

CONSCIOUS BIAS

occurs when a person is very clear about their feelings/attitudes, and related behaviors are conducted with intent. Bias itself can be for or against something, and conscious bias involves overt behavior like preferential treatment, physical or verbal responses, or exclusion.

INCLUSION

is the creation of an environment where anyone feels welcome to participate fully, and feels supported in doing so. An inclusive environment recognizes differences and respects them in such a way that no one feels tokenized or ignored.

BELONGING

is sometimes described as the results of successfully combining all three previous terms. Belonging is the sense of feeling like you are an important member of the group. While inclusion means everyone feels supported to participate, belonging suggests that an individual feels able to do that participating as their full self, without feeling self-consciousness about who they are.

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

operates outside of a person's awareness and can be in direct contradiction to espoused beliefs and values. This bias automatically affects a person's behavior and can interfere with decision-making and relationships such that stated goals are compromised.



METHOD

- **Survey key school district stakeholders groups to encourage storytelling and personal accounts**
- **Conduct interviews with community members**

Survey Stats:

K - 2: 76 responses, 34.5% response rate

3-4: 49 responses, 28.6% response rate

5-6: 66 responses, 37.9% response rate

7-8: 41 responses, 25.2% response rate

9-12: 58 responses, 15.9% response rate

Parents/Guardians: 221 responses

Educators: 65 responses

To assess the diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging sentiment of MGRSD, a variety of information gathering methods were used.

Surveying:

Seven different surveys were deployed to the MGRSD community. Five surveys went to students ranging from K-12, one went to Parents and Guardians, and one went to Educators. Each student survey was created to match the students' developmental level, with input from a licensed children and family therapist. While these surveys included a number of scale or Yes or No questions, the main goal of these questions was to stimulate memories to encourage sharing of experiences. Each one asked similar questions phrased slightly differently, and "Is there anything else you'd like to say about that?" frequently over the course of the survey to capture the experiences of each participant - key qualitative data in understanding how bias shows up in MGRSD. Quantitative data was also collected, and tells some of the story, however, due to the lack of diversity in the community in general and relatively low response rates for middle and high school, the numbers offer a guideline but are not definitive data. It was critical for this project to collect anecdotal accounts of individual experiences to assess the depth of challenges created by biases in the school district. This report will primarily focus on those accounts.

Demographic Data:

The demographic makeup of MGRSD comes directly from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and survey respondents were able to further self-identify their race, gender, sexual orientation, and other characteristics.

Interviews:

Interviews were conducted with students, parents/guardians, and educators via Zoom and telephone, in order to collect even more individual stories. These in depth conversations were particularly helpful to fill out the picture painted by the anecdotal survey responses.

Digital Storytelling:

When telephone or Zoom was not available or not preferred, email provided a platform for digital storytelling - the sharing of personal experience in narrative form. These stories again provide additional context and depth to the information collected through surveying.

Note: The included testimonials are a representative sample. Some details have been changed to protect the identities of the people involved. Other relevant testimonials have not been shared in this report for the same reason.

OUTCOMES

Two types of biases: Widely Felt vs. Specified

In the Mount Greylock Regional School District there are two ways that bias is experienced and recognized by students and parents alike. The first are widely acknowledged issues that are brought up by parents and students across the board regardless of their identity. These biases are preferential treatment for athletes and top academic performers, and division between Lanesborough, Williamstown, and other town residents which often presents itself as socioeconomic bias. These types of biases are felt across the student population particularly at the high school level. Specified issues on the other hand are not felt by the population as a whole, but are felt deeply by the students and their families for whom these issues surface. These issues include but are not limited to racial bias, gender bias, and bias against a perceived minority ideology.

These specified biases are present at almost every grade level in MGRSD, and are reported by those whose identities mean they are affected by those biases, as well as those who observe the bias but are not subjected to it themselves.

The delineation of widely felt biases from specified biases is not to create a sense of priority or urgency around one set over the other, rather to help better illustrate the nature of the challenges facing MGRSD moving forward. Widely felt biases are more visible to larger swaths of the community, however specified biases exist just as strongly, more so for some families. For students to experience an equitable education, and to feel as though they truly belong, both types of biases must be addressed simultaneously.

Specified Biases



Widely Felt Biases



WIDELY FELT BIASES

- **Preferential treatment for athletes and academics**
- **Williamstown vs Lanesborough (as proxy for socioeconomic bias)**

Specified Biases



Widely Felt Biases



The nature of these widely felt biases produce two contradictory responses. Because preferential treatment for athletes and star academics, and the socioeconomic/town divide in the Mount Greylock Regional School District are so pronounced, the perception can be that these problems are more important to solve as a community than other types of bias. Some responses to the surveys - at all levels - included phrases like "race is not an issue here, the real issue is..." and named one of these two challenges. This is in part a product of the demographics of the area.

There is no getting around the reality that the majority of the Mount Greylock Regional School District students and their families are white. That means is that for many, racism or racial bias operates as more theoretical in nature rather than a lived and felt experience. For the majority of students and families in the district, racism simply does not play a direct role in their lives. In fact, both the preferential treatment of athletes and star academics, and the negative perception of lower socioeconomic background cut across race and gender. Students and families can occupy identities that are affected by both of these widely felt biases and by some of the specified biases. These issues feel like umbrellas encompassing almost everyone.

On the flipside, because these widely felt biases spread across the district more broadly than the specified biases, they can also become part of the set dressing of the school district. These biases can fall victim to statements like "this is how it has always been" and lead to inaction, or feel like such a large and entrenched problem that any new action taken would feel futile to be able to address it.

These widely felt biases exist for survey respondents in two ways. 1. As the most important things to deal with because they affect the most people, or 2. Mentioned as a given for the community as they mostly do not show up in flashpoint instances the way that specified biases do. Neither of these perceptions accurately reflect the nature of these widely felt biases: they exist alongside other biases; students and families are feeling their effects; they need to be addressed and mitigated.

WIDELY FELT BIASES

- **Preferential treatment for athletes and academic stars**

The perception is widely felt by both students and parents/guardians that students who are athletes, and students who are in the top tier of academic performance are treated better by teachers and administrators, and offered more opportunities in middle and high school. This particular feeling of bias did not show up for elementary school survey respondents, suggesting these areas become pronounced once students enter 7th grade.

Athletes are perceived to "get away with" things that students who do not play sports could not. They are also perceived to have an easier time socially as there is a built in structure in the school for them to find students with similar interests. This can also manifest in non-athletes experiencing bullying from student-athletes, and a resulting frustration when seeing those same students then lauded for their contributions. Students with interests outside of sports find themselves without as many outlets to explore their variety of interests or find students with similar interests, such as the arts or music (beyond theatre). and technology.

Students who are not in the top tier of academics can feel left out of opportunities at the school, like classes offered by BCC or Williams College. There is a perception that one must be connected or the "right" kind of student to hear about these opportunities in a timely manner in order to be able to participate. Additionally, parents of students who are not at the bottom nor the top academically feel overlooked when it comes to support for their child in both the classroom and beyond.

This is primarily an issue of equity as well as equality. Non-athlete students and less high performing students are not being treated the same as their peers. There is a perceived lack of additional opportunities for those students who don't fit these molds, leading to less rich academic and extracurricular experiences overall, and resulting in some students feeling a lack of a place to belong in the school community.



