

2021

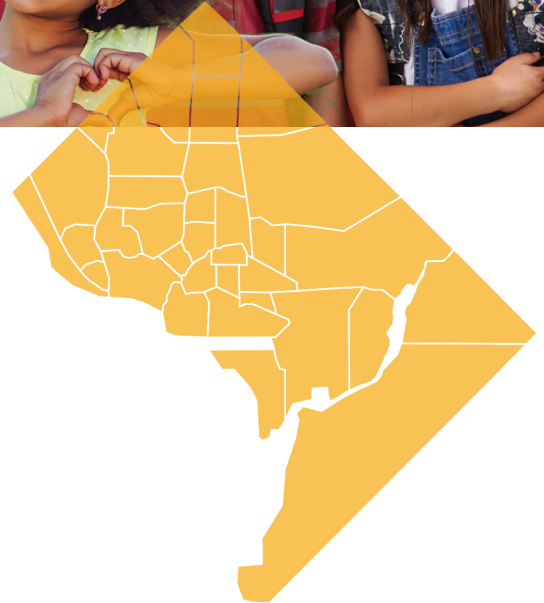


# AASA EQUITY COHORT CASE STUDY

Equity in Action in  
Washington, D.C.  
Public Schools



[www.aasa.org](http://www.aasa.org)





# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE AASA EQUITY COHORT CASE STUDY SERIES

The AASA Equity Cohort is committed to “Equity in Action,” addressing the growing inequities confronting students, families, and educators throughout the United States today. Without question, the recent global pandemic has highlighted the range of inequities that have been engineered into our country’s public school systems. These systems should be serving ALL young people, but many of our learners are marginalized because of structural conditions that work against this critically important national goal.

The AASA Equity Cohort is comprised of experienced educational leaders, national experts, and a cadre of passionate school leaders who are focused on cultivating equity and excellence in our increasingly diverse United States public education systems. This cohort is committed to facilitating intentional and deliberate actions to promote equity in rural, suburban, and urban school districts. The cohort provides school leaders and their teams a safe, collaborative, and action-oriented learning space for courageous conversations about equity in schools.

It is essential that tangible examples of equity and excellence “in action” be showcased as part of these efforts.

Therefore, a key component of the AASA Equity Cohort is the development of a series of case studies of school districts throughout our country making strides in promoting equity and addressing areas in which students have been historically underrepresented and underserved.

We are delighted to present the following detailed and comprehensive case study from our Nation’s Capital, Washington, D.C. Public Schools. We are extremely grateful to the staff of D.C. Public Schools for their truly outstanding work in preparing this document on the ways in which this district is making remarkable strides toward equity and excellence.

# AN INTRODUCTION: WASHINGTON, D.C. PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DC Public Schools (DCPS) committed to ensuring that all our schools provide rigorous and joyful learning experiences in a nurturing environment every day. We work to ensure every student feels loved, challenged, and prepared to positively influence society and thrive in life. We focus our efforts on becoming a district of both excellence and equity.

## Links to additional helpful resources:

- [A Capital Commitment 2017-2022 - Annual Updates](#)
- [DCPS Strategic Plan – A Capital Commitment 2017-2022](#)
- [DC Public Schools Launches New Strategic Plan, A Capital Commitment 2017-2022](#)
- [A Capital Commitment 2012-2017](#)

## District of Columbia Public Schools

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DC 20002

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## District Vision, Mission, & Guiding Principles



### VISION

Every student feels loved, challenged, and prepared to positively influence society and thrive in life.



### MISSION

Ensure that every school guarantees students reach their full potential through rigorous and joyful learning experiences provided in a nurturing environment.



### VALUES

**Students First:** We recognize students as whole children and put their needs first in everything we do.

**Equity:** We work proactively to eliminate opportunity gaps by interrupting institutional bias and investing in effective strategies to ensure every student succeeds.

**Excellence:** We work with integrity and hold ourselves accountable for exemplary outcomes, service, and interactions.

**Teamwork:** We recognize that our greatest asset is our collective vision and ability to work collaboratively and authentically.

**Courage:** We have the audacity to learn from our successes and failures, to try new things, and to lead the nation as a proof point of PK-12 success.

**Joy:** We enjoy our collective work and will enthusiastically celebrate our success and each other.



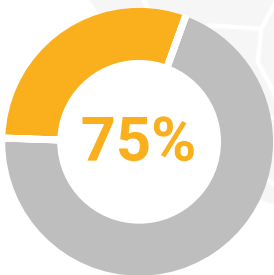
# Student, Staff, & Community Demographics



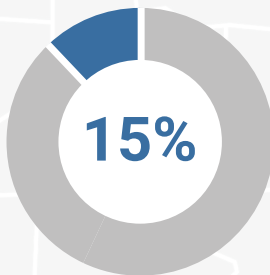
CLOSE TO 50,000 STUDENTS DISTRIBUTED INTO EIGHT WARDS



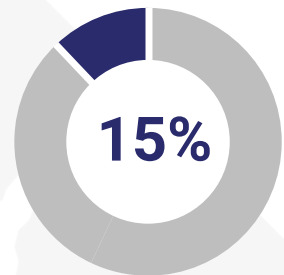
**116**  
**SCHOOLS**



**ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED**



**ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**



**RECEIVE SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES**



**114**  
**PRINCIPALS**



**181**  
**ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS**



**4,200**  
**TEACHERS**

# Highlights Of The District's Work In The Area Of Promoting Equity & Achievement For All Learners

The following resources were developed to support teachers and Central Office staff in their anti-racist learning (*Resources can also be found on the Equity Strategy and Programming Team webpage: [dcps.dc.gov/equity](https://dcps.dc.gov/equity)*):

## Links to additional helpful resources:

- [Culturally Responsive Curriculum Pre-work](#)
- [Culturally Responsive Curriculum Review Thought Catcher](#)
- [DCPS Equity Infographic](#)
- [FAQ: Norms for Inclusive and Equitable Synchronous Learning](#)
- [Protocol for Responding to Incidents of Hate and Bias](#)
- [Put your Data on a DIET](#)
- [School Equity Planning Guide](#)
- [Share Your Equity Journey with DCPS](#)
- [DCPS Equity Framework](#)

D.C. Public Schools has created a Protocol for Responding to Incidents of Hate and Bias to provide a clear process for how these types of incidents are addressed.

