

District-Wide Equity Audit Belmont Public Schools

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Educational Equity Consultants and Researchers

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Auditors and Collaborators Bio

Elizabeth Borneman has a background in educational equity consulting, facilitating DEI workshops, and designing games and simulations for youth and adult learning. She holds a B.S. in Neurobiology from Georgetown University and M. Sc in Media Studies from MIT. AT MIT Elizabeth led equity design teams for adult learning and online courses at MIT, and has published research on designing and scaling simulations for improving equity teaching mindsets and practices in K-12 schools. She has also performed institutional research on diverse students' sense of belonging and motivation in school. In Boston she taught middle school coding, robotics, and SEL in public schools across Massachusetts.

For this audit Elizabeth led and wrote the sections for the Student Climate Surveys, Staff Climate Surveys, quantitative Hiring analysis, Policy and Disciplinary analysis, and Onboarding Belmont's DEI Director. Elizabeth collaborated with Josh Littenberg-Tobias, a researcher at MIT's Teaching Systems Lab, on the quantitative data analysis for the Staff Mindset Survey and Hiring sections. Joshua Littenberg-Tobias is a Research Scientist in the MIT Teaching Systems Lab. Hfis research focuses on measuring and evaluating teacher and student learning within large-scale learning environments with a particular focus on equity and civics education.

Belicia Smith has a background in K-12 elementary teaching, learning design, and educational equity consulting where she applied equity-centered pedagogies to center learning experience. She has experience working with all stages in elementary school from preschool learners to higher education and adult learners. She holds a B.A in English Literature from CSU Sacramento and a M. Ed in Human Development and Psychology at Harvard Graduate School of Education. She continues to advocate for the most vulnerable students in K-12 education by working directly with students as a mentor across Massachusetts and California school districts.

For this audit, Belicia led and designed all Interview and Focus Group Questions for all participants, hosted all interviews with staff, school and district leaders, and students. She also hosted all focus groups. She conducted the qualitative Hiring Analysis and collaborated on the Onboarding of Belmont's DEI Director.

Introduction and Goals

Our goal is to support Belmont Public School's commitment to ensuring every student learns at their highest capacity, such that their identity and background do not pose barriers to their education and futures. We have done so by conducting an unbiased, comprehensive equity audit via listening to a myriad of voices, learning the inner workings of BPS culture, collecting various BPS data, and analyzing it through a reputable and rigorous Equitable Educator Mindsets and Consequences Framework.

This audit is intended to be used as a tool and resource to uncover and validate all BPS students and families' experiences of equities and inequities, in order to make real improvements. We have provided lists of summative needs and recommendations for creating equitable environments for all students, staff, and families across BPS. This report reveals to school and district leaders, administrators, and support staff, where and how to create equitable and comfortable learning environments for most vulnerable students, and thus, all students.

We collaborated with Superintendents, the Director of DEI, the Director of Human Capital and administrators to gain a complete picture of what BPS hopes to be as a community through the following audit elements:

1. Climate surveys to assess equity issues from middle and high school students, teachers, and administrators.
2. Conducted interviews for school staff, administration, and students
3. Held focus groups for all families represented in BPS. These groups included open call for all families, targeted groups of families of color and METCO families, and families with children in the Special Education Program
4. A review of documents through an equity lens of policies, procedures to assess policy language, programmatic review of disciplinary and behavioral data
5. A qualitative review and analysis of survey data that provides comparative statistics across local, regional, and national school districts.
6. A review of historical hiring data data to develop a recruitment/ hiring/ retention strategy

At the center of this work, our collective purpose is to influence a culture shift where all students, families, and staff feel a deep sense of belonging and comfort in BPS, and where all students thrive academically, socially, and in new ways towards their full potential.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Vision And Mission Statement

Written by Director of DEI, Chon'tel Washington

BPS is committed to cultivating a sense of belonging in the climate of our schools, district, and the broader community. When students feel connected to their educational environment, it generates tremendous benefits to their educational outcomes. Specifically, celebrating diversity at BPS entails creating equitable learning environments for all students. Moreover, we are adopting the following definition of diversity: this includes students from historically minoritized groups in the US such as Africans whose ancestors were forced to leave their homelands, LGBTQ+ students, students with disabilities, and Indigenous peoples whose land were stolen from them. We also intentionally focus on

those students with international, immigrant backgrounds and those first-generation in the US, and all intersectionalities of identities.

Such an [inclusive] learning environment will allow students to learn uninhibitedly, make more significant interpersonal connections with peers and educators, see themselves in the curriculum and surroundings, and protect space for that student to bring their whole authentic self to the learning environment. This enriches everyone's learning experience overall.

The rich diversity among our students, faculty, and staff is essential to achieving the desired outcomes of the district. We aim for students to feel, learn and advance in a manner that reflects themselves, and empowers them to acknowledge the positive attributes that they bring to the learning experiences. In order to do so, educators and staff must see students as collaborators in the teaching and learning process alongside the family and community. It is expected that students be supported and guided by loving adults that wholeheartedly see students as a whole person with unlimited potential.

Belmont exudes excellence. Our goal now is to demonstrate that a more inclusive school district and academic excellence are not culturally exclusive. We achieve true excellence when access and success are not limited to a select few, but ensure that all students and staff have the opportunity to thrive and succeed. Therefore, we must acknowledge and flatten any hurdles and balance the challenges that provide some students with advantages and opportunities over others.

Measuring the Mission: Equity Audit Process. What now?

Coming into this role, I am bringing these visions to life alongside the Equity Audit process. The audit will allow us to acknowledge, inform, direct, and shape these metrics of success across BPS in the following ways:

We are learning about the settings, policies, practices, communities, and culture, that do and do not:

- Allow students to learn uninhibitedly
- Make significant interpersonal connections with peers and educators
- Protect space for that student to bring their authentic self to the learning environment, which enriches everyone's learning experience overall.
- Allow for diversity and representation across school staff and educators who understand and can relate to the experiences to students unique experiences at all grades, such that students are asset-framed across identity characteristics
- Implement and develop an inclusive curriculum where students can see themselves represented, and increase educator skill and comfort in leading the content

The next step is working with school leaders to bring these metrics to a most equitable standard. This audit's findings, analysis, and recommendations will be the standard that provides benchmarks and metrics for the schools to measure their success.

The BPS Office of DEI is Committed to:

Supporting educators in weaving social, racial, and economic justice into the curriculum, work processes, projects, and relationships. This includes equipping our educators with appropriate knowledge, tools, and safety to adequately address challenges with severity, where necessary to become champions of change in the district.

It's focal points are as follows:

- Continue building upon the district's Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) by developing consistent implementation methods across schools.
- Reflect on, interrogate, and integrate, identity and accountability of self and others. (for staff and students)
- Engage in courageous conversations about current events and historical topics. (for staff and students)
- Work to create safe and brave spaces (i.e. learning environments) where students can learn from one another and engage in transformative discourse that challenges worldview and perspectives.
- Commit to cultivating welcoming working and social environments that ensure all staff, in particular diverse staff, are comfortable and are excited to be in Belmont schools to perform as their best self and highest capacity.
- Bring on and collaborate with experts qualified to examine curriculum, develop an inclusive and antiracist pedagogy where students can see themselves represented, and increase educator skill and comfort in leading the content.
- Collaborating with human resources to assess and increase workforce diversity and retention of educators of color.
- Provide parents, staff, and community members a voice in how BPS provides educational opportunities to students of color and acknowledges the intersectionality of various demographic variables that affect educational outcomes
- Addressing hate incidents. This includes creating a cohesive process for students or staff to log the occurrence, to advise on accountability measures, and for school leaders to transparently communicate to families and community members about details, according to the incident.
- Address other Audit findings (see **"Measuring the Mission"** above)

To successfully implement the above statements, I will be collaborating with the acting Superintendents and District leaders.

*All above commitments require consistent implementation methods across all BPS schools. develop consistent implementation methods across schools.

Credits and Acknowledgments for this statement are given to Elizabeth Borneman and Belicia Smith, and the research:

Milner, H. R. (2010). A diversity and opportunity gaps explanatory framework. *In Start where you are, but don't stay there: Understanding diversity, opportunity gaps, and teaching in today's classrooms*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. pp. 13-44.

Worthington, R. L., Stanley, C. A., & Smith, D. G. (2020). *Standards of professional practice for Chief Diversity Officers in Higher Education*.
<https://www.nadohe.org/standards-of-professional-practice-for-chief-diversity-officers>. Retrieved January 12, 2022, from
<https://nadohe.memberclicks.net/assets/2020SPPI/ NADOHE%20SPP2.0 200131 FinalFormatted.pdf>

Glossary of Terms and Research Framework

Educator Mindsets and Practices Research Framework

Richard Milner and colleagues (Filback et. al) identify five major tenets of educational practice considered essential to understanding opportunity gaps in schools. These make up the *Educator Mindsets and Consequences Framework*. Each tenet in the framework is defined as a set of mindsets, practices and consequences. These tenets, or mindsets, reveal biases and orientations that educators have toward equity and inclusion, and the associated practices and consequences for staff, students, families, and schools. Each set of mindsets can support, hinder, or even prevent students from reaching their full potential in and out of school.

The elements of this audit report were assessed and analyzed through this Educator Mindsets and Consequences Framework. We used this framework and its language to develop metrics in evaluating all data collected and provided to us. Through the lens of the framework we identified and explained the realities of students and adults across Belmont's classrooms, schools, communities, and policies, in language and in practice.

This audit reports measures of which equitable tenets and mindsets were explicitly expressed and demonstrated in patterns across Belmont, those for which there was great room for improvement, and those equitable tenets and mindsets that were missing in all respects in the data. Altogether,

this allowed us to identify and explain the realities of students and adults across Belmont's classrooms, schools, communities, and policies. This framework also informed recommendations and strategies for equitable improvements.

The four tenets, or mindsets, that guided the evaluation of data in this audit are briefly described as follows:

Educator Mindsets:

1. Equity | Equality: This set of mindsets address how and whether educators consider the ways larger issues in society and student family privilege influence student's academic achievement and success.

An Equity mindset understands that students' success in school is everyone's responsibility, and that academic achievement must be viewed in relation to broader social realities. A consequence of this is that students get high quality education and/or multiple chances to succeed. Solutions are pursued to address factors outside of student control.

An Equality mindset on the other hand assumes that all people generally have equal opportunities to succeed with effort and sacrifice and therefore do not consider ways that societal systems disadvantage some groups while privileging others. A consequence of this is that educators view academic performance as a student problem with a "blame the victim" approach, and students receive lower quality education without additional support to achieve.

2. Asset | Deficit Framing: These mindsets provide insight into how we asset or deficit frame our students - to the extent that teachers draw upon students' unique cultures, personal, and community assets in order to harness meaningful learning or not.

An Asset mindset holds an expansive view that all students are able to learn and that students from every culture can be engaged in learning and experience academic success. A consequence of this is that educators recognize and build on the potential that each student brings into the classroom, and disconnects between home and school cultures and behaviors are recognized and addressed equitably. The number of subjugated students being referred for disciplinary action and special education is also reduced.

A Deficit mindset on the other hand holds that students must conform to traditional school culture and teaching approaches. Educators with this mindset hold narrow views of who can and can't learn based on dominant cultural stereotypes. A consequence of this is that students from subjugated groups are disproportionately referred for disciplinary action or special ed. Educators with Deficit mindsets also fail to recognize or build on the potential that each student brings into the classroom.

3. Awareness | Avoidance: These mindsets address the extent that demographic categories are integrated into conversations, policy-level decisions, and curriculum. They address the comfort level

and willingness of the school staff and culture to explicitly acknowledge students' demographics (race, gender, ability, sexuality, ethnicity) across their work and decisions.

An Aware mindset understands that race and gender impact daily experiences of teachers, students, and families. Educators see ethnicity or gender as important factors and find ways to discuss them and consider them in decisions. Educators are aware that student identity and background influence how they access and perform in school. A consequence of this is that instructional, curricular, and policy decisions reflect awareness of structural inequalities or power imbalances. Student demographics are central in understanding and supporting student academic achievement.

An Avoidant mindset sees race or ethnicity as a taboo issue and avoids considering them in educational decision making. Educators with an Avoidant mindset do not recognize how race and gender manifest in the daily lives of teachers, students and families. A consequence of this is instructional, curricular, and policy decisions do not address structural inequalities or power imbalances and so student demographics are peripheral or ignored in understanding and supporting academic achievement.

4. Context-Centered | Context-Neutral: These mindsets shed insight to the extent that curriculum and school practices are reflective of an appreciation and acknowledgment of students' home, family, and community lives outside of school.

A Context-Centered mindset works with an appreciation for how realities outside of school impact student learning and performance. Educators with this mindset understand parents and community members in order to understand students and teach them well. A consequence of this is that educators seek to build on the home-school connection, and seek to build on connections between the curriculum and the community to make content meaningful and relevant.

A Context-Neutral mindset on the other hand views the classroom as a closed system and views interactions outside of school is inconsequential for learning. Educators with this mindset deliver subject matter as isolated content irrelevant to the surrounding community. A consequence of this is that educators miss opportunities to build partnerships and make curriculum meaningful for students. Educators don't act upon a need to understand parents and the community in order to educate children.

The goal of this framework is to help us understand what we are doing in our practice, the rationale behind these approaches, and the consequences of decisions. This framework allows us to make recommendations for associated actions and concrete practices that start at the individual level, and apply out to networks of colleagues, students, and Belmont communities.

Overview Reference Table:

A Framework of Educator Mindsets and Consequences – Overview
(Adapted by R. Filback and A. Green from work of: Bartolome, 2008; Hancock, 2011; Milner, 2010; Pollock, 2008)

Dimension	Mindset	Orientation	Explanation	Consequence
<i>Demographics</i>	BLIND	“Deny difference”	Do not recognize role of student background	Curriculum & instruction applied uniformly
	AWARE	“Tailored support”	Understand student background informs learning	Curriculum & instruction differentiated
<i>Culture</i>	DEFICIT	“Student limitations”	Reliance on stereotypes about who can achieve	Diverse students taught with less rigor and lower expectations
	ASSET	“Student potential”	Identify and build on each student’s strengths	Diverse students receive challenging and meaningful curriculum
<i>SES</i>	EQUALITY	“Everyone has a chance”	View societal systems as basically fair or just	Low academic performance explained with “blame the victim” approach
	EQUITY	“Structural injustices”	See society as benefitting some and disadvantaging others	Low academic performance analyzed through lens of systemic realities
<i>Social context</i>	A-CONTEXTUAL	“Focus on classroom”	View schools and classrooms as closed systems of learning	Students’ everyday interactions outside of classroom ignored
	SOCIOCULTURAL	“Look at lived realities”	View academic success as product of totality of students’ daily lives	Students’ lives in local context taken into account

For more information on these analytical frameworks and equity topics see:

Richard Milner, [A Framework of Educator Mindsets and Consequences](#)

- Milner (2010) - [one page overview](#), [study guide questions for book](#)

In this report “DELTAS” are defined as areas of improvement, for each equity tenet, or mindset, and other topics in equity.

Methods Employed

Audit Kickoff

We kicked the Audit process off alongside the DEI Director Chont’el Washington, Director of Human Capital Mike McCallister, and BPS Superintendent and Assistant Superintendents. Before we collected any data or made requests for collaborative meetings across BPS, Ms. Washington shared and sent mass emails to all Belmont Public School staff. These kick-off emails introduced the auditors, outlined all major details of the Audit’s process, and provided detailed answers to many FAQ’s she and other school leaders had received about the audit. This included informing staff of upcoming audit elements and data collection: climate surveys for students and staff, interviews for staff, focus groups for students and families, and policy analyses.

Student Climate Surveys: Middle School and High School

Middle School and High School Students were administered the *Panorama Equity and Inclusion Survey*.

The Panorama Equity and Inclusion Survey provides schools and districts with a clear picture of how students, teachers, and staff are thinking and feeling about diversity, equity, and inclusion in school. The survey can help schools and districts track the progress of equity initiatives through the lens of students and staff, identify areas for celebration and improvement, inform professional development, and signal the importance of equity and inclusion to the community. The student topics were developed in partnership with the [RIDES \(Reimagining Integration: Diverse & Equitable Schools\) Project](#) at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

The student survey questions covered the topics:

- Sense of Belonging
- Cultural Awareness and Action
- Diversity and Inclusion

The questions are as follows:

Sense of Belonging

How much students feel that they are valued members of the school community.

Grades 6-12

Question	Response Options				
How well do people at your school understand you as a person?	Do not understand at all	Understand a little	Understand somewhat	Understand quite a bit	Completely understand
How connected do you feel to the adults at your school?	Not at all connected	Slightly connected	Somewhat connected	Quite connected	Extremely connected
How much respect do students in your school show you?	No respect at all	A little bit of respect	Some respect	Quite a bit of respect	A tremendous amount of respect
How much do you matter to others at your school?	Do not matter at all	Matter a little bit	Matter somewhat	Matter quite a bit	Matter a tremendous amount
Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?	Do not belong at all	Belong a little bit	Belong somewhat	Belong quite a bit	Completely belong

Cultural Awareness and Action

How often students learn about, discuss, and confront issues of race, ethnicity, and culture in school.

Grades 6-12

Question	Response Options				
How often do teachers encourage you to learn about people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always
How often do you think about what someone of a different race, ethnicity, or culture experiences?	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always
How confident are you that students at your school can have honest conversations with each other about race?	Not at all confident	Slightly confident	Somewhat confident	Quite confident	Extremely confident
At your school, how often are you encouraged to think more deeply about race-related topics with other students?	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always
How comfortable are you sharing your thoughts about race-related topics with other students at your school?	Not at all comfortable	Slightly comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Quite comfortable	Almost always
How often do students at your school have important conversations about race, even when they might be uncomfortable?	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always
When there are major news events related to race, how often do adults at your school talk about them with students?	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always
How well does your school help students speak out against racism?	Not at all well	Slightly well	Somewhat well	Quite well	Extremely well

Diversity and Inclusion

How diverse, integrated, and fair school is for students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures.

Grades 6-12

Question	Response Options				
How often do you spend time at school with students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always
How often do you have classes with students from different racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds?	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always
At your school, how often do students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures hang out with each other?	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost always
At your school, how common is it for students to have close friends from different racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds?	Not at all common	Slightly common	Somewhat common	Quite common	Extremely common
How fairly do students at your school treat people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?	Not at all fairly	Slightly fairly	Somewhat fairly	Quite fairly	Extremely fairly
How fairly do adults at your school treat people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?	Not at all fairly	Slightly fairly	Somewhat fairly	Quite fairly	Extremely fairly

Ahead of administering the student surveys we shared a survey proposal with the Superintendents that included the survey background and survey questions. This allowed the Superintendents to review the surveys and seek approval from students' families, or offer an opportunity to opt out. All

students who completed the survey took it during class time via a Qualtrics link sent out by the Middle and High School Principals.

For the Middle School, we troubleshooted a few aspects of the Survey brought to our attention on the day students took it. Troubleshooting and adaptations included our making adjustments to the survey such that it allowed students to move forward through the survey even if they wished to skip a question. We also added a Google Translate function to the survey to provide students with the option to fully translate it into Spanish. We made that option available for any other languages requested for translation. Before the end of the Survey day, we created another copy of the survey for students who missed their initial class-time opportunity to take it. This version of the survey also allowed students to skip through the questions that they wished and translate it into their language.

We received survey responses from the majority of students at The Middle School, with a 75% Response Rate.

For the High School, all surveys had the option for students to skip questions if they wished and to translate the survey into another language. We were informed of one case where a teacher had accidentally moved through a student survey and we made note of that survey in order to exclude it from our results. No other issues with troubleshooting came up from the High School .

We received survey responses from the majority of students at The High School, with a 87% Response Rate.

Staff Climate Surveys and Comparative Analyses

For Staff Climate Surveys we combined the Educator Mindsets and Consequences survey created at MIT's Teaching Systems Lab and a General Climate Survey. Ahead of administering the surveys to staff we shared a survey proposal with the Superintendents that included the survey background and survey questions. This allowed the Superintendents to review the survey.

The Educator Mindsets and Consequences survey instrument was designed to measure each individual's equity mind-sets. Each item conveyed a different statement about the mind-set (e.g., "Teachers should consider students' race when teaching"), which participants rated on a 6-point scale from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 6 = Strongly Agree (see survey items below). The survey instrument was developed through a rigorous process of piloting and revision that included content validity review by experts in equity in K-12 schools and convergent validity with established measures (Littenberg-Tobias et al., 2021).

Three emails to staff with the Survey Link were sent out by the DEI Director, Ms.Washington. She collaborated with the auditors to send a few follow up survey emails over a month to encourage

participation and increase the response rate. We finally received a 60% staff response rate. Compared to staff demographics at Belmont, there is an underrepresentation of White staff who took the Survey, indicating that White teachers were less likely to complete the Climate Survey than staff of color.

The staff Educator Mindset and Consequences survey questions were as follows:

Equality-Equity Overall

- Success in school is primarily the student's responsibility.*
- All people are born with the same opportunities to be successful.*
- Today's schools help all students equally.*
- Anyone who works hard enough can do well in school.*
- Students from lower-income families have the same opportunities to succeed as students from higher-income families.*

Asset-Deficit Overall

- Teachers should have high expectations for all students.
- Every student can be successful given the right support.
- Teachers should identify all students' strengths even if they do not fit within traditional school norms.
- Teachers do not need to know much about their students beyond their grades and behavior in class.*
- All students should be expected to follow the same traditional school norms.*
- It is a teacher's job to challenge all students academically.

Avoidant-Aware Overall

- Teachers should consider students' race when teaching.
- Students' race affects their experiences in schools.
- The current school curriculum is meaningful for students from almost all backgrounds.(
- Students' identities affect their access to opportunities in schools.
- Teachers should talk with their colleagues about how race affects students' experiences in schools.

Context-Specific -Neutral Overall

- Acknowledging the context in which the school is located can help students learn.
- Students' surroundings affect the way they engage with the material.
- Engaging with the community can help motivate students.
- Communities play a big role in students' success.
- Educators should include elements of students' lives outside of school in their teaching.

*These questions are Reverse-coded in our analysis.

We compared staff survey scores at BPS with data from public school educators across Massachusetts, the Northeast, and the United States. Data from the Northeast specifically includes public school teachers in New England, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. This comparative data came from MIT's Teaching Systems Lab. The data is made up from educators who participated in 2 internationally-launched online courses called "Becoming a More Equitable Educator" at MIT in 2021 and 2019. It's important to note that the comparative data populations might differ from BPS data in ways. In particular the staff who make up this comparative data self selected to participate in a course about Equity. They may be more likely to view equity as a priority or main concern in their professional development. Even though the comparative public school staff data might differ from the BPS staff population in ways, it provides us with a sense of where BPS staff are on equity measures, compared to those same measures for staff across the country.

For more information about the development of the Staff Climate survey measures see:

Littenberg-Tobias, J., Borneman, E., & Reich, J. (2021). Measuring equity-promoting behaviors in digital teaching simulations: A topic modeling approach. *AERA Open*, 7, 23328584211045685.

Staff Interviews

We interviewed 12 staff using a mixed-methods protocol. Three interviews were targeted to specific people we wanted to hear from and 9 interviews were randomized. Our targeted interviews were chosen by suggestions in the Belmont community.

The Director of DEI sent out an open invitation to all staff at all schools with time slots spanning from 11AM - 5PM during the week of Oct. 25- Oct. 29. Staff who volunteered signed up for a time slot that worked for them and we followed up with a Zoom link. Interviews were conducted via Zoom and spanned over 40 minutes.

We interviewed in total:

- 1 Superintendent
- 1 Assistant superintendent
- 1 Principal
- 1 AP
- 1 Guidance counselor
- 5 Teachers
- 1 Curriculum Director of Social Studies
- 1 School committee member/ Equity subcommittee member

Interview questions included 3 questions per equity mindset, equating to 12 questions total. An additional 13th question opened up the opportunity for interviewees to share anything we didn't talk about that they want to mention.

Interview protocol included:

- Asking open-ended questions geared toward mindsets
- Following up with clarifying questions and anecdotal examples
- Avoid sharing own opinions and experiences

All interviews were recorded and transcribed for accuracy.

Interview questions were influenced by the following:

Seeking to understand	Topics questions Covered
To what extent does the participant uphold an Equity vs. Equality Mindset	Factors that contribute to student success, flexibility in policies, the role merit plays in student achievement
To what extent does the participant uphold an Aware vs. Avoidant Mindset	How educators find ways to acknowledge and discuss race, ethnicity, and gender and include them in instructional, curricular and/ or policy decisions. How conflicts are addressed and resolutions created, HT operations, and fiscal decisions if applicable
To what extent does the participant uphold an Asset vs. Deficit Mindset	Views on student strengths, how they build on unique student strengths to motivate and challenge them to succeed, and disciplinary measures/ classroom management
To what extent does the participant uphold a Context centered vs. Context Neutral Mindset	How educators work with an appreciation for how student realities outside of school impact their learning and academic performance, family goals, families goals in achieving those goals, and representation in curriculum content and assignments

Analysis process:

We used a deductive qualitative analysis- starting the analysis from a “top down” approach by applying existing Equitable Educator Mindsets and Consequence Frameworks to the data. After transcribing interviews and checking for accuracy, we pulled out common themes with a thorough and comprehensive decoding process and cross checked from other data collection points (information is consistent across groups of interviewees).

Student Interviews

Student interviews were all volunteer-based. The Director of DEI, Chon'tel Washington sent permission slips to school leaders and teachers for students to bring home to parents and/or guardians to sign. Some families signed permission slips electronically.

Our goal was for every middle and high school student to receive a permission slip and decide if they wanted to participate. Then, sign up via an online link. Once students signed up and turned in a permission slip, a Zoom link was shared with Chon'tel Washington to send to students.

We had two days blocked for student interviews spanning on Nov. 3 and Nov. 4 from 1:30 PM- 4:50 PM. Day one was specifically for students of color and day two was an open call for all students of all backgrounds. Student interviews were conducted via Zoom and were 15-20 minutes long.

Only two students of color signed up on Nov. 3 to be interviewed the same day. These two students did not show up to the interview. All slots were filled for day 2 dedicated to all students.

In total, we received nine students who signed up for both days.. Out of those nine students, four students were interviewed in total. Some students didn't have their permission slips signed, didn't have a secured place to speak honestly, and/or didn't show up for other unknown reasons. None of the four students we spoke to were Black/ African American students.

To hear from students of color, we attempted to attend any Black and Brown student groups or affinity groups. It was unclear whether these groups had launched in the present school year and/or who was the leader. Instead, Chon'tel Washington collaborated with Belmont High School Principal, Isaac Taylor, to have a secured room for Black and Brown students to participate together via Google Meets during the school day on Nov. 22. Chon'tel ordered pizza as an additional incentive for maximum participation. This group interview was held for one hour and students were asked the same questions all students were asked in interviews.

8 Black/ African American and Hispanic/ Latinx students attended this group.

12 students were interviewed in total.

Interview questions were reviewed by Assistant Superintendent, Superintendent, and were sent to parents and/or guardians. These questions included 3 questions per equity mindset, equating to 12 questions. An additional 13th question opened up the opportunity for interviewees to share anything they think is important or that we as auditors should be aware of. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for accuracy.

Interview protocol included:

- Asking open-ended questions geared toward mindsets
- Following up with clarifying questions and anecdotal examples
- Avoid sharing own opinions and experiences

Methods for individual student interviews and group interview:

Seeking to understand	Topics questions Covered
To what extent does the student experience Equity vs. Equality Mindset at school	Student perceptions of additional supports they receive and ways their learning is assessed
To what extent does the student experience an Aware vs. Avoidant Mindset at school	Student experience with adults noticing and addressing differences between classmates as it relates to decision making, having challenging conversations and how/ when to advocate for others
To what extent does the student experience an Asset vs. Deficit Mindset	Student experiences with school rules and how their classmates strengths are discussed to encourage learning
To what extent does the student experience a Context Aware vs. Context Neutral Mindset	If students get opportunities to talk about things happening outside of school, the nature of projects and assignments, and how their identity relates to their curriculum

Analysis process:

We used a deductive qualitative analysis- starting the analysis from a “top down” approach by applying existing Equitable Educator Mindsets and Consequence Frameworks to the data. After transcribing interviews and checking for accuracy, we pulled out common themes with a thorough and comprehensive decoding process and cross checked from other data collection points (information is consistent across groups of interviewees).

Focus Groups: Open Call, Families of Color and METCO Families, and Special Education Families

Planning for family focus groups began with a meeting involving the DEI director, METCO director, and BECA leader. We also met with Superintendent John Phelan and Assistant Superintendent Janice Darias to review methods for conducting focus groups.

Conversations included topics of affinity groups, outreach, and scheduling.

Focus groups were conducted the week of Nov. 1- Nov. 4.

Time slots were approved by all parties mentioned above. The schedule was planned as followed:

Monday: Open Call for All families

12:00-1:30pm

5:30-7:00pm

Tuesday: Families of Color & METCO families

12:00-1:30pm

5:30-7:00pm

Thursday: SPED families

12:00-1:30pm

5:30-7:00pm

Focus group invitations were sent out and made available to BPS families a week before scheduled days.

On day 2, Nov.2 during focus group #3, we found out from participants that **some families were not sent Focus group invitations, days and times. On day 3, focus group #5, we learned that none of the invitations were sent to any of the four elementary schools until Wednesday, Nov.3.** We learned that invitations were posted on a Facebook group. We did not discuss using Facebook as a platform for any part of the Equity Audit with any administrators or collaborators. However, many participants only knew of Focus Groups were being conducted by seeing it posted on Facebook. Dates are unclear and there was confusion from many families who did not identify as POC, METCO, or SPED families and how they could share their voice and experiences. The Open Invitation was not made available to hundreds of families.

To address this, we scheduled a Last Open Call Focus Group 2 weeks later on Friday, Nov. 19th:

Last Open Call for All families

12:00-1:30pm

5:30-7:00pm

We attempted to collaborate with METCO director to ensure METCO families received the invitation to participate, however collaboration was insubstantial. Despite communication being time sensitive, families received invitations to the first Last Open Call for All Families sessions an hour after it began. As a result, we had limited participation from METCO parents.

We asked all focus groups 2-3 questions per mindset. All focus groups were asked the same questions.

Focus group protocol included:

- Asking open-ended questions geared toward mindsets
- Following up with clarifying questions and anecdotal examples

- Avoid sharing own opinions and experiences

Analysis process:

We used a deductive qualitative analysis- starting the analysis from a “top down” approach by applying existing Equitable Educator Mindsets and Consequence Frameworks to the data. After transcribing interviews and checking for accuracy, we pulled out common themes with a thorough and comprehensive decoding process and cross checked from other data collection points (information is consistent across groups of interviewees).

We asked participants to share the school and grades their child(ren) attend, the pros and cons of Belmont Public Schools, and to make suggestions. We also asked for additional information they felt comfortable sharing that we did not cover in the conversation.

Focus group responses fall under the following categories:

- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in all aspects of their experience,
- Opportunities to participate, volunteer, and build connections with community and other families
- School leadership initiatives, trust, responses, and practices
- Admin and staff communication regarding student experiences, incidents, and other decision making

Policy and Disciplinary Analysis

For the Policy and Disciplinary analysis we reviewed the “Belmont Public Schools Policy and Procedures Manual” and disciplinary policy data from BPS school principals or school leaders. We assessed each and every policy in the Manual through the lens of the Educator Mindsets and Consequences Framework, outlined in the Research Framework section above. This analysis considers policies and procedures a reflection of the mindsets, beliefs, views, and priorities of the individuals who wrote them - so our research framework was fitting.

For each Policy in the Manual’s index we assess the extent to which equitable mindsets and orientations were present, and the extent to which policies reflected clear and potential inequities. We made suggestions and recommendations for adapting policies and procedures to be more equitable and in alignment with the highest standards informed by the Educator Mindsets and Consequences Framework, which guides this audit overall.

We reviewed Disciplinary sections from individual School Family and Student Handbooks for parts of this analysis. These specifics are further detailed in the Policy and Disciplinary Analysis section of this Audit. We requested and audited the following disciplinary information from all BPS school Principals:

- Discipline records or statistics
- A summary statement or statement of philosophy for your school's approach to discipline
- Copies of any discipline or office referral forms

Hiring Analysis

We reviewed and compared hiring relevant data from BPS teachers and students with data from teachers and students in Massachusetts (MA), the Northeast, and National (US) public school districts. This analysis compares teacher and student racial data across districts.

We prepared this analysis to determine the extent that BPS staff are representative of BPS students by race. We then reviewed hiring questions from Principals from all BPS schools. We applied these findings to recommend strategies in the hiring process to increase teachers of color (e.g. Black/African American, Asian, and Hispanic/Latinx) in the district, and to increase the hiring of staff members with equitable perspectives and mindsets that could translate into practice in their roles at BPS.

For the Interview Question review, we received 2nd round interview questions from the Director of Human Capital and from three other Principals and school leaders.

We received Sample Interview questions from the School leaders: Elizabeth Baker, Deb McDevitt, and Lindsey Rinder

We received sample interview questions from administrators which were for the following positions:

1. Kindergarten teachers (from 2009)
2. Professional Aides (from 2011)
3. Middle school general ed. Teachers (year unspecified)
4. Middle school teachers: 7th grade ELA (year unspecified)

We asked nine school leaders for sample interview set questions and received three.

1. General question for unspecified role at Belmont High School
2. ELA Questions at Belmont High School
3. ELL role at Elementary School Level Positions

We analyzed questions through the lens of the Equitable Educator Mindsets and Consequences Framework to determine 1. To what extent does the hiring committee frame questions equitably 2. How do these questions demonstrate equitable tenets across mindsets and culture of BPS and 3. What opportunities do interview questions provide candidates to demonstrate equitable mindsets in theory and in their practices.

We then recommended re-framing existing questions to improve the measures outlined above, and provided recommendations for additional questions to ask candidates.

Onboarding the Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

We met with the new DEI Director, Chon'tel Washington, weekly to complete all steps of this audit. In addition to this audit's planning and implementation procedures, we began by outlining a vision for the DEI Director's work and a DEI vision for DEI across BPS. The DEI Director's Mission and Vision Statement is included above and details the role the audit plays in providing data to inform and support Chon'tel's work as the new DEI Director. Final support for onboarding will include the auditors joining Chon'tel for one-time meetings with school leaders across BPS to ensure mutual understanding of relevant audit findings. These meetings will also support Chon'tel in strategic action planning following the completion of this audit, to address and improve upon critical measures of inequity reported here.

Surveys

Middle School Student Survey

Middle School Response Rate: 1021 responses/1368 students = 75%

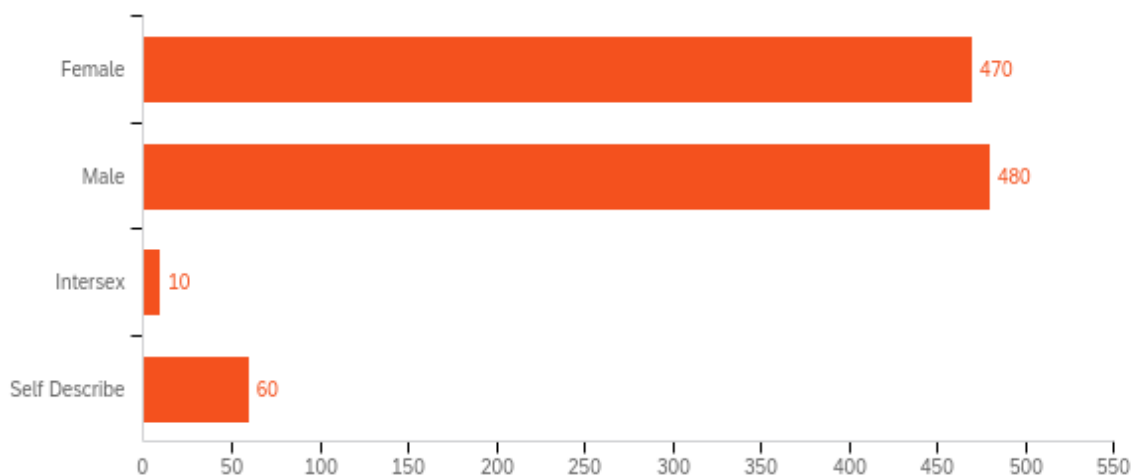


Fig 1. Overall Middle School Gender Demographics. In this survey we calculated a total of 470 Female, 480 Male, 10 Intersex, and 60 students who Self Describe their gender.



Fig 2. Middle School students “Self Describe” gender word cloud. Self Describe gender included terms like the following: binary, genderfluid, agender, don’t, pangender, and more.