WIDELY FELT BIASES

- **Preferential treatment for athletes and academics**

Testimonials

My daughter feels (as many other kids do) that the school highly values sporty kids, and that the arts are really under-invested in at the school—this has been my experience as a parent too. There is not much thought given to the needs of kids who want to excel in other areas. And there is really no entry point toward extra-curricular physical engagement for a kid who wants to play something to have fun, build community. When I look at the range of opportunities offered to kids at Mt. Greylock, it seems to me there is real room for change. - Parent, High school

Athletes

Parents

- There are a lot of sports options at Mt. Greylock, but very few deep opportunities to pursue the arts. There is theater, but the music program is lacking and visual arts is very, very minimal --it makes it hard for kids who aren't sporty to find a home at Mt. Greylock. (Middle school)
- We are not into sports. It makes it hard to fit in sometimes and it can be hard for non-sporty kids to find motivation, interests, and connection. The school could do more to promote non-sport activities, events, awards and successes. (High school)
- Guidance counselors are inconsistent. Athletics are elevated beyond academics at times. (High school)

Academics

7th-8th grade

- Our teachers can be really rude to students who don't do well and even as a straight-A student I am offended at how they are talked to and seen as almost in-human.

9th-12th grade

- I don't think that certain students are necessarily encouraged over others to take AP classes, but I do think there is too much of a divide between AP/SAT-Ivy-League-high-education-type students and students taking more normal classes. It's probably partly due to the culture created by Williams College, but I think that divide is a big problem in the earlier years of high school as people try to find and cement their "place" in the school.
- In some classes (math especially) one test in sixth grade kind of determines your mathematical experience at Greylock because it is fairly challenging to change classes so you are kind of locked into a path.

Parents/Guardians

- There is a definite focus on honors/AP students. If you do not fit that mold, you feel less than other students. Teachers treat you differently if you are a straight A student. (High school)
- I think where MGRHS has a problem is that kids from less affluent backgrounds are not made to feel included, or kids with learning differences or other struggles. Handing out National Honor Society packets at lunch? In front of other kids just to rub it in who made it and who didn't? Williams kids who just happen to know about classes they can take at Williams while others don't, or know what classes they can take over the summer to skip classes during the year? (High school)

WIDELY FELT BIASES

- **Preferential treatment for athletes and academics**

Testimonials cont'd

Parents/Guardians cont'd

- The issue we have had this year is kids being put out to the student population as role models that other kids are supposed to be looking up to when in reality they are not good role models. Very often it is a popularity contest. It is not a good message being sent to kids that they should be looking up to many of the kids who are put out there by the school as "models." There is a lack of diversity, and kids with disabilities, of any kind, being represented in any role of leadership in the school. (High school)
- Its homogenous, overwhelmingly white, there are a number of naturally high achieving students from academic families, they have travelled extensively etc. If you are a student like my child who did not fit that mold, they really felt deeply ashamed and embarrassed and had started to really look at herself as not being smart, not being a good student and her self esteem just plummeted. The most important thing for me was that she was quitting on herself. I could see her stop trying and giving up. To see that as a fourth grader is heartbreaking. [At her new school] it has been a 180 degree shift for her as a student and as a kid and a burgeoning adolescent. She finished the year on the high honor role, she is now perceived as a high achieving student. Her teachers say that she is one of the leaders in the classroom as far as raising her hand and give an opinion. There is this huge permission to be whatever it is you are. (Lower school)

WIDELY FELT BIASES

- **Williamstown vs Lanesborough (as proxy for socioeconomic bias)**

Starting in the seventh grade, there is a distinct experience of a divide between students from Williamstown and students from Lanesborough and other towns. The perception is that students from Williamstown are, generally, double privileged in that they are more likely to come from economically advantaged families, and more likely to have a parent or guardian working at Williams College, making them more likely to have their needs met, their questions answered and their complaints addressed. While students from Lanesborough are most commonly mentioned, students from other towns also report feeling de-prioritized as compared to their Williamstown schoolmates. There is some perception that this is the "real" bias issue in the Mount Greylock regional school district. This perception is understandable given that this divide touches each person attending Mount Greylock Regional School District. No matter the color of your skin, your gender, or your personal ideology, you either fall into the category of "students from Williamstown" or "students from Lanesborough or elsewhere."

The widespread nature of the experience of this bias results in it being at the forefront of the minds of the majority of students, and also a backdrop to the operations of the school in general, making this divide feel inevitable. Additionally, there is a perception that the existence of these biases have been swept under the rug or otherwise declared to have made significant progress towards mitigation, but that is certainly not the experience of students and families in the district. Not only is this divide ever present today, but it is seen as a holdover from previous generations of Mount Greylock Regional School District attendees. The expectation is that students from Williamstown will be treated better, be better supported, and have more expected of them than students from other towns.

The result of this bias is inequity - Williamstown students are seen to be given better opportunities or be better supported than students from other towns. Additionally, students and families experience a lack of inclusion and lack of a sense of belonging due to the stigma of not being from "the right town."



WIDELY FELT BIASES

- **Williamstown vs Lanesborough (as proxy for socioeconomic bias)**

Testimonials

Although it is often stated that this is no longer the case, there is still a big difference in how Lanesborough and Williamstown kids and parents fit in, are treated, included, and feel welcome. - Parent, High school

7th-8th grade

- Problems are not race. Stop obsessing about that. Kids tease each other about being fat, ugly or from the wrong town.
- Hancock children are looked down on by teachers and children in this school.
- There is still a clear line between Williamstown and Lanesborough kids. Williamstown is rich, Lanesborough is not.
- There's a big class divide at this school.

9th-12th grade

- Lanesborough kids are given worse grades and treated as if they are not good students, just because they're from Lanesborough.
- Having connections, the right friends, the right teachers, helps with opportunities.
- A lot of times activities or clubs cost money...I am lucky where I have access to basically any of the extracurriculars I want to do. Sadly I know of others who have not participated in activities due to financial burden - they don't feel like they should ask their parent for money, for fear of them saying no, and they don't want to apply to get into the activity for free, due to being embarrassed (it is great that our school will usually help out with things like club fees and stuff tho!).
- The Lanesborough kids are treated unfairly and made to feel as if they are lesser just because of where they're from.

Parents/Guardians

- We are looked at differently, not because of race, but because we do not live in Williamstown. Williamstown parents are very "snobby" towards others.
- Sometimes families not from Williamstown or Lanesborough feel a bit left out and the children can feel it as well.
- Everyone says there isn't a difference if you're from Williamstown or Lanesborough but there is. Like one day [the guidance counselor] brought down the kids who were economically disadvantaged so they all know who the other ones were. They were told they could apply for something based on their economic standing altogether... so they named each other the poorest f*** kids. Everyone's talking about that senior award night because everything seemed to go Williamstown Williamstown Williamstown. Summer courses are often at BCC, MCLA or Williams and are offered to them first. Some kids get information far before others and there is no equity.
- Often, zip code matters, as does the number of graduate degrees listed after someone's name...the Williamstown parents and kids and Williams faculty seem to get listened to the most.
- Blue collar or non-Williams families are not always respected by teachers and or coaches. This is especially obviously with the boys soccer team,
- I've had remarks made to my child about him living in Lanesborough. I have had people make remarks about me. Mostly it's because we're not the richest. Sometimes we're just made to feel like we don't belong because we don't have the Williamstown zip code.

SPECIFIED BIASES

- Race
- Gender
- Ideology

Specified Biases



Widely Felt Biases



Specified biases affect specific groups or individuals in the Mount Greylock Regional School District, rather than cut across the population in general. The three specified biases that show up most strongly in the district are racial bias, gender bias especially against girls, and ideology bias for people who do not share the views of the majority. In all of these cases the students and families experiencing these biases can find themselves in the challenging position of having to justify their concerns or otherwise prove that these issues are happening. The impact of the bias incidents themselves, coupled with the additional challenge of feeling dismissed or otherwise not treated appropriately can lead to a sense of alienation in the students. There is a general perception that these types of issues are often treated as one offs, rather than indicative of entrenched biases in the school communities.