## We have collaborated with Central Office Teams to Embed Equity Throughout Workstreams:

- **SPCI/CSPs:** Reviewed Comprehensive School Plans with an equity lens and developed a resource, Equity in Every Domain to support school leaders in embedding equity throughout their CSPs (available in clusters CSP folders).
- **CI Institute:** Developed a six-week program including weekly check-ins, pre-work and guest speakers for Racial Equity fellows who reviewed DCPS curriculum to ensure cultural responsiveness.
- **Global Cornerstones:** Updated the Living Through History Cornerstone to embed the anti-bias framework domains and guiding questions aligned to the six themes of culturally responsive education.
- **Early Stages:** Engaged managers in developing a sustainable approach to equity that ensures systematic progress and persistence over time from updating job descriptions to the teams' mission statement.

- **LEAP:** Collaborated with LEAP Leaders to update existing equity framing in modules and create new opportunities to embed equity into LEAP Leader content, PD and ongoing offerings.
- **ECE:** Led a three-party series of “Managing for Racial Equity trainings” for ECE managers and developed a division survey to identify specific needs around policy, identity and mindsets, practices and culture. As a result, ECED has developed an “ECE Race & Equity Task Force” that is identifying equity-related issues in early learning and developing recommendations for action steps that ECED can take to ensure anti-racist practices in our ECE programs. (Report).
- **Content and Curriculum:** Collaborated

with the Office of Teaching and Learning to identify a cohort of content and curriculum Central Office leaders. The CCEC Cohort launched a two-part introductory session: Data Through an Equity Lens. Each part of the session introduces key steps in interpreting data to advance equity goals and create space for critical reflection on the role of data in contributing to and mitigating biased narratives, as well as its influence on DCPS decision-making.

- **Data and Strategy:** Collaborated with members of the Office of Data Strategy and Systems to conduct a training for all office members focused on equity and what it means to be anti-racist in their respective roles.

In January 2021, we launched **Anti-Racist Educator University** to build and deepen the capacity of our educators to lead and support culturally responsive learning environments. It is a strategic lever aligned to the district’s broader value of equity as a value and strategic priority. This series deepens professional learning by offering actionable and applicable strategies through content experts, teacher-led professional learning communities and a micro-credentialed Canvas course. To date, more than **1,000 DCPS staff** have registered for Anti-Racist Educator University. **Four keynote speakers** have engaged those staff members including Cierra Kahler-Jones, MenSa Maa, Dena Simmons and Zaretta Hammond.





## Equity Action Committee continues to be a safe space dedicated for anti-racist educators to:

1

Increase the will and skill of equity champions in schools and Central Office to eliminate opportunity gaps and disrupt institutional bias.

2

Create tangible resources to build capacity of school and Central Office Equity Teams leading this work from an adaptive lens.

3

Guide teams in leveraging a problem-solving approach to identifying and addressing inequities informed by qualitative and quantitative data.

### Video Series/Story Bank

To convey the District's efforts around anti-racism and equity across stakeholders

- [DCPS Educators on Anti-Racism](#)
- [DCPS Central Office Staff on Anti-Racism](#)
- [DCPS Celebrates Black History Month](#)
- [DCPS Celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month](#)
- [DCPS Standing Ovation for Equity Finalists](#)  
Discuss What Equity Means to Their School Communities
- [Wheatley Education Campus](#), Standing Ovation for Equity Winner, on their School's Equity Journey
- [Columbia Heights Education Campus](#), Standing Ovation for Equity Finalist, on their School's Equity Journey
- [Walker-Jones Education Campus](#), Standing Ovation for Equity Finalist, on their School's Equity Journey

## Courageous Conversations About Race

Over the past two years, more than 1,000 school-based and central office staff have participated in Beyond Diversity training, a personally transforming two-day seminar designed to help educators understand the impact of race on student learning and investigate the role that racism plays in institutionalizing academic achievement disparities.

Over 1,000 students will be impacted through the student programming led by the Equity Strategy and Programming Team:

230

230 middle school girls have been engaged in our Reign: We the Girls programming which meets bi-weekly and covers topics such as leadership, advocacy, identity, and self-care.

90

90 middle school boys have been recruited to participate in the launch of our EMOC: Rites of Passage programming which meets monthly and covers topics such as: brotherhood, leadership, and conflict resolution.

730

We anticipate reaching an additional 730 students by the end of summer through our Innovation Programs which provide schools with targeted funding to address an area of interest such as college readiness, mentoring, STEAM and Academic supports.