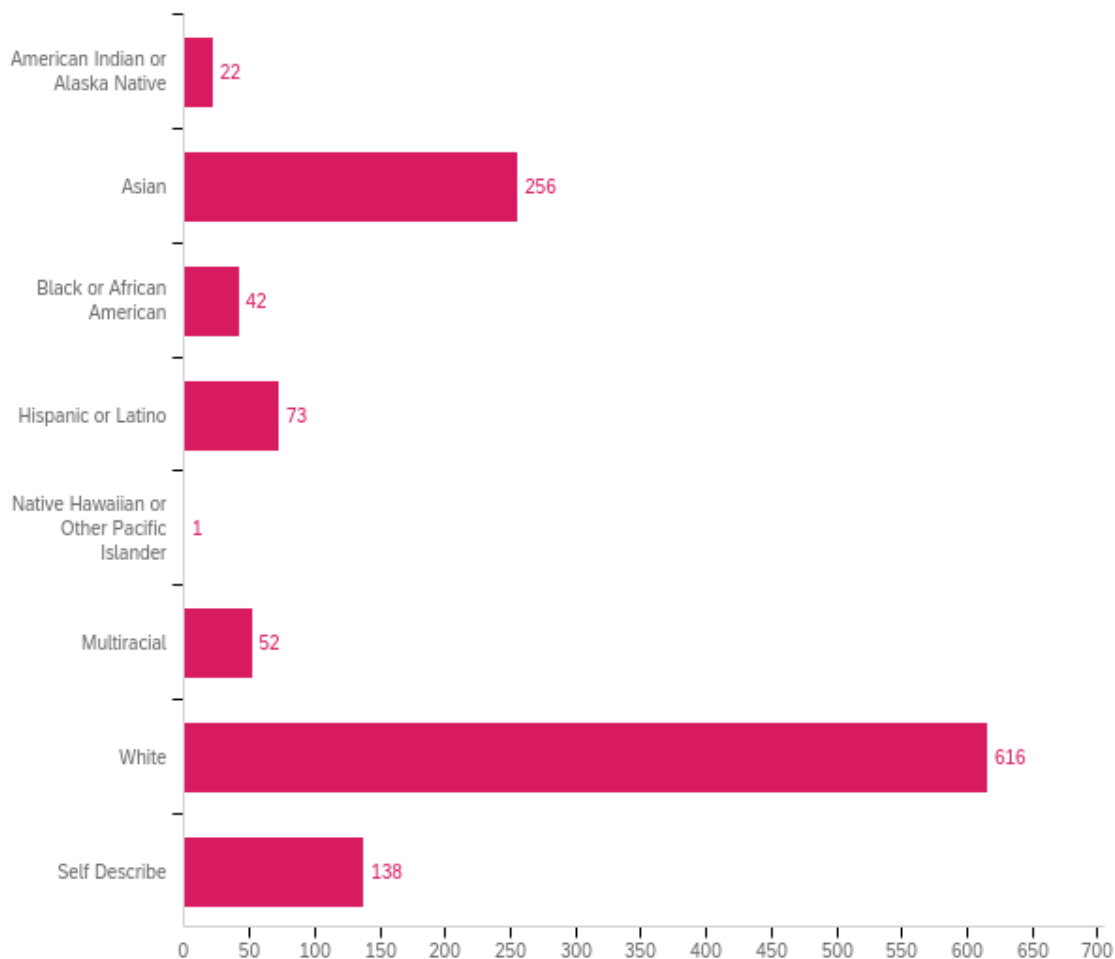


Fig 3. Overall Middle School Racial Demographics.

In this survey we calculated a total of 22 American Indian or Alaskan Native, 256 Asian, 42 Black or African American, 73 Hispanic or Latino, 1 Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 52 Multiracial, 616 White, and 138 students who Self Describe their race or ethnicity.

Students who **Self Describe** their race included the following: Jewish, Armenian, Canadian, Iranian, Indian, and more.

Multiracial students included the following: Half Indian and Polish, Latino and white, Korean and German, Brazilian, and more.

According to the Summary Survey statistics, the majority races of students at the Middle School include: White and Asian students. The minority races include American Indian/Alaskan Native and Black/African American students.

With 1 student who identified a Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander this was under 1% and was not considered statistically significant. In some graphs this data is omitted for graphical accuracy.

Middle School Survey Findings

Reported are the notable and qualitatively significant survey results reflecting equitable, or positive findings and inequitable, or negative findings. These results include findings from the total population of students, students from different races/ethnicities, and students across different gender identities. For questions not reported below, the results for most students were normal around the middle response, or most students felt in the middle, and less felt on either extreme, about the question.

Major trends by Question Category:

- Overall, **Belonging scores** are lowest for Black students and for students who Self-Describe their gender (i.e. nonbinary, gender queer, gender fluid). White, Asian, Hispanic, and Multiracial students report higher levels of Belonging on average.
- Black and Multiracial students report the lowest scores for **Cultural Awareness and Action**. Hispanic students report higher scores on average than any other race of students at the Middle School for this category. White and Asian students report mostly in the middle (neither reporting strongly positive or negative experiences of cultural awareness at their school). There were no major differences across gender identities for this question category.
- Black and Multiracial students report the lowest scores on average for their experience of **Diversity and Inclusion** at the Middle School. White students report the highest scores on average for their experience of Diversity and Inclusion. There were no major differences across gender identities for this question category.

Significant and Notable Findings by Question: (By total population, race, and gender)

Sense of Belonging

Q5 - How well do people at your school understand you as a person?

- While nearly half of Female and Male students (42% and 48% respectively) report they feel “Understood quite a bit” at their school, only 20% of students who Self Describe their gender feel the same. The most common response for Self Describing students (40%) is that they feel “Somewhat Understood” as a person by people at their school.

Q27 - How much do you matter to others at your school?

- Within most races (White, Asian, Hispanic, Multiracial, etc.), the highest proportion of students, between 42% and 47%, report that they “Matter Quite a bit” to others at their school. This proportion of students who report they “Matter Quite a bit ” is the highest for Hispanic/Latino students.

- For Black students on the other hand, 42% report they matter less, or “Matter Somewhat,” to others at their school. Only 33% of Black students feel they “Matter Quite a bit.”

Q28 - Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?

- Within most races (e.g. White, Asian, Hispanic, etc.), the highest proportion of students report they “Belong quite a bit,” at their school, followed by the second highest proportion of students who report they “Belong Somewhat.”
- Black students on the other hand, report the lowest scores on average than other students. Black students report equal percentages of “Belonging Somewhat” and “Belonging quite a bit” - 30% of students reporting each. This distribution is different from any other student racial group at the Middle School.

Cultural Awareness and Action

Q29 - How often do teachers encourage you to learn about people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?

- Black students report the lowest score on average than all other races.
- While all other student races (e.g. White, Asian, Hispanic, Multiracial, etc.) on average report that teachers “Frequently” encourage them to learn about people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures - Black students report that teachers “Sometimes” encourage them to learn about people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures.

Q30 - How often do you think about what someone of a different race, ethnicity, or culture experiences?

- Most students across the school population report they “Frequently” (39%) followed by “Sometimes” at (37%) think about what someone of a different race, ethnicity, or culture experiences.
- More than half of students who Self Describe their gender (56%) report they “Frequently” think of what students from other groups experience. This is a significant amount. This percentage who report “Frequently” also differs between Females (45%) and Males (32%).

Q31 - How confident are you that students at your school can have honest conversations with each other about race?

- Hispanic/Latino students report the highest scores for this question; most are “Quite Confident” that students at their school can have honest conversations with each other about race.

- Black and Multiracial students on average report the lowest scores for this question. These students mostly report being mostly “Somewhat” and “Slightly confident,” that students at their school can have honest conversations with each other about race.

Q32 - At your school, how often are you encouraged to think more deeply about race-related topics with other students?

- Most students across all races report they “Sometimes” (40%) are encouraged to think more deeply about race-related topics with other students. 23% of all students report they are encouraged to think more deeply about race-related topics with other students “Once in a while.”

Q33 - How comfortable are you sharing your thoughts about race-related topics with other students at your school?

- Black and Multiracial students on average report the lowest amount of comfort with sharing their thoughts about race-related topics at their school. (2.98 and 2.8 Means). The highest proportion of Black students report they are ‘Slightly comfortable’ with this (38%), which is a higher proportion for this response than any other racial group.
- Hispanic Students and those who Self Describe their race on average report being more comfortable than any other racial category, with sharing their thoughts about race-related topics with other students at their school.

Q34 - How often do students at your school have important conversations about race, even when they might be uncomfortable?

- Most students across all groups report on average that students at their school “Once in a while” (35%) have important conversations about race. This is followed by “Sometimes.” (30%).

Q35 - When there are major news events related to race, how often do adults at your school talk about them with students?

- One third of students across all groups report on average that when there are major news events related to race, adults “Frequently” talk about them with students. Following this, one quarter of students report that teachers do so “Sometimes.”

Q36 - How well does your school help students speak out against racism?

- Black students on average report the lowest scores than any other race for this question. Black students mostly report their school helps students speak out against racism “Somewhat well.” Furthermore, higher proportions of Black and Multiracial students than any other groups report that their school helps students speak out against racism only “Slightly well.” At least one quarter of the Black students in the middle school feel this way.

Diversity and Inclusion

Q38 - How often do you spend time at school with students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?

- White students differ from the rest of the students. White students are more likely than any other students to report they “Frequently” rather than “Almost Always,” spend time at school with students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures at their school.

Q39 -How often do you have classes with students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?

- Black and Multiracial students report the lowest averages. They are less likely than any of their peers to have classes with students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures. Black students also have the highest proportion of students, who report “Almost never” sharing classes with students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures.

Q40 -At your school, how often do students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures hang out with each other?

- More than half of students across all races report students from different races, ethnicities, and cultures “Frequently” hang out with each other.

Q41 -At your school, how common is it for students to have close friends from different racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds?

- Nearly half of all students, regardless of race, report it’s “Quite Common” for students to have close friends from different racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds. This is followed by 30% of all students who report that it's “Extremely common.”

Q42 -How fairly do students at your school treat people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?

- Black and Multiracial students report significantly lower scores on average than all other races for this question.
- While for White and Asian and Hispanic students more than half (54% and 55% and 50% respectively) report “Quite Fairly”, only 35% of Black students report that students treat others [from different cultures etc.] “Quite fairly”.

Q43 -How fairly do adults at your school treat people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?

- White students and students who Self Describe their race report the highest scores on average for this question. On the other hand, Black students report the lowest scores for how fairly adults at their school treat people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures.
- Only 29% of Black Students report that adults at their school treat people from different races “Extremely Fairly,” while 60% of White Students report the same. Reports of “Extremely fairly”, followed by 53% of Hispanic students, 48% of Asian Students and 47% of Multiracial students. Black students on average mostly report that adults at their school.

Middle School Survey Conclusions and Future Directions

Sense of Belonging: On average, Black students and those who self describe their gender report lower Belonging scores. This means that across all student races and gender identities, these students’ report experiencing that they belong the least, and that they matter less than other students at the Middle School. White, Hispanic, Asian, and Multiracial students, and students who do not fall outside of traditional gender binaries, generally feel they belong and matter more at the Middle school.

Cultural Awareness and Action: There is a difference in students’ perspectives at the level of cultural awareness at their school, for both their peers and the cultural awareness demonstrated by adults at the Middle School.

While some students are mostly quite confident that their peers can have honest conversations about race (i.e. Hispanic/Latino students) there are many minority students (i.e Black and Multiracial students) who are only somewhat and slightly confident that their peers can have these honest conversations about race. This could imply that they are either not feeling they can speak up honestly themselves, that they are not hearing honest conversations, or/and that there aren't spaces at school to have honest conversations about race. It’s really important that students in minority races at the Middle School in particular feel that honest conversations about race can be discussed.

It’s important to note that most students across race and gender identities think frequently about what someone of a different race, ethnicity, or culture experiences. This is all the more reason for adults to be prepared and skilled to facilitate dialogue, and create safe spaces at school for students to work through their thinking and to learn about others. Despite the fact that students are thinking about the experiences of others from different races, ethnicities, and cultures, most students across all racial groups and gender identities report that they are “Sometimes” (40%) are encouraged to think more deeply about race-related topics with other students. 23% of all students report they are encouraged to think more deeply about race-related topics with other students “Once in a while.”

There is a lot of progress that can and should be made here from adults at the school to encourage their thinking in healthy, open, safe, and culturally aware ways.

Finally, it must be noted that within the past few years there;s been major news and social movement related to racial justice, around both African American and Asian issues in particular. Students are not only aware of this and are growing up being exposed to major racial news, but many students and their families care deeply about these issues. While one third of students across all groups report on average that when there are major news events related to race, adults “Frequently” talk about them with students, there is a quarter of students at the Middle School who report that teachers only do so “Sometimes.”

Alongside this, significant amounts of Black and Multiracial students are reporting that they aren't feeling comfortable having these conversations, on average, with other students. While teachers may be discussing these important issues with students sometimes, it's important to note that discussing the topics alone does not ensure that minority students in particular are feeling comfortable about it or safe enough to speak up honestly in the conversation. As our students develop and learn, it's important for them to have role models and equity-oriented adults to guide and support them.

Diversity and Inclusion. There are positive reports of diversity at the Middle School, but there is much room for improvement for inclusion. It's important to note that more than half of all students at the Middle School report that students from different races, ethnicities, and cultures “Frequently” hang out with each other. In addition to this, nearly half of all students, regardless of race, report it's “Quite Common” for students to have close friends from different racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds. This is followed by 30% of all students who report that it's “Extremely common.” These findings in particular highlight the importance that with students spending time together, that all students, in particular diverse and minority students, should feel included.

This survey shows, though, that experiences of inclusion at the Middle School do vary by student's race. Black and Multiracial students report the lowest scores on average for their experience of diversity and inclusion at the Middle School. These students not only report lower scores than any other race (e.g. White, Asian and Hispanic students) for how fairly students at their school treat people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures - but Black and Multiracial students report they are less likely to have classes with students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures. Black students have the highest proportion of students, who report “Almost never” sharing classes with students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures. Other students do not show these patterns at all. This implies that some Black and Multiracial students are being isolated in some way, which is notably inequitable and alarming.

It's unclear what accounts for these great differences in students' reports of how fairly they feel they are being treated, but survey questions provide insight. When it comes to students' reports of how adults treat people from different cultures, races, and ethnicities, only 29% of Black Students report

that adults at their school treat people from different races “Extremely Fairly,” while 60% of White Students report the same. Nearly half of Hispanic and Asian students also report that adults at their school treat people from different races, cultures, and ethnicities “Extremely fairly.” These differences from students could imply that adults are inconsistent in how fairly they are treating students, and potentially treating Black and Multiracial students, less fairly. This could be a reflection of the mindsets and practices of staff, the school policies and climate, which are analyzed in subsequent sections: Staff Surveys and Staff Interviews.

High School Survey

Response Rate: 1157 responses/1334 students = 87%

High School Demographics Collected:

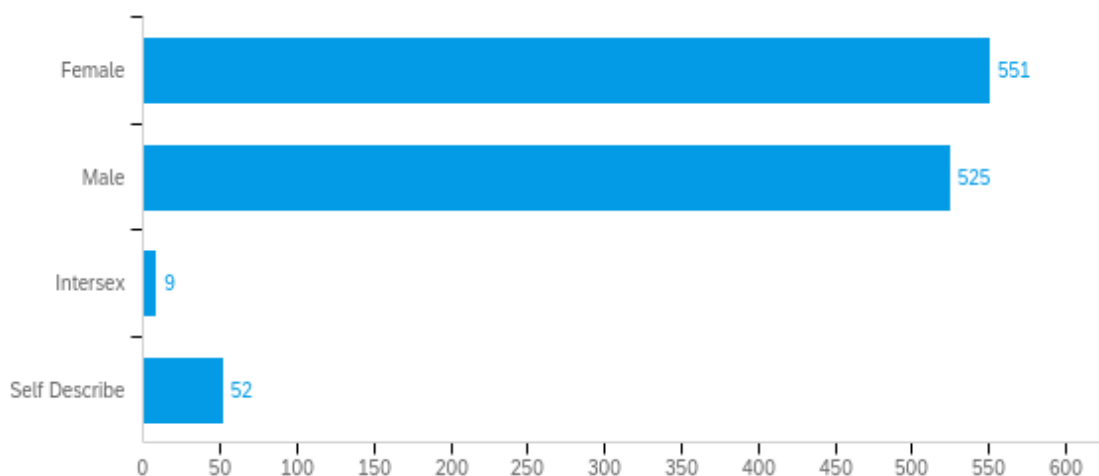


Fig 4. Overall High School Gender Demographics.

In this survey we calculated a total of 551 Female, 525 Male, 9 Intersex, and 52 students who Self Describe their gender.

With 8 students who identified as Intersex, this was less than 1% of students. This was not considered statistically significant. In some graphs this data is omitted for graphical accuracy.



Fig 5. Word Cloud high frequency gender identities that students self-describe.

Students' self-described gender identities included: nonbinary, transgender, gender fluid, genderqueer, fluid, and demi, and more.

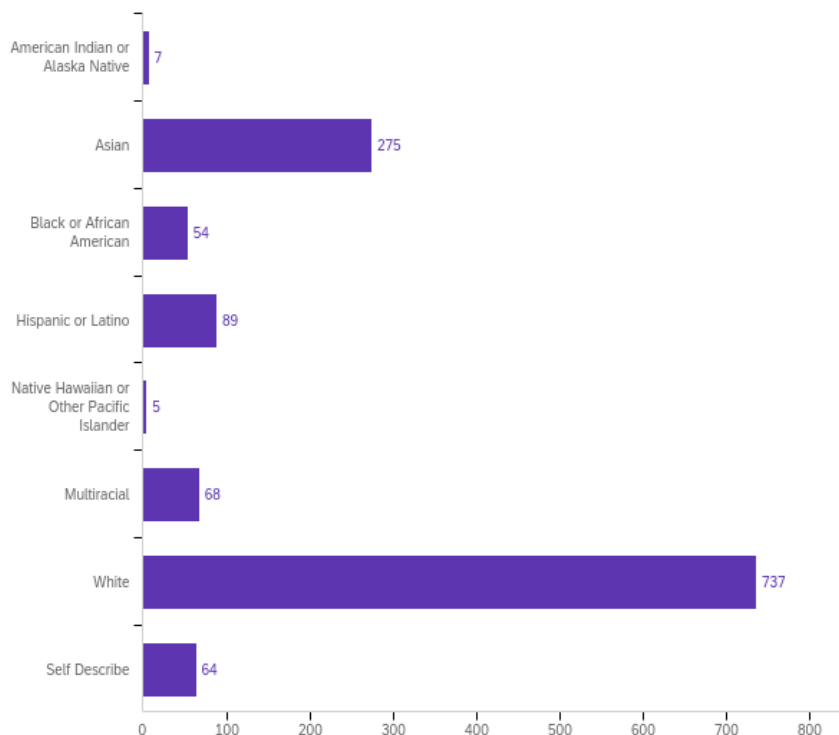


Fig 6. Overall High School Racial Demographics.

In this survey we calculated a total of 7 American Indian or Alaskan Native, 275 Asian, 54 Black or African American, 89 Hispanic or Latino, 5 Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 68 Multiracial, 737 White, and 64 students who Self Describe their race or ethnicity.

Students who Self Describe their race included the following: Arab, Brazilian, Middle Eastern, Southeast Asian, Armenian, unapologetically me, and more.

According to the Summary Survey statistics, the majority races of students at the High School include: White and Asian students. The minority races include American Indian/Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and Black/African American students.

With 5 students who identified as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander this was not considered statistically significant. In some graphs this data is omitted for graphical accuracy.

High School Survey Summary of Findings

Reported are the notable and qualitatively significant survey results reflecting equitable, or positive findings and inequitable, or negative findings. These results include findings from the total

population of students, students from different races/ethnicities, and students across different gender identities. For questions not reported below, the results for most students were normal around the middle response, or most students felt in the middle, and less felt on either extreme, about the question.

For each Question Category, here are the major trends at the High School:

- Overall, **Belonging** scores are lowest for Black/African American and American Indian/Alaskan Native students. White students, followed by Asian students, report the highest Belonging scores. Intersex students report the lowest Belonging scores within the gender identity category.
- Overall Black students, followed by American Indian/Alaskan Native, report the lowest scores for their experience of **Cultural Awareness and Action** at the High School. Students who Self Describe their gender report the lowest scores on average for this category.
- Overall, Black students report the lowest scores for their experience of **Diversity and Inclusion** at the High School. There were no major differences across gender identities for this question category.

Significant and Notable Findings by Question: (By total population, race, and gender)

Sense of Belonging

Q5 - **How well do people at your school understand you as a person?**

- The majority proportions of White, Asian, Multiracial, and Hispanic students report feeling “Understood quite a bit” as a person. White students report the highest on average for this question.
- On the other hand the majority of Black and American Indian students report being “Understood Somewhat” as a person by people at their school.
- There are differences between all gender identities. The majority proportion of Intersex students (40%) report they are “Understood a little” as a person. Compared to Male and Female students where the majority proportion (43% and 41%) of students report being “Understood quite a bit.”

Q25 - **How connected do you feel to adults at your school?**

- The majority of Black students feel “Slightly connected”, compared to the majority proportion of students from all the other races, who mostly report feeling “Somewhat Connected,” followed by “Quite Connected.”

- The proportion of Black students who feel ‘Quite Connected’ is significantly smaller than any other racial group.
- Black students also report the highest proportion of feeling “Not at all connected.” than any other group. Hispanic/Latino students report the next lowest for this response category.

Q26 - How much respect do students in your school show you?

- While nearly half of all students from all other races report feeling “Quite a bit of respect” from other students, *only a third* of Black students report feeling “Quite a bit of respect” shown to them from other students.
- Males and Females report similarly, with the majority reporting students at their school show them “Quite a bit of respect.” For Intersex students, on the other hand, the majority proportion of students reporting that students at their school show them “Somewhat respect.”

Q27 - How much do you matter to others at your school?

- Black Students report the lowest means for this question, mostly that they “Matter Somewhat” to others at their school. Most other races on average report that they “Matter somewhat. On the other hand White and Multiracial students mostly report on average that they “Matter quite a bit.”
- Black students, followed by Latino students, show higher proportions than any other races that they “Matter a little bit” to others at their school. At least 21% and 18% report this respectively.
- The same proportions of American Indian/Alaskan Native students report they “Matter Quite a bit” and “Do not matter at all.” (33% for each score).

Q28 - Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?

- Black students report the lowest scores for this question, followed by students who Self Describe their race and American Indian/Alaskan Native Students. Black students report either Breakdown graph also shows Black students also have the highest proportion of all other students who report they “Belong a little bit. (25% of Black students)”
- Multiracial, White, and Asian students report this highest on average for this question.

Cultural Awareness and Action

Q29 - How often do teachers encourage you to learn about people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?

- White, Multiracial, Asian, Hispanic, and students who Self Describe their race report similarly here - with the majority of each of these groups reporting, “Frequently”, followed by “Sometimes”.
- Black students on average report significantly lower scores on this question than all other races. The majority of Black students report that teachers “Sometimes” encourage them to learn about people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures (27%), followed by “Almost Never. (26%).”

Q30 - How often do you think about what someone of a different race, ethnicity, or culture experiences?

- Most students across all races report they “Frequently” think about what someone of a different race, ethnicity, or culture experiences (42% of students). 34% of students report they “Sometimes” do.
- Students who Self Describe their gender report the highest proportion who “Almost Always” think about what someone of a different race, ethnicity, or culture experiences. On the other hand, half of Females report they “Frequently” think about this, while less than a third of Males report they “Frequently” think about what someone of a different race, ethnicity, or culture experiences. The majority of Males report “Sometimes.”

Q31 - How confident are you that students at your school can have honest conversations with each other about race?

- Asian, followed by White students, report the highest scores on average out of all students for this question. Most students (White, Self Describe, Hispanic, and Asian students), report feeling “Somewhat Confident.” (32% - 39%), Followed by “Quite Confident. (20% - 26%)”
- On the other hand, Black students report the lowest on average of all races for this question. The majority proportion of Black and American Indian students mostly report they are either “Not at all confident” or “Slightly confident.” (27% for both scores).

Q32 - At your school, how often are you encouraged to think more deeply about race-related topics with other students?

- Nearly 40% of all students report that they are “Sometimes” encouraged to think more deeply about race-related topics with other students, followed by about a quarter of students overall reporting they “Frequently are” encouraged to do so. Following this is, “Once in a while.” This is normal around the mean.

- Distinctly, most Black and Native American students report on average that they are “*Almost Never*” encouraged to think more deeply about race-related topics with other students. Black students report the lowest scores of all races for this question.
- On the other hand, all other groups (excluding Native Hawai’ian) report more similarly to the total population - mostly reporting they are “*Sometimes*” encouraged to think more deeply about race-related topics with other students.

Q34 - How often do students at your school have important conversations about race, even when they might be uncomfortable?

- Black students, followed by American Indian/Alaskan Native, report the lowest scores on average for this question. Nearly half of Black and American Indian/Alaskan Native students report students at their school “*Almost Never*” have important conversations about race, even when they might be uncomfortable.
- Notably, across all races this question has the highest proportion of students who report that “*Almost Never*” do students at their school have important conversations about race, even when they might be uncomfortable. Nearly a quarter of students from each race report this.

Q35 - When there are major news events related to race, how often do adults at your school talk about them with students?

- Black students report the lowest score on average than other students. This is due to a quarter of Black students reporting that when there are major news events related to race, adults at their school “*Almost Never*” talk about them with students. This proportion is about 3 times higher for Black students than any other race.

Q36 - How well does your school help students speak out against racism?

- Over a third (37%) of Black students report that their school helps students speak out against racism “*Not at all well.*” This is the most frequent response that Black students report for this question.
- Students from all other races most frequently report that their school helps students speak out against racism “*Somewhat well.*”
- Unlike Male and Female students, a quarter of students who Self Describe their gender report that their school helps students speak out against racism “*Not at all well.*” The majority proportion of Male and Female students report that their school helps students speak out against racism “*Somewhat well.*”

Diversity and Inclusion

Q38 - How often do you spend time at school with students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?

- The majority proportion of students, regardless of race, report they “Frequently” (38%) followed by “Almost Always (37%)” spend time at school with students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures.

Q39 -How often do you have classes with students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?

- Most students, regardless of race, report more often than not that they “Almost Always” have classes with students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures.
- Distinctly, Black students report significantly higher proportions of students than any other race, that they “Almost Never” have classes with students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures. 15% of Black students report this, compared to 0% - 3% of students who report this from all other races.

Q40 -At your school, how often do students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures hang out with each other?

- While most students regardless of race report that at their school, students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures “Frequently” hang out with each other, American Indian/Alaskan Native and Black students, e their race report higher percentages of “Almost Never” than any other group (50% and 17% respectively).

Q42 -How fairly do students at your school treat people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?

- While most students, regardless of race, report that students at their school treat people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures “Quite Fairly,” Black students have the highest proportion of students who are report that students at their school treat people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures “Not at all fairly.” (17% of Black students compared to 5% and less of all other students).

Q43 -How fairly do adults at your school treat people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?

- Black students score significantly lower on average than any other students for this question. While the majority proportion of Black students report “Quite fairly (30%),” there

is a notable proportion of Black students who are reporting that at their school adults treat people from different races, ethnicities, and cultures ‘Not at all fairly.’ (20% of Black students)

- 50% of American Indian/Alaskan Native students report that at their school adults treat people from different races, ethnicities, and cultures ‘Not at all fairly.’
- There are differences between gender identities for this question. Females and students who Self Describe their gender report “Quite fairly” the majority of the time. Males and Intersex students report “Extremely fairly” the majority of the time.

High School Survey Conclusions and Future Directions:

Belonging. Black students alarmingly score the lowest of all races on all Belonging questions at the High School. Students who identify as Intersec also report the lowest scores for this category. Specifically, compared to every single race in the High school on average, Black students feel less understood as a person, less connected to adults at their school, and there are many Black students who *don't feel connected at all* to adults at their school. Less Black students than the other races feel they are shown respect by other students at their school. Black students also report feeling they matter less to others at their school than anyone else. Overall, the data shows Black students reporting they belong the least.

The scores for these questions are also low for American Indian/Alaskan Native students. Notably, one third of American Indian/Native Alaskan students at the High School report that they don't matter at all.

By contrast, nearly half of *all other* students from other races report feeling “Quite a bit of respect” from other students, but *only a third* of Black students report feeling “Quite a bit of respect.” Similarly, students who identify as either Male or Female report experiencing more respect than students who self describe their gender. The majority of White, Asian, Multiracial, and Hispanic students report feeling “Understood quite a bit” as a person. White students report the highest on average for this question and most of the others in this category.

Students in the majority at the High School (White and Asian) have the highest scores, and Black, American Indian, and Hispanic/Latino students report the lowest. These trends are not equitable. The High school must improve across many equity standards to improve these conditions. These are addressed in subsequent sections of this Audit.

Cultural Awareness and Action. There are alarming responses here for Black students and students who Self Describe their gender identity, that the High School needs to take very seriously. Faculty should be aware that students are frequently thinking about what others of different races, cultures and ethnicities experience. With students thinking about this often, it's important that staff

are able to support students and serve as positive examples in terms of how they express their thinking and teaching about diverse people's experiences.

Many students, regardless of race, don't feel very confident that they can have honest conversations with one another - they only feel somewhat confident. Many racial minority students are not at all confident with this. These results show that even though so many students are thinking about others' experiences, there are not spaces for all students for open, honest, and safe discussions, Black students report the lowest scores here. This is a worrisome statistic, given Black students are in the minority at the High School. It could imply that Black students are not hearing honest or healthy conversations about race, that there is not a safe and open space for them to express their own true feelings, or other possible reasons.

Alongside this, students mostly report that they are only "Sometimes" encouraged to think more deeply about race related topics. Even worse, many Black students and Native Americans say that they are "Almost Never" encouraged to do so. This could imply that subjects important to Black and Native American are not prioritized, marginalized or being ignored by High School staff.

In fact, there are significant numbers of students who say that students almost never have important conversations about race, even when they might be uncomfortable. This is the question where most students, regardless of their race or gender identity, report that students "almost never" have important conversations about race even when it's uncomfortable. Furthermore, Black students differ from White and Asian students in their view of how much adults talk about major news related to race - which could suggest that Black stories aren't being discussed when they come up in the news, while other stories (i.e. Asian stories and issues) are.

There is much improvement the school can make when it comes to helping students speak out against racism. The best students report is that the school helps students do so "somewhat well". This particularly needs to be improved at the High school for racism against Black students - who significantly report that the school helps students speak up against racism "not at all well".

Diversity and Inclusion. Overall, students report that they frequently spend time with students from different races, cultures and ethnicities at their school. Students across backgrounds frequently interact. Still, while most students regardless of race report that at their school, students from different backgrounds "Frequently" hang out with each other, American Indian/Alaskan Native and Black students report higher percentages than any other students, that this "Almost Never" happens. This further motivates the importance of Equity as a priority for adults and students at the High School.

While most students, regardless of race, positively report that students at their school treat people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures "Quite Fairly," Black students have the highest proportion of students who are report that students at their school treat people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures "Not at all fairly." (17% of Black students compared to 5% and less of all other students). Even though this is not the majority of Black students, some Black students in

particular are clearly having a different experience of peer to peer respect than other students at the High School.

Distinctly, Black students report significantly higher proportions of students than any other race, that they “Almost Never” have classes with students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures. 15% of Black students report this, compared to 0% - 3% of students who report this from all other races. This could imply that some Black students, and no other students, are being isolated from their peers. This should be further investigated.

Not only for peer- to -peer treatment, but there are big discrepancies in Black and Native American students' reports about the way *adults* at the High School treat people from different races, cultures, and ethnicities. Black students score significantly lower on average than any other students for this question about how adults treat people from diverse backgrounds. While the most common response amongst Black students was that adults treat others “Quite fairly,” there is a notable proportion of Black students who are reporting that at their school adults treat people from different races, ethnicities, and cultures ‘Not at all fairly.’ (20% of Black students). Furthermore, and alarmingly, 50% of American Indian/Alaskan Native students report that at their school adults treat people from different races, ethnicities, and cultures ‘Not at all fairly.’ So even though most students say quite fairly - it raises the question about which groups of students are seeing and experiencing fair treatment from adults, and why this is not happening equitably across students, according to them.

With students reporting spending so much time around peers from different backgrounds, the school should be motivated to create norms that ensure an equitable and safe environment. This promotes inclusion and good health for students developing relationships with one another and their interpersonal exchanges.

Staff Surveys

Response Rate: 60% of active BPS staff responded to the Survey.

English Language skills of BPS Staff:

Native English - 90% , Excellent - 8%, Intermediate -2%

Race and Ethnicity of BPS Staff:

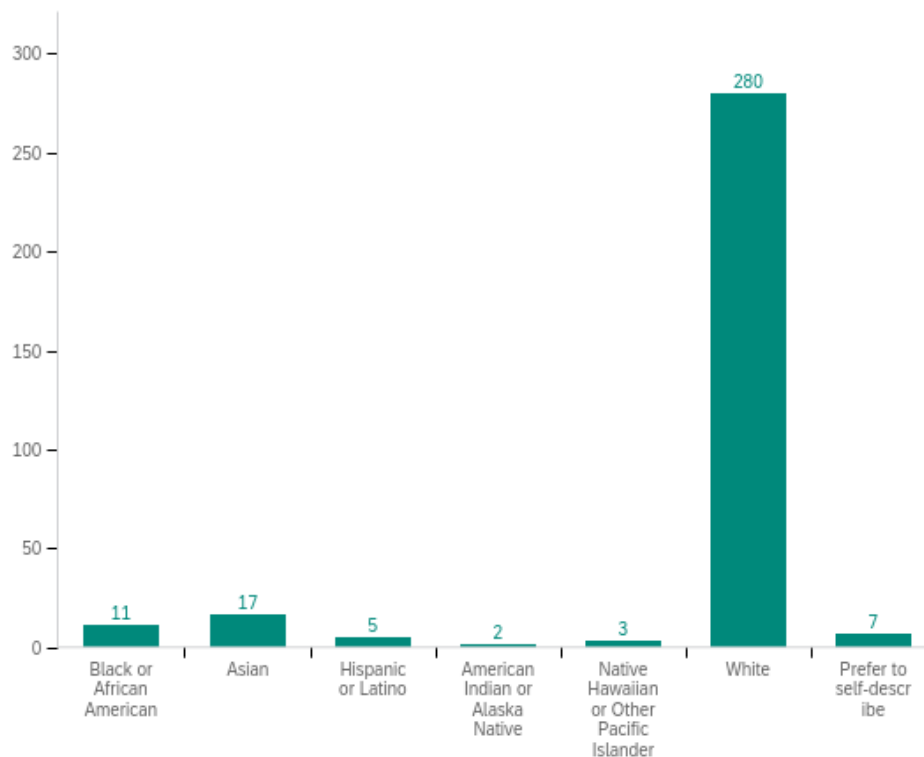


Fig 7. **Counts of Belmont staff by Race or Ethnicity.** This survey captures 280 of White staff, 17 Asian staff, 11 Black or African American staff, 7 staff who prefer to self describe their race or ethnicity, 5 Hispanic and Latino staff, 3 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander staff, and 2 American Indian or Alaskan Native staff.

Staff who prefer to “Self Describe” their race or ethnicity include: “Jewish, Jewish American, Northern European, Arab, Russian, and ‘this survey is absolutely false and absurd.’”

BPS Staff Barriers to Furthering Education:		
“Have you experienced any of the following barriers to your education?”	Yes	No
Geographic (e.g. school far away)	8%	90%
Financial	50%	49%
Scheduling	46%	53%

Table 1. Percentages of BPS staff reporting whether or not they experienced geographic, financial, or scheduling barriers to furthering their education.

The majority of BPS staff have not experienced geographic barriers to their education. More than half of BPS staff have not experienced scheduling barriers to their education. Staff report about the same amount (50/50) of having and having not experienced financial barriers to their education.