For some community members there is a perception that too much attention is paid to racial bias, and not enough attention is paid to the widespread biases, specifically the socioeconomic/town divide. The ubiquity of the widely felt biases versus the localization of specified biases in specific groups creates this false dichotomy. The goal of creating a more inclusive, equitable, and welcoming school district in order to foster growing diversity among the population requires that all of these biases be examined, recognized, and addressed in service of long-term mitigation.

Addressing only one type of bias at a time ignores that many of these experiences are intersectional, meaning that students and families can hold multiple identities and feel multiple types of bias simultaneously. To determine one to be more important or pressing than the other is to further alienate students who are experiencing the effects of these biases in the school district.

SPECIFIED BIASES

- Race

Incidences of racial bias in the Mount Greylock Regional School District as reported by students and parents/guardians offer some of the most jarring personal experiences described in conversations and survey answers compiled for this report. The demographics of the Mount Greylock Regional School District means that the depth of this issue can be obscured if one was to solely look at the average of responses to questions about inclusion, and belonging.

Based on data from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the 2020 - 2021 enrollment of the Mount Greylock Regional School District was 86.2% white, and 14.8% students of color. 2.4% of the district identifies as African-American, yet you will see in the testimonials provided below, students who identify as black experience very directed racially motivated comments despite their relatively small numbers in the population. It would be a mistake, for example, to conclude that because Black students only make up 2.4% of the school district that their experience of bias is somehow less important or less frequent than the widely felt biases discussed above. Despite how much smaller the student of color population is, reports of racial bias outnumbered reports of any other type of bias. Both conscious bias in the form of verbal abuse, and unconscious bias, such as teachers confusing the names of students of color, were reported by survey respondents.

Students and families of students of color who have pursued alternative educational opportunities cite specific instances of both unconscious and overt bias, and lack of comprehensive response and mitigation actions taken by teachers and administration as key factors in their choices. These families seek out not only more diverse environments for their students, but also environments that take racial bias - conscious and unconscious - seriously and take active steps to make their students feel that they are included and belong.

Racial bias creates an environment where it is very challenging for a student of color to feel like they belong. There is perceived inequitable academic access and discipline, as well as the burden of experiencing racially charged incidents at school. These conditions contribute to the ongoing challenge of diversity in the school district. Families of color can be less inclined to choose MGRSD if there are other options because of the treatment their kids may face.



SPECIFIED BIASES

• Race

Testimonials

There is not a single day I haven't experienced racial microaggressions at this school. You are failing your students of color. - Student, High school

**My child did flat out say "I don't feel safe when I'm at school."
- Parent, Lower school**

K-2nd grade

- I felt uncomfortable because I have different hair and the color of my skin.
- The kids comment on my skin color a lot, they say I'm tan. I feel uncomfortable because my hair is different than the kids in my classroom.

3rd-4th grade

- I saw a girl, who was black, getting picked on two years ago. Another girl, who was white, was yelling in a mean way at that child. I told the yeller to stop. She stopped but still gave the other girl mean stares and made mean noises and gestures at her. When the whistle blew, the yeller said, "I hate you" to the other girl. Both of them have moved away. I wish I had told an adult.
- Once a student called an Asian student a Chinese lady.

5th-6th grade

- I was told that my mom would be beaten up because I am adopted and that I am black. I was also told I was hated because of the color of my skin, which is black.
- I have a friend who is of color in the school. Sometimes the kids in the school year above us would pick on him. The only thing I regret in that school year is not telling an adult about it. Some of them would pass us by in the hallway. I think he's had some of this before because he took it like a champ. I think he understood that some people can be unkind but the world is not always forgiving.
- I'm not sure what grade this was but a kid made many racist Asian jokes and gestures, and my friends tell me they've seen that happen a lot, and no one really cared.
- Sometimes I feel really bad for my friend who gets treated differently because of his skin color.
- A classmate was bullied in 3rd grade because of skin color.

7th-8th grade

- I would say a good amount of students I know are very uneducated on racial subjects and even a number believe slavery should still be in practice.
- Sometimes students don't get put into the right level of classes because of their race. My friend scored the correct points on the test that determines what math class you are put into. They put them in one class and not the other, but their parents talked to the school and they eventually got moved up.
- In our discussion after reading Stamped many students agreed that none of the lessons from the book should be valued since the book was "racist towards white people." This thought was also supported by a teacher.
- A friend in my grade, who is mixed heritage, feels some boys in the class are racist and homophobic. A boy in class has said he doesn't like "black people."
- Yes there were a few incidents in our school involving racial slurs said to other students and harassment from one of the gym teachers because of race.

SPECIFIED BIASES

• Race

Testimonials cont'd

7th-8th grade cont'd

- Incidents are always acknowledged and dealt with, but then the school goes back to pretending that the incident was more or less a one-time occurrence and that there are no underlying problems.

9th-12th grade

- I feel like when there have been racist incidents, mainly on Zoom, the admin has said that there are going to be new safeguards put in place to prevent them from happening in the future, but then none of the teachers actually use them. After the last one it was said that all teachers would make it so that on Zoom we would have to put in our school email to even be accepted into the waiting room, but literally only 1 out of all of my 8 teachers have used this feature.
- I have had multiple incidents where teachers call me by the name of a student of the same ethnic minority because "the names sound similar" or "we look alike." This problem never happens with white students.
- A lot of the lack of diversity in school has to do with the syllabus. This year was basically the first time that I have ever read diverse books as an assignment for a class (English), and we watched diverse movies as well (in History). I think it is evident when teachers go that extra step to create diversity in the classroom and in our education, and I appreciate them for that.
- The High School Book Club, REV, and the Multicultural Student Union are good examples of organizations that have helped with diversity.
- I've been profiled as Muslim a lot (I'm not Muslim, just South Asian), and several faculty and staff members have used me as an emotional punching bag to let out their Islamophobia. I have also been fetishized by faculty and staff—called "exotic" and "fascinating" over the phone. I am not your orientalist fantasy. I am a student. I am trying to learn. There is not a single day I haven't experienced racial microaggressions at this school. You are failing your students of color.
- I submitted the same exact answers on a group assignment as my classmate and got a worse score. Additionally, I submitted mine on time while his was late. (from a student of color)

Parents and guardians

- We just moved here and my kids are adjusting, but it is VERY different here and we feel it. We are a white family and do not feel treated differently, but my children have noticed multiple acts of racism and bigotry that go unaddressed by fellow students and staff. (Middle school)
- As parents of a mixed-race student, we hear about comments and incidents at school periodically from our son that are racist, mostly directed at African-American students rather than Asian-American students. (High school)
- Diversity and inclusion is obviously very important and as a person of color, I appreciate the effort. I know this is difficult, especially in an area that is extremely white. These issues are almost an abstraction - not something real and tangible for many kids to understand. I think there needs to be an effort to diversify the staff so that kids aren't just being taught by white women. We also can't forget about economic diversity - kids need to feel OK about themselves no matter what color they are and also no matter how much their parents make. (Lower school)
- I think students and families who are white (and athletic) tend to be included. Students and families who are not, are not quite as welcomed. For example, proper pronunciation of names is not a priority and there is not a lot of outreach. It would be nice to welcome new families and do more to encourage diverse voices in the Parents' Association. (High school)