# EQUITY-RELATED PROBLEMS OF PRACTICE & SOLUTION-ORIENTED INITIATIVES CURRENTLY UNDERWAY IN D.C. PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1. Equity at DCPS means creating an environment in which we eliminate opportunity gaps, interrupt institutional bias, and remove barriers to academic and social success, particularly for students of color. To promote equity, DCPS will provide access, inclusion, and affirmation, offering the most support where the greatest disparities have persisted.
2. In order for DCPS to be an anti-racist multi-cultural organization, we must commit to overcoming systemic racism and intersectional forms of oppression. Full participation, decision-making and shared power in DCPS will reflect the diversity of the students and families we serve.
3. **Major Equity Initiatives in Response to Identified Problems of Practice:**
  - **DCPS Becoming** is about building anti-racism in DCPS through conscious efforts and deliberate actions that provide equitable opportunities for all students on an individual and systemic level. It is about acting and disrupting behaviors that promote racial hatred, bias, and the oppression of marginalized groups. Students, especially those who experience extreme adversity and racial trauma, need more than rich content to thrive. They need supportive environments, meaningful relationships that foster connections, and above all, teachers who are willing to acknowledge, examine, and confront their harmful assumptions and biases—in order to nurture and serve the whole child. These are the principles that undergird DCPS Becoming, and the principles that will lead all facets of the work. It is a movement, not a project. DCPS has reached the limits of what it can accomplish and hit its ceiling. Priority programs are designed to transform from the inside out, establish lasting change, all in pursuit of building an antiracist DCPS so that all students can reach their full potential.
  - All educators becoming fluent with the history of racism, its place in education, and the application of the science of learning and development to affect change within DCPS.
  - All schools becoming safe, supportive, and loving spaces that reflect racial sensitivity and cultural competence.
  - All students becoming resilient, passionate, and confident in their identity, especially those who experience racial trauma.
  - **Anti-Racist Educator University** is a strategic lever for equity that provides DCPS staff with shared learning rooted in anti-racism. This offering is unique in that it applies pillars of anti-racism and the DCPS Equity Framework with action through Context Experts, Professional Learning Communities and Micro-Credentialing. PLUs and certification are available at no cost to DCPS staff. To-date more than 1,000 have registered for this year's soft launch.
  - **Courageous Conversation Affiliate Cohort** is a group of 20 Central Services staff across offices and line of difference who are engaging in a semester-long experience to become practitioners of Courageous Conversation content. As a commitment to the cohort, staff members engage in cross-team application of the Courageous Conversation Protocol in their personal and professional context within DCPS; utilize the Protocol to engage DCPS staff in racial literacy development discourse in collaboration with the Equity Strategy and

Programming Team; and collectively work towards building and sustaining DCPS staff capacity to implement the organizational and individual commitments to equity as outlined in our framework.

- **Equity Audit and Framework Revision:**

DCPS' equity framework is a living document and executive summary outlining the DCPS definition of equity, areas of inequity to address, an equity lens outlining an individual and collective approach to the work and district commitments across offices and teams. This document will be expanded to bridge theory with practice by offering case studies of schools and teams that have narrowed opportunity gaps and addressed disparities from an equity lens. Additionally, DCPS will be partnering with an external consultant to conduct a district-wide equity audit of initiatives, policies, practices, and systems.

- **Affinity Spaces:** The Equity Strategy and Programming Team initially launched affinity spaces as safe spaces for you to reflect and process following the tragic deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and Tony McDade. One way to process in a safe space is through affinity. DCPS affinity spaces are gathering opportunities for people who share a common identity. This space will be organized based on the racial identities represented in Central Office as we aim to lean into the Courageous Conversation condition of isolating race. DCPS Central

Office staff from the Equity, Community Action and SEL Teams will co-facilitate these discussions in affinity at least once a month but more frequently as requested by the group. More than **200 DCPS** staff have signed up to participate in affinity spaces to-date.

- **The Equity Action and Advisory Committee** is a monthly space for school-based and Central Services staff to increase their collective will and skill as equity champions across the district. The committee builds school and Central Services capacity to lead from an equity lens; increases the will and skill of DCPS equity champions; thought partners and shares strategies to better individual practice and leverages a problem-solving approach to collectively address inequities. More than **150 DCPS staff** are a part of the Equity Action and Advisory Committee with regular attendance of **40 staff** per meeting.
- **The Rigorous Instruction Supports Equity (RISE) Program** is supported through the Teacher and School Leader Incentive (TSL) Program - a federal grant made of 13 awards to support local education agencies in developing, enhancing, improving, and implementing human capital management systems (HCMS) that include performance-based teacher and principal compensation systems (PBCS). Each of the funded projects – including the development of a **RISE Equity Professional Development Specialist position** was designed to be concentrated in high-need schools and



has the goal of increasing overall student achievement and closing the opportunity gap between low- and high-performing students. DC Public Schools is excited to announce we are the largest award winner in 2020. 43 schools will be supported under this grant. The Rise Equity Professional Development Specialist specifically will be building a train the trainers model for equity champions at each school to receive ongoing foundational learning around racial equity to adapt that learning into their own school-based professional development. They will also receive a stipend for their work.

- **Empowering Males of Color-Rites of Passage (EMOC-ROP) program** is focused on building brotherhood, developing critical thinking, knowledge of self and global awareness through rites of passage approach. The program provides guidance, resources, and engagements for middle school-aged male-identifying students of color. Seven schools are engaged in this initiative.
- **Reign: We the Girls Leadership program** focuses on creating spaces for young women of color to build community, confidence, and leadership skills, while also focusing on identity and health and wellness. 10 schools are engaged in this initiative.
- **Male Educators of Color Collaborative (MEOCC)** aims to be a sustainable cohort of educators in DCPS who create a sense of fellowship and belonging amongst male educators of color within the district, while simultaneously providing them a voice to ensure their needs are heard and met by senior leadership through coordinated advocacy efforts. The function and design of MEOCC is meant to align with [DCPS' Capital Commitment: 2017-2022](#) strategic priorities by ensuring that DCPS empowers its people and retains and promotes male educators of color, a historically underrepresented group of educators nationwide, while also promoting equity across all facets of DCPS. To reach this vision, MEOCC will focus on promoting and empowering the brotherhood of male educators at DCPS.