Highest Level of Education Completed:

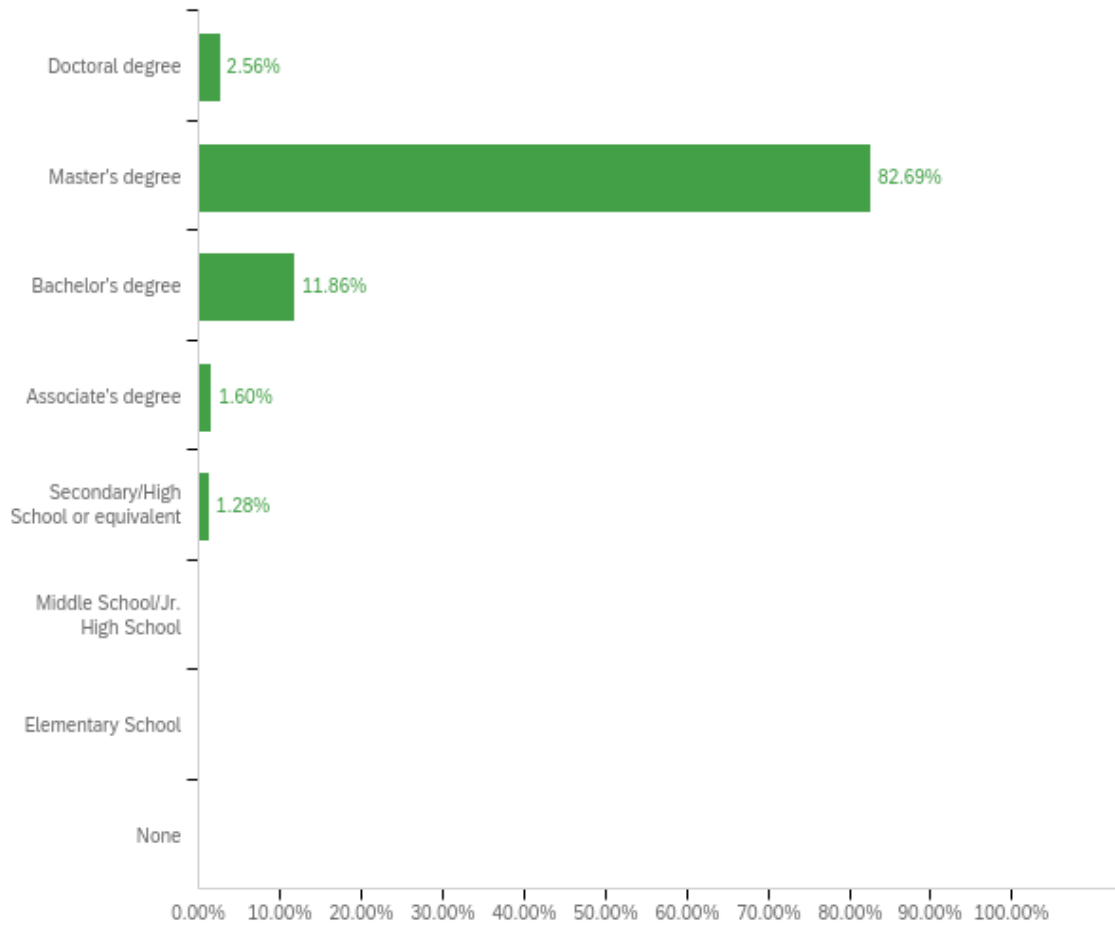


Fig 8. Percentages from the highest level of education completed by BPS staff. Most staff at BPS have a Master's Degree.

Educator Mindset Survey Results:

Here we report Belmont staff Equity Mindset Scores compared to K-12 staff from schools across MA, Northeast, and the US. Each mindset graph provides a single score which is the average of scores from the mindset questions that fall within one of 4 mindset categories (i.e Equality - Equity, Deficit Asset, Avoidant - Aware, and Context Neutral-Centered). We also report Belmont's School Climate Survey scores to other school districts.

See Staff Survey Methods: Equity Mindset Survey



Fig 9. Equity Mindset Survey Scores and School Climate Survey scores for educators at Belmont compared to public school educators at MA, Northeast, and US.

- Belmont educators have lower mindset scores for Deficit-Asset, Avoidant-Aware, and Context Neutral-Centered scales compared to MA public school educators as a whole.
- There was no difference for Equality-Equity mindset measures between BPS and other MA public schools.

- Of each educator mindset within Belmont, Belmont educators score the highest on the Context Neutral-Centered mindset (5.25 of 6) and lowest on the Equality-Equity mindset (4.84 of 6).
- Belmont educators have significantly lower ratings for the School Climate Survey measure than MA, Northeastern, and US public schools.

Fig 9 Analytical Notes:

Each BPS staff mindset score is relatively high, between 4.84 and 5.25, out of a 6 point scale. Compared to other public school scores reflected in Figure 9 above, this is common. This is a common finding in K-12 Staff survey research: while staff report high equitable survey responses and mindsets, these findings don't always align with educator's actual practices and discussions about the same equity topics. This is often due to the strong social desirability inherent in the surveys, and educators typically know the "most equitable answer", even if their practices do not align.

Furthermore, such discrepancies between survey scores/reported beliefs about equity and actual practices and policies towards equity are reflected in this Audit's subsequent Staff Interview, Focus Group, and Policy and Disciplinary analyses of this audit. For further analysis on individual staff mindsets in practice and discussion, refer to the Staff Interview analyses.

Individual Mindset Survey Questions Analysis:

The following three individual items from the Educator Mindset survey were significant for Belmont educators, when broken down by staff race. Survey questions not reported did not show differences between staff race, and aligned closely on average with the Mindset category scores reported above.

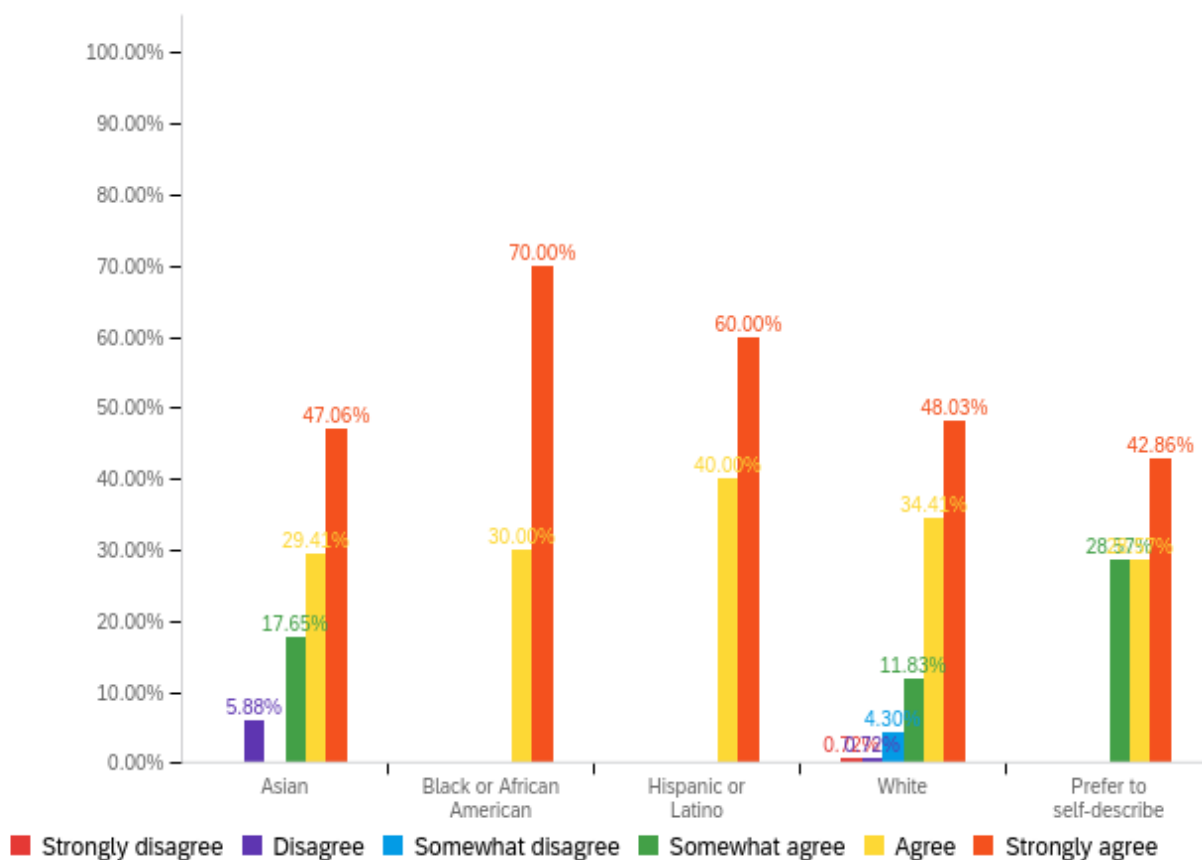
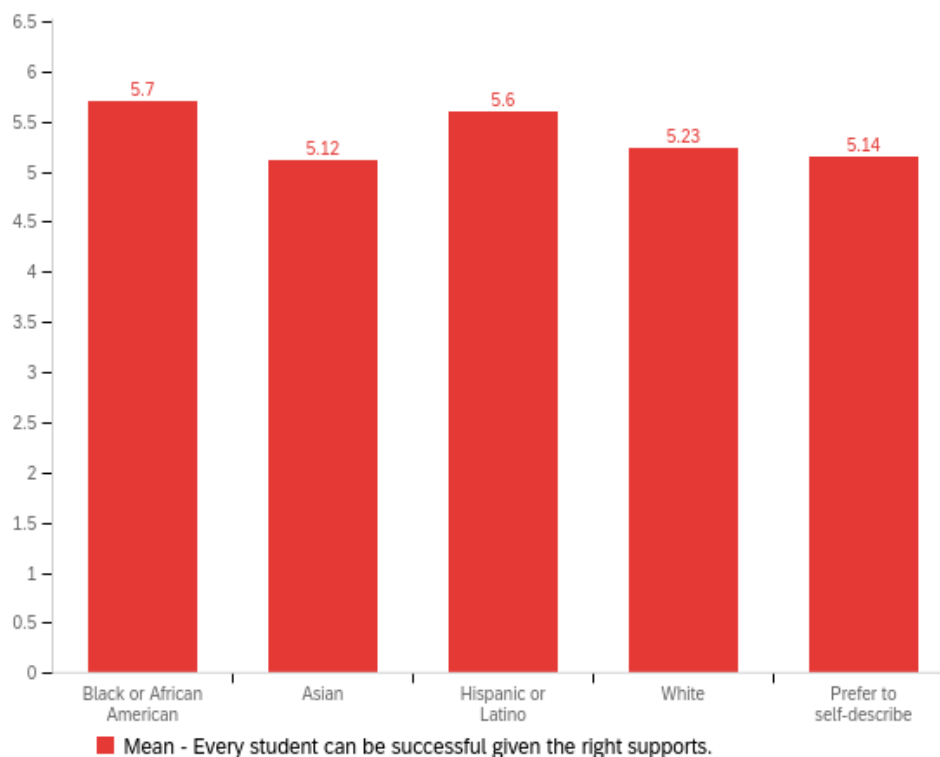


Fig 10 and 11 . **BPS Staff Scores for the Asset-Deficit Mindset Question: “Every student can be successful given the right support.”** The top graph reports staff average scores by race. The second graph reports detailed breakdowns of the extent of agreement with the question, by staff race. Educators report the extent to which they agree with the statement.

- Here a higher score means you are more likely to support the Asset-framing view of students. Black staff report the highest Asset mindset scores here, while Asian staff and those who prefer to self-describe their race or ethnicity report the lowest scores.
- Unlike in other racial categories, there is a small proportion of Asian and White BPS staff, who report disagreeing with the Asset-framing statement above. These proportions reflect a Deficit mindset from these staff about students.

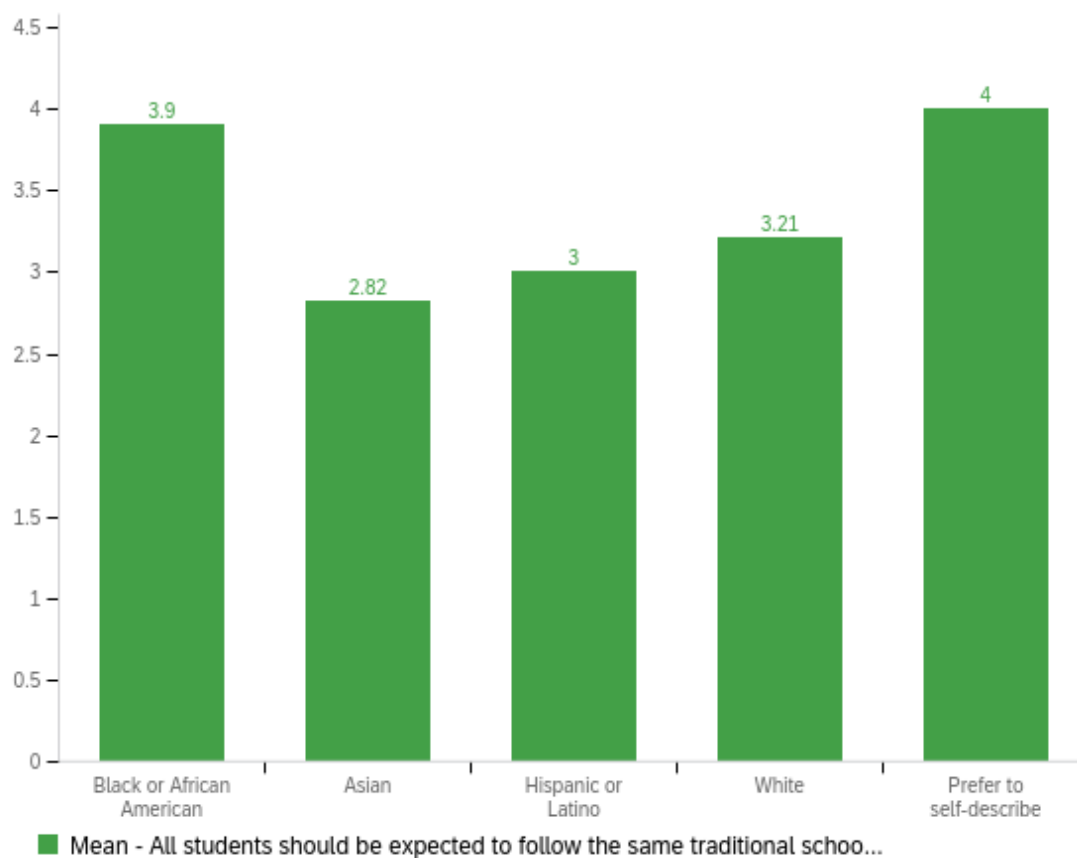


Fig 12. BPS Average Staff Scores by Race for the Asset-Deficit Mindset Question: “All students should be expected to follow the same traditional school norms.” This question is Reverse Coded.

- Here a higher score means you are more likely to support the Asset-framing view of students. A lower score means you are more likely to support the Deficit-framing view of students.
- Black staff reported the highest scores, reflecting an Asset framing view of students.
- Hispanic and Asian staff reported the lowest scores for this question, reflecting more Deficit framing views of students.

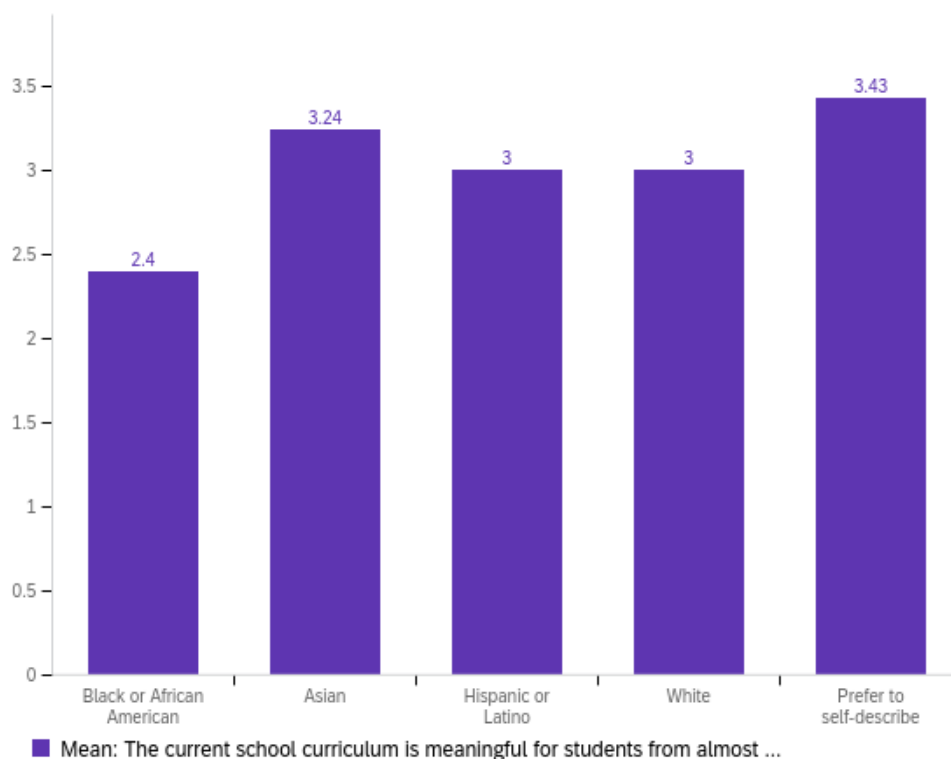


Fig 13. BPS Average Staff Scores by Race for Aware-Avoidant Mindset Question: “The current school curriculum is meaningful for students from almost all backgrounds.” Staff report the extent that they agree with the question.

- Here a higher score means you are more likely to support the Avoidant view of students and curriculum. A lower score means you are more likely to support the Aware view of students and curriculum.
- Asian staff and those who prefer to Self Describe report the highest scores here, reflective of a more Avoidant mindset towards students and curriculum .
- Black staff reported the lowest scores, reflective of an Aware mindset towards curriculum and diverse students’ experiences.

Individual Mindset Scores of BPS compared to MA, Northeast, and US public schools.

For the three individual mindset survey questions above, Belmont also scored lower than public schools in MA, the Northeast and US. For all other individual mindset questions, there was no difference between Belmont and other schools. This includes cases where Belmont may have scored higher than other public schools, for which there are no cases. (See the Appendix for individual mindset score items for Belmont, MA, Northeast, and US public schools.)

- For the **Asset-Deficit** mindset question: **“Every student can be successful given the right supports.”** Belmont public schools averaged 5.21, while MA, Northeast, and US public schools averaged 5.58, 5.33, and 5.33, respectively.
- For the **Asset-Deficit** mindset question: **“All students should be expected to follow the same traditional school norms.”** Belmont public schools averaged 3.75, while MA, Northeast, and US public schools averaged 4.46, 4.45, and 4.34, respectively.
- For the **Aware-Avoidant** question: **“The current school curriculum is meaningful for students from almost all backgrounds.”** Belmont public schools averaged 3.94, while MA, Northeast, and US public schools averaged 4.11, 4.16, and 4.27, respectively.

Staff Educator Mindset Recommendations

- **Improving Deficit Mindsets About Student Support** - Deficit mindsets surrounding whether any student can succeed given the right support need to be improved for many staff, in particular White and Asian staff. These views are harmful to students in that they can keep educators from practicing ways to both motivate and challenge all students, in order to build on the potential that each and every student brings with them into the classroom. This mindset should be shifted toward an Asset-framing mindset where staff view that any student, no matter their background, can succeed when they are supported. Educators with an Asset framing mindset hold an expansive view that all students are able to learn.
- **Improving Deficit Mindsets about Traditional School Rules** - There also should be improvement for some Asian staff around views about traditional school rules. Rather than holding the view that all students should be expected to follow the same traditional school norms, when students demonstrate non-traditional behaviors, teachers with Asset framing mindsets find ways to draw on students' cultures and assets. This allows for a reduction of the number of students referred to disciplinary action for not complying with traditional

school rules or majority culture, and it allows for critical relationship building between teachers and diverse students.

- **Improving Avoidant Mindsets about School Curriculum** - Regarding school curriculum, staff should recognize that the current curriculum is not meaningful for students of all backgrounds. Recognizing this would reflect an Aware mindset, rather than an Avoidant mindset, such that all students can be best served by BPS curriculum and instruction. Once this is recognized and acknowledged across all staff, concrete adjustments to outdated and biased curriculums can be made. This would also help teachers to connect with the many students who do recognize that the curriculum is not meaningful for them, which would improve their chances of belonging, inclusion, and learning.
- Overall, Equity mindset scores need to be improved across BPS. These mindsets are concerned with the extent to which BPS educators build on the potential that diverse students bring to the classroom while at the same time challenging students, and acknowledging that race and gender does affect the everyday experiences of students, teachers, and families.

Climate Survey Questions Results and Analysis

The following two Staff Climate Survey questions for BPS staff differed significantly by staff race.

- **Faculty share a common vision of quality teaching and learning.**
- **School leaders do not treat faculty as professionals.**

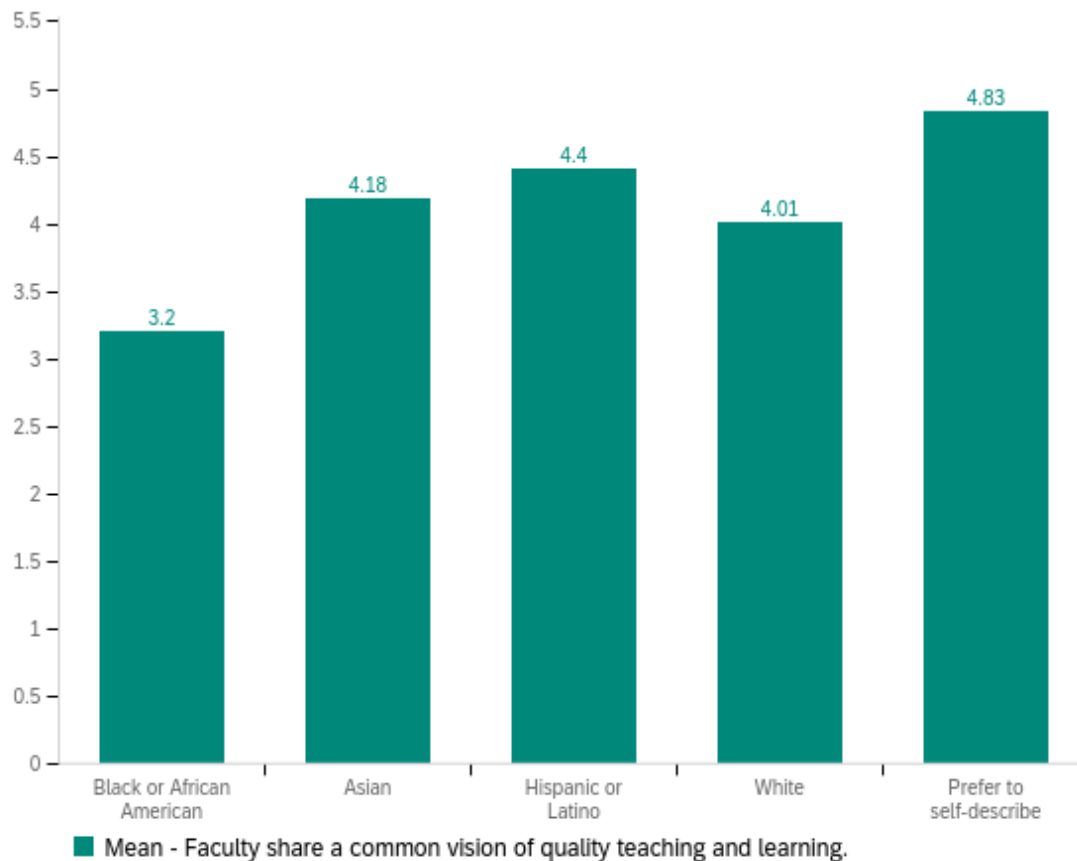


Fig. 14. BPS Average Staff Scores by Race for School Climate Question: “Faculty share a common vision of quality teaching and learning.”

- There are significant differences in staff’s reports by race for this question.
- Both Black/African American and White staff report the lowest scores for faculty sharing a common vision for quality teaching and learning.
- Staff who prefer to self describe their race report the highest scores for this question.

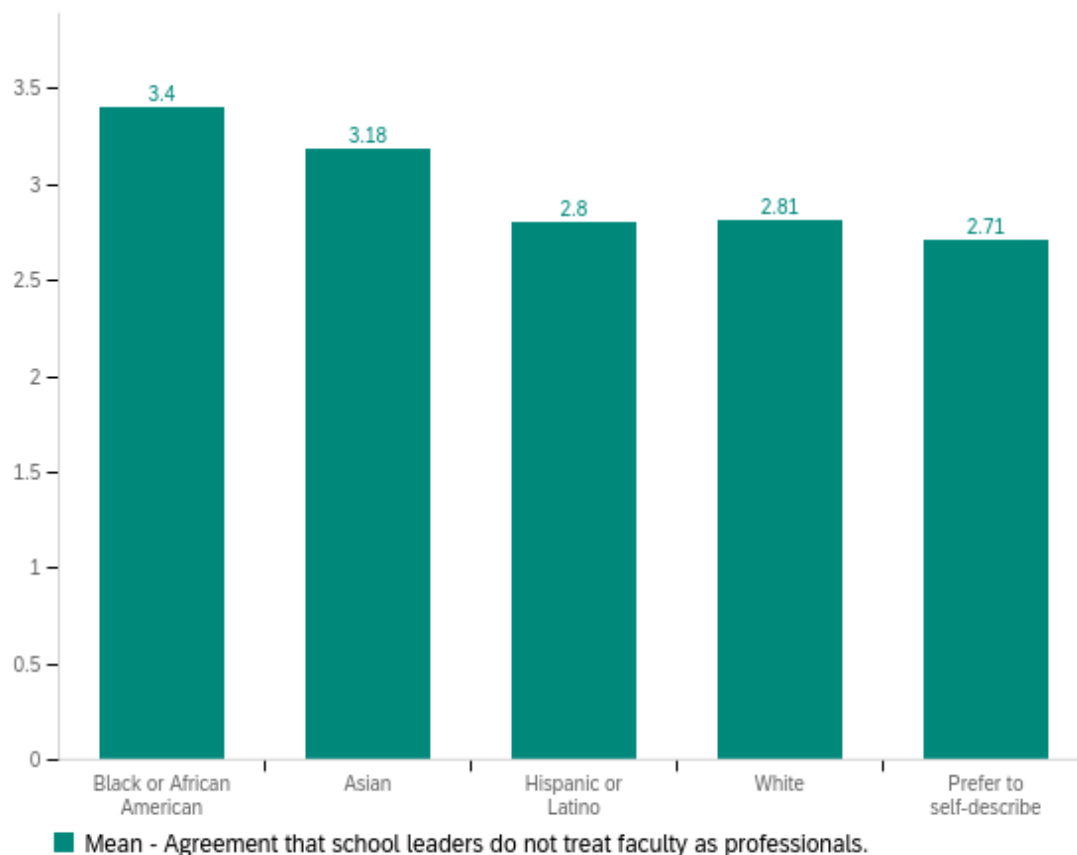


Fig 15. BPS Average Staff Scores by Race for School Climate Question: “School leaders do not treat faculty as professionals.”

- There are significant differences in staff’s reports by race for this question.
- Black/ African American and Asian staff report the highest scores in agreement that school leaders do not treat faculty as professionals.
- Staff who prefer to self describe their race or ethnicity agree the least that school leaders do not treat faculty as professionals.

Belmont compared to MA, Northeast, and US public schools

To assess staffs’ perceptions of their school’s instructional context, we administered a 9-item scale that measured respondents’ attitudes toward the instructional culture in their school (e.g., “Faculty share a common vision of quality teaching and learning’). The following seven staff School Climate Survey questions for BPS differed significantly from other public schools in MA, the Northeast, and the US. BPS scored significantly lower for the following questions.

Q#	Climate Survey Question	BPS	MA	North East	USA
1	Faculty share a common vision of quality teaching and	3.85	4.24	4.24	4.28

	learning.				
2	School leaders listen to a variety of perspectives when making decisions.	3.81	4.20	4.21	4.22
3	Faculty frequently work together to address school-wide problems.	3.79	4.40	4.35	4.36
4	When problems arise, faculty try to address the root cause of problems instead of symptoms.	3.59	3.94	3.94	3.95
5	Faculty collect many different types of student data to inform instruction.	3.96	4.33	4.31	4.23
6	School leaders are open to adopting innovative instructional practices.	4.04	4.53	4.52	4.47
9	School leaders do not treat faculty as professionals. *	3.93	4.5	4.48	4.57

Table 2. Significant Climate Survey Results for BPS staff v staff from MA, Northeastern, and US public schools. Highlighted scores show a larger difference in terms of the Mean.

- Belmont is lower than average compared to MA, Northeast, and US public schools for these Climate Survey Questions.

Breakdown of Significant Climate Survey Results within Belmont: (Majority percent response is highlighted). Most staff are in the middle.

Q1 - 1.6% Strongly Disagree , 11.69% Disagree, 18.18% Somewhat Disagree, **30% Somewhat Agree**, 28.25% Agree, 9.74% Strongly Agree

Q2- 9.09% Strongly Disagree , 12.34% Disagree, 15.6% Somewhat Disagree, **33.77% Somewhat Agree**, 24.03% Agree, 5.52% Strongly Agree

Q3- 3.25% Strongly Disagree , 12.99% Disagree, 17.86% Somewhat Disagree, **34.09% Somewhat Agree**, 25.32% Agree, 6.49% Strongly Agree

Q4- 4.61% Strongly Disagree , 15.79% Disagree, 25% Somewhat Disagree, **31.25% Somewhat Agree**, 19.08% Agree, 4.28% Strongly Agree

Q5- .33% Strongly Disagree, 7.21% Disagree, 21.64% Somewhat Disagree, 32.46% Somewhat Agree, **32.79% Agree**, 5.75% Strongly Agree

Q6- 3.96% Strongly Disagree , 8.25% Disagree, 12.21% Somewhat Disagree, **33.33% Somewhat Agree**, 32.67% Agree, 9.57% Strongly Agree

Q9- 19.54% Strongly Disagree, **31.9% Disagree**, 18.57% Somewhat Disagree, 12.38% Somewhat Agree, 12.38% Agree, 5.21% Strongly Agree

Staff School Climate Survey Recommendations

- BPS faculty should adopt a common vision of quality teaching and learning that centers on Equity. Both Black and White staff across BPS somewhat agree that there is not a shared vision for quality teaching and learning. This implies that even if a school mission statement or vision does exist, there should be actions taken to ensure this vision is shared, understood, and applied across the district. The DEI Director's Vision Statement would serve as an excellent statement to share, understand, apply, and build upon for improving equity and common vision across BPS.
- School leaders should ensure that they are treating all faculty, regardless of race, culture background, status or role within BPS, as professionals. There should be no space for disrespect, condescension, or discrimination between staff. Black and Asian staff at Belmont are reporting that they only somewhat disagree that school leaders do not treat faculty as professionals. It is important that all staff disagree and strongly disagree with this statement. Mutual respect should always be the standard and given equally, regardless of colleague demographics - especially in regards to faculty working on subjects related to equity, and inclusion.

Interviews

Introduction

To measure to what extent and how BPS Educators and Staff uphold and practice Equitable Educator Mindsets, we interviewed 12 staff members including teachers at Wellington Elementary School, Special Education and General Education teachers at both Chenery Middle School and Belmont High School. We also interviewed School Leaders (Principals, Assistant Principals, and Curriculum Directors, District leaders (Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, School Committee Members, Equity Subcommittee Members) and METCO Leaders.

*See Methods Section for more details on the analytical process

Overall Staff Trends

There were many demonstrations of a range of equitable mindsets in theory and in practice from participants ranging from their role, grade, and school. Some of the major trends highlighted from interviewing school leaders, staff, and school committee members include:

- A common concern from educators who have an understanding of equitable mindsets is that they do not have the support to help translate into practice.
- There is a stark difference in equitable mindsets and practices between special education teachers and general education teachers in Chenery Middle School and Belmont High school
 - Many educators and some staff are frustrated with colleagues who do not value equitable practices and anti-racism thinking
- African American, Brown, and LGBTQ+ students are rarely explicitly mentioned in conversations and initiatives centering diversity, and are mostly rendered invisible in interviews. There is a heavy emphasis on international and cultural diversity, rather than racial diversity, in BPS
- Teachers and staff express a strong belief that being world travelers translates into having an appreciation and understanding of the diversity of students at BPS
- There is a strong focus from school leaders and educators on teaching “kindness” in response to racism, homophobia, xenophobia, and other offenses that would be considered hate crimes.
- Educators and staff have extremely different, and sometimes opposing experiences at BPS depending on identity and background in terms of trust with their superiors and support from colleagues
- School leaders and district leaders express that fiscal decisions rarely consider equitable practices or reflect equitable decisions

Findings and Recommendations

Elementary Teachers at Wellington

Equity/ Equality Mindset Summary

Teachers express an Equity Mindset as they believe policies should be flexible for younger aged students to accommodate developmental stages. Teachers communicate that assessing student learning is less about grades and more about age-appropriate development, skills, and understanding. Students are grouped based on demonstrated skills. There is a common belief that students can do and learn something new and challenging if they are consistently encouraged paired with the proper tools to do so.

Demonstrations of an Equity Mindset included some of the following responses:

- Understanding who the student is: individual interests, individual strengths, individual needs
- Students having autonomy over their learning
- Student comfort levels with environment
- Holding students to high expectations
- Having an inclusive curriculum that visually represents student identities

Aware/ Avoidant Mindset Summary

Teachers express an Aware Mindset by describing how outcomes for student success represent inequities that happen in the classroom and school as a whole.

Demonstrations of an Aware Mindset include some of the following responses:

- Giving different students different supports can contribute to segregated classes as they get older

“we have more black and brown students that received like, intervention for reading or math than, than other students that aren't of color ...But sometimes our groups they start in a certain way, like our, our lower readers, our middle readers are higher readers, and that the intention is to have flexible groupings. But that doesn't always happen. They kind of do get sort of stuck in these groups, despite everyone's best intentions.”

- Differences in student demographics
 - Responding to student questions and comments about differences between their classmates. For example, Black students have asked why they are the only one with dark skin and teachers responded by talking about similarities, differences, and the importance of being kind.
 - Understanding the importance of advocating for LGBTQ+ students to create an inclusive environment

“being able to create a learning space where kids were acceptive of kids like if this the student who by birth was male, but was exploring wearing dresses and trying to make sure kids didn't just laugh, or just look at it”

- Understanding international diversity plays a role in the classroom experience
- Teachers are willing to engage in difficult conversations to ensure students are receiving fair and equitable instruction
 - When conflicts around pedagogy arise, teachers are satisfied with the resolutions from reading specialists.
 - Teachers communicate conflict and inequities to school leadership but are not always supported. School leaders did not work with teachers to resolve conflicts brought up, especially during Covid demonstrating an avoidant mindset from school leaders.

“last year was probably like the worst year that I had here and it was just something always popping up. I think I went to the principal and I just stopped going because it's like, I don't think anything was getting resolved and I kind of just wanted to make it through the end of the year”.

Asset/ Deficit Mindset Summary

Teachers express a strong Asset Mindset when talking about international and cultural diversity in the classroom. Teachers recognize student strengths but there is a gap on drawing on these strengths to encourage learning in the classroom.

Some teachers demonstrate a Deficit Mindset at times in the following ways:

- Attributing student behavior to their home environment as opposed to possible triggers in the learning environment
 - There is a common belief that students are bringing behaviors that don't align with classroom expectations into the classroom
 - There is a lack of questioning whether student behavior is a response to discomfort in the learning environment
- When talking about Black and Brown students, it is commonly through the lens of behavioral differences
 - In these cases, teachers expressed challenges with unsafe student behavior and how they're not supported by school leadership in proactive, preventative measures:

“We are so busy using our school resources to sort of put out fires, that I don't feel like we do enough to create programs or areas of the school where we could be more proactive. So I don't think the actual behaviors the problem, but there's clearly something bigger going on that maybe we should be working on in in groups with guidance counselors, or social workers or, and unfortunately, those those staff members are so overloaded, that we don't have that opportunity to really teach staff to give support to students. Like for example, I have students where there are perfect opportunities to have a guidance

counselor, or someone to talk to about what's going on at home. They're here, but they have no time or availability for students like that"

Context-Centered/ Context-Neutral Summary

In most cases, teachers express a Context-Centered Mindset when talking about communication between families and their family goals. There is a mix of Context-Centered and Context-Neutral Mindsets between teachers when discussing curriculum. Teachers uphold a Context-Centered Mindset in knowing that their curriculum has the potential to give space to a diverse group of voices, but mostly referring to international students. When teachers talk about assignments and experiences, they tend to refer to many white and Asian countries.

Teachers have the option whether or not they want to bring in other voices from different identities into their curriculum. It is not required, nor is there any incentive to do so. This is a challenge for some teachers because when they noticed Black and Brown students being deficit framed in their required curriculum, the administration and school leaders had no response or support.

"I would say the curriculum is not super representative of various cultures. We've tried over the years to incorporate better mentor texts that have more diverse characters, because like, we have the Lucy Calkins curriculum, and not a whole lot of diverse characters in that curriculum, it has these picture cards. And there's like, I think we looked, I think, five years ago, we looked at all the pictures and tried to see in regard to negative social situations, like the kid that was talking when the teacher was teaching, or the kid that did something wrong, and then they were problem solving. There were a disproportionate number of kids of color that fell into sort of the negative role. And then we like, address it, and then nothing happened...so we know this, and then it's still in our curriculum"

Demonstrations of a Context-Centered mindset:

- Some teachers do their best to make sure students are represented in curriculum:

"I also try to make sure I'm teaching things that are more inclusive, that includes all of the students in the classroom, I tried to make sure that it's not only just for like black and brown students, although we don't have that many. But it also includes, like, all of the students, I try to include, like, pictures with, like, include things where they can see themselves in it."

"...we have students from, like, I have a student from Serbia, I have a student from a student from Nepal, I've had a student from Armenia, Turkey, like, all sorts of different countries, and they are very proud of their heritage and what they bring. So creating and, trying to build into the curriculum ways where they can share and express, celebrate something about them... I really wish there are more ways to do that, where it's not just me reading a book."
- Some teachers send out weekly newsletters to families despite not being required to do so and families send great feedback and enjoy this effort.