SPECIFIED BIASES

- Race

Testimonials cont'd

Parents and guardians cont'd

- They're all about diversity until the Pittsfield and North Adams kids suggest coming to integrate with theirs. It's a bunch of white liberals trying to make themselves feel better by bragging about the diversity or feelings of it but if their kids really have to go to school with kids from Pittsfield, North Adams, Springfield... They run for the hills and never look back. (High school)
- Although the school makes public comments about DEI and seems sincere in its efforts to make a more inclusive atmosphere for all students, too often it seems critical voices get quashed or are discouraged in other ways from speaking out, and sometimes messages feel tone-deaf from administrators. I know from our son's perspective, he does not always feel the school lives up to its public image in practice and that students who are involved in various groups around these issues are not always listened to or given any real power for facilitating change, so they feel like window-dressing and get discouraged when they see how things are actually working. (High school)
- My students (who are not white) tell me about a lot of situations where there is no room for discussion of any opinions other than the white students, often extremely progressive, but not lived experience. Often, my non-white students' opinions on social matters are shouted over so that white students can attempt to display their progressive social understanding. This irony is not lost on my students. (High school)
- Are the school and the teachers really comfortable talking about race? I honestly have no idea. Again, with so many white teachers and white students, it would be easy for race to be an afterthought, or something that could be swept under the rug. I have no idea if teachers talk about race and ethnicity in ways other than in a negative way. And what I mean by that is: students are told not to be mean to others because of their differences. However, are students ever asked to talk about their culture and customs? Are students of color asked how they feel about something from their non-white perspective and made to feel that being a minority can offer insights that other students might not have? Diversity means celebrating differences, not just admonishing students for noticing differences. (Lower school)
- Again, not sure what kind of DEI training the faculty and staff have had.....ideally it is something that happens continually, a couple times a year, not just a one-off.....a teacher of my child once told me that he should stop hanging out with certain kids (all of color) because they were causing trouble, and didn't my child know better, and pointed out another child walking down the hall, who was white, and said, now there's a good kid. I wanted to take this remark to the administration, but then covid hit. (Middle school)
- I am not sure if teachers and staff have the skills and comfort level they need to talk about and address issues-- it takes time and practice and support. (Lower school)

Additional testimonials available in Appendix I

SPECIFIED BIASES

- Gender

Girls in the Mount Greylock Regional School District experience gender biased behavior both from their fellow students, and at times from teachers in the district. The gender divide begins early in elementary school, showing up both in gym class and in the classroom. Not only do girls find themselves excluded from participation in athletics, but stereotypes about the behavior of girls are present in their learning environments. As students progress through the grades these gender dynamics begin to intersect with the widely felt bias of preferential treatment for athletes, and becomes part of a power dynamic that leaves girls who do not participate in sports particularly vulnerable.

The evolution of negative gender stereotypes from elementary school through high school can build two detrimental effects in girls and young women in the district, affecting not only their self-esteem but also their willingness to try to participate in activities where they may feel unwelcome due to their gender. In addition, male students can be detrimentally affected by the stereotyping of gendered behavior expectations.

While most reports of gender bias referenced the treatment of girls vs. boys, other reports included the lack of sensitivity to non-binary people in the community - students and adults alike. Reinforcing of traditional gender stereotypes either through exclusionary practices on the sports field, behaviors in the classroom, or gendered learning materials, harms boys, girls, and non-binary students alike.

Gender bias creates inequity for students (namely girls) who do not feel able to participate in various activities in the same way as boys, or feel gender expectations about their behavior and interests are being forced on them. In addition, students who may be non-binary may feel less supported by the lack of an inclusive environment, and thus not feel they can belong in school as their true selves. This perception may stunt gender presentation diversity if students feel they must hide their identity due to fear of exclusion, erasure, or ridicule.



SPECIFIED BIASES

• Gender

Testimonials

Hearing in class that "girls cause all of the drama", and a teacher saying she was glad her child was a boy because "girls cause a lot of drama all of the time."

- Student, Lower school

K-2

- There is a student who makes fun of classmates for being girls. We don't think this is "different."

5th-6th

- A couple of years ago I was trying to play kickball with a group of boys. One of them told me that I should be a cheerleader and not play with them (I am a girl). I was pretty hurt by that remark. It has sort of happened a lot ever since then. I have been told that I can't play soccer at recess because I am a girl. People have doubted my ability to play almost all sports because I am a girl. Even teachers have told me that the boys were better than the girls even before we have started playing the game. One time, a gym teacher had already placed all of the girls on teams and was now spreading the boys out. She put seven boys on each team and then referred to them as the only "good players" on the team just because they were boys.

7th-8th grade

- Students at my school makes sexist jokes and it never gets traced back to them so they get away with it. The administrators never know.
- Blatant sexism while doing physical activities (gym - completely ignoring the presence of girls, and going out of their way in order to prevent a female student from touching a ball. When mistakes by girls are made even once, comments like "pass it to someone with a d***" aren't out of the ordinary)
- Overhearing teachers talking about the length of girl's shorts which seems inappropriate and weird.

9th-12th grade

- I think that there is still a decent amount of sexism that is evident in school...mainly from other students, not really directly, but when people make sexist jokes or micro aggressions they aren't always called out...
- There is definitely a teenage culture of beauty that has negatively affected me at Greylock, but that has less to do with the school and administration than it does with sports. Sports are greatly valued, which is a good quality in a school since sports can teach and give students so much, but certain cultures on teams, especially girls' teams, encourage unhealthy mindsets about body image and eating. I think there needs to be more available education about eating disorders and body image problems throughout high school, and more communication with coaches and health teachers about how they teach how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. A now-retired health teacher told girls in my health class that our athletic careers would be ruined by "the 5 b's": boobs, butt, boyfriends, beers, and birth control. Though I often told that story as a funny joke, it certainly imprinted on me an idea that my growing body was not useful, strong, or built correctly, and that the teacher and other adults had kind of gross expectations for my behavior.

SPECIFIED BIASES

- Gender

Testimonials cont'd

9th-12th grade cont'd

- Students who don't play a sport at Mt. Greylock or are not really good and are not male, often experience inequalities in gym. Not necessarily from teachers, but from male students who assume leadership within a team. So, many people experience sexism or discrimination in gym class from other students. It's often not dealt with appropriately when it is. I think that people do not feel that their voice is respected or significant in these situations, so no one does much of anything.
- This has also reminded me of dress codes. There are some that make sense to me, such as ones surrounding profanity. But they are not equally enforced and they are unfair because they can disproportionately impact different gender expressions. The language changed recently, and I have not been in the actual school for one and half school years, but I still feel that this is true.

Parents/Guardians

- PreK studied artists - all but 1 were male, all were white, most were French. Pretty bad IMO (Lower school)
- I have had concerns in the past about the school dress code policies and how these were enforced. There were instances where dress code was used to police girls' appearances -- based on the idea that their appearance could be "distracting to the boys." Some staff also used this policy to police girls' appearances and body-shame. If the school must have a dress code, it should be one that is fair to girls, boys, and non-gender-conforming students.
- Some of the classroom materials promote outdated gender roles and norms, and I've heard anecdotally that teachers reinforce outdated gender norms as well.
- I fear that my girls were put into a lower math class in 7th grade. I definitely think that students are sorted by gender and race instead of their intelligence. (Middle school)
- There was a conditioning moment in the classroom. A student noted that the all-girls team was always going last and asked "why can't we go first" and the para (the teachers aide) said "because girls are more patient than boys." It would be different if the para had said something like "I've observed that the four of you are very patient and that's something I appreciate about your team." Instead it was framed in a gendered way that is problematic for the girls and the boys too, who learn they don't have to be patient. (Lower school)

SPECIFIED BIASES

- Ideology

Students who hold viewpoints different from the majority of their classmates can feel unwelcome, bullied, and as a result unwilling to participate in class. A number of students and parents/guardians report that having viewpoints that are perceived as conservative compared to the majority of the other students and families in the district makes them the target of derisive comments, and a general sense that their ideas and voices are not welcome in classroom conversations around topics where they may voice a contradictory opinion or ideology. There is also concern that faculty can contribute to creating an environment where these students do not feel comfortable revealing their beliefs or participating in class discussion. This type of ideology bias acts as a barrier for those students to fully participate in their education, and in some cases leads to negative mental health consequences for students who feel alienated or bullied.