- **Critical Conversations** is an interdisciplinary elective that incorporates ethnic studies and social emotional learning (SEL). Students in this course engage in rigorous learning experiences designed to build their capacity as critically conscious individuals prepared to challenge the status quo and serve as leaders on a global stage.

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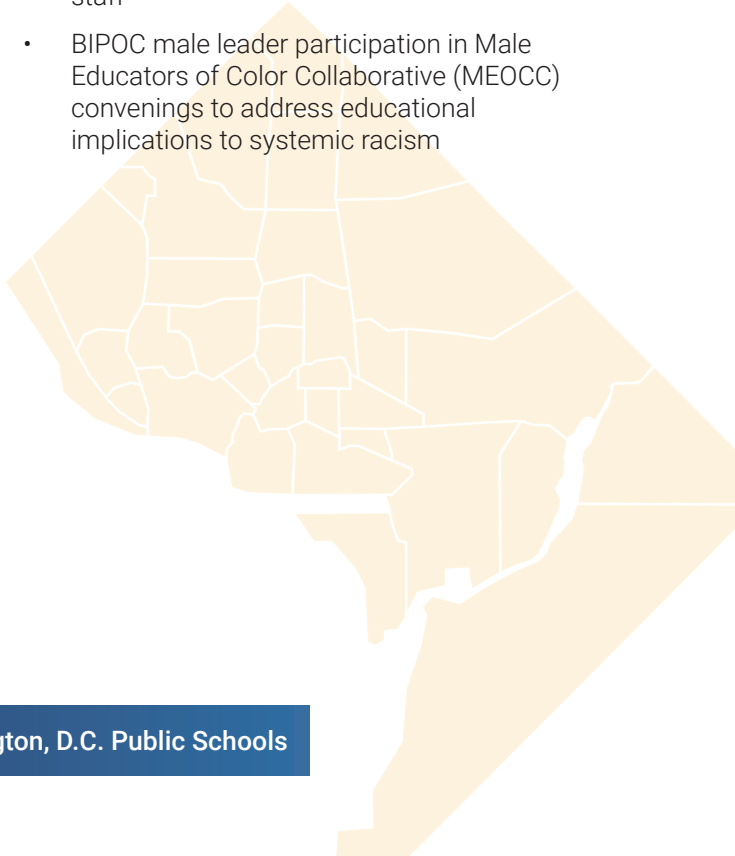
All schools becoming safe, supportive, and loving spaces that reflect racial sensitivity and cultural competence.

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# EQUITY-DRIVEN LEADERSHIP IN D.C. PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1. DCPS is committed to maintaining the standard that every school strategically aims to address the needs of every child every day. To that end, our Leadership Development Team has designed professional learning communities (PLCs) and development series to support school leaders in creating structures that ensure the long-term sustainability of school-based initiatives that promote equity. We address topics such as Operationalizing the Mission in Vision with an Equity Lens and Systems-Thinking to Support Culturally Responsive Instruction.
2. In addition, we selected a program design partner committed to eliminating educational inequities, Center for Educational Leadership (CEL). With their support, we have conducted Equity-Centered Leader Focus Groups to gather input from leader stakeholder groups on equity-centered dispositions that align with our district's mission and values. We are currently in the process of using this data to inform the drafting of our district's Equity-Centered Leadership Competencies.
3. The following include (but are not limited to) equity-centered leadership actions that currently exemplify models in our district:
  - School leader participation in our district's Courageous Conversations Series designed to disrupt racially based assumption, biases, and practices that impact students, especially those often marginalized
  - Leaders creating space and prioritizing dialogue with families, community members, and staff by, with, and for students to address race, equity, and cultural competency
  - Clear and consistent accountability measures with staff whose mindsets and practices do not demonstrate alignment to equity-centered practices in order to disrupt practices
  - School leaders using the content covered in PLCs and programming, such as Resource Management with an Equity Lens, and then applying those strategies at their school communities
  - School leader contributions to district-wide innovative development opportunities such as Antiracism University, DCPS Equity Problems of Practices led by leaders for other leaders, and enrollment in Leading for Equity and Access with district partners.
  - School leaders promoting and supporting the retention of diverse and culturally response staff
  - BIPOC male leader participation in Male Educators of Color Collaborative (MEOCC) convenings to address educational implications to systemic racism





# BUILDING AN EQUITABLE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

## 1. How are you ensuring that every student is treated fairly and respectfully?

- From a student behavior lens, we are enforcing the Student Fair Access to Schools Act, which provides an equitable approach/guidance for schools when responding to student behavior. Additionally, it is aligned to DC Municipal Regulations (DCMR) Chapter 25, which is the legislation all DC schools have to follow.
- We are implementing the five non-negotiables which highlights greeting all students with affirmative language.
- Our protocol for responding to incidents of hate and bias outline a process for schools to follow when incidents/issues regarding hate/bias/discrimination can be reported and addressed, which includes outlining short-term and long-term support.

## 2. How are you ensuring that all learners experience a sense of belonging, engagement, and feel personally and culturally respected?

- DCPS is committed to building adult capacity around our trauma responsive schools (TRS) model. The TRS framework approach emphasizes the following:
- Establish relational trust with students. Speak positive and affirmative language daily. Provide spaces for students to regulate their emotions.
- Our TRS model allows us to ensure we are creating a positive, safe and affirming learning experience for all students.