- Teachers take into consideration what students are experiencing outside of school that may be contributing to behavior paired with curriculum being too challenging and comfort levels in the classroom.
- Family goals include the following:
 - Continue to open opportunities for families to participate and be interested in students homework and classwork
 - Encouraging families to read with their children at home and to get students excited to take their work home and complete tasks with their families.
 - For families to see themselves represented in the readings and assignments.

Demonstrations of a Context-Neutral Mindset:

- Communication
 - For most teachers, email is the main source of communication with families and they are aware that it is great for some, but for other families, particularly families of color this is not ideal as they do not receive information and are not given the same opportunities to connect with teachers.
 - There are language translation applications to communicate with families who speak other languages, but it is not commonly used.

- Curriculum
 - Some teachers don't believe there is a connection between how curriculum may trigger students and impact their ability and desire to learn.
 - Students have limited opportunities to discuss their heritage (usually only in the holiday season and/or international week - which is inclusive mostly of international heritages).
 - While teachers understand the power of a diverse curriculum done properly, there is lack of effort and support to do so.

"...something I find really challenging is that diversifying the curriculum... a lot of that's put on us. And then as a teacher, we can pick and choose things. But it doesn't create a cohesive curriculum, where from kindergarten through fourth, kids learn different things that build upon each other, both of like a social justice curriculum, it always seems to just come down to a couple lessons that either find on Teachers Pay Teachers or someone has a great read aloud, and I show it on YouTube, and we talk about it. There's not enough structure to it"
 - Some teachers are avoidant of incorporating the role history, identity, and racism plays in the school curriculum and learning environment.

"... students sharing their identity and understanding each other's identity and respecting each other's identity. And of the social justice standards, that's been one of the easiest things to tackle. I find more challenges moving to like the action and diversity pieces of those standards, because I don't always know how to approach it... I'm also not all about history in first grade. It really doesn't present a strong presence in terms of just the curriculum."

Recommendations for Elementary Teachers at Wellington

To improve an Equity Mindset:

- Create opportunities to make staff, and especially staff of color feel more welcomed and supported by responding to and addressing their needs, creating environments for them to feel safe, and figuring out how to best support their unique needs and finding the resources to meet these needs.

To improve an Aware Mindset:

- Create a more consistent and responsive protocol for conflict reporting and resolution between students, staff, and for families

To improve a Context-Centered Mindset:

- To create replace harmful, racism curriculum with a diverse content supported by experts on decolonizing and creating an anti-racist age-appropriate curriculum
- Create incentives for teachers and admin to get on board in diversifying their curriculum and fostering environments that are more representative of different identities

Middle School Teachers (Special education and general education educators)

Equity/ Equality Mindset Summary

Special Education

The Special Education middle school teachers demonstrated a strong Equity Mindset when describing multiple factors that play into student success. These include:

- Advocacy
- Audio texts
- Read alouds
- Close communication with parents and teachers
- Student empowerment
- High but not unrealistic expectations
- Connecting purpose of present tasks at school to future
- Making time for students to come in and work on the weekends or after school
- Students coming from families who value education

Special education educators continue to demonstrate an Equity Mindset in the following ways:

- Policies and decision making
 - They believe flexibility with school policies plays an essential role in student success, comfortability in the classroom, and trust between the student and teachers.
 - Special education educators maintain high expectations for student behavior which includes handling behavioral issues in the classroom.
 - They believe that policies play a role in the student experience.

- There is a strong understanding that all students' needs must be met in order for them to achieve academic success.
- Measuring student learning
 - Special education educators express that as long as students' needs are being met, educators are advocating for them, and families are involved, students who work hard tend to have a more successful and positive experience.
 - When students are struggling academically or socially, either their needs are not met or there is something else going on that must be investigated. Trust between the educator and student is key in successfully helping the student work hard.

General Education:

General education teachers demonstrate mostly an Equality Mindset when talking about the ways in which they apply policies and contribute to overall student experience. Equality Mindsets are demonstrated in the following ways:

- Merit and student success
 - Educators lack the proper resources to support students academically with extra help, and/or don't have the ability to understand students' outside experiences.

"I think a lot of the things that would play into the success of the students we don't have, our class sizes are too big. We don't set aside enough time for community building and for non-academic students support, for students who need more challenging work. I have some ELL students this year with no materials to work with. Nothing I've been provided, have zero to support my foundational ELL students"
 - Without much support, educators rely on merit to measure student success

"Merit plays a huge role in how I evaluate students' success. What I'm looking for is how much effort is the student putting in and how much growth is the student making. And so if we're all starting in a different place, and we all have different abilities, what I want to see is that you're making growth that makes sense for where you started, and that you're always making your best effort"
- Teachers who move at a fast pace and do not always slow down for all students in most classes

Aware/ Avoidant Mindset Summary

Special Education

Special educators continue to demonstrate an Aware Mindset by acknowledging and addressing inequities that students face daily. Special education educators demonstrate an aware-based mindset in the following ways:

- Acknowledging and confronting racism and ableism SPED students experience from teachers and classmates:

- SPED educators advocate for students who are treated differently for having IEP's or other special needs.

"...I have to stand up for students... if you're violating the IEP, you're not following it, you're not doing the accommodations, you're singling the kids out. And sometimes, the parents said, we no longer when our kids in Belmont public schools, we are getting an advocate, and we are seeking private placement because of how our son was treated by their teacher"
- They address problems by talking to general education teachers and bring issues to school leaders' attention.

"... I've dealt with a team of teachers who have not been IEP friendly. And I, you know, I am an advocate, right? And so I'm gonna fight for my kids' needs. So if parents and students are complaining to me, that the students feel uncomfortable in the classes, and the teachers are singling them out because of their disabilities. I have to address that. And because I addressed it, I made myself...I wouldn't say not likable, but some of the teachers had an issue with that."
- Creating safe spaces for all students who are different.
 - They take seriously the experiences of students by trusting students and believing them when they explain how they aren't being treated fairly or are being singled out and/or picked on by teachers or classmates.
- Addressing the ways in which students treat each other and serious issues
 - Special educators work hard to address these behaviors and beliefs by negating stereotypes.

"In Belmont, it's a very competitive academic situation, we do have leveling and math that starts in seventh and eighth grade, most of my students tend to end up being in the lower level math. And unfortunately, their peers who are at a higher level, give them a hard time about that, and tease them and make them feel inferior. And I let the kids know, like, we all have strengths and weaknesses, you know. And so if you're in a lower level math class, it's better for you because it goes at a slower pace. And we get to do more practice, and you get more assistance. But if you're in the higher level math, it goes at a real fast pace. On this lot more work, the teachers are not going to slow down for you

"We talked about what happened on January 6, with the capital insurrection. And then we had some kids who didn't really understand the gravity of it. They thought it was funny. And then the next week, I brought it up again, I said, I noticed some of you were smiling on the camera. And you thought it was funny. But a week later, we have some police officers who are dead because of that we have civilians who are dead. It's not funny. So I, you know, I could try to break

down the gravity to them. And you know, I also tried to break down stereotypes”

- Holding families accountable for their children's learning

General Education:

General educators demonstrate an Avoidant Mindset in many ways. These examples include the following:

- Conflict
 - When issues regarding student experiences are brought to teachers attention, many teachers default to explaining a lack of resources, get upset, and/or disregard the impact of their actions.

“... because she called the teacher out on her behavior in the classroom. And I would say it's not resolved. Basically, the way we left it was 'I do not want to work with particular teachers again'... you know, they call the kids lazy. They say things like certain kids are just warming up the seat... they're not looking at that kid as a kid, as a whole kid. So the resolution is, 'I'm not going to work with you again'”
- Acknowledging student differences
 - Some general educators do not always treat students with IEPs the same as other students.
 - Students with IEPs are made to feel uncomfortable in class, singled out, are given work that is too challenging, and sometimes are blamed for their needs. In these cases, general educators tend to get upset and disregard any impact of their actions.
 - There typically is no consequences or incentive for teachers to change their behavior and there is hardly any resolution.
- Addressing the ways in which students treat each other
 - Educators recognize there is a divide between students who are in lower level courses and those in higher level courses. Students who are in high level courses tease other students and “make them feel inferior” yet do not always address this behavior or thinking.
 - General educators attribute student behaviors to oversized class sizes and a lack of community building opportunities.

Asset/ Deficit Mindset Summary

Special education teachers showed strong and clear examples of how Asset-framing all students and their behaviors. They emphasized strengths unique to certain groups of students that are many times Deficit-framed by other staff. There was a strong concern about the impact this deficit-framing students experience. Some general educator teachers demonstrated a deficit-based mindset when talking about students with IEPs and students of color.

Both special education and general education teachers asset-frame families and student backgrounds when talking about different cultures and the many backgrounds students come from and how to use that to encourage student learning. However, there is a heavy focus on international culture and international diversity from the general education teachers.

Special Education

Demonstrations of an Asset Mindset include the following:

- Student behavior and discipline
 - Students behavior is interpreted through the lens of what needs are being met and which aren't
 - There is a strong emphasis on respecting the student regardless of background, needs, or any other factors to create trust, build strong relationships, and learn students strengths
 - Educators rely on student strengths to correct behavior, motivate students academically, and encourage students socially
 - Special educators consider multiple factors when making disciplinary decisions such as student feelings and emotions, who is present, who is possibly being harmed, how to approach the student with conversation, and to never humiliate or embarrass students. They use these moments to highlight student strengths.

- Academic Rigor
 - Students are encouraged and expected to work hard and be challenged academically to thrive

“Her reading was very low. But she has a wealth of knowledge. And when you talk to her, she has so much passion. And she's really into the environment. And like I said, I'm trying to teach her like, you're not might not be a strong reader and writer, but your voice is strong, and your thoughts are strong. And I'm trying to teach her how to use speech to text on the computer, so that she can talk about what she wants to talk about, and then teaching her how to take that stream of conscience and organize it into like strong writing”

“I have goals for my students through the IEP, but I also have other goals. So they can feel better about themselves academically and socially. Because not only do they feel badly about themselves academically, but it bleeds over into the social realm as well”
 - Educators pay close attention to curriculum and assignments to ensure students are not being held to unrealistic expectations and/or not being challenged enough

General Education

Demonstrations of a Deficit Mindset include the following:

- Student behavior and discipline
 - Educators do not always build on all students' strengths and frame problematic student behavior as detached from the classroom.

“There's no connection between respect for my space. And they just so liberally will draw, scribble, pencil or pen, it doesn't matter all over the desks., and I think that's because the community has tolerated that all the way along from the time they started in the public schools. And I don't understand that”

- Students are described as having a lack of respect for the space and destructive behaviors that are attributed to student families and home environments.

“Because I really think that even though it can be perceived as a really small thing, it sets a particular kind of tone, that's just not the right tone, right?...I'm always really surprised that they come in with these habits.”

- Educators express how punishments for students are sometimes influenced by parents and family demands. Families of color and other international families are less likely to successfully advocate for their children receiving punitive measures for certain behaviors.

“... two of our students had a knife at school. One of the students is not a white kid, a non white. The other student is from a Belmont family, white kid. One student was suspended from school, and the other basically had half a day of sitting in the Lower School office as its punishment. And it was explained to us that the student who was suspended was the one who actually brought the knife to the building, but the knife actually belongs to the other student and the other student made it so that can bring it to school. And I felt like the punishment really had to do with what the family demanded ... And it was very much like a class, class race status, kind of, you know, it was so clear cut to me that that difference in the way that was handled between those two kits.”

- Academic Rigor

- Students of color are not always academically challenged as they are not prepared to enter AP/ honors courses in high school. They are not pushed to higher academic standards in humanities courses or in math.
- Students with IEPs or other special needs are sometimes given too challenging of work and without proper advocacy, fall behind.

- Socio-economic factors

- There is a gap in learning students are getting at home given socio-economic status that correlates to being identified as a special education student in early grades. Schools and general education teachers do not identify Black and Brown student and family strengths to close these gaps.

“ Belmont is so academically competitive, and parents with the means and money get their kids tutors, they give them extra curriculum advancement, they take them to museums, they take them on trips, just enrich their lives. And they also have the time, or the money to hire a tutor, or to sit down with them and help them with their homework. Well, the kids from economically

disadvantaged homes do not have the same privilege. So they are on their own, they don't have anyone to help them with the homework. They don't have that chance to travel to foreign countries and to museums, and to do that enrichment. So that causes them to be behind. I also see it with kids in the Metco program...it's the same kind of situation."

- Racism and other discriminatory behavior
 - There are instances where general education teachers have called students with IEP's derogatory and discriminatory names, slurs, and do not view the student as a whole child. These same teachers especially deficit-frame Black students:

"There are some teachers in the back of their minds who are thinking, you know, black kids aren't as smart as white kids. And they don't treat them the same way. And I've had a lot of Metco students tell me that tell me that they feel that way, that the teachers do not cheat them the same way as the white kids, and don't have the same academic faith in them"

Context-Centered/ Context-Neutral Summary

Both special education and general education exhibit a Context-Centered Mindset in the following ways:

- Short-term and long-term goals for families such as the following:
 - Help students discover their present interests and how to connect it to their future selves, and making a path to get there
 - Improving attendance - creating strategies with families to avoid contributors and address barriers
 - Finding ways to bridge gaps in student ability and teacher expectations
 - Ensuring students feel good about themselves and are confident
- There is a strong desire for Curriculum content and decisions to be more inclusive of student background and experiences

Special Education

Special Education Teachers exhibit Context-Centered Mindset in the following ways:

- Safe spaces are created for students to talk about things that are happening outside of the classroom throughout the year.
 - Building community with icebreaker activities for students to share anything they've seen in the news, social media, or anywhere outside they'd like to talk about and/or bring up events from their community, the country, and world at large in the classroom on a regular basis. Such as LGBTQ+ rights, racism, and xenophobia.

"If kids want to bring up anything in the news, I always like an icebreaker. What have you read about or heard about in the news, that that, you know, and I have everyone share...Trayvon Mayans, we talked about that. Henry, like we had an issue in Belmont last year, where a gentleman a black man, was killed by a white man, he was run over and there were racial slurs. And, you know, that was a big thing, because Belmont is always considered this safe

community. And that was big for the kids, like a murder happened to Belmont. And it was a white on black crime, you know. So we do talk about things like that we talk about, about gay people being gay and people being transgender.”

- From Science, English, Civics, students are given the opportunity to unpack and think critically about the voices left out in history through lessons taught by special education teachers and are empowered to take action.

“We talk about the roots of racism, about slavery, about Jim Crow about the Civil Rights Movement...And in civics, we talk about, you know, the founding of this country, and what voices were left out of the founding of this country, like the Native Americans and the African Americans. And we make the kids think critically about that. Why are those voices left out? You know, and what can we do to change that?”

- They include literature, books, movies, and discussions that are inclusive of cultures in and outside of the classroom. African American students were explicitly named to make sure they are included.
- Making sure students see themselves represented positively in the history of all lessons, in the present day workforce, and in all subjects-math and science included.

General Education

General Education teachers demonstrate a Context-Neutral Mindset in the following ways:

- Curriculum
 - Diversifying math curriculum is not a priority because of deadlines, tests, and lessons that must be taught.

“...the math curriculum doesn't align to anything. We are on this very strict timeline, we need to teach this lat these, this, this unit by this date, and you know, I mean, like, there's very little flexibility”

“ We are so shackled by our responsibilities to the standardized curriculum and the standardized tests. “
 - They also believe that a math or science class is not the place to discuss things outside of the classroom.

“I teach math and science. So generally those things [societal or local affairs that students see or experience outside of the classroom] don't come up in my academic classes”
 - A lack of urgency in relating science lessons to environmental issues, there was a lack of understanding of the severity of some realities. In response to hate speech about killing Black and LGBTQ people, there was a lack of seriousness of how these incidents are communicated to students from teachers and what should be done in response.

“I do a little social justice thing with them about environmental social justice”

“...we did a couple quick lessons on hate speech, and hate. But then we tried to make it more about the importance of kindness, thinking that that might be developmentally more appropriate to fifth graders. So yeah, I mean, the kids made these flower petals, we had given them a choice of some quotes about kindness.”

- Student background
 - Teachers believe that since some students are involved in outside clubs that center a lot of these topical conversations, they don’t see a reason to bring it up in the classroom.
 - There are some opportunities for students to bring parts of their culture such as beliefs, traditions, and food into conversations and projects. These opportunities happen most during the November and December months as American holidays are taking place.

“I’ve lived in a number of different countries, I speak a number of different languages, I travel a lot. My, the woman I teach with also travels a lot. And I think that when you travel, you’re so much more open and interested in other cultures. So we also do a lot of SEL work with our students. And a lot of it has to do with like, we’re doing this whole thing on like family traditions and cultures and stuff, it’s sort of like leading into Thanksgiving”

Recommendations for Chenery Middle School Teachers

To improve an Equity Mindset:

- Reconsider how racism is taught to students - teaching “kindness” and using “age/developmentally appropriate” as a reason to water down conversations may be perpetuating issues. Talking to students about bullying, racism, ableism, economical differences, white supremacy, and privilege can provide a cultural shift because most vulnerable students are targets to their peers.
- Reconsider the role in which attendance plays in student grades
- Provide METCO students with better transportation options and opportunities to accommodate their learning

To improve Aware Mindsets:

- To have more practice and PD opportunities that help educators put common buzzwords and commitments to equity in practice.
- For administrators to build trust between themselves and teachers to understand teacher experience when conflicts arise.
- Provide teachers with resources to support students in most critical situations such as transition grades, students not being in a traditional school for years, not knowing the language, and other more severe challenges.
- METCO students should receive the proper advocacy from leaders with clear resolutions when conflicts arise.

To improve Context-Centered Mindsets:

- Embed the above lessons in the curriculum as opposed to a response to a new traumatic incident.
- Reimplement community block: the designated time to talk about societal issues is an opportunity for stereotypes to be broken up and severity of incidents to be communicated to students and where students can plan responses to implement change. This was a useful space for teachers and students.

High School Teachers and School Counselors (General education teachers, AP teachers, and special education teachers)

Equity/ Equality Mindset Summary

The Special Education and general education high school teachers demonstrated a strong equity mindset when describing multiple factors that play into student success. These include:

- Relationship building between students and teachers
- Students being able to see their own progress
- Fostering a safe community
- Having high expectations of students
- Knowing students strengths
- Giving them information students didn't know existed

Educators exhibit an Equity Mindset around the idea of rules and policies in the following ways:

- Policies
 - There is a common belief that all rules and policies are grounded in the idea of respect and that it is important to adjust and modify the rules given the context of the situation in order for students to be treated fairly.

However, these equitable mindsets do not translate to practice and both special educators and general educators exhibit a strong Equality Mindset in the following ways:

- Structure of school days
 - The way school days are structured do not meet the needs for all students and teachers and they do not work to alter the day for students who need more structure.
 - There is a strong focus on student independence and freedom: students decide how their days look, they decide if and when they need to get extra help from teachers, and they decide when they want to eat lunch. Educators are aware that some students get lost in this design and staff and school leaders are aware that students with disabilities and students of color - mainly Black and Brown students are the

ones impacted the most and are also the students not performing as well academically.

"I think it creates a lot of independence for kids. And the trust since they have a lot of freedom. And we believe that they're going to use that to benefit. I guess on the con side of that is it doesn't work for every kid. So there are some students that need more structure who aren't developmentally there yet, and don't have all those executive functioning skills yet. And so sometimes I think they suffer. Because maybe the adults aren't able to put enough structure in place for them that they need it or if they want to, it feels like it's very it singles kids out. Because they would be kind of the exception as opposed to the rule. So it feels very targeted when you try and create a little more structure for a student in our school."

- METCO students have barriers for participating in sports
 - "METCO students have a really difficult time pertinent to speeding sports teams... So there's no social Avenue there"*
- Merit
 - General educators rely on the work that students put in to measure their success.
 - Special educators rely less on merit in student evaluations and contextualize their progress with the way in which students needs have been met. They have seen students work hard and still don't achieve at their highest capacity because they lack support or access to other necessary resources.
 - Socioeconomic status shows in the classroom:
 - "The leveling setup for math is a giant problem... that's part of the problem. You have in this community a lot of families who seek additional support for math programming outside of the school. And then they come into the school. And those students, they're trying, they've tried to do different things about it. But it's an unfair advantage"*

Aware/ Avoidant Summary

There is a mix of Aware and Avoidant Mindsets in this group. For example, most educators are aware of inequities and how they perpetuate in the culture. But this awareness doesn't always translate into practice. In this case, most educators demonstrate an avoidant-based mindset.

Educators express an awareness of the following:

- Different identities represented in the school staff and student body
- Lack of inclusion, thus family engagement from families of color
- Segregated classrooms by course level
- Students are unable to connect with teachers despite teacher effort
- Students of color experience microaggressions from peers and other teachers and staff members on a daily basis

Educators express an Avoidant Mindset in the following ways:

- Student academic success and demographics
 - It is common for teachers to not reach out to families of color when students have academic or social problems in the classroom. Educators are extremely reluctant to get parents and families of color involved if students are struggling, miss class, or are absent for consecutive days. When teachers reach out to parents, it is usually done so through email but lack any follow up with families to ensure resolutions.

“I’ve definitely had students that have come to me about an issue like something that might have happened in the class, and I will reach out to the parent and I might ask the parent, ‘has a teacher reached out, have you checked with the teacher at all?’ and they say ‘No’. Or I recommended to the teacher to reach out. I ask them, ‘Have you talked to the parents yet?’ And they say, ‘Oh, no, I haven’t’. ... or, sometimes maybe a kid is absent a whole week, and the teacher didn’t reach out... More teachers need to reach out. And I think when it comes to racially, or cross culturally, it doesn’t happen as much as it should.”

- Learning Environment (Segregated Classrooms)
 - The racial representation of classrooms indicates the level of the class (college prep. course or honors/AP course). Admin and other teachers express awareness that this is a problem and have discussions about how to increase the population of students of color in honors/AP courses by affinity grouping or cohorting efforts but have not.

“I really feel like the way we are leveling classes is doing a huge disservice to many students, and probably a particular students of color ... if I were to like walk into the classroom, I can just like walk and see right away like, is this a college prep class? Or is this an honors class? You can tell by race... if I were to look at just the numbers of kids who are black and brown in college prep classes versus honors class”

 - There is little to no action done in addressing learning environments that are not conducive to students of color belonging or learning. Students of color have spoken up about not being treated fairly, not being listened to, being ignored by their teachers, or being called out for their race and still little advocacy is done on their part.

“So in terms of trying to be supportive of my students, when they may have experienced racism in the classroom, or racism in speaking with different teachers, I try to either point things out to a teacher or a director, or attempt to help. I listen to students in my office talk about the number of microaggressions that happen, you know, on a daily basis for some of our students of color,

“Students come to me and explain a teacher was being short with them, sometimes they felt like the teacher wasn’t listening to them, they felt like they

were called out on something, and they felt they were called on it merely because of their race”

- Administration
 - Administrators do not present solutions or help find solutions to inequities educators and other staff bring to their attention. They show patterns of being avoidant of issues students face.
 - Administrators do not address issues educators and other staff face from school leaders and colleagues. Some teachers experience constant sexism by their male colleagues who they describe as abusive, manipulative, and domineering. The administration has not assigned consequences to these staff despite reports and complaints and staff are left without resolution.

Asset/ Deficit Mindset Summary

Educators have asset-based mindsets in theory but there is a disconnect in implementing these mindsets in practice.

Educators demonstrate an Asset Mindset in the following ways:

- Family backgrounds and strengths
 - There is a strong asset-based mindset when educators talk about international cultures, students of color, and their families. Some strengths include families wanting to see the best for their child and making themselves available if something is wrong. Educators also recognize students and families as being resilient and wanting a strong, quality education despite hardships and other barriers.

“I mean, everybody’s invested in school, even even the kids that I that struggled the most, or you think are the most disconnected from school, their families have the same dreams and hopes for them as every kid that walks through the building”

Educators demonstrate a Deficit Mindset in the following ways:

- Family Engagement
 - Lack incentive and initiative to build on the strengths of all families and are missing opportunities to connect and build trust. For example, teachers have a hard time connecting with parents - especially METCO parents. They call and/or send emails but don’t always reach parents. There are no solutions to find the most effective way of communication. There hasn’t been considerable action taken despite educators recognizing this is a big area for improvement. (Insert Quote that places the burden on the families or put in context)
- Academic Standards for Black and Brown students
 - Black and Brown students are unprepared for AP/ honors courses and for the college process. Educators do not consistently build off of the strengths of Black and Brown students.

“Belmont as a district needs to do a better job in terms of holding high standards for our students of color and pushing them to take classes in terms of, like, students that have come out of the middle school have kind of been like, not as many of our students of color, who should be in high level AP and honors classes are there”

“...if you look at the racial breakdown in terms of college prep honors, AP classes. Like if you, if you looked at the numbers from years and years ago, you know, they were low. And their numbers are higher than they were. But as I said, like, they're not even close to where they need to be. So more needs to be done. And they need to start working on this, you know, like, before high school”

- There is no structure, guidance, or help with financial aid for Black and Brown students to pursue their interests in college.

“...We have to do better... we don't even get into helping kids, like, fill out their financial aid paperwork.. And I'm finding kids that like, you know, they'd have their guidance counselor meetings all year, and they put in their little list of colleges they were applying to right. But like, they never filled out the financial aid... and so it's like, we superficially tried setting these kids up, but nobody's really digging in. And we don't have a set program or set person to be like, did you really take care of all the nitty gritty that needs to be taken care of, to start school next September or to start your vocational program.”
- Educators ask students about their interests and strengths to prepare and guide them to a vocational or for-profit school.
- Educators are aware that students constantly deficit-frame their Black and Brown classmates, assign stereotypes to certain groups, i/e assuming all Black and Brown students are in the METCO program, come from a lower socio-economic status, and assuming they are not as smart, etc. and some educators try to address this behavior and get students to think different.
- Discipline
 - Educators tend to ignore student behavior instead of correcting it to avoid being labeled as racist. Some of the biggest behavioral problems educators face with students is not going to class and hanging out somewhere else on campus instead. Black and Brown students are not held to the same standard or expected to perform to the same expectation as the rest of the student population.

“... there are so many staff members in our building that are afraid to approach our students of color. And for no other reason, other than, like, you know, just racist, you know, like racist reasons in the back of their head or, you know, like biases that they have. And rather than, like, you know, call somebody out. So somebody in the hallway, who happens to be, you know, a student of color, maybe they're doing something they're not supposed to be doing. And a

teacher may not want to call them out, because they don't want to appear that they're being racist, calling them out... Anyway, I just think that I've definitely seen that happening, and it's gotten worse rather than gotten better."

"If a student of color is doing something they're not supposed to be doing, a teacher may not want to call them out, because they don't want to appear that they're being racist, calling them out"

- Educators label student behavior as disruptive and disrespectful despite being aware that these students 1. don't have other opportunities in the school day to see each other, and 2. students are leaving class because it is too challenging and teachers are not accommodating to their needs.

"For some of the students I have that are cutting class, some of its academics, school is really, really hard. And so it's easier to not be there than to struggle."

Context-Centered/ Context-Neutral

Some of the major goals educators had for families include the following:

- Make sure students are set up to be successful after graduation
- To ensure families are in the communication loop with their students
- Being more inclusive and welcoming for students of color

Educators demonstrated a Context-Neutral Mindset in the following ways:

- Family Engagement
 - It is common for teachers to not reach out to families of color when students have academic or social problems in the classroom. Educators are extremely reluctant to get parents and families of color involved if students are struggling, miss class, or are absent for consecutive days.

"...faculty can do better at reaching out to families, especially our families of color. I think a lot of the white teachers, which are the majority of the teachers in our building, and we do need more diverse staff. Teachers tend not to reach out to the families a lot. And teachers should be reaching out to families more, not just sending an email, but reaching out and I've definitely noticed, not with every teacher, but with some teachers, there's a reluctance to reach out to certain families and they tend to be more families of color."

"...students that have come to me about an issue like something that might have happened in the class, I reach out and might ask the parent, 'has a teacher checked in at all?' And the response is usually, 'No'. Or I recommend the teacher to reach out. Teachers rarely reach out."

- Family outreach is usually an email but educators rarely follow up with families to ensure resolutions are made when students of color are falling behind.

- Curriculum
 - Although educators acknowledge the current curriculum (materials, assignments, projects, etc.) is problematic in practice, there are little initiatives being done to change this and little support for educators who are trying to diversify their curriculum and alter their pedagogy.

“...curriculum is not inclusive. They have used books that they should have done away with years and years ago. But that was like, that was it's, it's gotten better than it used to be, but nowhere near at the level it should be”
 - Conversations centering racism, homophobia, and historically oppressed people around the world are very US centric and don't always offer the proper context for international students and families who feel excluded from the curriculum.
 - Educators were discouraged with community pushback and school leadership apologizing for an optional diverse summer reading list and other attempts at adopting a culturally responsive teaching pedagogy and curriculum.

Recommendations for Belmont High School Teachers and School Counselors (General education and special education educators)

To improve Equity Mindsets:

- Require all school leaders and staff to commit to anti-racism PD training and a culturally responsive teaching pedagogy to learn how to address the needs and interact with Black students and other students of color in ways that reduce harm, build deep understanding, and create more positive experiences.
- Have options for students to have more structure in school days - consider having multiple options or tracks for students. Consider creating plans and guiding students on how to structure their day to prevent Black and Brown students and students with disabilities from falling behind.
- Create more social avenues and opportunities for METCO students to be involved in team sports activities, games. There are too many barriers such as finances, transportation, and other resources in place that with the right awareness and equity mindset can be alleviated.
- Create more in depth college preparation opportunities and intentional mentorship for first generation students and students of color.

To improve Aware Mindsets:

- Admin needs to take more seriously the impact of a majority white teaching group. Create a more diverse teaching staff by focusing on hiring practices, budgeting process, and retention strategies.
- Give METCO students and other Black and Brown students opportunities in structured day to hang out with each other to lessen the chances they'll skip class.

To improve Context-Centered Mindsets:

- Reconsider the amount of power community members have over decisions in BPS and shaping BPS culture.
- Find ways to supplement students' learning for those economically disadvantaged - vouchers or scholarships for programs or extra tutoring programs.
- Create a protocol where teachers reach out to parents and follow up if students are struggling socially, academically, or are absent either for one class or an entire week.

School Leaders: Curriculum Directors, Principals, AP's at Chenery, Butler, and Belmont High School

Equity/ Equality Mindset Summary

School leaders exhibit an Equity Mindset when talking about the many factors that play into student success. Some of these factors involve the following:

- Curriculum that involves a wide range of perspectives
- Students learning how to identify inequities in systems
- Successful teaching strategies
- Student comfort and feelings of belonging in classroom
- Students feeling safe and warmth from the buildings
- Knowing staff and leaders cherish and value diversity
- When students and families have a relationship with school leaders and staff
- Students having an open and good relationship with parents/ guardians/ caregiver

School leaders and curriculum directors demonstrate an equity mindset in the following ways:

- Policies
 - There is a common belief that policies should be fair and applied to every student given the context of the situation.
 - In the elementary grades specifically, leaders believe discipline should be a guide for learning opportunities as opposed to punitive measures.

“When it comes to student discipline, discipline, I don't even I like to think of discipline as helping to guide a student, I'm not punitive, I think I like to see them as learning opportunities, and learning opportunities both for me, and the adults who support any given child's, and learning opportunities for the child to grow”
- Merit
 - There is a common equitable mindset amongst school leaders who believe that in order for students to succeed, hard work is not enough. Their needs and individual accommodations are major contributors to student success.

“... success isn't just effort, there are a lot of pieces that are done both on the day the child but as well as the grownups helping the child, they're both responsible for that child's success.”

School leaders and curriculum directors demonstrate an equality-based mindset in the following ways:

- Fiscal Decisions
 - Most fiscal decisions made do not center or directly address inequities or problems students face.

“I don't know if I can speak to any specific fiscal decisions that I've seen that are policy based that have tried to address equity and diversity”
 - While there are conversations happening at the high school to diversify educators and other teaching staff and to provide more equity related PD, minimal actions have been taken.

“We try to hire for diversity, but I think we can do more. As far as policies, that's where we are, at this point, I don't think we have anything in place district wide.”

Aware/ Avoidant Mindset Summary

School leaders and curriculum directors demonstrate an Aware Mindset in the following ways:

- Structural Decisions
 - Students are placed in classrooms based on skills based on assessment, personality traits (leaders, followers, extroverts, introverts), genders, and languages spoken at home.
- DEI Initiatives
 - It is important for teachers and staff to value diversity and to talk about kindness when something prejudice or harmful happens despite being at the beginning stages of what that looks like
- Curriculum
 - There is a strong understanding the importance of diversifying the curriculum, teaching controversial topics such as the history and current state of Palestine, real history such as US slavery, Native American genocide, and implementing authors of color as much as possible.
 - There is a great awareness in considering the lens content is introduced by, the ways in which it is taught in the classroom, and how students relate or connect to the content differently.
 - They express how students are sometimes triggered by content such as slavery in the US but avoided other factors that may be contributing to these reactions outside of the content - ie/ lack of trust, racism from classmates and teachers, a lack of context, etc.
 - There is a common belief that the identity of a predominantly white teaching force in the district impacts student sense of belonging and learning as well as parent participation.

School leaders and curriculum directors demonstrate an Avoidant Mindset in the following ways:

- Structural Decisions
 - Racial identity was not a major consideration when talking about structural decisions and what contributes to racial segregation of classrooms.

“When we create classes, for the next year, we try to do a balance of like demonstrated skills based on assessments, but then also we think about personalities. Do we have leaders or followers? Do we have introverts or extroverts? Do we have kids of different genders, as well as languages spoken if they identify as having one language or if they're multilingual. So we just try really hard to balance our classes.”
- Explicitly naming racism
 - When talking about major events that center racism, white supremacy, anti-blackness, homophobia, and genocide, some school leaders refer to these with the date that it happened on. For example: “January 6” as opposed to saying the Capitol Insurrection, “May 2020” as opposed to saying George Floyd, “Community death” as opposed to saying the murder of Henry Tapia

Despite this common awareness, there is an avoidant mindset in practice as little action in diversifying the teaching staff has been done to address this.

Asset/ Deficit Mindset Summary

School leaders and curriculum directors exhibit an asset-based mindset in the following ways:

- Family Demographics
 - School leaders and curriculum directors appreciate and recognize that all BPS families want a strong and quality education for their children
 - All families have a willingness to be involved in their children's learning and communicate that to school leaders.
 - There is a strong value of the many different perspectives families offer based on their own background, other experiences from other countries, and a willingness to share.
 - All have a desire to create more opportunities to build off of family strengths to contribute to student learning and school environment.
- Discipline
 - School leaders note that most common behavioral issues students experience are with their peers. In these cases, school leaders tend to demonstrate how student differences are student strengths and highlight the importance of kindness for all grades and ages.

Conext-Centered/ Context-Neutral Mindset Summary

Some of the major goals for families school leaders and curriculum directors had for students and families are the following:

- To assess students to determine their skills

- Build on student and family strengths
- Determine how to enhance students who grew throughout remote and hybrid learning
- For students and families to see themselves in the curriculum - (no mention of how accurate their representation should be though)
- Better understand how their children can act on systems of power that exist in the world and how to identify inequities
- To experience joy and happiness in BPS in students learning and being in community with other families
- That students have a good transition and are prepared to go to the middle school

School leaders and curriculum designers demonstrate a Context-Centered mindset in the following ways:

- The overall goal and content of what they hope students get out of learning should be inclusive of all students and representative of different backgrounds
- The curriculum directors, with the support of school leaders, are attempting to make curriculum resources more forthright in discussing parts of history and using more appropriate language.

"I would not say that I have a purposeful goal to work all of those current events into the curriculum but at this point, we are doing it more on an holistic basis. We do have current events pushed into the curriculum in a wide range of places. Because we do believe that kids need to be able to relate historical understandings to what's going on in the world today. If you're asking me if it's a goal to have like Current events as a part of our curriculum every day? No, that's not a current goal of ours"

- They encourage teachers to find ways for students to learn through the perspective and lens of historically marginalized people. However, relating lessons to today's current events are not a priority or goal for educators to include in the curriculum.

"It is not a goal for current events to be included in the curriculum"

Recommendations for School Leaders: Curriculum Directors, Principals, AP's at Chenery

To improve an Equity Mindset:

- Required equity-centered Professional development opportunities for all leaders and staff (short term and long term plan).
- Review the impact of leveling and how to make classes fairer to address how students of color are at a disadvantage without access to the higher level courses.
- To have paid opportunities or other incentives for staff to attend family events that embrace other cultures.

To improve a Context-Centered Mindset:

- Have people in positions of teaching and directing humanities (history, social studies, English, etc.) well versed in the history of US and who has experience of it being taught with

compassion, empathy, and seriousness so students won't be triggered and/or will be prepared to discuss triggering resources and how to manage it.

- Find ways to get Black and Brown families involved in sharing parts of their identity with teachers in literature, arts, math etc. to deviate from mainstream content.