It's important to recognize how challenging addressing this particular type of bias may be, particularly for educators. If a student expresses ideas or opinions that are in some way discriminatory, that educator is put in a position of needing to mitigate harm from those statements, but also not cause harm to the person making them - a delicate and difficult thing to do. In order to mitigate this bias, students need to be made aware when their comments or behaviors are harmful to their schoolmates, and student behavior needs to be seen as taken seriously by teachers and administration, regardless of which side of an ideology they sit on. As shared in the Educators Survey: Key Responses section, educators are interested in learning how to better navigating difficult discussions around challenging topics in productive ways, which can be beneficial for leading class discussion that allows for differing viewpoints and mitigates potential harm.

Students who are not participating in class because they feel they will be bullied are not having an equitable educational experience. It's challenging to know how many students feel this way, as a few responses suggested that some just don't speak up, ask questions, or participate in discussions due to their beliefs. Diversity of thought is important in the classroom, and many MGRSD educators seem up to the challenge of navigating the complex and potentially contentious discussions that can arise from classroom debate.



SPECIFIED BIASES

• Ideology

Testimonials

I do not believe the teachers have adequate training to facilitate a safe sharing of opinions and ideas. It seems that the political divide between students from different towns is large and that animosity is festering rather than modeling for students how to build relationships across political divides. - Parent, Middle School

7th-8th grade

- I'm a Trump supporter, Christian, pro-gun, pro-life and I think all lives matter, I have been told to kill myself because I'm the minority and different from all the other kids.
- Christians are not always welcome.

9th-12th grade

- This school only allows for liberal and progressive ideas to be expressed. Any other idea is immediately shut down and not allowed.
- Sometimes I feel like I'm singled out because of my views on politics.
- This school staff and students included do not accept and include or allow controversial opinions or expressions.
- I've been insulted before for having certain viewpoints of the Christian religion, such as being pro life/anti abortion.
- Once one of my friends wrote something about a political view that many students at school didn't share, and when they had a peer editor (a student) read and edit it, that students spread rumors about the students who wrote it and that their political views were wrong. After, that student was made fun of and talked about.

Parents/Guardians

- My child's teacher frequently ridicules those with differing political views. My daughter knows clearly her teachers political views (unnecessary). Teachers should teach kids how to think, not what to think. (Lower school)
- If families have traditional beliefs and practices-say belong to a Church- they are treated differently... religious beliefs are sometimes dismissed as retrograde superstition or quaint or odd. (High school)
- My child was bullied based on her political and religious beliefs. (High school)
- Conservative and religious views are looked down on by students/faculty and staff. (High school)
- The school is not open for all views. One of the teachers remarked that if anyone is a Trump voter to please not let them know. We are not Trump voters, but we believe everyone should be welcome at the school despite their political views. (Middle school)
- Greylock has a very liberal ideology and if a student feels differently about any subject instead of having an intellectual discussion, there is name calling and shunning. We moved to Lanesborough 12 years ago specifically for Greylock and the fact that both of our kids feel some form of exclusion is sorely disappointing. (High school)

SPECIFIED BIASES

- Ideology

Testimonials cont'd

Parents and Guardians cont'd

- I don't think we (as a school or community) are teaching our students to have patient, nuanced conversations about these issues. At least in what I have seen over the past couple of years, there is a rush to judgment on all sides. This is also affecting how the assistant principal, and perhaps other school administrators, are dealing out disciplinary measures--it seems like there's not the time, care, sensitivity to figure out what's really going on--instead there's a leap to judgement and sometimes punishment that may stifle greater understanding, critical thinking, and empathy instead of promoting those things. (Middle School)
- I will say that when I've tried to get involved as a parent in issues or on committees addressing diversity and equity issues, I have struggled. My opinion is not the same as most people's, and this is not a thing about my race or the race of the people who are on the committees. It's about the fact that I'm outspoken and disagree with the typical way these questions are asked and answered, and I don't think previous administrations have known what to do with that. (High school)
- We got an email/phone calls about my child not participating, doesn't speak up, answer questions We told one of the teachers that they don't agree with many of the things being said and there's a student on the zoom call that told them to kill themselves and so they are not going to speak up in class. Nothing changed, nothing got better, nothing happened. (Middle school)

EDUCATORS SURVEY

• Key responses



Faculty and staff at all of the schools in the Mount Greylock Regional School District were sent a survey to gauge their experiences in a number of areas. They were asked to evaluate things like student interaction, equitable access to activities, and their comfort level talking about various challenging topics. Additionally, the survey asked what may be useful for ongoing professional development, and how the administration could support its educators moving forward. A number of key themes emerged from the educator survey. Responses are a representative sample.

1.

The majority of survey respondents who weighed in on what types of professional development would be helpful cited that they would like specific ideas and techniques for addressing moments when difficult topics arise in the classroom, and incorporating complex topics like race, gender, and socioeconomics smoothly into the curriculum. Educators are seeking both age-appropriate and situationally appropriate interventions or language so that when challenging topics inevitably arise, they can facilitate productive discussion among students or de-escalate conflicts if they occur. Additionally, they seek guidance and tactics so when they are witness to incidence of bias, they can intervene most affectively.

- Deescalation for teachers, they often inadvertently cause or contribute to an issue.
- Best ways to encourage and incorporate different viewpoints in the classroom...ways to encourage a gender, race, ability, respectful classroom atmosphere, etc.
- One that gives me direct interventions on what to say and do in certain situations
- Training that offers strategies, materials and techniques. We never seem to get to that part because we spend too much time exploring our biases.
- A professional development about talking to students about race, ethnicity, and culture would be helpful. Also, when I talk to students about these topics, I often worry about negative feedback from families who may have differing viewpoints on the discussion (ex: a family who doesn't agree with BLM becoming upset that we discussed it in class). I need to know that the administration will back me up if this happens.
- Using the arts to build a school community that values every person
- I think faculty and staff are more open to discussion than people think. But where they need guidance is in when and how to talk to students. They are often so focused on curriculum and skills that they jump right there rather than address current issues. They are afraid to lose time with curriculum and are not always comfortable. Here's a good place for training -- and for administration to say "it's okay to talk about what's going on..."

EDUCATORS SURVEY

• Key responses

2.

Educators are seeking opportunities to collaborate or discuss these types of issues among each other, with the recognition that it is difficult to find the time to do so. Multiple educators from Williamstown Elementary School in particular mentioned they had previously appreciated professional development time on Wednesday afternoons, and miss it now that it is gone. It was also mentioned that middle school teachers are compensated for the time that they work collaboratively, but that is not the case for teachers at the high school level. Educators want not only professional development to give them specific ideas, but want to then discuss those ideas and techniques with their colleagues to understand how they may work best in the context of their grade, their school, and this district as a whole.