## 3. How are staff, students, families, and community members engaged in your work with equity and excellence?

- DCPS has prioritized the voice of our key stakeholders in the development of our Capital Commitment goals and strategic priorities-including equity and excellence.
- DCPS Family and Community Engagement Team has prioritized engagement with families who may not have a traditional platform for elevating their concerns -especially Black and Brown families in Wards 7 and 8 and our Spanish-speaking families.
- DCPS supports school and teacher level partnership with families through our Family Engagement Partnership with Flamboyant foundation and teacher fellowship, our Family Engagement Collaborative. Both of these professional development opportunities provide educators with tools, resources and trainings to support relationship building, communication and discussing academics with families.
- Stakeholders are also engaged through the Chancellor's Parent Advisory Board, Chancellor's Student Advisory Board, Chancellor's Principal Advisory Board and Chancellor's Teacher Advisory Board.
- Over the last year DCPS has been intentional about creating a school-level approach toward reopening and recovery -the Reopening/Recovery Community Corps. This group of mixed stakeholders has worked together in each school community to plan for a strong and safe return to in-person learning and ensure those students furthest from opportunity (EL, SPED, At-risk) were prioritized for return first.



# PROMOTING EQUITABLE & CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CLASSROOMS

## 1. How does your written, taught, and assessed curriculum reflect a commitment to equity, cultural responsiveness, and differentiation?

- Our curriculum is designed to support equity, cultural responsiveness and differentiation by providing rigorous and meaningful instructional materials for teachers and students.
- For example, our humanities curriculum focuses on diverse voices ensuring that our students are reading from authors that reflect their backgrounds and cultures.
- Our curriculum materials are also designed with elements of Universal Design for Learning allowing diverse learners and learning styles to access the content.

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Our district prioritizes establishing a positive learning environment for our students.

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## 2. How does your district promote instructional practice consistent with child development research, effective and culturally responsive pedagogy, and the commitment to address the needs of every learner?

- Our DCPS Essential Practices set the framework for effective instruction in the district based on different bodies of research reflective of multiple content areas.
- Our essential practices, DCPS curriculum and professional learning reflect the latest research in the field including a commitment and attention to diverse learners.
- We collaborate with our Language Acquisition Division and Division of Specialized Instruction to include elements of Universal Design for Learning in our curriculum and PD.
- During this past year, we launched our Anti-Racist Educator University to support a series of workshops on culturally responsive and anti-racist instructional practices. This includes both mindsets, policies, and practices.

## 3. How do classrooms in your district build a sense of community for all learners and teachers?

- Our district prioritizes establishing a positive learning environment for our students. In fact, our Essential Practice rubric, our teacher evaluation system, prioritizes it as the first dimension of effective teaching.
- Our district curriculum and pacing prioritize time for teachers to build this community and provides recommended activities and resources. These activities promote self-reflection, collaboration, and building positive identities.



# ENSURING SUSTAINED & DIFFERENTIATED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR ALL STAFF

- 1. How does your district encourage all staff to place students at the center of education and accept responsibility for each student's social-emotional, cognitive, and overall growth and well-being?**
  - Our Essential Practices rubric highlights the importance of prioritizing student social-emotional and cognitive development to support a positive classroom culture. Through our LEAP program, we have intentionally lead sessions that address students SEL needs through a district-wide LEAP Seminar Series called our "SEAD and Equity Foundations" series.
- 2. What kinds of sustained professional learning do you provide to support your staff in understanding and addressing best practices for promoting equity and excellence?**
  - Equity lives through our professional development by focusing on high-quality instructional resources, highly effective instruction and instructional practices, and access to grade level content and expectations. Through our PD, we focus on these areas by assisting teachers understand and effectively implement the DCPS curriculum; develop best practices to support diverse learners including students with disabilities, emergent bilinguals, students below grade level, and students of color; and engage in ongoing data cycles to review and respond to student work from a diverse range of student work products.



# ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURAL COMPONENTS THAT PROMOTE EQUITY & EXCELLENCE

## 1. How are you enhancing and/or revisiting your district's policies and regulations to ensure that they align with your vision, mission, and guiding principles for equity and excellence?

- The DCPS Policy Team established a new standing Policy Committee this winter of high-level leaders from across DCPS to review draft policies and provide feedback, make recommendations to district leadership on short- and long-term policy priorities, and serve as a community of practice to improve the quality of DCPS' policy work and hold each other accountable for incorporating broad and diverse perspectives. This included norming as a Policy Committee on DCPS' values, particularly our goal of being a racially equitable and anti-racist school district.
- The team added a racial equity analysis worksheet (based on the [GARE racial equity toolkit](#)) to the standard process for developing or revising district policies in order to ensure that all DCPS policy work explicitly considers the racial equity impact of the proposed updates and advances racial equity in the district.
- We also expanded the purpose and scope section of our policies to include additional information on DCPS' vision, principles, and goals of racial equity and excellence throughout the district and ensure that the underlying policies themselves are developed with these principles in mind and incorporate them throughout.

## 2. How is your district working to ensure diversity and high-performance in its hiring and retention practices?

- We are proactively employing a multifaceted

recruitment plan aimed at attracting educators of color across all content areas and grade levels. Strategies include marketing on diverse organizational and professional websites such as DiversityJobs.com, the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE), Latinos for Education, Education Week, and the National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE). Additionally, hosting tailored recruitment and cultivation events such as our Supporting Language Learners at DCPS and Male Educators of Color panel webinars each spring to ensure educators feel welcome and connected to a community before they are even hired with our district:

- Establishing new partnerships, such as our residency partnership with Howard University, to create sustainable and rigorous pipelines for recruiting, developing, and retaining teachers of color.
- Providing retention support for licensure compliance by offering the PCMAS as an alternative licensure exam for Heritage Spanish Speakers for prospective and current bilingual staff, as well as funding Praxis prep courses through Trinity Washington University for 130 staff in 1 and 2-STAR schools and/or staff in high-need content areas (disproportionately affecting educators of color).
- Partnering with stakeholders to ensure selection materials and evaluators are set up for a rigorous and equitable selection process. The Talent Development team partners with a research team to develop and refine a selection process



that is predictive of future performance on IMPACT, DCPS' teacher evaluation system. Additionally, the Talent Team partners with content teams from the Office of Teaching and Learning to assist in developing selection materials, as well as the Equity Team in training evaluators to mitigate biases in the selection process.