District Leaders: Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents, School Committee Members, Equity Subcommittee Members, METCO Leaders

Equity/ Equality Mindset Summary

This group of leaders demonstrates a strong Equity Mindset when describing multiple factors that play into student success. They included many of the same factors mentioned in the other groups with an emphasis on METCO students and families being more connected to the school and staff through relationships, trust building, and meeting families' needs.

Leaders express an equity mindset in discussing future fiscal commitments to address inequities in BPS schools. For example, they are planning to do the following:

- Use federal grant money to create and execute a plan of action based on the SPED audit findings, specifically MTSs and UDL
- Hire a cultural ambassador for families
- Required PD for staff and educators
- Recruit, hire, and retain Black and POC staff and educators
- Programs, policies, and curriculum assessment
- Hire social workers, adjustment counselors, summer programming, pre-teaching, and other affinity groups for students and families with SEL and mental health at the center of student achievement
- Create proactive academic support and enrichment opportunities for historically marginalized families

It is reiterated by many school leaders that according to DESE, BPS is at the bottom 6% of per pupil expenditure. Leaders express an equity mindset in admitting that it is a priority to rework the school district budget to determine what is important and how money will be spent.

- Merit
 - Despite school leaders demonstrating an equitable mindset, they recognize not all staff uphold this mindset:

“Typically, meritocracy is the standard. So they're saying, you know, as long as everybody works the same amount, everybody has some opportunity to succeed a lot of the time. So if a kid has the external pressures that society or is putting on kids or family things or out of kids control, as long as you work hard, it's fine. And if you're not working hard, that must mean you don't care. You're not trying or something else. But everybody has the same opportunity to

succeed. So like, why aren't you? That's exactly the narrative here. And I don't believe in that.

- Fiscal Decisions in SPED
 - There are steps being taken to address disproportionately identification of Black and Brown students in SPED.

"We hired two special education team chairs. That's another position that is pretty commonplace that we've never had. And that having two people working with all of the elementary school, special educators, as opposed to each educator writing their own, running the team meeting and writing the IEP, there'll be two people who have more training and expertise and hopefully a more consistent approach, who are working collaboratively with SPED leaders to have a more consistent approach to the identification and review of eligibility"

Aware/ Avoidant Mindset Summary

The leaders in this group demonstrated a strong Aware Mindset in the following ways:

- Factors that contribute to student success
 - Leaders are aware that student background, identity, socio-economic status, and other factors contribute to the student experience and the inequalities some groups face at BPS.
 - It is a future goal to ensure all teachers understand UDL and the role race and student identity plays in pedagogy with the hopes that they will stop confusing differences with disabilities.
- Staff Mindsets
 - Leaders acknowledge that plenty of educators and staff express an avoidant-based mindset in understanding how identity shapes the culture of the classroom and student learning.

"I think there were always staff members who already knew that equity was important work to do. And there were some who didn't even know it was the thing that we needed to pay attention to. And everything in between. There are still people who maybe don't think this work is important, but it's not acceptable in most circles to say it out loud"
 - They are also aware that teachers, especially math teachers, don't always see the "whole child" in their classroom or consider what they went through to be present, where their interests lie, etc.

"I think that they do a nice job hearing the kids so when someone comes in with a challenge or a problem. They're very attentive to that, but I don't think that they see their job as taking care of the whole child"

Subject Courses at the High School

This group demonstrates an aware-based mindset when talking about the process in which students are placed in class based on their academic skills. Actions to address this include a slight change in policy that makes it easier for students in college prep. courses to move into AP/ honors courses. Black and Brown students are still less likely to take AP/ honors courses because

1. There is not a process set into place that encourages Black and Brown students to take more challenging classes.
2. They are not consistently academically challenged or prepared in earlier grades at elementary and middle school
3. Leaders don't always advocate for students in advanced courses

"grouping and leveling, exacerbate segregation, and separation...we also need to have people who work directly with students, whether it's a teacher or a guidance counselor and say, you should take this course, you will thrive in this course. And then, and then have that course be a welcoming place.... So we have a long way to go for that...So there are pockets of that. Still, I would say that there are a lot of high school teachers who still think they teach content, not children"

Asset/ Deficit Summary

This group of leaders demonstrate an Asset Mindset in the following ways:

- Family Background
 - Leaders describe families as engaged, highly motivated, and highly educated. They recognize families with strengths in activism, philanthropy, and who care about human rights can help shift BPS culture.

"We've got a highly motivated and engaged community and highly highly educated community with a lot of resources"
 - School leaders recognize that students are coming back from remote learning with new challenges but also new growth and development and are hoping educators can find these strengths to build on in the classroom. On the other hand, there are challenges students are facing that leave educators defaulting on deficit framing students - in transitional grades especially. A lack of support and resources for these students leave them vulnerable and more likely to be deficit-framed by educators.

METCO Program

METCO Leaders demonstrate an Asset Mindset in the following ways:

- They hope to empower families to build independence, and be held to a high standard to disprove common stereotypes and deficit framing of METCO students and families by the BPS community Leaders who express they want METCO families to be empowered.

"METCO students feel like they're kind of under a microscope or like sort of put in this category that they need the most help and sort of deficit framing around that"

"There's a lot of assumptions made about who the students are and what they need. And I think there's often this white guilt that that's how I kind of interpreted that plays

out where they want to do things for families, and for students, rather than empower them to do for themselves”

- Communicate a strong appreciation for communal culture and multi-generational homes and how there is an abundance of love and activity that can be leveraged to hold families and students to a high standard

“I tend to have the biggest divergence in perspective is that I’m here to empower families, to help them build independence, help students build independence, I hold them to a high standard”

Context-Centered/ Context- Neutral

This group of leaders express a strong Context-Centered mindset when talking about curriculum. They believe there needs to be a change in the way subjects like history, ELA and literature are taught and presented to be more inclusive and accurate. Leaders also demonstrate a strong context-centered mindset when talking about goals for families. Some of these include:

- To educate more families on what is tolerated and accepted in terms of racism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination by peers at BPS
- Get all parents involved in social issues students face and for them to not wait until it impacts their child
- Include parent voice in determining a more inclusive curriculum

METCO Program

METCO leaders demonstrate a mix of Context-Neutral and Context-Centered Mindset.

Demonstrations of a Context-Centered Mindset are as follows:

- To ensure international and ELL families have an understanding of race in the US, the language it’s talked about, and how their students may be impacted, to negate stereotypes applied to these families and have conversations to structurally and systemically address these

“And what we’ve encountered is like black and brown is such an American concept that you could say those words. Culturally, it’s not resonating”

“... everything is so Americanized, families don’t even know what race is. And like, what was interesting was that they were like, since we’re in America, we want to know what that means. They wish that we could educate them more on that, like, we recognize that as different in our country, but like, we’d love it if the school would just like, teach us more about what’s going on in America.”

- To help families connect with their children’s teachers when cultural or racial barriers are present

“I’m here to help families connect with their teachers, especially when there may be some hesitancy and trust along racial lines. But we also notice feelings like, this isn’t

my community like I don't live in Belmont. Teachers have worked in the school for 35 plus years, and she is beloved by everyone but families still don't know anything about the teachers. They can't come to the building whenever they want. They can't just drop in. Yes, they're welcome. But it's, you know, you have families who just don't"

- Bridge the gaps of cultural norms - many families come from countries where it is not acceptable to question experts in education and/ or advocate for their child. African American families also sometimes fall into this category.

"In many countries, the people who work in the school are the experts and parents aren't supposed to weigh in and question and ask and push in the school building. Like that's supposed to, in many cultures, that space isn't for parents to have a say. They're really feeling uncomfortable about this. They didn't even know they could say something because of cultural differences. That's not something they're accustomed to"

Demonstrations of a Context-Neutral Mindset are as follows:

- Student and Family Needs
 - They recognize challenges and needs families and students require but these needs are not met by the METCO program or BPS because it is expected for parents and families to close these gaps.

"I think the biggest challenge is just the transportation and it's helping them understand the schedule and what services and options are available given the distance"
 - There is a common belief among METCO leaders that because the program is optional, families are expected to address their own needs and solve their own challenges to fulfill their commitment. There are no structures in place to address challenges

"These challenges typically don't get resolved, and under fulfilling the request that we submit, giving us files that are incomplete, not being responsive to needs that we identify here. They are shifting away from some of their services that they have traditionally done that enable us and ensure families have a positive experience here ...because there are services METCO no longer offers. And we weren't designed to fill in those gaps"
 - Change in METCO leadership has translated into fewer resources available for parents and no action has been taken to address this.

"And so with that comes additional work and additional responsibilities. And the parents understood that when they signed up for it, and we should hold them accountable for that"

"...there's just leadership shifts, direction shifts, and it's hard to catch up with that"

AP Math Program: 7- 12th grade students having the opportunity to skip a grade level of math in middle school by taking a test that shows they mastered the grade level skills and concepts. The goal was not to hold students back who were accelerated in math.

School leaders canceled this program. They demonstrate Equitable Educator mindsets when describing the decision making process in canceling the AP math program and the inequities that stemmed from it. The decision to cancel this program reflects the following mindsets:

- **Equity** - District leaders realized classrooms were not optimal learning environments for all students. And therefore, typically those students who are Black and Brown, English Language Learners, or students with IEPs begin to fall behind creating a larger gap.
- **Aware** - They explained clearly how it was serving a very specific group of students, and doing a disservice to Black and Brown students, and girls. The math classrooms were racially identifiable. The test to get into the program was very high stakes and had arbitrary cutoffs that nobody could explain why they were in place.
 - Relied on students being good at taking tests
 - If a student scored above the cut score on the placement test, they were admitted to the program. If a student scored anything below the cut, they were not admitted.
- **Context-Centered** - Some families provide enrichment and extracurricular opportunities for their children (math test-prep tutors, Russian math school enrollment, and other deeper math learning opportunities) while some families are unable to provide the same opportunities to their children.

Creating alternatives: School leaders continue to reflect equitable mindsets by creating and providing alternatives to still provide students with more challenging math options. Although students no longer can skip a grade in math, they can do the following:

- Attend an after school program (primarily web-based via Edgenuity with a teacher facilitating the class) that provides challenging math opportunities for students who are ready
- When students are finished with the online course level in the after-school program, they advance to the next math level
- Attend summer accelerated math program as an extracurricular

Thinking ahead: The next phase is to look at 5th and 6th graders who are not meeting benchmarks to provide them with more opportunities to catch up before they fall behind.

Recommendations for District Leaders: Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents, School Committee Members, Equity subcommittee members, METCO Leaders

To improve an Aware Mindset:

- Leaders need to create and communicate a shared understanding and definition of equity from a top down perspective to trickle down to staff, teachers, families, and students and how it will be applied to achieve outcomes.

“...you must understand the root cause beyond, you know, and how to how to solve it. That’s, I think, where we don’t do everybody a disservice. And words like equity no longer mean anything because it means so many different things to different people.”

- Reconstruct a new way of teaching and learning as opposed to grouping in lower grades and leveling in higher grades.
- Establish higher standards for teachers and/or consequences when teachers don’t show they are interested in the whole child - find teachers who are instead of trying to change the ones there - this kind of work takes years and children will continue to be harmed in the process.

To improve an Equity Mindset:

- Work on supporting students during transitional grades- ex: highlight student support when entering kindergarten, middle school, high school
- Creating a streamlined protocol where parents volunteers make sure all students are aware of the opportunities they’re bringing and that events advertised in a way that collaborates with school leaders, teachers, and other families so students are not excluded

To improve a Context-Centered Mindset:

- Create more opportunities outside of sports for families and students to connect with each other
- Ensure families are being supported in understanding racism and US history, and connected with resources to implement in their homes.

Student Interviews

The purpose of interviewing high school students is to learn how they perceive their overall experience at BPS. Their voices give us more insight into the culture of BPS from the student perspective. We took the descriptions of their experiences and aligned it with the Equitable Educator Mindset Framework to see where Equitable Mindsets are present.

(Open call to all students): Student participants include LGBTQ+, White, Asian, International students

*No Black, African American, or Hispanic students were interviewed individually.

Equity Mindsets

Overall, these students describe their experience at BPS schools as a positive, fair learning environment. Teachers are helpful and responsive especially when students have questions about their grades. They feel that teachers are open to accommodate and are understanding when students communicate their needs. Overall, grading seems fair.

Avoidant Mindset

Students tend to describe teachers and school leaders' approaches to addressing hateful incidents as Avoidant. They describe a strong emphasis on learning about the importance of kindness and are encouraged to say something if they see their peers engaging in hate speech or acts. However, they are not told what to say, how to say it, and some students are overwhelmed at that expectation to advocate for hate incidence without any guidance.

If an incident happens in the community, there is usually an announcement made over the loud-speaker and teachers will open a conversation if students want to talk about it. While students explain this process, they also express a concern that teachers lack impact and influence on student perception and understanding of the severity of issues. For example, teachers don't always correct student behavior if they are laughing or aren't paying attention when talking about hateful incidents when they occur.

Asset Mindset

With regards to school rules and policies, students describe rules as fair. Students recall old rules that are no longer in effect as targeting Black students such as not being allowed to wear the hoodie on a sweater and believe schools have improved in the rules they enforce.

Context-Centered and Context- Neutral Mindsets

Students describe their classroom experiences as somewhat context-centered in that they have opportunities to talk about their background in humanities classes such as world History, English, and Social Studies when there is something relatable in the curriculum. Other times, they are encouraged to bring up their cultures and beliefs to support a thought and/or idea about something they are learning.

In some cases, students describe classrooms as being Context-Neutral as they do not always feel comfortable bringing up things they see on social media or in the news in the classroom despite teachers opening up the room for these conversations. LGBTQ+ and Black experiences are not as welcoming in class discussions.

Recommendations for Improving All Student Experiences:

To improve student experiences by addressing Equity Mindsets:

- Students need to be provided more learning opportunities to understand the seriousness of hateful incidents and the impact it has on their peers -anti racism training for students.

To improve student experiences by addressing Aware Mindsets:

- Teach students what to say if they hear or see their peers expressing hate or racist speech/ actions and provide opportunities for them to practice.

- Have STEM teachers begin to understand ways to bridge social issues, local issues, history, and racism to their lessons.

To improve student experiences by addressing Context-Centered Mindsets:

- Culture should influence curriculum as opposed to curriculum influencing culture: embedding more opportunities in curriculum for students to see themselves/ bring themselves in.
- More LGBTQ and Black identities and voices need to be embedded in curriculum and celebrated in and out of the classroom.

Black and Brown Student Group Interview: Black/ African American, and Hispanic/ Latinx students

Equity Mindsets

Students describe having some teachers who demonstrate equitable mindsets and who generally care for their learning and well being. They are happy with the educational opportunities and resources BPS offers. They describe certain things like access to teachers that care about the subject matter, nice campus buildings and other nice things as positive experiences.

Equality Mindset

Despite the benefits listed above, students describe an overwhelming feeling of not being comfortable in class and teachers not making the effort to create classrooms that foster a sense of belonging for their presence. Students describe classroom environments as unsafe because they experience microaggressions from teachers and racist classmates without proper attention or advocacy from adults. These same experiences happen in the hallways as building monitors make them feel uncomfortable and unsafe. They believe their experiences are different than other students.

Avoidant Mindset

Students describe their school leaders and teachers as having an Avoidant mindset in the following ways:

- Representation: Students are most concerned with the lack of representation in their classrooms teachers as well as classmates
 - There are not enough teachers at Belmont that can relate to their life experiences
 - Some students have never had a teacher of color, a Black teacher, or a Brown teacher and that bothers them

"I've never had a Black or Hispanic teacher out here. And like, also, I think that's weird. Because when you have to write an essay about life as, like a minority or something, I feel like they wouldn't really understand that... Like, a white person has never really experienced none of this stuff, you know?"

- Students feel like the staff don't really care to learn or respond to what they experience

"And also, I feel like some of the staff don't really care that much about us. Like they don't really ask us any questions like 'have you eaten?' 'How are you feeling?' Like, 'are you tired?' 'You want to take a break?' Like none of that, even when they know what we do to get here"

- Racism: Below are a few instances that students describe highlighting racist interactions or perceptions of BPS culture

- Microaggressions from teachers are rampant. Some teachers have argued in class that racial slurs can be okay to say out loud when learning about history, or reading a text. On the other hand, some teachers don't allow racial slurs to be read out loud but don't correct students when they use them

"Sometimes, the teachers will give you attitude for no reason, and I understand that they have to get up early and stuff. But so do I. But like she'll come tapping on my desk like this all class and telling me that I'm not paying attention when I really am. And then also, like, when if I'm reading out loud, we read a lot of little white plays, it's hard for me to pronounce some words and the teacher will laugh and tell me what it means. And, then, on the tests, we have hard words that I don't understand. And if I keep on asking them what it means, they get annoyed"

"Like there are a lot of heavy misconceptions, like, complete misjudgments about our identity from everybody. It gets annoying, and like, tiring at some point"

"When I was a freshmen, one of my teachers came and initiated a conversation with me. And in one conversation, she managed to make a bunch of assumptions about me and it put me off. It made me feel a weird mood and really uncomfortable. She said she went through a lot of the same things I did. But it was only the first couple days of school"

- Classmates make racist comments and joke about their physical features, intelligence/ academic capabilities, stereotypes, and socio-economic status and teachers rarely address it. If incidents escalate and families are involved, students rarely face consequences

"I just tell myself they're ignorant white children. Like, they always make like those little comments like, 'oh, you need to straighten your hair' Or 'you should do this' or 'Oh, you look like you live in the projects', stuff like that."

"And a lot of the white kids here have said the N word. And like we all know who they are. And nothing happens to them. Like they get sent out one day and then they come back. They say it and they say it to Black kids and it's true"

because they're racist. Sometimes they have a meeting with their parents and the teacher or something but then the next day, everything just goes back to normal for them"

- Classmates make fun of Black students - some teachers go the entire school year mispronouncing a student's name even after constantly being corrected.

"I'm used to dealing with ignorant kids here. And also teachers never got my name, right, which is kind of annoying to deal with... them saying my name wrong. Every single class, they just didn't care to correct it"
- Students don't feel safe on campus and feel singled out by campus monitors and other staff

"It's always a white lady in the halls who just follows all the black kids around the school literally standing right behind me just like a ghost, literally just trailing others, like she's waiting for us to do something wrong or get us in trouble for talking loud or something when they literally ignore and smile at the white kids"

Deficit Mindset

- Student strengths: In the student interviews, they had trouble thinking back to a time where a teacher highlighted their strengths
 - Students describe their teachers as upholding deficit-framed mindsets because they are often hesitant to give honest grades or provide useful feedback when students are writing about their experience. In these cases, they don't feel like they are academically challenged and their strengths are not highlighted
 - Black students are often accused of being in the wrong at times or are suspected of misbehavior before they get to defend themselves or use their voice

"In middle school, all the time, when other kids did something, it was only the Black kids who got called out and in trouble. We had to stay after class even though we didn't do anything. We were just accused of doing it because we were right there watching the white kids. And then we just got in trouble"

Context-Neutral Mindset

- Diversity and Equity Initiatives
 - Black and Brown students don't feel like they're included in conversations about diversity and inclusion and believe those initiatives are for students who come from different countries and speak different languages

"When the school talks about a lot of diversity, I guess they're right. There are a lot of different kinds of people around the world. But they aren't talking about us. They mean like, all different kinds of white people, different kinds of Asians but like they're not talking about Black people. They're not talking about Hispanics or brown people when they're saying or thinking like diversity"

- Communication of sensitive topics
 - When hate incidents happen locally or in the US, students are highly impacted socially and academically and adults on campus rarely address this adequately

“Last year, when that whole storming of the Capitol happened, we had to sit and have a whole history lesson for a couple classes about that. But then, like, when were so many things that happened over summer like George Floyd, and like, Briana Taylor and like, we only got like an email about it. We never talked about it in class. Then when a bunch of like, crazy white people couldn’t travel because of Covid, we have to sit down and talk about it because they don’t get their way.”

- Curriculum
 - When teachers ask students to talk about their experiences of identity, etc. in classroom conversations, assignments, and curriculum, they don’t feel comfortable talking in front of so many white teachers and classmates.
 - Students do not see themselves represented in the classrooms, hallways, or offices at BPS schools
 - Teachers can sometimes cause more harm when asking students to complete assignments focusing on identity: having students ask parents about income and budgeting and sharing out to the class to compare.

“We had to, bring in objects and stuff from home, we just kind of more like, you know, like, generic stuff, and like, the fashion and other stuff like that. And when it comes to us like black students and Hispanic students re sharing out like, it was more like, more deep and stuff and the kind of, I don’t know, I just feel like that different from other students”

“I feel like when we talk about ourself, teachers just give us an A, because they don’t know what we’re saying anyway, they can’t really. When we talk about ourselves, race always comes up. This is a recurring problem, I guess, in our lives. They just don’t know what to say, because they don’t know what we’re talking about”

“In one of our classes, we had to go home with a paper and write down our family income and how we spend money, and what we spend money on. They told us to ask our parents how much they pay for bills, food, clothes, and stuff like that. We came to class to share and obviously people have different incomes but it was hard to share with the whole class. It was weird”

- Students describe teachers as avoidant of certain topics that involve race and racism. They skim over slavery and Native American history and when they do talk about it, they try to make it seem not as bad as it was
 - Students feel like they have to tip-toe around topics involving race, racism, and honest American history

“if we're like talking about, like, slavery, or something, I know, like, the teachers might feel uncomfortable, but I wouldn't want them to like not read important things because there's so many things that we haven't talked about about slavery to not make it seem as bad. There's just so many things that the teachers never talk about”

“I feel like if we talked about racism or something or if we are reading something like black literature or something, if we just speak what is on our mind, people are just gonna look at you. So it's better to just tiptoe around these topics.”

- Teachers tend to gloss over or ignore when students critically think about what is happening in the classroom

“In English class, me and X have this thing where we just sit in the back of the class and all the white people are in the front. Like this is our back row and I wrote something about that on my paper when it came to my mind for an assignment. And the teacher, she was just like, ‘oh, good observation’ but she didn't really say anything else besides that it was an interesting point. But she didn't really like, you know, talk about it.”

Recommendations to Improve Black and Brown Student Experience:

To improve Black and Brown student experiences by addressing Equity and Aware Mindsets:

- Addressing Racism
 - Implement anti-racism training for all staff, educators, and school leaders to understand how actions are microaggressions, how to address harmful and racist student behavior, and to understand the impact it has on Black students.
 - Create clear consequences for hate speech and racism targeted to Black students, LGBTQ+ students from classmates and teachers and staff.
 - Provide all families with anti-racist parenting resources.
- Diversity and Inclusion
 - Diversify the teaching staff of all classes so all students have Black and teachers of color.
 - Make a targeted effort to embrace Black students' culture throughout the year and during Black History Month.
 - Co-create a diverse curriculum with Black and Brown students in humanities and STEM classes.

To improve Black and Brown student experiences by addressing Asset Mindset

- Require teachers to implement culturally-responsive teaching pedagogies and PD sessions that guide them on ways to challenge students while still being sensitive to the topics
- Ensure teachers are implementing strategies and teaching practices that build off of student strengths to improve their academic and social experiences

To improve Black and Brown student experiences by addressing Context-Centered Mindset

- METCO Program
 - Provide student transportation ASAP. It's cold, early, they're tired, hungry, and uncomfortable. Daylight savings times and winter conditions exacerbate the problem.
 - While working on getting better transportation, help give students appropriate bus and train passes.
 - Invest and advocate for student interests and help find ways to support student clubs for Black and Brown students.
 - METCO leaders advocate for students when they are experiencing hardships or challenges with an emphasis on finding a resolution.
- College prep
 - Get students in college prep. Programs with emphasis on applying to needs-based schools (so students don't have to take loans)
 - Guide 12th grade students through college application process, financial aid, and scholarships opportunities
- Find ways to represent Black and Brown students in their learning environment - having posters, art, photos, etc. of students, families, scholars, and important figures that look like them

Summary and Analysis

Elementary Teachers at Wellington:

There is a mix of teachers demonstrating equitable mindsets in practice and those who do not. There is a common gap where equitable mindsets don't translate into practice and a strong awareness of this. All teachers agreed that efforts to center equity in BPS are fairly new in BPS (about 5 years), which may help understand student experience in the higher grades. Lastly, there was an overall lack of urgency and trust in the school admin and leaders to be supported to shift their classroom culture and student experience.

Chenery Middle School Teachers:

There is a stark difference in mindsets and practices between special education educators and general education teachers. At all times, special education teachers expressed an equity mindset, context-centered, asset-based, and an aware mindset and gave clear examples on how they employ these mindsets in the classrooms. Only sometimes general education teachers exhibit the same mindsets but struggle with ways to implement these mindsets. All teachers agreed that more efforts must be made to achieve better progress and are at times lacking resources for practice. Lastly, there was an overall lack of urgency in the racism and homophobia students experience from their teachers, their classmates, and the world. General education teachers do not always communicate

the severity of some of the hate incidents happening at the school and in the US as a whole. Many times, general education teachers contribute to poor experiences students of color and students with IEPs have and are not always held accountable for their harm.

These interviews revealed that racist and/or ableist teachers are still teaching students and have faced no consequences for their behaviors or mindsets, even when reported to school leaders.

Belmont High School Teachers:

While special education educators are more aware and equitable in their mindsets and practices than general educators, they have not acted in implementing structural changes that could benefit vulnerable students. Most times, special education teachers expressed equitable mindsets with clear examples on how they employ these mindsets in the classrooms. Only sometimes general education teachers exhibit the same mindsets but lack examples and initiatives that put these mindsets in practice. All teachers agreed that more efforts must be made to achieve better progress and are lacking resources and incentive for praxis. Similarly to middle school, there was an overall lack of urgency in addressing the racism and homophobia students experience from their teachers, their classmates, and the world.

There are times where teachers encourage students to bring in parts of their culture into the lesson or activity with a heavy emphasis and interest in international students.

There seems to be a disconnect between what “normal” behavior looks like for students of color and what it looks like for staff. In these cases, students are at a disadvantage. For example, educators believe students should sometimes be more “settled” in the context of being around their friends. However, excitement may look differently for students in this context. As a result, students sometimes ignore teachers and other adults in the hallways when they’re trying to discipline them or get them to stop acting certain ways.

Educators explain how they observed students of color usually come into the high school behind academically while other international and white students are advanced because of the additional support that they’ve gotten outside of school as well as higher standards they’ve been expected to achieve in previous school years. This represents a deficit-framed mindset from previous teachers, school leaders at other Belmont schools. There is also a lack of awareness as to why the space may feel uncomfortable to Black and Brown students. Their behavior is usually attributed to other outside environments as opposed to whether or not the teacher fosters a welcoming, respectful tone for all students.

School Leaders and Curriculum Directors:

Overall, school leaders and curriculum directors demonstrate knowledge of equitable mindsets but lack many necessary actions to translate their beliefs into practice. There are educators across BPS culture who do not address Black and Brown student behavior to avoid discussing or being labeled as racist which further targets students and contributes to lower standards and expectations.

Educators exhibit an extreme avoidant mindset in practice when communicating the role major events play in contributing to Belmont schools' culture.

In some cases, there is little flexibility in state mandated policies and requirements which determine curriculum and sometimes create a lack of sufficient opportunities for students to learn from a wide range of voices in curriculum and/ or instruction. The solution to students being triggered by sensitive and heavy content regarding race was to shift the focus on joy, happiness, and resilience enslaved Africans upheld as opposed to the realities; while this does broaden narrative and asset frame cultures, this can sometimes contribute to distorting the realities that enslaved Africans faced. There was a lack of awareness that joy, happiness, and resilience can be taught in other lessons rather than slavery in the US.

District leaders, Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, School Committee Members, Equity Subcommittee Members, and METCO Leaders

There are strong demonstrations of equitable mindsets with ideas and visions that follow, however many actions that address inequities are still in early stages of discussions.

METCO Leaders demonstrate a mix of equitable mindsets - they demonstrate strong awareness and context-centered mindset in some areas such as student and family barriers, inequities and sometimes negative experiences students face. However, METCO leaders demonstrate equality mindsets in expecting families to address most barriers students face.

Open Call Individual Student Interviews:

Students are mostly satisfied with their teachers, school leaders, and overall experiences at BPS. Some students mentioned areas of improvement in the curriculum where they would like to learn more truthful and honest narratives about history and more opportunities to interact with different books and voices. Although students do express concerns with issues of hate and explicit racism in BPS, when incidents happen, students are not very satisfied with the ways school leaders respond. They feel like the adults are not taking it seriously, which then sends concerning messages to the students. For example, students laugh and joke when racist and/or homophobic incidents take place and is simply accepted amongst the general student body. International students describe common occurrences of being bullied for their appearance, accent, and only being accepted when they are displaying or discussing aspects of their culture.

Black and Brown Student Group interview:

Students describe school and learning environments as unsafe no matter how many times Black students get to do activities that center themselves because they don't always feel comfortable around their peers and teachers. When racist acts happen, things are briefly mentioned by and then things go back to normal for everyone except students mostly impacted.

Students express that it is common for teachers to exhibit microaggressions, to make racist comments, and to not correct students who make racist comments or actions. These students

describe teachers as having attitudes with them and getting annoyed when they ask for help. Students express they are tired of dealing with misconceptions about their identity and stereotypes placed upon them without any support.

Black students feel as though educators, staff, and classmates don't care about the injustices that impact them the most compared to other groups of students. Students gave many examples where incidents and injustices that matter to white students and families such as school shootings and the capitol insurrection, were given great attention and opportunities to talk about it and take action. On the other hand, Black students and families were not given the same attention, care, and space from school leaders and educators when something centering racism and Black genocide happened. For example, students were devastated and traumatized when Henry Tapia was murdered during a racist encounter, and the many cases of murders of unarmed black men, women, and children that happen but they were not contacted or allowed space to talk about it.

Black students don't feel like diversity efforts, conversations, and events include them. They don't feel as if they belong there, and are not encouraged to be involved as most of the conversations focus on international diversity as opposed to race.

METCO Program:

METCO students don't feel as supported by METCO leadership in ways they expect. Students at Belmont High School report having to travel to Dudley station on their own time to get their bus and train passes and wish to be able to receive it at school. While METCO leadership is always available for students to talk and welcome their conversations, concerns, and experiences, there is a lack of advocacy following student conversations. Students also feel a lack of support in creating clubs and other initiatives from leadership and are not able to make these spaces for themselves because of safety purposes. METCO leaders do not always secure safe spaces for students who ask.

Focus Groups

Introduction

The purpose of these focus groups is to hear the unique and detailed ways families describe their experiences within BPS at large from superintendents, school leaders, teachers, and other support staff. Their perspectives help us to better understand the varied ways in which BPS culture influences families' experiences and shape their perspective. Listening to families and hearing their equitable and inequitable experiences allowed us to learn more about the mindsets of all school leaders and staff in schools. We applied the Equitable Educator Mindset Framework to their feedback to paint a clearer picture of BPS culture at individual schools, programs, and their strengths and areas of improvements.

Findings

Open Call (All families focus groups)

The following are the benefits families describe of BPS culture according to the mindset discussed:

Equity Mindset

- Families describe experiences and interactions with teachers to be positive in the following ways:
 - Teachers are available multiple times during the school days to help students who need extra help

“The teachers are very engaged. If a child needs help they go to the teacher, like generally the teachers are available at multiple times to assist students if they should need it.”
 - Teachers are well qualified, bright, and engaged at the high school. They work late, send emails to parents at night to talk about students needs and progress

“The teachers are very good, very well qualified, they're very bright and engaged. And they think about their students a lot. You know, when my kids were at Burbank, I would see the teachers, some of them would work late, some of them would be emailing me at night, I could tell they were still thinking about the students, you know, and thinking about individual students and what they need”
 - They push students to learn during remote and hybrid learning with encouragement

Aware Mindset

- One of the most common beliefs is that while there are more diverse communities than Belmont, it has grown to be more diverse over the years and more historically welcoming to a large international student and family population
- The large population of Asian students and families makes Asian families more comfortable being a part of the BPS community and having their children in the schools.
- Black Belmont residents are appreciative of the METCO program because their children are able to make friends who look like them
- Families share a common appreciation for the forthcoming initiatives and changes with the new DEI director, Chon'tel.

Asset Mindset

- The performing arts programs and opportunities give educators opportunities to build off of and grow student strengths by highlighting what students enjoy. These environments are described as inclusive environments with strong teachers and activities created to bridge gaps between students.

- BPS schools - the high school in particular, offers a variety of after school programs, workshops, and activities that support many different student interests and strengths.

Context-Centered Mindset

- Families notice that there are more diverse names in their children's math homework assignments
- There are some opportunities for them to be involved in their children's learning and for learning about different cultures.

The following are the DELTA's families describe of BPS culture according to the mindset discussed

Equality Mindset

- Hate incidents are a common concern for families as they happen often and school leaders lack responses that satisfy families. Families describe the following areas of concern:
 - Lack of consequences and accountability for students who commit hate acts and speech

“There's so much bystander trauma when something nasty happens and they see the adult not intervening. You want a role model but at the middle school level, the administration are just hoping that it would resolve itself and treated like two kids not getting along. Then all the leadership apologized to him. And that went halfway because the bully is still there. She still calls out to him from another room and harasses him. They don't know what to do about it.”
 - School leaders' responses seem to be determined by who the victim is (identity, family background, etc.) and who was harmed (racism homophobia, ableism is not responded to as seriously)
 - Focus is usually on the victim of a hate incident rather than the perpetrator
 - Lack cohesion and consistency when addressing occurrences

Avoidant Mindset

- Diversity and Representation
 - Families express concern about that lack of diversity in student groups: White kids hang out with other white kids, international kids hang out together, etc.

“The white kids are hanging out with themselves and not a ton of mixing”
 - Lack of representation among staff and is alarming for parents - staff photos on walls visually are homogenous and don't communicate a value of diversity and inclusiveness. If there are people of color in the classroom, they are usually aides which sets a certain tone for parents.

“Out of all the teachers they've had, out of all the special education teachers, they've had out of all the aides, they've had in their classrooms over the years, I can count the people of color they've ever had as an adult presence in their

classroom. And while it's good that it's not zero, we could do a lot better in terms of the representation of the people that the adults that are there serving our students."

- Lack of representation of Black students in classrooms is alarming for parents.
- When BPS staff praise diversity in the community, there is a heavy emphasis on international diversity and isn't inclusive of LGBTQ+ students or Black and Brown students, making these families feel even more siloed.

"I do think we have a lot of cultural diversity. We don't have enough racial diversity"

- Communication

- Communication from school leaders and superintendents sometimes feels intentionally confusing for families. For example, they believe leaders leave out important pieces of information and details that could be helpful in telling the whole picture of an event or incident.
- Communication lacks transparency and is avoidant of addressing the root of incidents, i/e vague descriptions, lacks an educational component, lack of action to follow up statements of intolerance

"Last year, there was an incident where an Asian middle schooler was spit on. And just sort of in the context of other things that were going on in the schools, it seems to get very little attention and got a very slow response from the administration, especially, you know, we, we wrote letters, and we would, it was just an it was like pulling teeth to get them to address this"

"The way they communicate is kind of whitewashed. Everything is ambiguous. They give us these little snippets of information. And it just feels really disingenuous, like we as parents are left not knowing anything. And everything is presented in this positive light, which drives me nuts because things are not positive"

- Families fear racism, homophobia, and bullying will continue because students aren't comfortable telling teachers, staff, or leaders when incidents happen as parents find out months later sometimes.

"Something that made their child uncomfortable happened. They heard a homophobic slur in the hall, and that kind of thing, like, and they said, I didn't report it, but it's like they're saying it to me, because they want someone to know."

- Most equity and diversity talks and beliefs from school leaders and teachers seem to be performative and disintegrated lacking opportunities for real action. The main concern is that the many small groups working in pockets toward making BPS equitable are scattered, and lack collaboration for common goals, mission statements, and ideas.

“The school's commitment to equity has got to be more of a mission than just a statement. Basically, if you're in administration, and say this is what we're about, then they should, fully buy in and really lean into doing this type of work with the students, but also with the faculty, the faculty is going to have to do the work. There's going to be some level of training involved too”

- Not a strong focus on the needs of Black and Brown students, METCO students, and LGBTQ+ students to be fully integrated into the school system and culture.

“The kids who are targeted are either kids in the LGBTQ community, you know, or Asian Americans, black and brown kids, like they have to go to school with this trauma every day. There are no clear ramifications on what happens to the kids who are doing these things...And it makes it hard to thrive in that kind of environment.”

“An 18 year old white boy was assaulted by some men of color. And so there was a recent community forum which was supposed to be about issues of race. And it pretty much was all about that incident, when we have had a murder in town of a black man. And, you know, I went into this forum thinking that people were going to talk about that, but instead it was about this incident where a white person was assaulted. So that was very disappointing.”

“I think the fact that celebrating differences is minimized, like our black and brown children, children who live locally, there's really not an emphasis on their needs, their social and emotional needs. Primarily that's focused on our METCO program. Those children, but our children who live in Belmont actually have the same issues as our Mecco students, not transportation

Context-Neutral Mindset

- Communication and Trust
 - Principals and superintendents are not putting in the efforts families expect to build trust and create better experiences for families.