- The former calendar with Wednesday early release allowed for continued work on a variety of topics; now our schedule only allows for a one-off with little to no follow-up. It's not good.
- In addition to not having built in time for collaboration, except for the middle school, it's not the expectation. I think because the middle school teachers get paid for their team meetings, the culture has become established that we shouldn't be expected to collaborate unless we are compensated.
- The middle school teams have benefited from weekly time to collaborate academically and to better support students. I would love to see time afforded to the 9th grade teachers and to see dedicated 9th grade teachers so that the team experience extends strongly for one more year.
- We have no time set aside in our schedule to get together as a community of educators to have group discussions.
- Allow us the time to discuss these concepts with our grade level peers. Along with that, expose us to professional development training. We are all coming from different backgrounds and have different exposure.

EDUCATORS SURVEY

• Key responses

3.

Some educators are very dialed into the variety of ways that difference and bias affect the school population. There is a recognition of the key biases discussed in this report, and more, and teachers have ideas for how to support the mitigation of these issues. The majority of educator responses reflect a desire to learn how DEIB practices can work to better serve their students in the classroom, and noted a positive shift in how the administration supports that work in the last couple of years. That being said, similar to some responses from parents and students, some educators are dismissive of the necessity for diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging practice being incorporated into classroom work. There are different attitudes towards this type of professional development, and it's important to recognize that student experience could vary widely depending on where their educator lands on the spectrum of believing in the importance of addressing issues of difference and unconscious bias in their profession.

- I think the high achieving students get away with stuff that the "trouble" kids would never get away with, and students know that. At the same time, it's sometimes reasonable. If someone has proved themselves to be responsible they should have more freedoms, but sometimes this kind of discipline is really unevenly applied.
- We tend, it seems, to be less successful in making less-economically-advantaged students feel welcome.
- Not all students have equal access to after/before school programs if they don't have transportation.
- There is a lot of outside pressure, primarily from parents associated with Williams College. I think they drive the school sometimes more than school leaders. Also it feels like these students are less likely to face consequences because mom and dad bail them out.
- I think it would be interesting to look at the enrollment distribution in advanced offerings based on a student's town of residence.
- Conservative students and families are sometimes dismissed or else feel the need (rightfully or not) to self censor. Working class identity outside of politics is sometimes marginalized in practice, though the rhetoric of our school culture speaks to inclusion.
- I feel strongly that there need to be more postings or stickers around the school talking about diversity. I would like each door to have a sticker acknowledging the acceptance of the LGBTQ community. We have several students who are already identifying as transgender.
- When diversity training occurred in our school, there was a great deal of pushback from other staff members. This was a frustrating experience because many felt judged for trying to participate openly.

EDUCATORS SURVEY

• Key responses

3. cont'd

- I just remember at one PD opportunity a few years ago, one teacher (who has since retired) actually said "we" didn't have any problems at WES and therefore didn't need the training. And no one (including me) challenged her on that. Yikes!! Also, some teachers don't seem to be willing/able to change even very simple things like not referring to the students as "boys and girls".
- Morale at WES is extremely low. I am happy to teach about diversity, but we also have to teach math, science, writing, etc. I do not want everything we do to fall under the diversity umbrella. I think a moderate approach needs to be taken.
- Something that exposes me to literature and curriculum to use with my students. I have no interest in a lecture about CRT, white privilege, or systemic racism.
- We were already trained.
- Staff should be high quality and FAIR to all students, that is more important than the color of our skin or our religion, gender, socioeconomic or cultural background.
- It is always important as we are here to educate all. However, I think that we need balance if we are truly tolerant. We cannot condemn the whole past and the whole system without being guilty of stereotyping and profiling ourselves, and I do not think that our old curriculum was all bad.

EDUCATORS SURVEY

• Key responses

4.

Educators appreciate an open back-and-forth line of communication between themselves and the administration. While some educators feel as though there is an open door, others note the difference between an open door and an actual invitation to provide feedback or professional opinions to the administration. There is an appetite for the opportunity for more collaboration and transparent communication between administrators and educators - and even parents - on issues as they arise, professional development planning, and school affairs in general.

- I feel comfortable approaching my admin with any concerns...but I wouldn't say I was encouraged to do so.
- There isn't a way to provide feedback to admin anonymously, that I am aware of.
- I can't think of a time when I have been asked for feedback.
- This has been the first year that Nurses have been recognized for their input and opinions.
- At the beginning of the year when kids were really struggling with remote learning and many were failing, we got an email asking us to detail all of the ways we had tried to help those students. It felt like it was kind of an attack, even though it was worded nicely. I sent a list of all of the things that I had attempted and what worked and what didn't, trying to make it clear that I had tried everything I knew to do, and then asked for other suggestions and help if they had ideas of what worked for other people. No one ever contacted me back. At a time when everyone was feeling like we were slowly failing and losing our minds, this was the last thing that I needed.
- We cannot move forward in school without families being made aware of the work. Some families are suspicious (and there is no color divide within that suspicion). It would be so beneficial for school leadership to work with all families (in collaboration with faculty, staff and student groups) to help them feel like they belong and work to develop common values and characteristics and help extend the conversations and programming we have in school to continue at home. Certainly school leadership must continue to have programming for faculty and staff, but communication with families will contribute to the overall goal.

FINAL THOUGHTS

As stated above, the goal of this report is to illuminate how bias shows up in the Mount Greylock Regional School District. The accounts from students, parents and guardians, and educators alike make clear that these five areas of bias are among the most prominent in the district. By no means is this conclusion meant to sideline any other experiences of discrimination or bias that happen in the school district, and moving forward ongoing work should include demographic breakdowns beyond the groups represented here in order to better understand the larger kaleidoscope of experiences in the district.

Specified Biases

Race

Gender

Ideology

Widely Felt Biases

Preferential treatment for athletes and academics

Williamstown vs Lanesborough (as proxy for socioeconomic bias)

This report has been driven by responses coming directly from the students, parents and guardians, and educators in the school district. For each of the testimonials included here, there are many additional not included. The process of absorbing these experiences is not easy, they represents many moments of trauma, challenge, and hardship, as well as moments of camaraderie, growth, and allyship. The experiences of community members are laid bare in these accounts, and may hopefully put an end to saying "X is not a problem here" for any of the issues discussed in this report.

The challenge moving forward is twofold. Education, in the form of professional development as well as community engagement opportunities, is necessary to continue the work of mitigating the experience of bias in the district. Additionally, information must continually be gathered about the ways that community members are experiencing their time in the school district, because what is top of mind today may - and likely will - change as the demographics of the area change. The work to create a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community where all students can feel as though they belong is an ongoing project.

JUST THOSE FIVE?

Additional areas of concern

The bulk of this report examines five key areas of bias that stand out in MGRSD, however student and family experience are not limited to these five differentiators. Students and families reported a number of different areas where they either felt treated unfairly, excluded, or otherwise made to feel as though they did not belong, such as family makeup, LGBTQIA identity, and neurodivergence. It is important as the district moves forward in its work to create a more diverse, equitable, inclusive community where all students feel as though they belong that these additional areas of concern also be part of conversations and learning opportunities for students, parents, faculty and staff, and administration alike.

Included at the end of this report is an appendix of additional testimonials and stories shared by parents and guardians in the community that highlight both more examples of the five areas discussed above, and other areas of concern. This list is long can be overwhelming, however the goal of this work needs to go beyond attempting to correct all of the visible issues, and then assuming problems are solved. Creating an inclusive community is an ongoing project of surfacing and resurfacing the various areas that need attention, and this list operates as a picture of this moment in time in the Mount Greylock Regional School District. This list will likely change over time, but the key ongoing factor needs to be a dedication to continuing evaluation of the gaps in DEIB in the district, and ongoing dedication to the work required to close those gaps.