### **3. How do you manage school and district operations and resources to promote each student's academic success and well-being?**

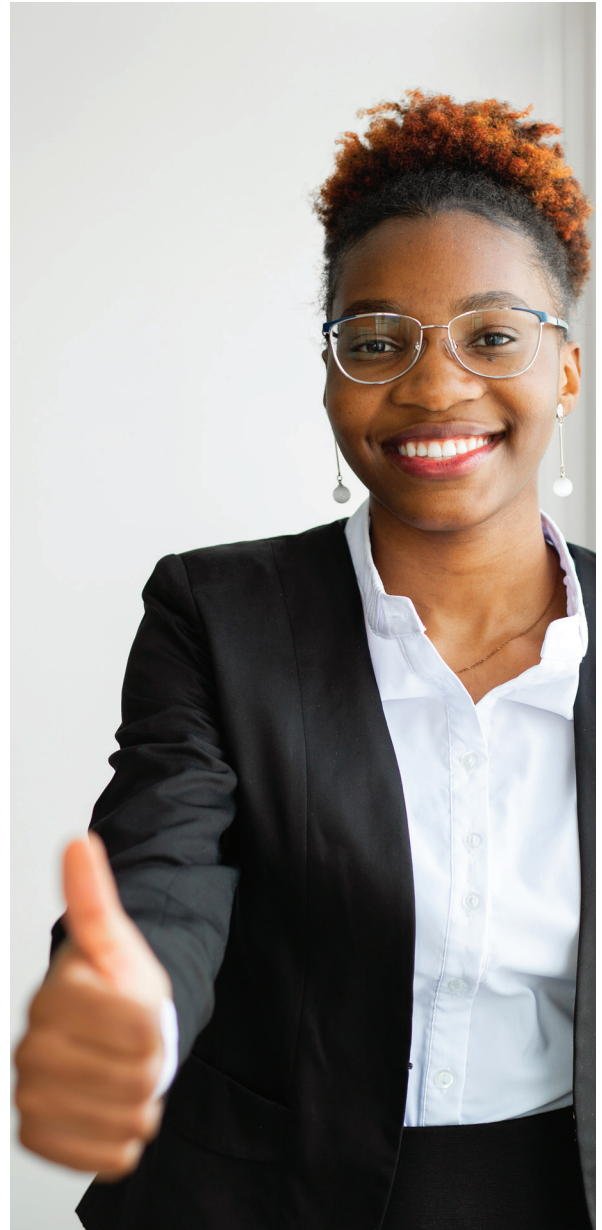
- The Strategic School Operations team encourages and promotes having dedicated operational leaders and cluster operations support in order to ensure principals lead, teachers teach, and students are focused on learning. In addition, there is a centralized strategic approach in providing staffing at the cluster level, to provide coaching, modeling, thoughtful oversight, and support while building capacity at the school level. By properly planning on the central office level, and creating systems, we ensure that all schools receive equitable resources to manage the day-to-day school operations. A focus on systems, safety, cleanliness and a welcoming environment are at the forefront of our approach and subsequent policies and initiatives. Examples include:
  - TSSL Program, which includes Directors and Managers of Strategy/Operations at 78 schools.
  - Coaching of our operational staff on a monthly basis (1-2 staff members per school).
  - Ongoing professional development for custodial staff (includes 500+ custodians).

### **4. How do you work with the Board of Education, community members, and families to ensure sustained funding for equity-related programs and initiatives?**

- DCPS' key lever for ensuring authentic engagement around the budget and strategic school-level priorities and goals is the Local School Advisory Team (LSAT) – a mixed group of stakeholders who are elected

each year to represent the school interests. Monthly meetings and frequent discussions around school goals, priorities and budget ensure equity is at the forefront and decision-makers at the school-level are informed by a broad group.

- Annually the budget process is designed to capture feedback on multiple levels- district and school-level around priorities such as equity-related programs. This is one through a required public hearing as well as surveys and public townhalls.





# BUILDING & SUSTAINING CROSS-INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

## 1. How do you engage colleges, universities, and other educational partners in your area to collaborate with you to achieve your equity goals?

- **DCPS Persists** - As part of DCPS Persists, our responsibility is to work with alumni currently in college, DCPS Persists has a set of college partners. Partner colleges were chosen for their student populations as they generally match the demographics of the DCPS population – allowing all solutions to be scalable as a lever to help both DCPS and the partner college improve persistence and graduation rates. These relationships are formalized with agreements that articulate data sharing, along with expectations on each side to support students and address common trends.
- **Early College** - In SY19-20, DCPS introduced two city-wide Early College programs to ensure that exponentially more students had the opportunity to access and earn up to 60 college credits simultaneously with their high school diploma. Bard Early College opened in partnership with Bard University, and The Early College Academy at Coolidge High Schools was created in partnership with Trinity Washington University. We intentionally located these Early Colleges in areas of the city with the most socioeconomically, racially, and ethnically diverse student populations.
- **Dual Enrollment** - DCPS offers 5 dual enrollment programs with 11 colleges and university partners in the fall, spring, and summer. College Prep works with OSSE and college partners to fund opportunities for students from grades 9-12 at all DCPS high schools. The College Prep Coordinator works

with university partners to communicate program expectations and provide support to students while they navigate the program. We continue to expand Dual Enrollment opportunities and improve the application process.