“So, yeah, so that was disappointing. This year, at the Chenery, there was a teacher who was white who addressed all of the Asian students in Mandarin Chinese, whether or not they were Chinese. And there was a lot of complaining about it from my daughter's friends. And it turns out, I did try to call the principal to talk about it with her. And it took a while for them to call me back.”
 - The most common experience families express is a lack of followup from school leaders when parents voice concerns.
 - Communication from school leaders gaslights families into thinking their students' experiences are not important or should not be of concern.

“I feel like there is that rhetoric or that when we express concerns as parents, especially for minority communities, we sometimes get a little bit of pushback to saying, ‘Oh, you're making this such a big deal’

- Family and community needs are not directly addressed when hate incidents occur
- Teachers seem to be overworked and don't make as much progress in creating more diverse and welcoming environments as they have potential to do.

"I think that there's a lot that could be done that hasn't been done at the elementary level. And there's some teachers who want really badly to do better, and do more, but they're extremely overworked and extremely overtaxed. And I've had conversations with teachers about trying to do things but can't"
- Culture of Belmont Community
 - The greater health of the Belmont community at large isn't considered or communicated in the conversation of equity at BPS schools.

"I think people's focus on their own identity, instead of thinking about the greater health of the community at large is causing a problem."

"There's just so many incidents at the high school and also at the Chenery, which were just really disturbing various racist language and slurs and demeaning language and homophobic language. And frankly, some violent language too I've been concerned with for way too long"
 - Families believe that equity initiatives should go beyond the walls of the schools to impact the culture of the community to be more inclusive of all cultures and identities.

"Here is in this particular town, you know, in Belmont, there's a very clear entrenched part of the community that is not ready for that change, and it can become confrontational."
 - Families of color have experienced racism from students as young as 8 years old on campus
- Social Media concerns

"We've talked about hate language and, and things that have happened physically in school, but my daughter has told me about a lot of really concerning comments in Snapchats and group chats where the language and those things are just as alarming and hateful. I think we saw more of it during the pandemic, but I know it still continues. I'm just like, really, really floored by what other students are saying about one another online."
- Curriculum
 - School texts are outdated and give students and families mixed messages about what is appropriate by teaching underlying messages.

"They were assigned a book and the teacher pointed out there's going to be some sexist and racist language in the book, and as we're reading the book, we're not going to read these books out loud. And so that was kind of"

understood by the class but what happened in my daughter's reading group was a kid, this kid was extremely focused on saying, 'I should be able to say the N word if I want to, it's in the book', or 'I should be able to use sex charts for women in the book, if I want to, because I'm reading'. So, you know, they kind of went back and forth for a while"

- Families express value for teaching classic texts (literature for example) but do want for their children to learn from voices in the past and present who represent different identities other than white and male.
- Families express a desire to be more involved with their children's learning but are not given many opportunities to collaborate with educators to do so.
- The target audience for equity initiatives in curriculum seems to be a white audience

"The administration itself has not done a very good job, on diversity, equity inclusion in terms of the curriculum. I don't think the programs that they've had in the past have been particularly effective. They also seem to be geared primarily toward white audiences and teachers in terms of like, teaching versus giving, like a holistic perspective, in terms of education, if that makes sense. Especially as we're looking at history and things like that"
- SEL curriculum lacks a cohesive focus for all students
 - Families appreciate SEL curriculum and values at the schools but because each school chooses their own curriculum, families face challenges with their children during transitional grades, hateful incidents, and other personal family incidents. They believe the SEL curriculum has the potential to fill in many gaps but is lacking in action.

"Every school in Belmont chooses its own social emotional curriculum. So there's no consistent SEL for the whole district. And that's not the case in other districts. You know, so in other districts, you know, they'll they'll have a number of different social emotional curriculum that they're all trained in. But every school in that district gets the whole umbrella of cleaning that is there in every school, but in Belmont, Burbank has its open circle. Wellington has its second step curriculum. Butler has I don't know which one is the second step or some other, but each principal gets to choose their own SEL curriculum. And then once you get to Chenery it's a hodgepodge of different things. They don't even have one name for what SEL curriculum they use and it's hard on me to keep track"
- School environments and staff are overwhelmingly white. It is not visually inclusive of all families from pictures on walls, etc and families don't always see themselves represented on campus.
- Racism and Discrimination

"I have a freshman currently, all three have experienced some form of racial discrimination from their peers, sometimes teachers knew and didn't report it. Right."

So again, that kind of goes back to the transparency thing, it speaks to the community saying, oh, you know, our kids have been locked up due to COVID. And, you know, they're just having some social issues. Bullshit. This has been going on for a very long time."

"And so there was a recent sort of community forum which was supposed to be about issues of race. And it pretty much was all about that incident, when we have had a murder in town of a black man. And, you know, I thought I had gone into this forum thinking that people were going to talk about that, but instead it was about this, no, this incident where a white person was assaulted. So that was very disappointing"

Comments on Specific Schools

Butler Elementary

Benefits:

- Parents enjoy how PTA is involved, organized, and creates fun activities for students such as having authors read to students and field trips learning about Wampanog Indians and Native American history. However parents feel like volunteer opportunities have decreased overtime and are unsure why.

DELTA's:

- Bullying incidents families and students experience is sometimes overlooked by teachers and school leaders with typically no resolutions and peace of mind for parents.

Burbank Elementary

Benefits:

- The annual multicultural night which includes learning opportunities, dance performances, traditional meals, and traditional garbs is something that families value and enjoy here.

DELTA's:

- Parents wish for school leaders to demonstrate their interests in family diversity and create opportunities to get to know families of color.

Chenery Middle School

DELTA's:

- The overwhelming presence of hate incidents here are of a major concern to families:
 - When an Asian student was spat on, there was a lack of attention from admin and school leaders, a lack of attention from BPS and town community despite spitting considering being assault and battery and the possible transmission of Covid
 - Swastikas are carved and drawn around campus and communications from school leaders attempt to mitigate the offense by using descriptions that try to make the attempt less serious
 - Hate speech circulates on social media sites such as snapchat, Tik-Tok, and other group chats and isn't discussed or addressed by school leaders or educators

- LGBTQ+ students experiencing discrimination by their peers and continue to be overlooked despite advocacy efforts
- When questionable teacher behavior and practices (comments and decisions they make) concern students, families, are brought to school leaders and admin attention, they hardly follow up with families or lack a timely response, don't take concerns seriously and rarely take any action to address concerns.
- PTA is structured in a way that excludes families and doesn't allow for maximum participation.
- Parents are overall tired and disappointed at the leadership and experience
- Families are not satisfied with multicultural nights. They describe them as missing learning opportunities and an overall lack of holistic parent and student engagement

Belmont High School

DELTA's:

- High school staff have witnessed homophobic slurs and death threats but failed to intervene or address incidents to school leaders.
- Multicultural Night is the only opportunity families get to bring aspects of their culture to BPS to be celebrated. However, this event lacks learning opportunities and is can feel exclusive to international cultures

Recommendations for BPS to Improve Family Experiences:

To improve an Equity Mindset

- Create a specific and consistent protocol to address incidents to families in groups who are targeted with explicit next steps, resolutions, consequences, and future preventative measures
- Create an anonymous protocol for students to report incidents to eliminate the burden of having to tell an adult
- Have a cohesive SEL curriculum program implemented in classrooms across the district - starting with inclusion classroom with special needs and neurotypical kids
- Expect school leaders and teachers to learn more about families background, name pronunciation, and history.

To improve an Aware Mindset

- Implement restorative justice circles and teaching for all students at all schools on a consistent basis led by experts
- Create and communicate clear guidelines and expectations for student behavior - what is acceptable and what isn't with consequences for non-tolerant actions
- Teacher training on how to have difficult conversations with students and how to turn harmful incidents into learning opportunities. Taking the conversation further than kindness.

To improve a Context-Mindset

- Have signs around the school halls with goals, missions, visuals that remind students of what cultures are represented, celebrate BLM, women's history, pride month, etc. for students to share and be proud of their identity, culture, and background
- Implement listening circles for families and affinity groups to include their voice and allow for participation in equity initiatives
- For celebration of culture to be embedded in regular curriculum and ingrained within the culture of community on a regular basis
- Communicate to families when teachers/ educators/ staff are doing DEI trainings or PD and other equity initiatives

Families of Color and METCO Families Focus Groups

The following are the benefits families describe of BPS culture according to the mindset discussed:

Equity Mindset

- Parents appreciated educators and school leaders understanding and responding to student needs by delivering food and learning materials to houses in Boston during COVID bridging gaps and making connections between Boston and Belmont through these initiatives.
- Belmont as a school district ecosystem has a lot of benefits and opportunities for students to succeed academically and economically in ways that other schools in their neighborhoods wouldn't allow them to.

The following are the DELTA's families describe of BPS culture according to the mindset discussed:

Equality Mindset

- Families experience school leaders often siding with more affluent families with credentials and other labels of Harvard professors when incidents occur with students.
"We went toe to toe with a bullying incident that wasn't treated fairly, in my opinion, or with much respect at all. The other parents brushed off the incident and put that they are Harvard professors and they didn't care... The child did not get any sort of consequence. But in school suspension when I threatened to tell the police"
- *International families are somewhat supported in learning about concepts of racism and diversity*
"All these concepts like racism, diversity, equity, these are things we learned here. I did not grow up knowing these concepts. I get to understand all these as I experience them,

and it's very new for us immigrant families to teach this to our kids. And because we need to assume that kids will, like, come across situations like this. And we're following the school's lead. There's so many things that I don't know. And there are so many things that I feel like I feel, I feel like I get caught off guard about how to teach how to talk about these things... there's some preconceptions about immigrant families already knowing some of the concepts about what's going on in this country or have been going on in the history of this country"

Avoidant Mindset

- Black families and METCO families are excluded from inclusion and equity efforts or discussions.

"So there's this recognition that there's two conversations happening with equity...one is of the people that are the dominant culture and then the one where I can only speak for myself as a person of color, as an immigrant."

- Multicultural night excludes Black families and is overused by school leaders, educators, and staff. This night acts as the answer to BPS inequities and as the solution to families of color feeling excluded.

"That's why I never made my way out there to the multicultural nights. It wasn't advertised in a way that included me. My child wasn't excited enough to go, my child felt like it wasn't for him. It didn't even attract me as a parent, I wasn't really sure what it was."

- Students experiencing racism, homophobia, bullying, and other hate acts:
 - Black students are targets for mistreatment, racism, and other microaggressions from their peers

"So he's been called the N word. And it's, you know, it's heartbreaking, because he didn't, he didn't understand what it meant...And it was not until maybe the second or third time, he shared it with me"

"...her hair is a frequent teasing topic. It's like, the go to, like, insult."

- Leadership has constantly brushes off bullying incidents involving racism, has mishandled bullying incidents with students and other families

"As long as we keep sanitizing hate incidents, we're not going to actually deal with what's happening. The real you know, the realities of what it is"

"We've had our own brushes in the school in terms of intolerance, microaggressions, etc. And as parents, you know, as immigrants, we usually don't like to get involved in the school and parachute in and do that. And I think that's very common. The moments that we actually have done that are supremely disappointing, where you leave the meeting, feeling good in one way that you've been placated and listened to, but it feels at the end of the day, over

and over again, very performative. So when you see the same issue that you are dealing with in fifth grade, and seventh grade and ninth grade in 12th grade, and then repeat the whole thing again, with your younger, younger kid, it becomes an issue”

- Teachers constantly call the Black students the wrong names and confuse their names with other black students

“I want to echo the sentiments shared about having representation, not just in the teachers, but also in the leadership to set an example. My child has had experiences with teachers, so he's been in environments where they're, you know, three or four black students, boys in eighth grade, and the teachers can't tell them apart. The teachers keep calling him somebody else's name. And I'll tell you, they know they look nothing alike. I look at them, and they are starkly different to me. And so he's kind of gone through these things, where he wants to make sure he looks different. So they don't confuse him with the other person, and he wants to change his hair, and so on, because he feels that will help folks be able to differentiate him.”

- METCO leadership rarely gets seriously involved when students are experiencing racism and microaggressions from classmates and doesn't always advocate for families

“It was a girl who was bullying my son, putting scissors to his head, trying to cause hair, hitting him with boots, the teacher observed this behavior yet the teacher did not report...the METCO director didn't even get involved. So basically, a lot of times in a situation whether my son's in the right or of my son's in the wrong, the biggest advocate”

- Communication for harmful incidents is sanitized and watered down. Parents want to know exactly what happened, what was said without it being whitewashed because they need to know if they're targets and how/for what.

“Like, why don't you stand up and talk about white supremacy, including in our town, it also, this isn't Belmont, these aren't our values”

- Teachers and staff avoidant mindset has an impact on families connecting with schools, student learning, and overall sense of belonging.

“I don't want my child to continue feeling like she's not welcome, or she's being picked on by her teacher anymore but she's afraid to even show emotion in the classroom anymore”

“Sometimes I've raised the question to teachers ‘what are you doing at the moment to support children of color in the classroom?’ I have never gotten a response of any kind. Like I asked it last week, in my daughter's parent teacher conference, since the Black and Brown affinity groups haven't started yet. ‘In the meantime, what sorts of things

are you doing in the classroom?' And the teacher said 'I don't know. I'll look into those' and then nothing.... It's just been kind of like not talked about out at all"

Context-Neutral Mindset

- School leaders and teachers overlook families' ideas on how to connect Boston families to Belmont families as their suggestions are overlooked and rarely implemented.
- Parents don't feel valued by BPS and are used
 - "I feel like sometimes I'm often used as a token parent myself... Like come bring her in for the DEI. Like yeah, here's our black parent"*
 - "I'm wondering if the PTO would be more favorable, favorable towards me, they knew that I had money to provide but I feel like I'm very disposable right now"*
- Communication with families is insufficient
 - English is the only communication between parents and staff which is not satisfactory for many families. When they receive pdf's from teachers or school leaders, they are unable to translate the document.
 - "Something else that I learned is that communicating with families can be problematic, because it's an English only communication. And the PDFs cannot be translated through Google Translate"*
 - Email is the main source of communication between parents and staff which is not ideal for all families.
 - Families are not notified right away when their children are falling behind academically or struggling socially.
 - "There are some teachers who I think ignore him when he's struggling. And when they're getting failing grades, nobody reaches out to me as the parent to say, your student is not doing well, or struggling. I've had experiences where there's a failing grade, and the teacher reaches out immediately with an email saying, you know, this was the first test or the second test, and I'm concerned, you know, what's happening at home interest, whereas in the high school, I'm noticing a lack of interest. And it is just mind boggling to me... and I'm holding Belmont to a higher level of interaction, and I'm just concerned and connection and care for students, for Black students."*
- Representation
 - Families are not represented in the schools environment
 - "And there's, there's nothing like no posters, or no nothing when I walk into the schools to show different skin colors, and mom's looking different than dads, and anything like that."*
 - Participation from families is very limited to be involved in structural decisions

“The traditional PTO/ PTA structure of having families or parents caregivers in only two meetings for the entire year. And if you can make those two meetings, you don't get a vote.”

“I haven't had a chance to do a thing at the Chenary. I went to the first meeting and tried to get involved. And it was seriously shut down. Like, oh, we have the meeting at some unavailable time. I work so there's nowhere for me to participate, but the moms and you know the people who get involved there is a very tight and close circle... and they do an amazing job. I'm not saying anything against them, they do an amazing job on the activities and the events and all the volunteers and things but I felt there was nothing for me in that part.”

Comments on Specific Schools

Butler:

Benefits:

- Families appreciate the efforts of the principal to learn students and families personally
- Parents feel supported by the English Language Learning support staff
- Teachers and staff create great activities for students but lack volunteer opportunities for families due to availability and times

DELTA's:

- It's common for students of color to experience bullying and have difficult times fitting in with their peers in the early grades

Wellington

DELTA's:

- Families describe staff and admin as hesitant to commit to an anti-racism mission statement and don't take actions to address inequities

“We were talking about whether or not anti racism should be put in the, in the mission statement. And for me, I thought, why is that even a question? So I'm still learning about the hesitancy to just bring up the word racism”
- The design of the PTO is inaccessible and doesn't allow for parents to participate much. The voting process is exclusive and only 2 meetings happen all year making participation for many families inaccessible.
- Families describe their children's kindergarten transition experience to be a challenge if they are not already connected to families. Teachers and school leaders have not been successful in including and welcoming Black and Brown students. Families describe teacher behavior as inappropriate as they mistreat students of color. Some examples include the following:
 - Ignoring students of color when they raise their hands,
 - Not acknowledging positive behavior,

- Deficit framing students and only highlighting or communicating to parents about negative behavior;
- Not reporting physical injuries when students get hurt

Chenery Middle School

DELTA's:

- Families who have students in elementary schools express concerns and anxiety about advancing to the middle school
 - “I generally hear negative things about Chenery and the experience of kids at Chenery and what gives me pause is that my son is already anxious about it.”*
- Uncomfortable experiences and micro aggressions from staff to students and families is frequent
 - Many families' only interactions with future educators and other aides have been negative experiences. Some families describe interactions with specialists and other aides as awkward and uncomfortable.
 - “The experience with that teacher was very awkward and she didn't seem to care about helping my child. I mean, it's strong words to say, but there's multiple data points”*
 - Students experience microaggressions from teachers and classmates
 - Families describe teachers as being impatient with them and not understanding of unique consequences
 - Children ask parents to avoid seeing specific aids and staff
- Families lack trust with educators and school leaders

Belmont High School

DELTA's:

- Teachers are aware of racism and homophobia, observe it in and out of the classroom, and sometimes don't report it or respond at the moment advocating for students of color. Parents usually aren't informed about incidents until it's too late.
- There is little to no trust between admin and some families because they don't take student experiences and conflicts seriously. When conflicts arise, it takes much effort and advocacy from families to find simple resolutions and solutions.
- Parents are not always notified when their students are struggling academically or socially: teachers don't always take the initiative to offer extra help, and don't reach out to families with concerns until students are deep in a hole and are just given a bad grade. Teachers and staff don't interact or attempt to build relationships with Black or Brown/ METCO families.
- Graffiti that invokes genocidal behavior, “Kill the N*****” in the boys bathroom was responded to with talks to all students about kindness and parents of color (as well as all other families) think school leaders and teachers didn't respond appropriately or enforce values or consequences.

Advanced Math Program

Parents are extremely upset and confused as to why the Advanced Math Program was canceled. There was little to no communication as to why it was being canceled and the information admin and school leaders gave to parents was misleading and false despite families' multiple attempts to provide solutions. .

"We were trying to push the Chenery to find out why they were canceling the advanced math program. And we just, you know, I mean, it was a struggle to figure out what was behind the reason for just doing away with it altogether."

"The way the communication happened in terms of why was canceled, you know, how the program was run, it just left kind of a sour taste in many people's mouth"

"We, as a group of parents offered multiple possible solutions, and most of them were not accepted"

Families still have not received clear communication for this decision. Parents see the cancelation of the AP Math program as an Anti-Asian initiative with mal-intent because it was canceled as more Asians began joining the program.

"As the number of Asians increased in these programs, the less inclined the administration became to carry on with and I guess I would like for some kind of conversation around it. I don't want to make presumptions, you know, I think that the school district is fantastic, my kids have had a really good experience. But I do think that Belmont as a school district is not great at paying attention to people who to kids who might need a bit more challenge"

In other cases, some parents were unaware this program existed until they heard about it from other families. The school did not advertise it to all families. In order to be in this program, families had to request details to participate and were at times caught off guard with school leader's responses. Schools only let students in this program if parents commit to provide extra support and that student will work extra hard to keep up.

Families express frustration as the school leaders mislead and lacked honest communication about the cancellation of the AP Math Program. As a result, some students are not being academically challenged enough in their math classes.

Recommendations for BPS to Improve Families Experiences:

To improve a Context-Centered Mindset:

- Host open forums for families of color to express their voices and schedule it around their availability
- All schools make volunteer opportunities available around parent schedules
- Implement a process where families partner for half day to connect students outside of school

- To have a What's app group for each language spoken/ background/ to communicate important messages about opportunities and other announcements to families in their respective language
- School leaders need to lead immigrant families and provide opportunities to learn about racism, and DEI so they can teach to their families - help teaching correct language, context, and identity, and what's going on in the country. They are uncomfortable
- Represent diversity visually with posters of kids with different skin colors, moms looking different than dads, multi-racial families

To improve an Equity Mindset:

- Have more opportunities for parents to be involved in elementary day activities, for teachers to introduce parents to each other,
- Provide international families with more targeted support for them to learn about racism in the American context and teach their children about it as well

To improve an Aware Mindset:

- Educate student body on microaggressions, racism with explicit details on what common actions/ behaviors they do that fall into these categories: touching hair, making comments about Black hair, calling students out their name with stereotypical cultural references, singling out classmates because of their identity
- Bring back host families for international students
- Have resources for international families and all families to learn about anti-racism parenting in the context of racism in the US context. They currently feel expected to come into the Belmont community already with an understanding of these nuanced topics
- For multicultural night, have someone at some point in the event talk about what it means to be inclusive and culturally competency through narratives

Special Education Families Focus Groups

The following are the benefits families describe of BPS culture according to the mindset discussed:

Equity Mindset

- LABBB program is a wonderful experience for students and families
- Integrated preschool is a great experience for students and families, mainly due to the well trained and experienced SPED teachers. Families describe them as very dedicated to their job, the students and their learning, and the family

We have been to the LABBB collaborative program, but even before that, we went to the integrated preschool. I think we have probably one of the best integrated preschools I've ever seen in my life. It is an excellent program. I wish that the town of Belmont would look at how excellent they do the integrated preschool and take cues from that and have it be in the rest of the Belmont School System"

"In the integrated preschool, I give a double thumbs up along with everyone else, what an amazing program. It is not just if your child is already on an IEP and needs those services. But for the peer students who come in. And I would echo what is said that, you know, it's such a positive way to start off your school experience on both sides for all children, but then it disappears"

"My son started with the integrative preschool when he was three. And it was a wonderful experience...it really set the bar high in terms of what I expected a special ed and moving forward at the preschool."

- At all schools and programs, teachers are the main reason students and families have good experiences:
 - Special education teachers have been phenomenal and amazing for families

"Every special educator that I've had in this district has been so dedicated to their job and their students. And I have no complaints about the teachers themselves and their dedication. It's a system issue, not a teacher issue"
 - Teachers have the power to ease transitional moments for students and families and when done, it creates a great experience for all parties.

"He's not really enjoyed school until this year, his teacher has really changed his life, in terms of accommodating him, and being there for him and encouraging him in a way that he needs"
- Students are able to bring friends with them when they are pulled out of class

Context-Centered Mindset

- Some parents receive reports with pictures about what their students do in the classroom and appreciate the communication, trust, and the learning their children are a part of

The following are the DELTA's families describe of BPS culture according to the mindset discussed:

Equality Mindset

- Aids are usually not SPED trained, sometimes don't understand a child's need, and has been the reason why many families resort to out-of-district placement for their children.

"If the school says, 'let's put you back in a mainstream classroom', what they typically do is give you an aid that is not specialized and/or trained. And that aid does not know your child's issues, or how to deal with them. And the teacher usually does not either. So while I'm all about inclusion, for my child to be back into mainstream, part of the school system, they just tack on an aid and say, 'Oh, I've checked my boxes, I've done my job'. And they're going to regress again. I've seen it not only with my child, but I've seen this with many, many other kids in Belmont"

- Students going through transitions are not supported as much as they should be
 - When students go to mainstream classrooms with aids, their success isn't guaranteed because needs might not be met
- Student placement is inconsistent with needs: some students are inappropriately placed and/or are not given appropriate needs. Unless families notice and advocate for their children, this is overlooked
 - Families who consistently track their children's progress and/or have more than one child in BPS with or without special needs notice and inconsistency from SPED leaders in measuring and evaluating student progress.

"I've seen the process both with like a child who is fully included, and a child who is in a sub separate classroom. And those two experiences are not the same."

"There's a complete inconsistency in services. In my experience if your child has more mid level needs, for example, my daughter has several learning disabilities, I'm shocked to hear what was just said about someone being offered something other than extended school year for the summer. Because my kid just gets shoved into the same extended school year, it doesn't matter if she can read or not. That's what she got. And it's not an appropriate placement for her. But that's all they would offer"

- Some families express their children not receiving the number of hours of services that were listed in their children's IEP's and SPED leaders acknowledging it but not presenting or creating any solutions.

"As far as my son's academic progress there they're not really pushing for that. Okay, like for two years in a row, including a few pandemic year, my son made no progress or did not meet his he made the most tiny incremental progress academically, he did not meet his IEP goals and did not receive all his listed services and was not receiving the number of hours during the pandemic of services that are in his IEP"

Avoidant Mindset

- Families express their children are simply not included in general education classrooms as general ed. teachers training lacks awareness of SPED students and integration techniques:
 - Regular school staff are usually out of the loop and lack understanding of what students need and how they can help

"They blame the student for their disability. And they don't want to be inclusive and same for some of the older aides that have been there a long time. They are punitive towards the students for their disabilities"
 - Many teachers with SPED students aren't trained to deal with students with needs and that struggle with academics go are related to needs/ abilities

- SPED students have a challenge with the high class size and little effort is done to alleviate these challenges
- LABB program only has one person of color on staff while majority of kids in LABB program are students of color
- There is an inequity in how resources are distributed to students. The services students receive depend on factors such as family involvement and socio-economic status.

“The services option they offered me was so poorly planned... not even a realistic ask. So I had to plan a summer for my child and asked them to reimburse me. So I came up with a plan and he approved it. I did it two years in a row. And they reimbursed me the new year if I showed all my receipts, but he said the way I got it approved was as long as my team felt like it met all the goals of his IEP whether academic, social, all those things, and it did.”

Context-Neutral Mindset

- Schools and classrooms are not inclusive for students of color with disabilities, students experience racism and ableism from classmates with little to no intervention from teachers and school leaders. Families are sometimes met with pushback from school leaders when they bring these issues to their attention.

“There’s a complete lack of communication in terms of anything related to special education and my child’s services. but more than anything is a constant pushback when I bring something to their attention. I feel like it’s a constant fight and I don’t understand why”
- To be successful in fighting for children’s needs, parents must spend thousands of dollars out of pocket on external testing and other legal fees for a lawyer and/or advocate to be involved in every step of the process.
- Families are burdened with proving to SPED leadership that their child has a special need if their needs are not physically visible.

“It got to the point where we unilaterally placed her and hired a lawyer to get what she needs out of the district. And I hear that story over and over from parents here. Until you go out and you spend out of your own pocket 1000s and 1000s and 1000s of dollars to convince them your kid actually does have some needs, you don’t get what you need, unless the needs are, you know, so noticeable and extreme that it’s, you know, they can’t get away with not providing it”

“The inequities of how services are doled out for students with learning disabilities in particular, and the differences based on which teacher you happen to have, which elementary school you happen to be at, and how much money you’re able to spend out of your own pocket for advocates and lawyers to try to get what you need is just it’s gut wrenching to me”

"...if you don't have that person, an advocate at the school as your person, it's a constant battle. And I have been left to feel like I need to hire a lawyer and spend money to get what I feel like are his basic needs are met, which are minor things"

"I feel like there's way more people with lawyers here than there should be"

"We've had a very similar experience where we were being continually denied for requests until we said we're gonna bring in an advocate. And then they started to take us serious."

- Families must learn on their own how the system works if they're new to the district, the country, or simply the American educational System
 - Understanding the complexities of the SPED program and how to navigate and advocate for their children is left for families to figure out without much support.

"If you don't know the process, you don't understand what the process is, your child could be waiting a really long time for even the most simple of supports."
 - Black and Brown families and international families are impacted the most and their students are not getting adequate support in the meantime

- Communication to families about evaluations isn't forthcoming or comforting

"We usually just get an email from somebody with no introduction. It's just like, 'hey, I'm going to pull your child out of the classroom and do some evaluations on her. Is that okay with you?' And well, we know, the IEP process and evaluations are ongoing. But it's just, I guess there's no, like, plan or structure, we have no idea who she's meeting with during the day or what they're even evaluating and how? Because it's just, you know, her in a room with, with 'who knows', it's been kind of a black box for us."

- Teachers communicating with families on how to help students is rare

"But this is the expectation where a teacher will say 'we see that you're struggling with this, how can we help you cope, rather than like you're disruptive to the class, and we need to figure out how to handle this' approach was a very delightful way of communication. I would love to see that more and not the exception".

"I don't know how to navigate any of this system appropriately and the teachers are scared to help you. I mean, but they help, but say, 'don't tell anybody I told you this, but this is what you need to do X, Y, and Z to get your child on an IEP because he desperately needs one'

SPED Data Collection Process

- Parents must collect and keep their own records and data to analyze to draw conclusions and track the progress of their children because SPED leaders do not do this.

“When I asked about report cards, I asked about prior meetings the previous year regarding, you know, their own concerns about how he is presenting in the class. And they said, ‘We don’t like to use report cards as data. And that we’re not seeing issues in class related to this’ even though I’ve already had a meeting regarding it. So it just seems like there’s mixed messaging, it seems like there’s no kind of real standard as to, you know, how they operate”

“I don’t think Belmont does a good enough job capturing where we were versus where we are now. Like, I only got a snapshot for his 2021. And had I not kind of dug into the 2018 testing and looked at his IEP and kind of tracked the progress reports, I wouldn’t know. Why aren’t they also drawing conclusions like that? Why aren’t they tracking that and making that more accessible to parents?”

- Parents are not given any information before IEP meetings and leave meetings confused. Parents want to have information such as evaluation progress, goals, services and accommodations being offered, but they receive no data. Or if they do, they get very little data without much explanation hours before the meeting.

“But I’m constantly coming into IEP meetings with little to no information. Like, I literally get nothing before the IEP meeting, to know what data they’re basing their their goals on, and the what services and accommodations are being offered to him. I have no idea because I’ve got nothing like literally nothing. And when I asked for it, they’re like, ‘well, it’s just a reevaluation”

“I’m not getting any data. Or I’m getting very little data. And when I get it, it’s at the last second before a meeting. Like legally, they have to give it to me 48 hours ahead of time?”

“I get my reports, like 24 hours, if I’m lucky ahead of time”

- Parents will receive provisional IEPs that are wrong documents
“On multiple occasions, I’ll get a provisional IEP sent to me, and then three hours later, an apology saying it was the wrong one. They’ll send one they made with some edits. My lawyer that I’m paying, however much for like just wasted an hour reviewing an incorrect document and now I get to pay her for another. These are things that actually affect people. And I personally don’t believe that there is strong leadership from the top of the Student Services Department on down to encourage change in the direction”
- Paperwork does not always reflect common agreements and understandings and is often different than what is discussed in meetings.

Main concerns

- Timelines are rarely clear and/or deadlines are rarely met.

"...It's been about three months, I think they said that it was only going to be 30 days to complete the assessments. But it's obviously way beyond that now. We're hearing from other folks that it's I guess it's pretty normal for them to miss deadlines"

- Meetings are unorganized and uncomfortable for families

"Our external evaluator joined our IEP meeting and she called me afterward and asked if that was a normal meeting? I said, 'Yes, why?' And she said, 'it was the most disorganized, and oddly run IEP meeting I've ever witnessed in my entire career'. And that was her outside perspective of how oddly Belmont manages this stuff. And like that was really validating to me, because I've always felt like why is it so hard? What is so difficult about this? They shouldn't be doing this every day. It should be easier, we should have more support, this should be better"
- SPED leaders disregard and do not include previous reports, records, and data of evaluations of students' needs and experiences at other schools in their evaluations and placement process.
- No consistent way to track student progress and teachers are not always included

"The teachers are silenced in IEP meetings. They're not allowed to talk by the liaisons, or the autism inclusion specialists, particularly if they are just there to save the money. They're not about helping the students. That's the feeling that I got all through elementary school"
- Parents are given conflicting information about ELL evaluation processes and what services are available for students coming from nuanced language situations, making qualifications for some services unclear.

"They flagged our child because we're coming back from abroad after living there for years. And originally, we were told that she needs to get some ELL services And then about a month later, when we talked to the school officials, they said we don't need this service. But for more than half her life, she was living in a foreign country. So I guess we're just kind of confused about evaluations for English language services. And then we were later told, like, oh, well, you actually don't need that. Do we qualify for this or not? It just hadn't been very clear for us"
- When parents ask clarifying questions or explanations about decision making, SPED leadership do not provide details to their evaluation and testing process leaving parents to feel like decisions are arbitrary.
- Families believe leaders can do better for SPED families

"If they were to spend the money that they're spending on litigation and out of district placements, and they actually funneled that into making a robust, special ed. Program, it might improve. I almost feel like they believe that because we're such a high performing school district that special needs don't exist, it's really rare, or we can just ignore it. Because we have such high achieving students that are scoring really high on the MCAS. We're gonna funnel out all those kids who don't score high on the MCAS,

added district placement, so that our MCAS scores are absolutely inflated. And it's disgusting to me, because it's so clear that that's what they're doing.

District Leaders

- Families express a lack of trust in district and SPED services and have communicated this to district leaders and still have not seen any changes.
 - "My confidence with the district. I feel like a lot of their efforts have been to just check a box and move forward and not necessarily be sincere."*
 - "It seems like they are really quick to tell us what they can't do before they're trying to tell us what they can do."*
- SPED and district leaders are inaccessible and don't respond to emails from parents in adequately
 - "I feel like they're inaccessible. There's been lots of opportunities to engage people in. But I feel like there's been a lot of missed opportunities, I can tell you, for sure, I have no trust, zero trust that anyone is looking out for my child"*
 - "he doesn't seem to respond to emails"*
- Families were not consulted about returning to in-person learning during Covid-19 and leaders were not thinking creatively about the needs for all students and families during Covid and the decisions for school models.

Specific schools

Burbank

DELTA's:

- SPED classrooms are not available for students so the only two options for families to choose is the LABB program or regular classroom with modified lessons and accommodations.
- Parents are not satisfied with the messages they receive from staff about student progress.
- Staff sometimes offer RTI instead of IEP for families because it's less paperwork and makes it harder to track students. Families experienced this being explicitly stated.
- Families have had poor experiences with inclusion specialists and inclusive classrooms:
 - Students are not being fully included in classrooms with aides and are sometimes asking parents to avoid their aides.
 - Students of color have an especially hard time in inclusive classrooms. Teachers frequently send them to the office for behavioral issues instead of having the resources, trainings, and mindsets to properly address student needs to create equitable solutions
 - Aides often make parents feel uncomfortable and is unclear why

Wellington

Benefits:

- Summer programming and help with right fit for students has been a positive experience - realizing there isn't just a one size fit all approach.
- Teachers demonstrate asset framed mindset for students with disabilities but parents would like to see it more in other teachers and in other schools.

DELTA's:

- Students needs not being met sometimes resort in students retaking a grade:
 - Families are advised for their children to retake a grade if they are struggling academically despite not having been successful in receiving proper intervention and needs.

“My child was told that he was struggling socially. By the end of the school year, I was told he was doing okay socially, but he just wasn't grasping the pre reading pieces and they suggested repeating the grade and we declined because he hadn't had any intervention. Doing the grade again the same wouldn't miraculously make him realize how reading works. And so we requested testing, we did not get an IEP right away, it took another year, had to get to the point where he was disruptive to the class before there was attention given to what might be the problem”
- Process of student evaluations is not communicated clearly to families:
 - They are unaware of when their child is getting pulled out of the classroom for testing and are sometimes notified via email after the fact.
 - There is a lack of planning, collaboration, and structure in the process and parents are frustrated not being included or informed who their child is with at school.

Butler

DELTA's:

- Families describe multiple poor experiences with teachers not including their children in the classroom.
 - Some students are ignored or labeled as disruptive when they simply aren't receiving the services listed in their IEP and families have a difficult time getting administration to take action
 - Teachers have made offensive comments about children with disabilities and intentionally exclude students, laugh at their students, and simply don't meet student IEP goals.

“My child's Butler kindergarten teacher, it was a disaster. Frankly, she did not feel that she used to attend his IEP meeting. She did not include him in her class...She did things and thought my son was too stupid to know she left him out. And it was funny to her. It is extra upsetting in a way because as far as my son was concerned, that was his teacher and he would be dying to talk to his teacher. He didn't understand what she was doing. You know, he fully thought

that was his teacher, but she obviously fully did not think he was her student. And she made very little attempt to hide that”

- Teachers don't think it's necessary to attend IEP meetings and are not always required to participate when they are present.

*Note: Black, African American and other Hispanic families were not represented in these specific focus groups. Majority students in the LABB program are students of color but the LABB program only has one staff member of color.

African American families are rendered invisible in this analysis as we did not hear their voices.

Recommendations for BPS to improve families Experience

- Hold SPED leaders to higher standards by holding them accountable for being professional and ethical.
- Require Equity PD sessions centering students of color and students with disabilities for SPED leadership.
- Aides should be required to go through a more rigorous SPED vetting process
- Maintain the same SPED liaison for students as they progress throughout the years.
- Create and implement a rigorous, and robust data collection and tracking process for all SPED Students that is easily accessible and understood by families.
- Adopt an inclusive SEL curriculum for SPED students and integrated classrooms.
- Host recurring open forum discussions for families to talk about their experiences with SPED leaders, district leaders, and educators to ensure open communication and establish trust between families and staff.