Moving forward, further research should gather sense of belonging data on these groups to better understand the current climate for all students in MGRSD:

- Williamstown/Lanesborough/Other towns
- Athletes/Non-athletes
- Gender presentation
- LGBTQIA students
- Academic performance ranges

FUTURE WORK

Tactics for understanding student experience

Using additional techniques to gather future information can help enrich the information collected about student experience, and contribute to creating the conditions for success in mitigating the affects of bias in the district. Here are two suggested options:

Snapshot surveying

- Rather than a long and comprehensive survey, this type of surveying asks very few questions but seeks to take the "temperature" of the students, families, or staff at any given time. By asking the same questions a number of times throughout the year, and asking for key demographic data such as race, gender, town etc, you can gain insight into the movements of student satisfaction and experience over time as it cuts across populations.

Expanded one-on-one conversations

- Research for this report included ten one-on-one interviews that included educators, and current and former parents and students. Connecting with a person for a one-on-one conversation offers a chance for additional insight into their specific experience, and to clarify and follow up on certain questions. It would be a valuable asset to the district's ongoing work to continue hosting one-on-one discussions with various community members as this work continues.

Additional Testimonials

Race, continued from Page 16

Parents and guardians cont'd

- My son was tasked to talk to his peers about why it is not appropriate for white people to say [a racial slur]. Some of the kids doing the talking were white, but for the students of color who had to stand in front of the classroom and do that? The principal at the time was so proud of this initiative. WTF. (High school)
- It really, really bothers me that multiple friends of color have told me that they don't feel comfortable sending their children to schools in our district because of incidents where they or their children haven't felt respected. (Lower school)
- I have sensed an increasing focus on using texts that incorporate marginalized identities and perspectives, but I don't think there's been nearly enough PD with teachers to help them in growing in their own understanding of DEI topics and the ways to explore them with students. My children--who are cis and white--feel comfortable asking questions and pushing back if they hear statements or viewpoints that are misaligned with values we have at home, but I worry about students from marginalized identities--racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, gender, sexuality, among others--feeling empowered to--and needing to bear the burden of--that same kind of push back. Many of the teachers are extraordinary educators and deeply caring people, but people who have had few lived experiences away from Berkshire County. I think work needs to be done to give them opportunities to learn about and discuss lived experiences that might not be well represented in the county. (Lower school)
- I don't even want to go on a rant about the 2nd grade Mexico project at WES. If a school is going to do a cultural project, get the facts correct. Mexico City DOES NOT have beaches--it is NOT Cozumel. There was so much opportunity in that project to learn and be exposed to a richly diverse country. If I were a child of Mexican descent, I would feel small having to endure weeks of misinformation and omissions. It makes me frustrated thinking about it. (Lower school)
- Schools must push beyond the black/white dichotomy. Our mixed race/religion/nationality family is not reflected in any materials or learnings. I don't think the school or district has a real sense of what the community diversity even looks like when we break it down. (Lower school)
- Positive representations of people of color, people from a variety of ethnicities, families of various structures, kids wrestling with gender identity -- I do not see any of this in the curriculum materials. There have been recent additions of books such as *Stamped* that I applaud, but they really need to be accompanied by positive examples of people of color as well. (Middle school)
- The 6th grade play debacle for example - a student of color was told he could not play one of the main characters because the family should look a particular way. He was outfitted in dirty coveralls instead of getting a suitable costume for his role (butler to a well to do family in Victorian times) while the chimney sweeps had outfits specifically tailored - I likened it to images of indentured black boys on a cotton plantation. There were insensitive and highly problematic scenes that spoke of racial ignorance. (Lower school)
- A student of color was the only one accused of making gang signs when he and friends were making peace signs. (High school)
- I think we could look at the national honor society applications from last year and wonder if it was or was not a coincidence that those selected were all white. (High school)

Additional Testimonials

Race, continued from Page 16

Parents and guardians cont'd

- Every time something happened - racialized name calling or something with teachers it was like the first time they were hearing it. Both from us and others. Rather than saying "we have a problem," it was like "this is an anomaly, we will address this as a one off."
- We were presented a 7th grade schedule with no science class. We asked why and they said he needed so much reading remediation that we can't give him a science class. We asked for the data on how often you use this approach, what are the outcomes, do they graduate and go on to college? They said this was private information - I didn't want the grades, I wanted outcomes as a cohort. They never gave us a reasonable explanation of why he wasn't in science. It's things like that where you change people's lives forever. It happens that we have more facility in navigating the school system and knowing what people need to prepare for high school and beyond. Not all families are similarly situated and they could easily be tracking people out of college.
- When my child had an issue with the boys in their grade, the response of the school was to come down very hard on the boys in a very punitive way. Three of the boys were black. Part of why those boys were acting out is all of the other stuff they were dealing with. I did not want them to have that experience of the administration just being punitive. I felt very bad and said that, I appreciate that the boys had a hellacious time at that school. This is a school issue, not a student issue.
- My child saw how much more diverse the charter school was, and since they are more aligned with the arts, it seemed like a better fit. He was excited about being in a learning environment that had more than one brown face in each classroom. Certain faculty would call them by the names of other students of color, and were very dismissive when my kids would correct them. There are four brown faces in this school and you can't get those four names straight? That's a problem. That's a big problem. It never seemed like the administration wanted to dig deeper and educate people more, hold some people's feet to the fire.
- From the moment my child got into school they started experiencing, for the first time in their life, racist incidents.
- From the start the biggest thing would have been actually hearing that it was a problem and really supporting her. Initially in a lot of the cases it was "are you sure you heard that right? Kids don't really say that." As if as a first grader she was capable of lying about someone saying something racist or threatening to her. They didn't believe her.

Additional Testimonials

"Please describe any incident you or your child may have witnessed."

These testimonials illustrate the variety of replies to the above prompt. It may be tempting to dismiss some comments as typical teasing or didn't-know-better behavior, however that interpretation can belie more insidious and widespread biases that may not be obvious at first glance. Recording these testimonials now creates a record of what is affecting the community in this moment, and that record can be used to measure progress or changes in the future. These responses came from parents and guardians at all grade levels and in all schools and are presented at random.

- I have heard students use the n-word. My children have heard teachers speak about "those" students when talking about different groups
- A couple of years ago some students were making a student feel bad about her Russian background by saying negative things about Russia and Russians as being bad.
- Teachers are negative towards Lanesborough students. They are terribly biased towards republicans. Teachers have told our son that his parents are white supremacists because they are republicans.
- A couple years ago our child witnessed a teacher touching and commenting on an African-American student's hair.
- My child was teased for being a girl who likes boys.
- I think the school is doing a great job about issues related to race, culture, and sexuality/gender. But the school leans in a political direction and have heard from my student issues related to more conservative politics not being tolerated by other students, staff, or faculty.
- My students heard other students saying that being transgender is wrong
- Students who identify as male making fun of those who identify as girls.
- A student made fun of another child for not having money, what their parents do for a living.
- Teacher putting racist questions on test and not acknowledging wrongdoing to students of color. (One student left the school system as a result.) Teacher mispronouncing a new student's name, repeatedly, even after corrections were offered. And seeming to treat that student (African American) differently.
- They have described homophobic, misogynistic, and racist 'jokes' or language they've heard/experienced
- Students calling other students the N-word.
- South Asian kids being confused as Latinos, consistently being called out for race or gender or sexuality, lack of respect from teachers
- I think there is still sadly a divide between Lanesborough and Williamstown kids/families. My children have heard very negative, racist things said at school and on the bus

Additional Testimonials

"Please describe any incident you or your child may have witnessed."