- **Career and Technical Education (CTE)** - DCPS is committed to ensuring CTE programs lead to high-demand, high-wage, and high-skilled jobs in the DC area. One of the ways we are strengthening our CTE programs is by using the career academy model. Students in DCPS College and Career Academies outpace their non-NAF peers in key outcomes linked to academic and postsecondary readiness, and this is especially true for our students east of the river. Career Academy students are also better able to articulate their postsecondary plans and how high school prepares them for college and career. College and Career Academies are open enrollment, meaning that any student can join an Academy regardless of the level of preparation, GPA, or test scores. Additionally, Academy leaders are encouraged to ensure enrollment reflects the school population in the areas of race/ethnicity, special education status, language learner status, and gender. As of SY20-21, 75% of the District's CTE programs use the Academy model.
- **Talent Ready Initiative** - The DCPS College and Career Program Division hosts a monthly cross-agency meeting with leaders from regional universities, educational partners, and city agencies focused on expanding the talent pipeline in the IT field. The leadership team uses funding provided by JP Morgan and Bloomberg as part of the Talent Ready

grant to implement programs for DCPS students, with a focus on student populations that are underrepresented in the IT field in the DMV area.

- **Career Ready Internships** - The DCPS Career Ready Internship Initiative places highly qualified Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) applicants into competitive, paid internships. Upon completion of the Tenacity Employability Skills training, students are eligible to interview with leading industry employers in their career field of choice. These internships are designed to expose students to the world of competitive employment and help guide students through the career exploration process. DCPS collaborates with the Industry Advisory Boards and the OSSE-led Internship Committee to develop a host employer recruitment plan.
- **Career Bridge Internship Program** - The DCPS Career Bridge Program provides opportunities for students to jump start their career in an industry of their interest while receiving one-on-one career coaching, career exploration, professional skill building, and a paid internship opportunity. The Career Bridge Program support a cohort of students who self-select into a 2-year, Career Education, Military, Apprenticeship and Employment pathways. DCPS engages with Internship Host Partners in high wage high demand industries in effort to expose and prepare students by offering industry certification and trainings.
- **College and Career Coordinators** - DCPS College and Career Coordinators (CCC) are assigned to our 9 highest need, comprehensive high schools to address postsecondary needs and supports. Students that attended these schools needed more

individualized support and tailored resources, which the CCCs provide. DCPS has seen increases in key college and career-related milestones at each of the nine CCC schools since their arrival in SY16-17.

## 2. How are community groups engaged in supporting your work with equity and excellence?

- The Connected Schools team and individual schools leverage the expertise of multiple groups. CSMs in particular work closely with ANCs, education councils, PTAs, local churches, advocacy coalitions and other community groups to build relationships, engage in supporting the community and collaborating to support students and families (including in accessing basic needs/ food, providing tutoring and enrichment and expanding vital health and social emotional programs).

## 3. What role do local non-profit organizations, government agencies, and business organizations play in supporting your work with equity and excellence?

- Many of our partners, including non-profit organizations, government agencies and business organizations, support equity by providing resources that many of our students furthest from opportunity do not have.
- Non-profits such as After School All Stars provide DCPS students with high quality afterschool enrichment programs that students with more resources pay hundreds of dollars for each semester.
- Government agencies like the DME's OST Office funds summer programs so students have access to free camps.
- Local businesses donate items ranging from tickets to sporting events to clothing to food.

“

CSMs in particular work closely with ANCs, education councils, PTAs, local churches, advocacy coalitions and other community groups to build relationships, engage in supporting the community and collaborating to support students and families.

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A photograph of two young children, a boy and a girl, looking at a globe. The boy is on the left, pointing at the globe, and the girl is on the right, looking at the globe. The globe shows the Americas and the Atlantic Ocean. The text "SCHOOL-BASED EXAMPLES THAT REFLECT DISTRICT PRIORITIES & PRINCIPLES FOR EQUITY & EXCELLENCE" is overlaid on the image in large, white, bold, sans-serif font.

# SCHOOL-BASED EXAMPLES THAT REFLECT DISTRICT PRIORITIES & PRINCIPLES FOR EQUITY & EXCELLENCE

1. What examples can you share of schools in your district that are demonstrating success in the areas of equity and excellence? What do these selected sites share in terms of addressing equity and excellence? What unique contributions and achievements does each of them demonstrate?

- **Wheatley Education Campus** was [DCPS' 2020 Standing Ovation for Equity Award winner](#). 2020 was the first year that Wheatley EC had been nominated for a Standing Ovation Award. From leadership to first year staff and veteran staff, all exhibited a clear application of equity in their school's community, in addition to a passion for the work. Equity is the responsibility of everyone at Wheatley to ensure effective implementation in the school as a whole. [Watch this video](#) to hear directly from Walker Jones EC leadership on their journey.
  - **Equity in Policy:** In terms of hiring, leadership infuses values and equity-based questions into their rubric to ensure staff are committed to being equity champions in this work.
  - **Equity in Practice:** At Wheatley, all staff went through a mandatory Summer Academy dedicated to SEL and equity during which they were introduced to racial autobiographies and the history of their community. The learnings from Summer Academy carried throughout the school year in the form of staff sharing their racial autobiographies during weekly staff meetings. Through this process, staff have strengthened their relationship to one another as well as their understanding of the aspects of their identities that may impact and influence the outcomes they see in their building.
- **Equity in Identity and Mindsets:** Staff have embraced a culture of "feedback is love," calling one another in on tough conversations around discipline, instruction and more while isolating race in the process. Staff also participate in an opt-in book study on "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" Led by Principal Plenty and AP Warner, staff have an opportunity to further make connections between the content and the work in their building.
- **Equity in Culture:** In addition to explicitly engaging in conversations about race and equity, school mental health staff push into classrooms to deliver Second Step Social-Emotional Learning lessons to students in a collaborative, intentional way. Staff also collapsed all of their individual school support teams from school mental health to attendance into one CARE Team to support the whole adult as well as the whole child and ultimately better support the entire Wheatley community.
- **Student Impact:** Wheatley has an inclusion model is so intentionally pervasive to ensure all students receive rigorous instruction. In addition, Wheatley has experienced gains in student improvement as exemplified in the data they shared with the committee during the visit.
- **Family and Community Impact:** Wheatley has a parent café during which families meet once a month to receive updates