***Refer to SPED Policy and Procedural Manual Audit for more in depth-policy recommendations**

Open Call Focus Group Summary and Analysis

Represented in these focus groups were families from many backgrounds including white American families, International families, families of color, and SPED families. The perception of diversity and equity varied from families and was highly influenced by families' historic background.

Regardless of family background, there is an overall concern that racism and prejudice will continue to exacerbate at the middle and high school if preventative measures are not taken seriously and quickly. There was a sense of worry with families when talking about the experiences Black and Brown, LGBTQ+, and Asian students face as targets of hate violence, the trauma it causes, and the constant expectation for students to thrive academically. Families are concerned that if there are no clear consequences, and as long as families only care about inequities and hate incidents when their

children are impacted, then there will be no real change in BPS. Families communicate a strong need for intervention through SEL learning and other initiatives to cultivate a culture shift.

There is an overall lack of trust between families and BPS school leaders, superintendents, and staff. Families have identified multiple opportunities for schools, educators, and staff to build trust, however families feel as though these opportunities are not being taken advantage of. Nonetheless, many families remain satisfied with their children's academic learning.

On the other hand, there were some families who have had great experiences at BPS and see little to no inequities at BPS. There are also families with children who have had wonderful experiences without any problems throughout elementary, middle, and high school and are satisfied in all areas of their experience. They've had collaborative teachers, school leaders, and accommodations. There are also some beliefs that children are being bombarded with conversations centering on equity and that these topics when taught should be fun to read, learn, and write about.

Families of Color and METCO Families Summary and Analysis

It was expressed multiple times that many families didn't feel comfortable going into detail about racist interactions, experiences, and other encounters in Belmont because of the emotional labor, lack of trust between schools and families and inauthenticity of past equity efforts but felt it was important to know that it happens way to often at BPS schools.

Despite some similarities, METCO families and Black and Brown families have very unique and different experiences, comfort levels, and trust with BPS and initiatives centering equity. Some Black families express feelings of tokenism where school leaders only reach out when they need them to represent BPS values of diversity. For similar reasons, such as not donating, families express feelings of being disposable by school leaders. Economic status influences the ways in which BPS values families of color which creates barriers between these families.

International families have never had to consider concepts like DEI or racism in their context so inequities and issues in BPS are new to many immigrant families. However, they are still expected by the district to talk and teach their children about these concepts with little support.

There is also a stark difference between international families of color and those white-passing international families. While white-passing international students don't experience racism, they are still subject to bullying and teasing for being different via language, religion, or accent.

Special Education Families Summary and Analysis

Families express that the integrated preschool is a great experience for families and exceeds expectations. Families are satisfied with the care, attention, and accommodations their children receive from the experienced and quality educators. However, once students transition into

elementary school, simple accommodations and/ or new goals to be added to IEPs become a struggle. Families often rely on outside evaluations and an attorney's legal support and advocacy.

Families also express that although their experience with SPED diminishes in quality as students enter elementary schools, the teachers make the biggest difference in their children's experience. Families are mostly satisfied when teachers step in and make great efforts in understanding and meeting students' individual needs. Some of these efforts include teachers who email *and* call parents to check in, updates parents on the progress made and setbacks students face, who offer support and motivation to students and families. At times, teachers advise parents on student needs but ask parents to not admit to SPED leadership that they received information from the teacher. However, teachers who demonstrate these efforts are described as a fluke. Some other factors parents describe in how their students' needs are met include class size, which elementary school they happen to be at, and how much out of pocket expenses families can afford to spend on outside evaluations, lawyers, and advocates.

On the other hand, some general education teachers have made student and families experiences unpleasant and grave. Teachers are not required and do not always attend IEP meetings, creating a lack of communication and understanding between all parties involved in student success. Some general education teachers and instructional aids are punitive toward students for having a disability and resort to punishing them for their behavior as opposed to understanding and meeting their needs. Teachers and other instructional aids have blamed students for their disability and make their experience worse.

SPED family focus groups question whether SPED leadership may be out of compliance with standards, procedures, and protocols and doesn't incorporate best practices or equitable educators' mindsets.

SPED leadership are unorganized in the evaluation and placement process and are out of compliance with standards and protocols. If a student's disability is not visible, parents must hire outside evaluators and provide evidence that the student has special needs. Parents do not trust SPED leadership and receive pushback when advocating for their children. As a result, parents will not speak to SPED leaders or attend any IEP meetings without an educational condustant, advocate, or lawyer. In order for SPED leadership to provide students with proper services, parents must figure out their children's needs, put it in writing and take initiative to place students in appropriate programs. Without lawyers or other legal experts, parents receive constant pushback and requests are often denied. In addition, students are often misdiagnosed, making the only way for students to be accurately diagnosed is by having an outside evaluation to hold leadership accountable for their evaluations.

As a result of our main concerns listed below in the findings, students are not given proper services and needs are not met in early grades in elementary school. These needs compound as students get older and academic success declines so SPED leaders place them out of district because their needs cannot be met. Parents are under a common belief that if needs are met earlier, many problems can

be prevented. There is a common concern that there is a motive behind SPED leadership reporting to send students to an out-of-district placement instead of providing them with the services they need. Parents also are interested in understanding what the SPED leadership litigation budget is and how that money can be used to serve students in lieu of fighting with parents.

Overall, feedback from families suggests SPED Leadership does not exhibit any of the equitable mindsets in practice. They embed practices of gaslighting and gatekeeping in the student evaluation and IEP process. Families express distrust in SPED leadership, school admin, staff, and district at large and feel like the inequities and malpractice in the SPED program are intentionally overlooked. Contributing to these sentiments are a lack of consistency in SPED evaluations, lack of basic detailed and current data, and lack professionalism leaving families to feel cornered, frustrated, and sometimes helpless. They do not have the best interest of students with special needs.

There is also concern about the SPED litigation budget and if it is influencing the way resources are dispersed and provided. In addition, many students of color are either wrongfully evaluated as SPED or sent to the LABB program or other out-of-district placements with the reason their needs cannot be met at BPS. Further investigation into this is necessary to really understand the workings and malpractice of the BPS SPED department.

*Many of the SPED focus group findings align with our SPED policy audit conducted in the summer of 2021.

Policy and Disciplinary Analysis

Analytical Framework

We reviewed all sections of the Belmont Public Schools Policy and Procedures Manual according to the Equity Mindsets and Consequences framework, as policies are a reflection of the mindsets and practices of the people who wrote them. These policies can either hinder or bolster equity across BPS through the systemic level norms they establish. The following sections highlighted showed notable policies and procedures that demonstrate either equitable or inequitable mindsets, according to the Mindset Framework. Recommendations are also included to shift inequitable language in specific policies and procedures, to reflect equitable knowledge, standards and practices.

Overall, the most notable policies and sections from the BPS Policy and Procedural Manual in this analysis are:

- **1006P Procedure: Public Participation at SC Meetings; 1017 Citizen Suggestions and Complaints; 1019 Complaints Concerning Instructional Materials.**

- **4009 Professional Development.**
- **5012 Freedom of Expression**
- **6008 Curriculum Development and Evaluation; 6009 Controversial Issues**
- **Additional Procedural Manual Findings**
- **Future Directions and Limitations**

Please review these policies analyses in particular below. Any sections and subsections of the Policy and Procedural Manual that are not included in this analysis either fell outside the scope of the Audit or were not considered relevant to this analysis. Broad findings and recommendations that apply across the Policy and Procedural Manual are listed at the end of the “Section Specific Findings and Recommendations.”

This Policy Manual Audit is organized by the following subject areas:

0000 General

1000 Community Relations

2000 Administration

*3000 Business and Finance

4000 Personnel

5000 Students

6000 Instruction

*7000 Non-instructional services

8000 School Committee governance and operation

** - These sections were not included in this analysis, as it was out of the scope of this Audit’s Equity Framework.*

Section Specific Findings and Recommendations

Section: General 000

0001 Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination

Benefits: Aware Mindset

Statements reflect an understanding that “race, color, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, active military or veteran status, age... ancestry,

disability” impact daily experiences of students and families. These statements reflect an awareness of structural inequalities or power imbalances that affect the aforementioned demographics of students and families.

DELTA's: Equality Mindset

Statements that all students will be given “equal opportunity” to a variety of services and activities at school should be shifted towards equitable opportunities. Equitable opportunities, rather than “equal opportunities” consider larger issues in a society to help address low student academic performance, and provide subjugated students with additional supports in order to achieve.

0006 Bullying and Hazing

DELTA's: Avoidant Mindset

Provides a blanket statement which applies to *all* students. Instead, an Aware and Equity focused mindset should also specifically protect the most vulnerable students, minorities, from bullying - in addition to protecting all students. Especially since there is a history of potentially hate-based acts against minority students in the district by other students.

Section: Community Relations 1000

1001 Community Relations Goals; 1003 Coverage of School Committee Meetings; 1005 Cooperation with Local Media; 1006 School Committee Meetings

Benefits: Context Centered

These sections are well focused on the community and seek to build on home-school connections to support interactions that promote student learning. In particular, the goals of maintaining a “continuous, two way process of communication and cooperative effort...,” and “increase mutual understanding of educational and community needs and establish partnerships to enhance learning opportunities and cooperation in the work of improving the schools,” are context centered. Attempts to build connections between the community and schools are reflected in the allowed coverage of meetings, providing the public with pertinent information concerning schools, and encouraging the public to attend meetings.

1011 Volunteers in Schools

DELTA's: Context Neutral, Avoidant, Equality Mindsets

This section lacks any contextual awareness or equity mindsets on how to make sure there is an opportunity here for all families. These procedures should account for the times and availability for families to volunteer and establish opportunities to participate.

1012 Public Performances by Students

Benefits: Aware Mindset

The policy “*No student is excluded because of race, color, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, national origin or disability,*” promotes Equitable, Asset framing, and Aware Mindsets. Beyond inclusion though, these students’ performances should be equitably supported, funded, and protected.

1014 Awards to Schools

DELTA’s: Equality And Context Neutral Mindsets

It is critical that these policies ensure that families who can give more are not given special treatments, and that families who aren’t able to donate or gift are treated equitably, and not as expendable.

1017 Citizen Suggestions and Complaints; 1019 Complaints Concerning Instructional Materials.

DELTA’s: Avoidant and Context Neutral

While this section references procedures that citizens must follow in order to make specific kinds of complaints to the Committee, the Committee should be sure to inform citizens who wish to make a complaint, in real time, of the exact steps they should take written by the Superintendent, so they can properly make their complaint. See the section “Superintendent’s External Policy Manual Procedures,” below for emphasis of this point.

The policy “*Anonymous complaints shall be disregarded*” is Context-Neutral and Avoidant. While this procedure reduces the number of complaints addressed and could hold the public accountable for their suggestions and complaints, this can be overall discouraging and inequitable for certain important complaints. A Context Centered policy, rather would ensure the Committee at the least reads Anonymous complaints as some community members and students’ families may prefer or need to protect their privacy and safety, depending on the nature of the complaint. Regardless of if a complaint is anonymous, the anonymity policy should help committee members with understanding all parents and families complaints in order to support them well.

Section: Administration 2000

2000 Administration Goals; 2001 Superintendent; 2003 Principals

DELTA’s: Avoidant Mindset

This section altogether lacks language about equity. All Administrative staff should explicitly demonstrate a commitment to equity. In particular, Principals should not only “*develop and implement appropriate guidelines and standards for student behavior and staff ensure a safe, supportive learning environment,*” - but should develop guidelines and standards to ensure an *equitable* learning environment for all students. In such an environment, all students should feel they belong and are included. These guidelines should truly align with the DEI Director’s Mission and Vision statement.

Section: Personnel 4000

4000 General Policy Statement; 4001 Recruitment and Selection

Benefits: Aware Mindset

This policy reflects an awareness that educators BPS staff should understand the educational enterprise from multiple and varied perspectives in statement about recruitment and selection of a “diverse representation at all occupational levels,” and in insuring “that a broad range of recruitment sources and professional networks will be utilized to provide the most qualified and diverse pool of candidates possible.” This policy should further align with the DEI Director’s Vision and Mission Statement, and staff should be representative of the students at BPS.

DELTA’s: Avoidant Mindset

The General Policy lacks any language demonstrating a commitment to equity. In addition to BPS supporting an environment that is student centered, creative, and flexible - this policy should explicitly support an equitable environment. All personnel at each level should demonstrate a commitment to Equity. This includes an awareness that students’ demographic backgrounds influence how they access and perform at school, that they hold an expansive view that all students are able to learn, that academic achievement must be viewed in relation to broader social realities, and they approach work with an appreciation for how students’ home and community experiences outside of school impact their learning and performance.

4002 Appointment of Personnel

DELTA’s: Equity focused Collaborations in Hiring and Recruitment

In addition to Principals, “working cooperatively with the Curriculum Directors, where appropriate, to locate and appoint suitable candidates for employment,” collaborating with the DEI Director in this process would further help to ensure that new staff demonstrate an Awareness, Asset-framing, Context-Centered and Equity mindsets towards students and colleagues.

Section: Students 5000

5005 Health and Wellness

DELTA’s: Belonging, Inclusion, and Respect

This policy stating, “The Belmont Public Schools are committed to providing school environments that promote student health, well being, and ability to learn,” should include student mental health topics

focal to equity which include an environment that promotes belonging, inclusion, respect, etc. This would reflect an awareness that students' identity and background influence how they access and perform in school, and should encourage educators to motivate and challenge all their students, including tapping into unique skills and strengths. This section should also align with the DEI Director's Mission and Vision Statement which explicitly describes the type of equitable and healthy environment that staff should promote and ensure for students.

5006 Student Progress

DELTA's: Improve Equity, Aware, Asset, and Context Centered Mindsets

In addition to ensuring that evaluation methods are “reliable and objective, [and] utilize specific standards and correspond to material being taught,” they should also be explicitly equitable. This includes ensuring evaluation methods reflect Equity, Awareness, Asset-framing, and Context Centeredness. Specially, evaluation methods should recognize that student demographics are essential in understanding and supporting students' academic achievement, that educators hold an expansive view that all students are able to learn, that students subjugated to systemic injustices get a high quality education and multiple chances and/or additional support to achieve, and that educators understand that students' academic achievement is a result of myriad interactions over time adults and peers inside and outside of the classroom.

5012 Freedom of Expression

DELTA's: Avoidant Mindset

This policy is majorly Avoidant of the role that student demographics such as race, gender, ethnicity, ability, etc. can influence students' experiences of the harm from certain speech. In addition to the banning of, “obscene, libelous or slanderous expression, abusive or insulting speech, or any expression that may cause disruption or disorder within the school,” hate speech, discriminatory, prejudiced, or racist speech, should be explicitly disallowed as free speech in this policy.

The consequences and disciplinary actions for students who commit any kind of the aforementioned speech should also be explicitly outlined to ensure accountability and to actively protect the students most harmed by such speech.

5013 Conduct and Discipline; 5015 Interrogation by Law Enforcement

Benefits: Context Centered and Due Process

This policy's requirement of Due Process is positively equitable, and should prevent staff from abusing disciplinary action against students. In order to uphold this policy school staff should: be unbiased in punitive action, be able to present the reasons for the proposed disciplinary actions being taken, and grant students and their parents the right to know the opposing evidence against them. Due process should also allow students and families the time and outline a procedure for parents and students to present their own reasons for a disciplinary action *not* to be taken.

DELTA's: Ensure Asset Framing and Equity Approaches to Discipline

It is critical that Disciplinary Action reflects an Asset Framing mindset, rather than a Deficit view, towards students. With the data showing that students from minority groups, especially African American students being disproportionately referred for disciplinary action and special education, these numbers need to be significantly reduced. Outside of obviously dangerous rules listed in this policy (*rules addressing possession of controlled substances including drugs and alcohol or dangerous weapons, use of force, theft, vandalism, knowingly making a false accusation, and violations of other students' civil rights*), educators should take all measures to find alternative ways to engage and/or challenge some students to be their best.

This means that educators should motivate students and tap into their unique strengths and traits, even when students don't conform to traditional school culture and teaching approaches. This requires that when school staff enforce conduct or intervene in the event of a violation, that educators first and foremost take steps to recognize and build upon the potential that each student brings. This requires that educators hold an expansive view that all students belong, and are able to learn, grow, and improve.

Section: Instruction 6000

6005 Class Assignment; 6014 Homework

Benefits and DELTA's: Aware, Equity, and Context Centered Mindsets

The class assignment policy demonstrates an awareness that student demographics such as “gender, ethnicity, and language” are important factors that should be considered in these decisions. This demonstrates an understanding that gender, ethnicity, and language impacts the daily experiences of students and teachers. This policy can be improved by ensuring classrooms are also racially diverse, in particular since Student Survey results at the Middle and High School showed that some Black/African American students report that they almost never have classes with students from other races, cultures, and ethnicities.

The Homework policy demonstrates Equity and Context Centered mindsets in the acknowledgement that for excused absences and religious holidays students are not expected to complete homework and study for tests. There is much room for improvement for equity here though. Exceptions for homework and tests should also be made for students if there are major cultural or economic reasons for students missing school. For example, there have been Historical Social and Racial Movements recently that are important parts of students' lives. Context-Centered improvements to this policy would establish an appreciation for how socio-cultural realities outside of school affect student learning and performance.

6006 Class and School Trips; 6008 Curriculum Development and Evaluation; 6009 Controversial Issues

DELTA's: Context Neutral, Avoidant Mindsets

This section reflects inequitable language that should be improved. Specifically, there are Context Neutral and Avoidant policies that should be shifted to Context Centered and Aware policies. Classes and School Trips have an opportunity to center equity in including trips that are educational in terms of culture, social justice, racial histories, and community-centered trips, for example.

The Curriculum Development and Evaluation section is majorly Avoidant in its language, and all around lacks mentions of Equity. While there is Contextual Awareness in the note that curriculum be informed by a variety of stakeholders, including parents/guardians, there should be a focus on ensuring the curriculum is equitable. For example, this policy lacks a strong statement acknowledging that curricular decisions should represent a diverse range of topics and lessons, and that it should be updated to reflect an awareness of structural inequities and power imbalances inherent in existing curricular materials in particular. This policy should strongly align with the DEI Director's Mission and Vision Statement on the topic of curriculum.

The Controversial Issues section is largely missing equitable procedures and language. There is also potentially harmful language in the policy. The statement "*Controversial issues which have political, social or economic significance may be discussed in Belmont Public School classrooms after teachers have determined that the particular issue is suitable for study or discussion and that it is related to the curriculum*" is not sufficient to equitably determine which issues should be discussed. It is neither clear which issues count as controversial (controversial should be defined), nor sufficient that the teacher alone should determine which issues are suitable or worth discussing.

This policy should reflect the fact that there are issues that are important and relevant to students, which may not be considered so by a teacher. There is also the possibility that many teachers are not equipped to decide what social issues are in the students' best interest to discuss or not. It is critical that policy here includes the necessity for Professional Development that will allow teachers to strengthen their skills related to DEI. PD should prepare teachers to make informed, equitable, empathetic, and skillful decisions when leading discussions of social, cultural, racial, and/or economic importance. Furthermore, it is imperative that the policy include Asset framing, and Aware language so that students who are in vulnerable positions (i.e. they are in the minority at their school, the issues are related to their histories, their issues and topics are underrepresented, the issues have deep emotional resonance for them and their families) are protected and supported in expressing their views and participating in discussions.

In addition, the statement that "*Teachers shall ensure that controversial issues are impartially presented in an atmosphere free from emotion and prejudice*" is largely biased against topics which have emotional resonance. This policy's disregard for emotion is potentially harmful and limiting for both teachers and students, and largely unrealistic for topics about equity. While the policy appropriately prevents teachers from expressing their own partisan views, there is tremendous room for improvement for equity here. Furthermore, middle school and high school student survey data from this audit shows that many students report not being encouraged by their teachers to think deeply about race and social justice issues. This "Controversial Issues" policy could potentially be influencing these students' experience of cultural awareness and actions. Revisions to this policy have great potential for improving students' equitable experiences.

6011 Recognition of Religious and Cultural Beliefs and Customs

Benefits: Aware, Asset Framing, and Context Centered Mindsets

This section demonstrates multiple examples of equity including Asset framing, Awareness, and Context Centered language. The policy here reflects finding ways to draw upon students' home culture assets, recognizes that students' identity and background informs how they access and perform at school, and

also seeks to build connections between the curriculum and students' religious backgrounds to make content meaningful and relevant.

6015 Education for Students with Special Needs and Disabilities; 6025 BPS Service Animals Policy

Benefits: Aware Mindset, Equity Mindset

There is specific language about "equitable resolutions of complaints." The policy language here also ensures that students with their own unique needs are supported, based on those individual needs. It's critical here that this aligns in practice, such that accommodations for these students can be made according to the student. This requires that adults supporting these students have a good relationship with them, as well as specialized knowledge of the students' needs to ensure their educational progress and success. The policy allowing service animals also demonstrates equity in that students with disabilities are given additional supports to succeed.

DELTA's: Align with SPED Policy and Procedural Manual Audit

In order to align the Equitable and Equity mindset benefits outlined above, it is critical that the SPED department improves their data collection process. Records collected about students should inform many Special Education processes - including SPED student placement, and any emotional and academic supports in particular which help the students to thrive. These processes can not be informed by TEAM Members' opinions alone. A data-informed process, both from within the school, and from information provided from knowledgeable experts of the student's condition, and adults who maintain a close relationship with the student, should be well established and carried out for all SPED operations.

6016 Supplemental Instruction; 6017 Home and Hospital Educational Services

Benefits: Equity and Context Centered Mindsets

These sections demonstrate a strong Equity mindset in that BPS will offer "direct, systematic and intensive supplemental instruction" for students who need "additional support in order to meet the state required competency standards," and that BPS will provide home or hospital instruction to students who are absent for two weeks or more. These policies acknowledge that it is not the student's responsibility alone to perform academically, but that it's everyone's responsibility to ensure academic success, in particular when factors outside of students' control are affecting their academic performance.

6018 Homeless Students; 6020 Educational Opportunities for Students in Foster Care

Benefits: Equity, Aware, and Context Centered Mindsets

These sections reflect a clear appreciation for how home realities outside of school impact student learning and performance. The policy clearly seeks to build upon the home-school connection to

support and promote student learning. In particular the designation of a staff person or Liaison with the role of ensuring homeless students receive the educational services for which they are eligible, and ensuring their transportation to and from school. An Equity mindset is also demonstrated in pursuing solutions to address factors outside of the students' control. Specifically - that BPS will "immediately enroll homeless students in school, even if they do not have the documents usually required for enrollment," and the School Committee's commitment to supporting "district and community efforts to ensure that students in foster care have access to high-quality, stable educational experiences."

Section: School Committee Governance and Operations 8000

8000 School Committee governance and operations; 8002 School Committee Powers and Duties; 8003 Individual School Committee Member Authority and Responsibilities

The improvements in equity language for policies concerning these sections pertain to *specific* powers, duties, and responsibilities from those listed in the Manual. Those specific powers and responsibilities are listed below and notes regarding equitable improvements are as follows:

School Committee Powers and Duties:

2. Adopting, evaluating and updating policies consistent with the law and the Belmont Public Schools' vision and goals;

These Policies should have an Aware lens, or reflect an awareness of structural inequalities and power imbalances, and reflect the view that race/ethnicity and gender in particular are important factors. The Committee should find ways to discuss and consider students' demographics in decisions. The policies adopted, evaluated, and updated should also align with the DEI Director's Mission and Vision statement goals.

4. Ensuring a safe and appropriate educational environment for all students;

Such a safe and appropriate educational environment should prioritize all students' belonging and inclusion, and should in particular align with the DEI Director's Mission and Vision Statement in terms of its goals for an equitable environment for diverse students.

5. Providing leadership on educational issues and advocating on behalf of all students and public education;

In advocating for students an Aware Mindset should be maintained. This requires examining how all students are best served by curriculum and instruction, and understanding that race, ethnicity, gender, and ability in particular impact daily experiences of students, teachers, staff, and families.

6. Hiring and supporting the Superintendent so that the vision, goals and policies of the Belmont Public Schools can be implemented;

This DEI Director's Mission and Vision for equity across BPS should be included in these goals and policies that the committee should support the Superintendent in implementing.

Individual School Committee Member Authority and Responsibilities:

School Committee members should:

1. *Understand the mission and vision of the Belmont Public Schools*

This includes an understanding of the new DEI Director's Vision and Mission Statement regarding equity across BPS.

Additional Procedural Manual Findings

Sections that should especially align with the DEI Director Mission and Vision Statement

The following sections are policies in the BPS Policy and Procedure Manual that require language that critically aligns with equitable standards, vision, and procedures. In addition to aligning with each element in the Educator Mindset and Consequences Framework, these policies should be updated in conjunction with The DEI Director's Vision and Mission Statement. This Vision Statement addresses equitable topics within these policies, which the policies below are missing. Recommendations for equitable improvements to these policies are as follows:

- **1013 Contests, Prizes and Awards-Sponsored by Outside Organizations.**

In particular, activities should be encouraged that promote the equitable values and environment envisioned in the DEI Director's Mission and Vision Statement. There could be excellent opportunities to invite in organizations that can improve diverse students' sense of belonging and inclusion, and sense of cultural awareness and action. These can also be opportunities to teach students and provide them with powerful learning experiences about equity. This policy can also ensure that there is a context-centered approach to which outside organizations work with students - in particular those already prevalent in students' communities outside of school.

- **4009 Professional Development.**

Equity PD that addresses the major DELTAS, recommendations, and findings in this audit

should be prioritized. This PD can be directly tied into, or closely related to, bolstering each of the mindsets in the Educator Mindset and Consequences Framework which are measured and described in the audit. Overall this PD policy should align with the DEI Director's Mission Statement about goals for Educators in particular and the equitable skills that staff are encouraged to develop and perform across BPS.

- **5000 Students Goals; 600 Instructional Goals; 6008 Curriculum Development and Evaluation**

These goals should have writing explicitly related to equity, rather than equality, and should be reviewed to closely align with the DEI Director's Vision and Goals regarding its equity goals for students and the curriculum. The curriculum policy language in this Manual is particularly Avoidant and lacks equity language all around.

- **6009 Controversial Issues**

This policy is further analyzed above and majorly needs to align with the DEI Director's Vision and Mission statement, to ensure teachers are in a position to make informed, equitable, empathetic, and skillful decisions to lead discussions related to politics, social and economic significance.

- **6024 Evaluation of Instructional Programs**

The Superintendent should work closely with the DEI Director on this policy. This will ensure the ongoing assessment of the curriculum and instructional programs can be measured in meeting the districts' equity goals, and those from the DEI Director's Vision and Mission Statement. It's critical that the data collected from such assessments be used to identify areas in which modifications and improvement are needed for equity.

- **8013 Policy Development and Adoption**

In the School Committee's work to develop or change BPS policies, it is critical that these efforts align with the findings of this audit, and the DEI Director's Vision and Mission statement. The Committee should understand the DEI Statement clearly, as well as this audit's findings in order to assess and make the necessary changes and equitable improvements to pivotal BPS policies.

Sections 6018 - 6021 and 6015: Educational Opportunities for Homeless Students, Military Children, Children in Foster Care, English Language Learners, and Students with Special Needs and Disabilities :

A need for a "Students within Racial Minorities" or "Diverse Students" section

These sections provide insight into the categories of students who are given special attention across BPS. Each of these sections demonstrates equitable practices; in particular they serve as strong examples of Context Centered, Equity, and Aware mindsets. Policies that are notably equitable

include those in place around which ensure transportation, and making decisions that are in the best interests of students based on the needs of each individual student. This takes into account a variety of factors for students in these sections. Still, English Language Learner students are the only student group here that is specifically culturally/racially/or ethnically diverse. It is critical that in addition to ELL Students, Military Students, Foster Care students and Homeless students, that a section here be instilled for other major minority groups across BPS.

There are a number of relevant minority student groups who report widely inequitable experiences at BPS according to the audit data. This includes significant vulnerable racial and cultural minorities at BPS: African American/Black students, Native American/Alaskan Native students, and Multiracial students. There are alarming inequitable patterns in these particular students' experiences throughout the audit (see Student Surveys, Student and Family Focus Groups, Discipline).

It is suggested as an action step in demonstrating a commitment to addressing the disparities in their experiences, to include a policy section for these students' experiences. Data supports that these students' experiences in school, compared to other students' experiences at BPS (e.g. White, Asian, and Hispanic/Latino students), are different. For this Policy and Procedural Manual, we suggest adding a "Students in Racial Minorities" or "Diverse Students" section here, in a format similar to those student sections listed in Section 6018 - 6021 of the 6000 Instruction Section. Similarly to Sections 6018 - 6021, there should be a description of the students who explicitly fit into this category, and procedures aligning with each item of the Framework of Educator Mindsets and Consequences. Furthermore, the support(s) offered to those students should align with the findings and recommendations outlined in this audit, as well as the BPS DEI Director's Mission and Vision Statement.

Future Directions and Limitations for Policy

Superintends' External Manual Policies and Procedures

For the policies listed below there were external references to procedures written by the Superintendent. We did not review these separate Superintendent's Procedures, but it is of utmost importance that policies listed below demonstrate equitable standards. A recommended next step is that the DEI Director collaborate with the Superintendent on reviewing these specific policies that are not included in the BPS Policy and Procedural Manual, and thus not included in this audit's analysis. The following sections from the BPS Policy Manual and Procedures that should be further reviewed for equity include:

- **1006P Procedure: Public Participation at SC Meetings; 1017 Citizen Suggestions and Complaints; 1019 Complaints Concerning Instructional Materials.**

There are topics in this policy that the Committee states it will not address without an appropriate procedure being followed, but these are major topics typically ripe with inequities in schools (e.g. complaints and suggestions concerning curriculum, personnel and administrative issues), which is further shown in this audit's data. Therefore it is of the

utmost importance that the Superintendent's procedures for raising such complaints are clear, context-centered, and readily available to community members.

The Superintendent's procedures here should specifically flesh out an equitable process for community members to raise any major concerns they have, and should include the steps the Superintendent will take to address alarming complaints, including those complaints about school personnel making small and big equity mistakes to ensure accountability to the community and families.

- **1025 Emergency Response**

It is critical that the Superintendent's Procedures for Emergency responses are most equitable and strong. Especially in regards to crisis situations in the Belmont community such as those that have come up in this audit - in particular the local death of Henry Tapia. In addition to "appropriate training, establishment of emergency response teams, consultation and cooperation with community agencies, and publication of emergency procedures," this policy should include, according to the incident, consequences and accountability procedures - in particular for hate crimes and harmful incidents between students and toward students from staff within the school.

- **4011 Staff Complaints and Grievances**

The procedures for this policy should be reviewed for all of the equity mindsets (Equity, Awareness, Asset Framing, and Context-Centeredness) to ensure that there is accountability across the board for all genuine staff complaints and grievances .

- **5008 Promotion and Retention**

This process should be reviewed for taking into account each of the equity mindsets relevant to students who are at risk of retention. This includes policy language that acknowledges the students' home to school connection, that consider ways societal structures disadvantage some students and privilege others (so subjugated students receive additional supports to achieve), that ensure that students have been motivated by school staff in ways that tap into their unique strengths and skills, and recognizing that student' demographics are central in understanding and supporting student academic achievement.

5010 Fees, Fines and Charges

Waivers and fee reductions should reflect Context Centered and Equity Mindsets. These consider the ways societal structures disadvantage some students and privilege others economically, and work with an appreciation for how realities outside of school impact the fees and fines that students and their families are able to legitimately afford. This policy should also be sure to list the types of fees for which reductions or waivers are available, and the processes required for students and families to apply for a charge reduction or fee waiver.

- **5011 Student Records; 7010 Data and Records Management, Retention and Disposal**

These Superintendent policies should be sure to specify the kinds of Student Records collected and kept - especially those that relate to students' equitable treatment and experiences in the classroom, and those records and notes which measure and assess

whether students are having a safe, equitable, and inclusive experience at school. This includes students' interactions with their peers and with any BPS staff.

It's critical in particular that SPED and other departments can access these records in an efficient, organized, and transparent way so that equitable decisions which need to be informed by student data can be made more effectively across BPS.

Disciplinary Policy Analysis and Limitations

We did not review the disciplinary policies within the school specific Handbooks, as these tasks exceeded the scope and budget of this audit. We also reviewed the publicly reported DESE data, but this data was not informative. To address this limitation, we requested and received some of the following quantitative and qualitative disciplinary data from each of the BPS school Principals to inform this policy analysis (the summary statements or philosophy can be found in the Appendix):

1. Discipline records or statistics
2. A summary statement or statement of philosophy for your school's approach to discipline
3. Copies of any discipline or office referral forms

School Specific Discipline Policy Analyses

Daniel Butler Elementary School

Benefits: Asset Framing and Context Centered

The Disciplinary policy data provided from this school demonstrated numerous equitable mindsets and consequences that are beneficial to students. Specifically, students are asset-framed: staff recognize and build on the potential that each student brings to the classroom in their "Introducing, modeling, and reinforcing positive social behavior..." and in collecting tokens that acknowledge positive behavior. These tokens lead to celebrations with themes chosen by students to celebrate their community. This school's disciplinary philosophy also demonstrates that educators are working to motivate and challenge all students, including tapping into their unique traits that already exist.

Furthermore, this school's disciplinary data shows that educators are seeking to build on students' home to school connection (family involvement and consultations) to promote positive behaviors in their students.

The statistics provided to us also show an Asset Framing mindset in that the number of students referred for disciplinary action has been greatly reduced over the past 5 years.

Wellington Elementary School

DELTA's: Insufficient Information Provided, Access not Granted upon Request

Overall the summary statement we received from this school was vague and did not mention equity at all. In addition to this, the links to this handbook did not work (did not link to the School's Handbook), and we never received access to the referenced Slides from the Wellington school Principal, despite multiple requests and emails to the school Principal for access.

We were not provided with much, if any, relevant information that we could use to determine the presence of inequities or equities inherent in Wellington Elementary School's disciplinary policies. The summary statement provided for this audit from Wellington can be found in the Appendix.

Winn Brook Elementary

Benefits: Asset Framing and Context Centered

The Disciplinary policy data provided from this school demonstrated equitable mindsets. The summary statement expressed Asset framing of students in that meetings about discipline are seen as "problem solving meetings," and " Mistakes/missteps are viewed as learning opportunities rather than transgressions" which suggests that educators aim to recognize and build on the potential that each student brings. The data also shows Context Centeredness in that "parents are viewed as partners" and they are worked with in order to understand students and support them well. Rooms for improvement around data collection were also mentioned, which further suggests a commitment to data-informed decisions around equity. Finally, we learned that there were very few office referrals, which aligns with an Asset mindset.

Chenery Middle School

DELTA's: Avoidant Mindset and Deficit Mindsets; Audit Limited in Reviewing Quantitative Data

Overall the summary statement we received from this school did not mention equity at all. This reflected a potentially Avoidant mindset in that student demographics were peripheral or ignored in this school's disciplinary summary. This could imply that school leaders here do not recognize in their major decisions how student demographics like race and gender impact daily experiences of students and families. Furthermore the summary statement focused on the students' responsibility to "course correct," rather than providing any Asset-framing language about how educators motivate students, or build on student strengths in order to reduce the number of students referred for disciplinary action.

We were provided with a draft version of the CMS Student Handbook. The Disciplinary section in the Handbook draft demonstrated Deficit mindsets for students in that it explicitly placed the full onus on the student to either "repair the harm done," or "face a personal repercussion following a behavioral infraction." There was no language indicating that educators at CMS recognize or build on the potential that students already bring with them, or to employ a process of appreciative inquiry around students' behaviors. The Office Referrals Protocol that we received did not explicitly demonstrate any of the Equity Mindsets either.

Belmont High School

DELTA's: Insufficient Information Provided

We did not receive a summary statement from the High School about discipline, although we were provided support in locating the disciplinary statistics. Without a statement, we are unable to provide an analysis or feedback on equities or inequities regarding discipline at the High School. This is of particular note since many Black/African American, American Indian, and Hispanic students at the high school reported the lowest Belonging, Diversity and Inclusion, and Cultural Awareness and Action scores at the High School. This should be a major area for follow up.

Burbank School

We did not receive any data from Burbank School.

Hiring Analysis

Comparative Statistics

We reviewed and compared hiring relevant data from BPS teachers and students with data from teachers and students in Massachusetts (MA), the Northeast, and National (US) public school districts. This analysis compares teacher and student racial data across districts.

We prepared this analysis to determine the extent that BPS staff are representative of BPS students by race. We then reviewed hiring questions from Principals from all BPS schools. We apply these findings to recommend strategies in the hiring process to increase teachers of color (e.g. Black/African American, Asian, and Hispanic/Latinx) in the district, and to increase the hiring of staff members with equitable perspectives and mindsets that could translate into practice in their roles at BPS. The comparative statistics, interview question analysis, and recommendations are reported below.