- Students derided by a teacher for their religious and political beliefs.
- There was an issue when a black student was experiencing racist comments from classmates a few years ago. I believe it could have been handled better by the school. Because that was years ago perhaps more firm policies are in place now around zero tolerance for racist hatred.
- When my child was in 7th grade I had to correct his teacher that we said "people of color" not "colored people." There's one teacher who always makes comments that degrade students who aren't on the soccer team. One teacher complained to me once that scholarships were being given to needs over merit. As we were economically disadvantaged that felt very hurtful. Some kids get special treatment. It is so political up there and the school committee often leaks information. I feel like I can't wait for the day for my children to just be out of there.
- There need to be protocols or guidance implemented for how the school addresses students and families who may be going through difficult challenges in their family. It's not clear who to contact when you need resources or support, and there doesn't seem to be a plan in place to support families who may go through upheaval or transition in the midst of a school year.
- Our friend's son was tormented by other boys because he is Jewish. They threw pennies at him. Another boy we know was also teased because he is Jewish.
- The only thing I have heard is a teacher being negative towards students who may not agree with the teacher's political stance. In my opinion, this is wrong no matter what the teacher's or student's opinion.
- We have seen or witnessed none. If anything, when there has been any issue concerning our children we have been met with compassion, open ears and understanding. We have experienced teachers who are genuinely kind humans who love to educate the child for who he/she is and meet them at their ability level regardless of gender/ethnicity.
- My students have never heard anything negative about gender or race, however they have frequently heard negative comments about religion/faith from other students AND teachers.
- My daughter was bullied bc of political views that were assumed. A friend of my daughter was ridiculed by her English teacher because of her religious views.
- Paraprofessionals making fun of a child's lunch (the child's parents are not from the US); asking a teacher if they do anything special for black history month in the classroom and being told they don't have time outside standard curriculum; boys on the playground attacking girls violently during a "break up" (they were 1st graders at the time); mispronouncing names, even after being given guidance
- My student experiences a lot of boys vs girls events at school. Sometimes it was a competition in class to see who could finish first, with subsequent bragging rights of who is first/strongest/best.

Additional Testimonials

"Please describe any incident you or your child may have witnessed."

- A student used derogatory language regarding sexual orientation.
- Students ripping down "pride" posters, male peers speaking aggressively/unpleasantly to female peers, students feeling pressured to identify and commit to their sexuality preferences in early middle school
- My child has only been at Mt. Greylock for one year and has witnessed multiple acts: 1. a teacher who repeatedly (after many corrections) mispronounced the name of the one black child in class in such a way that made it sound racially charged. 2. Multiple racist/homophobic Instagram posts by fellow students such as a confederate flag beating up a gay pride flag and photos of MGRHS students peeing on a gay pride flag. 3. White students covering a white board in a classroom with a drawing of a police "protect the blue" flag and explaining that the flag represents hatred for black lives. This incident happened when a substitute was present and went entirely unaddressed by the sub or any other teachers. The flag remained on the board all day and into the next day. 4. A neighbor of ours of Asian descent was called "Chinavirus" by other students on his very first day visiting MGRHS to prepare to attend next year. 5. Two students did not attend English class for the month that my daughter's class was reading *Stamped*. She noticed and wondered why and was told they had "opted out." These are a few, but not nearly all, of the incidents.
- My son has described students who struggle with learning being made fun of.
- A few instances, by the same student, of calling students of color the 'n' word, or referring to them as having 'yellow' skin...my son is friends with these students of color and has witnessed these first hand.
- Mixed race students are saying they want to eliminate their white part. An Asian kid was made fun because of her eyes. An adopted white kid was called an oppressor and compared to Hitler.
- My child has heard the "n word" and anti LGBTQIA comments.
- My child was new to a classroom where many children were continuing from the previous year and a well-meaning teacher said "the boys are going to be so excited to have a new boy in the class!" and then made other remarks assuming our child liked many stereotypically male activities. Not a big deal, but also not a good signal that the teacher understood how to support a child who preferred to play with children of a different gender.
- My child has been the receiver of racist comments and acts since first grade
- Watch the awards ceremony on YouTube. Nothing is said to the winner of the ESL award other than her name.
- We have a multi-racial family. I would say that for my child it contributed to them feeling out of place in that the world that they live in outside of school is far more racially integrated, and integrated as far as queerness than the elementary school and that contributed to them feeling like they were trying to fit into a world that didn't want them. That wasn't real. They would say it was "too perfect."

Additional Testimonials

"Please describe any incident you or your child may have witnessed."

- A Black student was told by a peer his skin is the color of poop.
- A student told my daughter that her hair looked weird and different. She is of mixed race.
- They have described homophobic, misogynistic, and racist 'jokes' or language they've heard/experienced
- There is often or more than often racism and homophobia
- I wonder about neurodivergent understanding for coping mechanisms, especially this year. My child was drawing, and I could hear because we shared a space, and she was told to put her pencil down and pay attention. I knew she was paying attention, but was drawing because she was bored. For her it was boredom, but for other kids it might be an ADHD thing. My understanding is that it is recommended to let the kid do what the kid needs to do and that might be something that may not be thought of as way of including kids in the classroom experiences. I understand how it could be a distraction, but is there a substitution that can be made instead of a removal?
- Jokes about race. Also teacher generalizing about genders
- The most egregious of them that I think were these easy readers to help them learn the "-oy" and "oi" sound. The problematic piece for me was right upfront. It was called "what are you?" And the first question was "Are you a girl or are you a boy?" We have friends with a non-binary child. How would they feel getting this in first grade? That's a problem. And a really straightforward one to correct.
- Misgendering a boy with long hair
- Some of the sixth grade boys were making fun of another boy who wasn't present about the quality / kind of his clothes and shoes. I'm sure it's typical kid stuff but it was in front of my kindergartener and it hurt my heart that he heard it.
- Students saying "you're gay" or hearing students using the n word, making fun of people who are overweight
- A staff member repeatedly misgendered a trans child.
- Jokes on tests about the KKK violence and in general, a guidance counselor has posted racist comments on social media, a coach referred to non white players on another team as "ethnics"
- Male identified students refusing to use correct pronouns.
- We moved to town the summer after 4th grade so there are lots of people who have known each other since their kids when to daycare or preschool. Some of that is born of it being a small community that its hard to break into. It happens a lot that there's "how did you not know this" kind of stuff. The default assumption is that people have been in town for a long time and that you just know everything.

Additional Testimonials

"Please describe any incident you or your child may have witnessed."

- They share there is a lot of joking in groups of friends where there is only one non-white student. These 'typical' ribs about food choices, music taste etc. are fairly common but my kids don't know if the black and brown students are uncomfortable about this cultural/ethnic/racial joking.
- As the kids got older and there was more coagulation of parent groups which defines how much time kids are spending together, there was a separation there as well. A lot of it was connected to our economic status - we were not in the alpine ski club, not invited to cocktail parties, fundraisers - not in the social hub of a lot of families in town. We were left out a lot of social circles and my child was alone.
- When we are hemorrhaging black families and queer students, and low income families cant even live here, and it says something that the rigorous debate is about an artificial turf field.
- There were teams in the classroom, and they were each given the name of a color. The groups that had mixed genders were things like orange and teal. The all girl group was purple and pink. I asked if they got to pick their colors themselves and the answer was no, they were given their colors. Also all the other groups were one color, and they were both together. To be generous, maybe it was to give girls who don't like pink another options, but it's just such an obvious gender norm.