on school and student performance as well as provide feedback for continuous school improvement.

- **Columbia Heights Education Campus (CHEC)** was a finalist for DCPS' 2020 Standing Ovation for Equity Award. CHEC has been nominated for Standing Ovation and has been recognized in other capacities in the district. CHEC has an equity committee of staff to identify areas of inequity to address as a whole. [Watch this video](#) to hear directly from Walker Jones EC leadership on their journey.
  - **Equity in Policy:** CHEC's dual enrollment program does not have an entrance exam and allows for late enrollment to address the inequities created by early enrollment requirements in other settings. As a result, 54 percent of African American students are enrolled in dual enrollment whereas other schools in the District are experiencing lower enrollment of African American students in similar programs.
  - **Equity in Practice:** The Equity Committee conducted a data equity audit to identify gaps in student achievement and strategies to address those barriers in the building.
  - **Equity in Identity and Mindsets:** The school has whole-staff opportunities to engage in professional development, training and conversations around racial equity including a summer PD with Courageous Conversation during pre-service as well as a staff-led PD in November based on feedback from the data equity audit.
  - **Equity in Culture:** Social justice is in the mission of CHEC. Every project that students complete connects to a social justice issue. The building and physical space of CHEC also include representation across lines of race and gender expression.
  - **Student Impact:** has a rigorous AP program with no tracking as well as programs such as Empowering Males of Color to meet student needs.
  - **Family and Community Impact:** CHEC has a clear sense of community among all stakeholders including parents, students, instructional and

non-instructional staff. They also have clear consistency in their equity practices. Although there were consistent in practices, there were missed opportunities for accelerating momentum around equity. The tone around equity in the building seemed to be driven by leadership's direction. With regard to families, caregivers and parents are so engaged at the school that five parents were present for the equity awards visit. There is also a Spanish class for parents who want to learn the language as well as an English class for parents wanting to learn English.

- **Walker Jones EC** was a 2020 finalist for the DCPS Standing Ovation Award for Equity. Walker Jones staff member Ms. Coleman also won the 2018 Standing Ovation for Teacher of the Year. Walker Jones showed clear progress in addressing opportunity gaps present in their school and letting exemplar staff members lead that work to have it permeate the entire school building. [Watch this video](#) to hear directly from Walker Jones EC leadership on their journey.
  - **Equity in Policy:** Walker Jones has leveraged interventions to ensure equity in their building including an inclusion model with scaffolds for students with special education needs.
  - **Equity in Practice:** In all classes we visited (all grade 3), student work was differentiated based on their test scores to ensure they receive personalized instruction.
  - **Equity in Identity and Mindsets:** Walker Jones puts great emphasis on making sure staff identity and mindsets are in a place to move the work with fidelity. When it comes to messaging on being able to hold high expectations for all students, the messaging is consistent across ALT. If staff make mistakes, the motto is not how to avoid making that mistake again. Rather, the motto is "what are we learning when we make mistakes?"
  - **Equity in Culture:** Walker Jones has a philosophy that in order to achieve success the culture of the building must be ready for success. As a result, they go by the 4 R's in their building – readiness,

resilience, responsible, and respectful. Students receive Dojo points for displaying these values in instruction and outside of the classroom.

- **Student Impact:** Data reflected that Walker Jones has made great strides in closing opportunity gaps present in their building.
- **Community Impact:** Walker Jones is an exemplar for other schools looking to make gains in student improvement.
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- **Student Impact:** Data reflected that Walker Jones has made great strides in closing opportunity gaps present in their building.
- **Family and Community Impact:** Walker Jones is an exemplar for other schools looking to make gains in student improvement.





# CONCLUDING COMMENTARY: LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

**1. Concluding Commentary (Including “Lessons Learned” and Recommendations): Please provide any concluding remarks or commentary you wish to provide readers. Are there recommendations you can make to districts that are in the beginning stages of addressing equity and excellence issues that you have addressed successfully?**

- Here at D.C. Public Schools, our focus moving forward is becoming a whole-child, anti-racist organization. This requires a strong commitment from all leaders, central and school-based staff, students, and families. And we understand that this is not a one-year process. Instead it will involve continuous work and focus on this priority. It will involve intentional training, strategic supports, and resources for all our stakeholders. It will require us to ensure that we are considering our policies, practices, culture, and identity and mindsets. And we are ready to do the work!
- Our recommendations for other districts include: (a) Conduct an Equity Audit to determine where you are; (b) Develop an Equity/Guiding Framework for your district; (c) Commit to capacity building, ensuring that EVERYONE is involved in this work—not just one person or one team; and (d) Get commitments from all offices and schools concerning how they are working toward addressing equity and excellence.