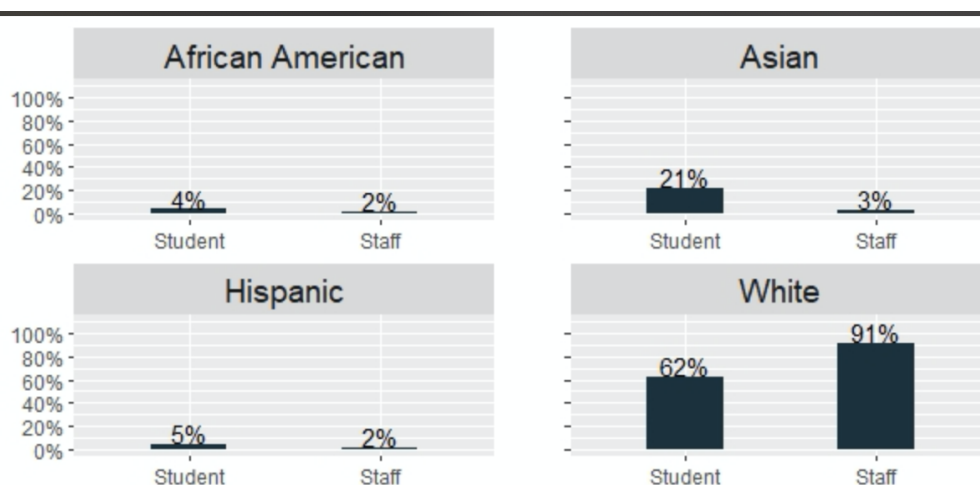


Fig 16. Comparisons of the percent of Belmont students of color and percent of Belmont staff of color. The data comes from the state records about student and staff demographics from the 2020 - 2021 school year.

- There is an overrepresentation of White staff compared to White students at BPS.
- There is an underrepresentation of Asian, Hispanic, and African American staff compared to these students across BPS.
- In Belmont there is a significant difference in the proportion of Asian students to the proportion of Asian staff. Specifically, with there being 21% Asian students and 3% Asian teachers, then there is a 19% gap in student to staff representation.

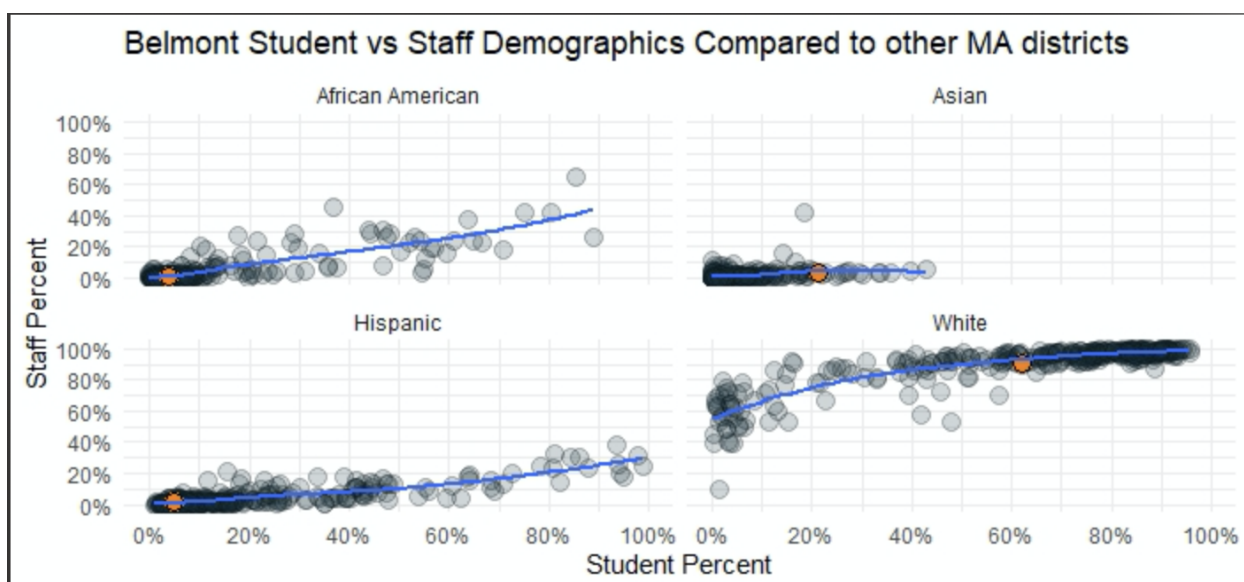


Fig 17. A plot of student vs staff races across all districts in Massachusetts including Belmont. Belmont is highlighted in orange. All other MA districts are in blue-gray. Each circle is an individual district. This includes Charter schools, but not private schools.

For this graph we downloaded all the data from all the districts across MA and plotted Student data v Staff race data. We fitted a line to represent the average relationship with Belmont.

- Belmont on average is similar to other districts in not having a proportional number of teachers compared to its demographics. For example, On average a district that has 50% of Black students has 20% Black teachers. BPS is neither higher or lower than the average district.

- There is an over-representation of White teachers at BPS. Though this is clearly not unusual compared to other MA districts.

Overall these data show that there are gaps in representation for students of color at Belmont, to staff of color. While the comparative data also shows that BPS is not different from other school districts in their extent of diverse representation, Belmont does have an opportunity to be state leaders in shifting staff numbers in BPS to be more representative of its students. Only a small number of MA districts reach that standard. Despite similarities to other districts, the gaps should motivate Belmont to strive to be a leader in hiring equity. These reports should in particular motivate personnel at BPS to take concrete steps to improve the hiring of qualified and talented educators of color across all positions. While it is understood that low teacher turnover rates could be an obstacle for hiring more staff of color, the interview process analysis below can further provide recommendations for filling available positions with new staff that bring equitable mindsets and practices. It would benefit Belmont to also do more explicit recruiting of staff of color.

Sample 2nd Round Interview Questions Analysis and Recommendations:

We reviewed sample interview question sets that candidates would be responding to in their Second Round of the Interview Process. We collected questions from school leaders by applying the Equitable Educator Mindsets Framework to determine:

1. Opportunities for hiring committees to frame questions equitably demonstrating the mindsets and culture of BPS
2. Opportunities for candidates to demonstrate equitable mindsets in theory and how they are embedded in their practices

These lenses give us insight into what extent are equitable mindsets being centered and communicated to the candidate during the interview. It is also important to see if and how equitable mindsets are centered in the conversations during an interview to ensure the candidate has the maximum chances to demonstrate if and how they uphold equitable perspectives, views, goals, and mindsets in their thinking and practice.

Following the analysis of Sample Interview Questions are recommendations that can be implemented as a hiring strategy to not only increase Black teachers and staff, but also Latinx, and Asian teachers and educators. The embedded recommendations ensure that any hired educators of color also understand and have demonstrated concrete ways in which they have and will center equitable mindsets in their practice. It is essential they are not just representative of students racially and culturally, but can relate to them and their experiences with nuanced understandings, views, and experiences.

“I mean, to be honest, I’m not sure a black person would want to work in our schools. I mean, when they hired a Black educator, they told her she may experience racism, you may experience racist interactions and if you do let us know” - educator at Wellington Elementary School

This powerful quote represents the culture at Wellington Elementary and possible other BPS schools that we hope to address with the following analysis and proposed recommendations.

General Questions:

The following questions are asked across all roles and grades at BPS. Here they are audited for whether and to what extent they demonstrate or do not demonstrate equitable mindsets. In some cases, these questions have different variations across roles, grades, and schools in all the sample questions we received.

- **Questions:**
Tell us about a time when a lesson or interaction did not go well and how you resolved it.
Tell me about a lesson that didn't go very well and what would you change about the plan if you could do it again.

The framing of these questions reflects a context-neutral mindset lacking reference to how student background, educator identity, or learning environment could have contributed to the candidate experience.

This question gives the candidate the opportunity to demonstrate how they uphold an aware-based mindset in practice by allowing them to describe conflicts that ended with clear resolutions.

Recommended Re-Framing:

Tell us about a time when a lesson or interaction did not go well and how you resolved it. What factors did you consider to understand the underlying cause of the event and how did they influence any actions taken?

Tell me about a lesson that didn't go very well and what would you change about the plan if you could do it again. How may have the learning environment, student and teacher identity, and other related factors played a role in this example?

- **Question: Describe a situation in which you have difficulty working with a coworker. What did you do to attempt to resolve the problem?**

The framing of this question slightly demonstrates an aware-based mindset as it asks the candidate to describe actions taken to find a solution. However, this question does not explicitly ask the candidate to give any examples of inequities they may have addressed or how power has played a role in their experience.

This question gives the candidate an opportunity to demonstrate an aware-based mindset with the opportunity for them to describe how they handled equity-related conflicts.

Recommended Re-Framing:

Describe a situation in which you have difficulty working with a coworker or addressing a school leader. What did you do to attempt to resolve the problem? What role did power play into this and how did you address it?

How would you define success when addressing conflict?

General questions from Belmont High School Sample Questions

- **Question: Our classes typically have 24-30 students in them with diverse needs, including students on IEP's and students who are EL's. How would you address the needs of this group?**

The framing of the questions meeting individual students' needs are only referenced when talking about students with IEPs, ELL, or SPED. This question demonstrates an avoidant-based mindset as students of color, LGBTQ+ students, international students, and other students who are not represented in this question can communicate that their needs are not required to be met if not in a legal document.

The question above provides the candidate an opportunity to demonstrate all equitable mindsets by providing clear examples of how they plan to manage and address the needs of each group mentioned, as well as all students.

Recommended Re-Framing:

Our classes typically have 24-30 students in them with diverse needs, including students on IEP's and students who are EL's. How would you address the needs of these groups while balancing the individual needs of all students?

- **QuestionL How has race and culture impacted your work as an educator?**
This framing of this question reflects an aware-based mindset, asset-based mindset, and a contextual-centered mindset as it directly asks the candidate to show an awareness of race, culture, and identity. They have the opportunity to asset-frame other races and cultures and to describe how factors outside of the classroom play a role.

This question allows the candidate to demonstrate all equitable mindsets and to give concrete examples of how these mindsets translate into their practice.

Recommended Re-Framing: None

ELA at Belmont High School Sample Interview Questions

These questions asked to candidates especially represent all equitable mindsets.

For example, this is the first time in our sample questions that candidates were asked to consider the role of SEL in their practice. These questions infer that it is important not just for students to understand and apply SEL to their experiences, but educators as well.

- **Question: How do you address differing student needs in your classroom? Students who need more support? More challenges?**

The framing of this question represents an equity-based mindset by assuming the candidate must consider all students' needs and how they plan to address them in the classroom representing a strong equity-based mindset. This is important framing for not just SPED, IEP, or ELL students, but all students who may or may not have structures already in place.

Recommended Re-Framing: None

- **Question: Share with us an experience when you were able to communicate with parents in order to help improve a student's success in your class.**

The framing of this question represents a strong context-centered-based mindset as it assumes communication with parents is essential in improving student success.

Recommended Re-Framing: None

- **Question: In Belmont, we have been working on becoming more culturally responsive teachers in order to improve equity for our Black and Brown students. What skills and experiences do you have that will help you contribute to this work?**

This question has a strong equity-based and aware-based mindset. It communicates an understanding that Black and Brown students have unique needs from other students of color. It also represents a strong context-centered mindset as it centers curriculum content and pedagogy students experience as key to their academic success and improving equity.

Recommended Re-Framing: None

Overall Conclusion

Overall, most questions provide candidates to demonstrate all equitable mindsets. However, the framing of the questions may influence candidates responses, thus not allowing them to demonstrate how equitable mindsets reflect in theory and in practice

On the other hand, the ELA interview questions for the high school allow candidates to demonstrate strong equitable mindsets in theory and in practice.

ELL at Elementary Level Interview Questions

These questions allow for more equitable mindsets to be explicitly stated given that this candidate would be working directly with ELL students who require extra support.

- **Question: How would your students describe you? Give us three words they might use.**

The framing of this question slightly represents an aware-based mindset as it allows candidates to see themselves through the lens of their students. However, there is no explicit reference to how history and identity shape student perception of the candidate.

Recommended Re-Framing: How would your students describe their experiences with you? How do you think identity influences their perception of you and your interactions in and out of the classroom?

- **Question: ELL families in Belmont come from a wide range of backgrounds, but they all want a high quality education for their children and make sacrifices to attain it. Tell us about your family engagement practices in the past. [If time: how might you handle a parent who is requesting to opt out of ELL services? A family with parents who have barriers to overcome, language or economic or otherwise?**

This question asset-frames families by describing them as wanting the best and high quality education for their children despite any barriers. It also demonstrates a context-based mindset by acknowledging the role context can play in considering a family request.

This framing allows for candidates to talk about the role in which family background and family engagement play in student success in multiple areas such as conflict resolution, language, and/or economic barriers. They have the opportunity to demonstrate all equitable mindsets and how they would realistically play out in practice.

Recommended Re-Framing: None

- **Question: The Belmont Public Schools are committed to becoming a place where we all learn and draw strength from difference. How might you be able to contribute to that vision?**

This question frames the diverse backgrounds and differences of all students as an asset where strengths can be found, with the assumption that the candidate must be prepared to do so.

Recommended Re-Framing: None

General Questions for Elementary School Level Roles

- **Question: What issues in education are of greatest concern to you? Why?**

The framing of this question slightly represents an aware-based mindsets as it assumes to the candidate that education as a whole is not without flaws. However, it does not directly address inequities or ask candidates what actions they have taken, plan to take, and/or continue to take to address these issues.

This question gives candidates the chance to demonstrate all equitable mindsets. They have the opportunity to communicate inequities they are most aware of and areas where they want to grow in this area.

Recommended Re-Framing: What issues in education are of greatest concern to you? How do they reflect inequities from the K-12 education system at large to the small interactions in the classroom?

Questions for Professional Aides: Unspecified grade

- **Questions:**
Describe the toughest discipline situation that you have encountered and how you handled it.
A parent appears at the classroom door angered over a classroom incident involving her child and you. As an aide, how would you proceed? If you were the lead teacher, how might you proceed?

The framing of these questions represents a strong focus on asset-based mindset with a heavy focus on the role that discipline plays in their practice and student experience.

This opportunity allows the candidate to asset-frame students and family behavior.

Recommended Re-Framing: None

Overall Conclusion

While many questions lacked explicit references to equity when asking about student needs, discipline, conflict and conflict resolutions, and consistency across schools and roles, there were great opportunities for candidates to demonstrate all equitable mindsets in how they think and in practice. Although questions don't explicitly mention race, gender, identity, etc. when asking about inequities, conflict, and discipline, candidates have the opportunity to bring these topics into the conversation.

There are ways for BPS to be more intentional in demonstrating their own equitable mindsets in the framing of questions. This will do the following:

1. It welcomes candidates of color as they learn how equity is embedded from the interview process to BPS culture at large.

2. Ensure all candidates have explicit opportunities to communicate their beliefs and practices through the equitable mindset framework lens and how they influence their practice with students.
3. Increase the chances of fostering a staff at BPS schools that embody equitable mindsets in their thinking as well as practice to ensure Black and Brown students, students of color, and LGBTQ+ students are represented and cared for.
4. Give the interviewer an opportunity to communicate support in place for candidates entering the new role.
5. Diversify the applicant pool as well as BPS teachers, staff, and school leaders who bring a mix of lived experience and learned experience.

Additional Recommended Questions

Asset-based mindset:

- We are currently working to negate stereotypes students of color, LGBTQ+ students, and international students face. Can you talk about how you asset-frame student behavior that is typically deficit-framed? How did you connect this to their strengths? Did you see any changes in their behavior in and/or outside of the classroom?

Aware-based mindset:

- Can you talk about how your understanding of the intersections between race, ethnicity, migrant status, and other forms of identity influence your practice and student experiences? What role does history play in this?
- Can you talk about a time where you advocated for a student or inequities you noticed and how you came to a common understanding with all stakeholders involved?

Context-centered mindset:

- What experience do you have addressing families of color, international families, Black families' needs? What supports are you looking to have in place to be successful in making sure their children are comfortable and academically challenged?
- How have you successfully brought families with different backgrounds together in your classroom? What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?
- Our students come from many different socio-economical backgrounds. How do you plan on bridging the gap between students of different backgrounds? What challenges do you anticipate facing in the context of BPS?

Proposed Strategy for Interview Questions

In addition to the suggested reframing of Interview questions, in order for optimal performance, these questions may be sent to the interviewee before the interview for them to answer in 500 words or less. This extra step in the screening process should ensure earlier on that someone applying for the position upholds a greater nuance of understanding how equity, history, and identity contribute to student experience.

It is important to keep the experiences of Black and Brown students in all schools, and especially in College Prep. level class at the High School at the center of these hiring initiatives, as these students express not being understood by their teachers. They also report they are struggling academically without proper support. Starting with diversifying their teachers will most likely improve the academic and social experience for all students of color, LGBTQ+ students, and students with disabilities and/or IEP's, because these teachers are more likely to relate to students and have the experience of building relationships with all kinds of students, especially diverse ones..

All Interview and Focus Group Recommendations

Interview-informed Recommendations

Elementary Teachers' Interviews

To improve an Equity Mindset:

- Create opportunities to make staff, and especially staff of color feel more welcomed and supported by responding to and addressing their needs, creating environments for them to feel safe, and figuring out how to best support their unique needs and finding the resources to meet these needs.

To improve an Aware Mindset:

- Create a more consistent and responsive protocol for conflict reporting and resolution between students, staff, and for families

To improve a Context-Centered Mindset:

- To create replace harmful, racism curriculum with a diverse content supported by experts on decolonizing and creating an anti-racist age-appropriate curriculum
- Create incentives for teachers and admin to get on board in diversifying their curriculum and fostering environments that are more representative of different identities

Chenery Middle School Teachers' Interviews

To improve Equity Mindsets:

- Reconsider how racism is taught to students - teaching “kindness” and using “age/developmentally appropriate” as a reason to water down conversations may be perpetuating issues. Talking to students about bullying, racism, ableism, economical differences, white supremacy, and privilege can provide a cultural shift because most vulnerable students are targets to their peers.
- Reconsider the role in which attendance plays in student grades
- Provide METCO students with better transportation options and opportunities to accommodate their learning

To improve Aware Mindsets:

- To have more practice and PD opportunities that helps educators put common buzzwords and commitments to equity in practice
- For administrators to build trust between themselves and teachers to understand teacher experience when conflicts arise
- Provide teachers with resources to support students in most critical situations such as transition grades, students not being in a traditional school for years, not knowing the language, and other more severe challenges
- METCO students should receive the proper advocacy from leaders with clear resolutions when conflicts arise

To improve Context-Centered Mindsets:

- Embed the above lessons in the curriculum as opposed to a response to a new traumatic incident.
- Reimplement community block: the designated time to talk about societal issues is an opportunity for stereotypes to be broken up and severity of incidents to be communicated to students and where students can plan responses to implement change. This was a useful space for teachers and students.

Belmont High School Teachers and School Counselors (General education and special education educators)

To improve Equity Mindsets:

- Require all school leaders and staff to commit to anti-racism PD training and a culturally responsive teaching pedagogy to learn how to address the needs and interact with Black

students and other students of color in ways that reduce harm, build deep understanding, and create more positive experiences.

- Have options for students to have more structure in school days - consider having multiple options or tracks for students. Consider creating plans and guiding students on how to structure their day to prevent Black and Brown students and students with disabilities from falling behind.
- Create more social avenues and opportunities for METCO students to be involved in team sports activities, games. There are too many barriers such as finances, transportation, and other resources in place that with the right awareness and equity mindset can be alleviated.
- Create more in depth college preparation opportunities and intentional mentorship for first generation students and students of color

To improve Aware Mindsets:

- Admin needs to take more seriously the impact of a majority white teaching group. Create a more diverse teaching staff by focusing on hiring practices, budgeting process, and retention strategies. If the hiring timeline isn't altered, it is less likely the workforce will be diversified
- Give METCO students and other Black and Brown students opportunities in structured day to hang out with each other to lessen the chances they'll skip class.

To improve Context-Centered Mindsets:

- Reconsider the amount of power community members have over decisions in BPS and shaping BPS culture
- Find ways to supplement students learning for those economically disadvantaged - vouchers or scholarships for programs or extra tutoring programs mandatory for students behind to participate in higher math class
- Have a protocol where teachers reach out to parents and follow up if students are struggling socially, academically, or are absent either for one class or an entire week

School Leaders: Curriculum Directors, Principals, AP's at Chenery Interview

To improve an equity-based mindset:

To improve an Equity Mindset:

- Required equity-based Professional development plans for all leaders and staff (short term and long term plan)
- Review the impact of leveling and how to make classes fairer: Students of color are at a disadvantage because they don't get access to the higher level courses. There is a visible difference based on race in college prep. Course and who is in an honors course. Students are internalizing this divide and impacts their sense of belonging in the classroom, their idea of respect, and their growth given the extreme amount of emphasis on academic ability in Belmont
- To have paid or other incentives for staff to attend family events to embrace other cultures.

To improve a Context-Centered Mindset:

- Have people in positions of teaching and directing humanities (history, social studies, English, etc.) well versed in the history of US and who has experience of it being taught with compassion, empathy, and seriousness so students won't be triggered and/or will be prepared to discuss triggering resources and how to manage it.
- Find ways to get Black and Brown families involved in sharing parts of their identity with teachers in literature, arts, math etc. to deviate from mainstream content

District Leaders: Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents, School Committee Members, Equity subcommittee members, METCO Leaders Interviews

To improve an Aware Mindset:

- Leaders need to create and communicate a shared understanding and definition of equity from a top down perspective to trickle down to staff, teachers, families, and students and how it will be applied to achieve outcomes
"...you must understand the root cause beyond, you know, and how to how to solve it. That's, I think, where we don't do everybody a disservice. And words like equity no longer mean anything because it means so many different things to different people."
- Reconstruct a new way to teaching and learning as opposed to grouping in lower grades and leveling in higher grades
- Establish higher standards for teachers and/or consequences when teachers don't show they are interested in the whole child - find teachers who are instead of trying to change the ones there - this kind of work takes years and children will continue to be harmed in the process.

To improve an Equity Mindset:

- Work on supporting students during transitional grades- ex: highlight student support when entering kindergarten, middle school, high school
- Creating a streamlined protocol where parents volunteers make sure all students are aware of the opportunities they're bringing and that events advertised in a way that collaborates with school leaders, teachers, and other families so students are not excluded

To improve a Context-Centered Mindset:

- Create more opportunities outside of sports for families and students to connect with each other
- Ensure families are being supported in understanding racism and US history, and connected with resources to implement in their homes.

Student Interviews Analysis (Open call students)

Recommendations for Improving All Student Experiences:

To improve student experiences by addressing Equity Mindsets:

- Students need to be provided more learning opportunities to understand the seriousness of hateful incidents and the impact it has on their peers -anti racism training for students

To improve student experiences by addressing Aware Mindsets:

- Teach students what to say if they hear or see their peers expressing hate or racist speech/ actions and provide opportunities for them to practice
- Have STEM teachers begin to understand ways to bridge social issues, local issues, history, and racism to their lessons

To improve student experiences by addressing Context-Centered Mindsets:

- Culture should influence curriculum as opposed to curriculum influencing culture: embedding more opportunities in curriculum for students to see themselves/ bring themselves in
- More LGBTQ and Black identities and voices need to be embedded in curriculum and celebrated in an out of the classroom

Black and Brown Student Group Interview

Recommendations to Improve Black and Brown Student Experience:

To improve Black and Brown student experiences by addressing Equity and Aware Mindsets:

- Addressing Racism
 - Implement anti-racism training for all staff, educators, and school leaders to understand how actions are microaggressions, how to address harmful and racist student behavior, and to understand the impact it has on Black students
 - Create clear consequences for hate speech and racism targeted to Black students, LGBTQ+ students from classmates and teachers and staff
 - Provide all families with anti-racist parenting resources
- Diversity and Inclusion
 - Diversify the teaching staff of all classes so Black students have Black and teachers of color
 - Make a targeted effort to embrace Black students culture throughout the year and during Black History Month
 - Co-create a diverse curriculum with Black and Brown students in humanities and STEM classes

To improve Black and Brown student experiences by addressing Asset Mindset

- Require teachers to implement culturally-responsive teaching pedagogies and PD sessions that guide them on ways to challenge students while still being sensitive to the topics
- Ensure teachers are implementing strategies and teaching practices that build off of student strengths to improve their academic and social experiences

To improve Black and Brown student experiences by addressing Context-Centered Mindset

- METCO
 - Provide student transportation ASAP. It's cold, early, they're tired, hungry, and uncomfortable.. Daylight savings times and winter conditions exacerbates the problem
 - While working on getting better transportation, help give students appropriate bus and train passes
 - Invest and advocate for student interests and help find ways to support student clubs for Black and Brown students
 - METCO leaders to advocate for students when they are experiencing hardships or challenges with an emphasis on finding a resolution
- College prep
 - Get students in college prep. Programs with emphasis on applying to needs-based schools (so students don't have to take loans)
 - Help students with financial aid and other scholarships
- Find ways to represent Black and Brown students in their learning environment - having posters, art, photos, etc. of students, families, scholars, and important figures that look like them

Focus-Group Informed Recommendations

Open Call Focus Groups Recommendations for BPS to Improve Family Experiences

To improve an Equity Mindset

- Create a specific and consistent protocol to address incidents to families in groups who are targeted with explicit next steps, resolutions, consequences, and future preventative measures
- Create an anonymous protocol for students to report incidents to eliminate the burden of having to tell an adult
- Have a cohesive SEL curriculum program implemented in classrooms across the district - starting with inclusion classroom with special needs and neurotypical kids
- Expect school leaders and teachers to learn more about families background, name pronunciation, and history.

To improve an Aware Mindset

- Implement restorative justice circles and teaching for all students at all schools on a consistent basis led by experts
- Create and communicate clear guidelines and expectations for student behavior - what is acceptable and what isn't with consequences for non-tolerant actions

- Teacher training on how to have difficult conversations with students and how to turn harmful incidents into learning opportunities. Taking the conversation further than kindness.

To improve a Context Mindset

- Have signs around the school halls with goals, missions, visuals that remind students of what cultures are represented, celebrate BLM, women's history, pride month, etc. for students to share and be proud of their identity, culture, and background
- Implement listening circles for families and affinity groups to include their voice and allow for participation in equity initiatives
- For celebration of culture to be embedded in regular curriculum and ingrained within the culture of community on a regular basis
- Communicate to families when teachers/ educators/ staff are doing DEI trainings or PD and other equity initiatives

Families of Color and METCO families Focus Groups Recommendations for BPS to Improve Family Experiences

To improve a Context-Centered Mindset:

- Host open forums for families of color to express their voices and schedule it around their availability
- All schools make volunteer opportunities available around parent schedules
- Implement a process where families partner for half day to connect students outside of school
- To have a What's app group for each language spoken/ background/ to communicate important messages about opportunities and other announcements to families in their respective language
- School leaders need to lead immigrant families and provide opportunities to learn about racism, and DEI so they can teach to their families - help teaching correct language, context, and identity, and what's going on in the country. They are uncomfortable
- Represent diversity visually with posters of kids with different skin colors, moms looking different than dads, multi-racial families

To improve an Equity Mindset:

- Have more opportunities for parents to be involved in elementary day activities, for teachers to introduce parents to each other,
- Provide international families with more targeted support for them to learn about racism in the American context and teach their children about it as well

To improve an Aware Mindset:

- Educate student body on microaggressions, racism with explicit details on what common actions/ behaviors they do that fall into these categories: touching hair, making comments

about Black hair, calling students out their name with stereotypical cultural references, singling out classmates because of their identity

- Bring back host families for international students
- Have resources for international families and all families to learn about anti-racism parenting in the context of racism in the US context. They currently feel expected to come into the Belmont community already with an understanding of these nuanced topics
- For multicultural night, have someone at some point in the event talk about what it means to be inclusive and culturally competency through narratives

SPED families Focus Group Recommendations for BPS to Improve Family Experiences

- Hold SPED leaders to higher standards by holding them accountable for being professional and ethical
- Require Equity PD sessions centering students of color and students with disabilities for SPED leadership
- Aides should be required to go through a more rigorous SPED vetting process
- Keep SPED liaison as students progress throughout the years
- Create and implement a rigorous, and robust data collection and tracking process for all SPED Students that is easily accessible and understood by families
- Adopt an inclusive SEL curriculum for SPED students and integrated classrooms
- Host recurring open forum discussions for families to talk about their experiences with SPED leaders, district leaders, and educators to ensure open communication and establish trust between families and staff

***Refer to SPED audit for more in depth-policy recommendations**

Limitations

- Policy - In our audit of the BPS Policy and Procedural Manual we did not review those externally referenced Procedures that are to be written by the Superintendent. We also did not have the capacity to read all school specific Student and Family Handbooks. A potentially next step task is that the DEI Director collaborate with the Superintendents to ensure that those external Procedures explicitly listed in this audit are reviewed and improved for equity. See the Policy Analysis for more detail.
- Family Focus Groups - Collaboration with school leaders was challenging in inviting Black/African American families, Hispanic/Latino families, and other families of colors to focus groups. Despite multiple attempts on our auditor's behalf to collaborate on invites for families in order to secure time and space for diverse families to share their experiences,

communications from METCO leadership were delayed or altogether not responsive. In addition, invitations were not initially sent to some schools, further impacting participation. As a result, this led to low numbers of Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino families at the focus group initially designated for them. This reinforced initial expressions of mistrust and frustrations from the small number of families (two) that were present for the initial invites. To address this limitation, the auditors offered an additional Open Call for all families, and for METCO families later in our process. This time school leaders were more collaborative and sent our shared email invites to welcome targeted families.

- Student Focus Groups - Signs up from African American/Black students and other students of color (i.e. American Indian and Multiracial students) were scant. While we were readily able to hear from White, Asian, and Hispanic students, it required multiple attempts to connect with these other students. This resulted from a combination of factors including: Permission slips and invites to students and families were delayed coming from BPS staff, and some Principals sent out the interview schedule to students at the same time a hate crime was committed targeting LGBTQ+ students. Many students expressed being hesitant to join because the communication wasn't clear from school Principals and school leaders, and they expressed feeling unsafe, not having a secure place to talk openly, and at times discouraged from participating in the equity audit. It was very challenging to track down and connect with Black students across BPS, despite data showing there are 42 Black students at the Middle School and 54 Black students currently at the High School
- Distinction Between Auditing and Research - The two differ in their process and are not the same. Research includes extending available knowledge by means of systemically defensible enquiry. Auditing requires us to get a lay of the land to determine and improve quality towards our agreed standards and benchmarks. While this audit demonstrates a number of research methods, this analysis does not count as research.

Conclusions

We have analyzed numerous elements across Belmont Public Schools reflecting perspectives, policies, and practices as documented and experienced by students, staff, and community across the Belmont Public School District at large. This has allowed us to uncover insights into systematic to ground-level decisions that influence the staff and student population across multiple identities and demographics. Our intentions were to provide BPS with the data, tools, and strategic action plans to ensure their promise that BPS is a place where diverse students, educators and families are valued - translated to staffing and culture.

We audited every school within the BPS district to report the following:

- District-wide patterns in students, staff and family experiences based on and influenced by race, class, gender, language, and ability.
- Key Equitable and Inequitable Educator mindsets upheld by faculty, staff, families, and students to identify areas of improvement at policy levels and interpersonal levels (including the classroom) with the goal of fostering belonging and inclusion among staff, students, and families.
- Comparative equity measures between Belmont Public Schools and other public schools across Massachusetts, the Northeast, and the Nation.
- Recommendations for equitable improvements in recruitment, retention, and hiring protocols and strategies for increasing educators of color across BPS.

From student climate surveys we found large inequities and racial discrepancies in students' experiences of belonging, cultural awareness/action, and diversity and inclusion. We also found differences in the reports of belonging and respect afforded to students who identify as explicitly Male or Female, compared to lower scores of students who identify as Intersex or who prefer to "Self Describe" their gender identities. White, Asian, and Hispanic students reported higher scores for each of these topics at both the Middle School and High School, and African American, Multiracial, and American Indian students reported consistently lower scores for belonging, cultural awareness and action experiences, and diversity and inclusion overall.

Positive examples of equity that students shared from many backgrounds included that at their schools, they frequently spent time with students from different races, ethnicities, and cultures. Many students also reported having classes with students from different backgrounds, and that adults at their schools sometimes encouraged them to think deeply about what students from other cultures, races, and ethnicities experience. There was a notable difference in the extent that students from different races, ethnicities, and gender identities felt respected by their peers and teachers, and felt like students at BPS could have honest conversations about race with each other and their teachers.

In our staff surveys we reported a range of deficit framing and racial and gender avoidant mindsets about students' capacities to succeed even if they are given the right support. There were inequitable views about whether the existing curriculum is meaningful for all students, and views about the extent that students should all be expected to follow the same traditional school norms.

Findings across staff interviews and student and family focus groups were consistent in reports of the kinds of equitable and inequitable experiences they've had across BPS. The most common belief from these inquiries is that while there is plenty of talk about diversity, equity, and inclusion across BPS, there is a lack of real change happening. School leaders, educators, and staff express how equitable mindsets influence their thinking, but that it does not always translate in practice in Belmont.

In our student focus groups, many minority students at Belmont don't feel welcome and accepted; they also carry challenges from outside of school on top of in-school trauma, which educators are not always prepared to support them through. Many families shared that any family that is not white and/or American white is subject to discrimination, bullying, racism, homophobia, and xenophobia. Educators and school leaders express a grave awareness of this across schools and recognize areas of improvement in their own practice and welcome support to implement equitable mindsets, which includes advocating for the most vulnerable students.

Nonetheless, some educators and school leaders do express equitable mindsets and implement equitable practices and gestures towards diversity and inclusion. Families in focus groups explained how those interactions make the biggest difference in their kids' learning and sense of acceptance. However, many families and students shared that this is not happening enough and sometimes is overshadowed by racism, discrimination, and negative experiences that Black and Asian students have on campus.

This audit's findings strongly suggest that a collective effort of improving diverse representation in hiring, equitable policies and procedures, and staff's equitable mindsets and associated practices through professional development must be done across BPS. Throughout this audit we have provided recommendations and suggestions for next steps for each of the elements reviewed. These suggested next steps and summative needs are unique to each section and school. One blanket statement or action step alone will not improve equity at BPS.

It is paramount to note that the district's support and commitment to having an audit performed at all is a major step towards improving equity. The collaboration with staff, students, and families across Belmont throughout this process allowed us to deeply assess each element in this audit, and furthered a collection of actions and conversations which have great potential overtime to make equitable change and success happen at Belmont.

A worthy goal is to ensure all positive findings from this audit are equitably distributed and experienced, such that no matter one's ethnicity, race, or country of origin, students and families know with confidence that BPS is the place where their children should be. In light of that goal, it is of the opinion of these auditors that improvements to each and every element of this audit can be made. This audit should serve as a reference point, a resource of expert opinions on these elements, and a data resource identifying the DEI patterns across Belmont that inform actions. Most of all, follow up from this audit should reflect unwavering commitment to improving equity for all students, especially the most vulnerable and under-represented, at Belmont Public Schools.

Future Directions

Culture Shifts - In order to accomplish change, BPS leaders must address the root causes of inequities to make a culture shift. This work should address the ways in which educators interact with students, and will require accountability and consequences for staff who exacerbate inequities, and for leadership within groups where diverse students are particularly vulnerable - in particular across METCO and Special Education leadership. This will also require that school curriculum directors partner with experts in decolonizing curriculum, and ensure staff participate in DEI and anti-racist professional development.

DEI Director's Work and Onboarding - The new DEI Director's role is critical in furthering this work. In order to ensure mutual understanding of this audit's findings, summative needs, and strategic recommendations, the DEI Director will meet with relevant school leaders responsible for addressing the key elements of this audit. The DEI Director's work would also be best served if she is able to build and hire a task force or committee who's main priority is to address these audit findings concretely across BPS. It is pivotal that The DEI Director be the individual to select and vet the members of this team. This is critical because this leading work requires individuals' strong expertise across equity topics, and that its members have the real capacity, time, and resources to tackle and follow through on audit findings. We recommend the DEI Director prepare a proposal that includes: the goals of her new committee to address the audit findings, the individual's skills and areas of expertise required for this team, and the tasks of the committee.

Professional Development - In ensuring Belmont staff are prepared to understand, integrate and act on this Audit's findings in their work, Professional Development for school leaders is strongly encouraged. BPS staff would benefit most from PD that aligns closely to this audit's equity measures and research frameworks for equity. PD that helps educators work with the types of student, staff, and policy data explicitly measured and explained in this audit would best position staff for improvements in specific areas of equity reported here.

Notably, PD should address the ways staff think about, discuss, and teach about topics to do with student and staff race, culture, and gender identities. PD should especially allow staff to improve upon their equitable practices towards ensuring policies, curriculum, teaching decisions, and leadership decisions reflect an awareness of structural inequities and power imbalances. Finally, PD that guides staff in considering societal structures, student background (i.e. race, ability, and gender identity) and circumstances help address students' performances, and should shape the way staff support and provide students with appropriate opportunities to achieve.