RACIAL EQUITY ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT SURREY SCHOOL DISTRICT

PREPARED BY THE RACING TO EQUITY CONSULTING GROUP:

BERNARDO RUIZ
ANITA GARCIA MORALES
TAMI FARBER
DR. NORMA ZAVALA
CHERYL VAZQUEZ COLON
SANDRA KIM RUIZ

FADUMO NURDIN
ALEX CHASE
LAURA BROWN
JEANNE TEODORO
TONY NABORS
JONATHAN RUIZ

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge that Surrey Schools District, where you work,play, and learn, are on the shared, unceded traditional territory of the **Katzie, Semiahmoo, Kwantlen**, and other **Coast Salish Peoples**.

The Racing to Equity Consulting Group would like to express our extreme gratitude to Dr. Tinney, his senior leadership team, Surrey Schools District's teachers, educators, students, their families and community members for their commitment to advancing racial equity and educational justice at the Surrey Schools and providing strong support for the completion of this report through truly collaborative partnership .

This report was made possible by each of your valuable contributions. Our hope is that you see yourself reflected in the key findings and recommendations contained in this report to intentionally, meaningfully, and strategicallyadvance racial equity and educational justice at the Surrey Schools.

We are grateful for the fortitude, courage, and exemplary leadership shown by each person involved in this process, especially the brilliance, strength and courage shown by SSD students. We are confident that this powerful team will guide and ensure theadvancement of racial equity and educational justice at SSD.

Our goal is to contribute to the creation of an environment at the Surrey Schools where each student, staff member, and family are honored, valued, and dignified for humanity for years to come. Thank you!

"*Where common memory is lacking, where people do not share in the same past, there can be no real community. Where community is to be formed, common memory must be created.*"

-   **Georges Erasmus, Aboriginal Leader Canada**

This quote gets to the heart of both nations' problem with race. Our citizens do not share a common memory. People of white European ancestry remember a history of discovery, open lands, manifest destiny, endless opportunity, and exceptionalism, while communities of color, primarily those with African and Indigenous roots, have the lived experience of stolen lands, broken treaties, slavery, boarding schools, segregation, cultural genocide, internment camps, and mass incarceration.

Opening Letter

On behalf of the R2E Consulting Group, we are pleased to present the Racial Equity Environmental Assessment of Surrey Schools District in British Columbia, Canada. This process began as part of Dr. Tinney and his Senior Leadership Team's unwavering commitment to advancing educational justice and racial equity at the Surrey Schools. Developing this report was a true collaborative process that documented 39 Listening Circles which included students, educators, school leaders, Education Association representatives, union representatives, families (Black, Indigenous, Southeast Asian, White), and support staff at all levels of the district. The purpose of this extensive qualitative data collection was to deepen our understanding of SSD from diverse perspectives of its internal and external stakeholders. This report captures those perspectives and translate them into a set of informed recommendations for SSD to advance racial equity and educational justice. Surrey's students, families, community members, and educators were particularly engaged and contributed insightful suggestions based on their lived experiences both within SSD and working with SSD. We hope that this report elevates the voices of SSD students, educators, leaders, and community members who provided their invaluable input and that their lived experiences are reflected in our findings and recommendations.

In partnership,
Bernardo Ruiz, Anita Garcia Morales, Tami Farber, Dr. Norma Zavala, Chery Vazquez Colon, Fadumo Nurdin, Alex Chase, Laura Brown, Jeanne Teodoro, Tony Nabors, Jonathan Ruiz, Sandra Kim Ruiz, and Dr. Yumiko Aratani

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Executive Summary

Background
The Surrey Schools District (SSD) is a 115-year-old school district that has the largest student enrolment in British Columbia. SSD is governed by an elected board of seven trustees representing the cities of Surrey and White Rock. SSD's vision is "We prepare our learners to think creatively and critically, communicate skillfully, and demonstrate care for self and others." This vision led Dr. Tinney to partner with *Racing to Equity (R2E)* to conduct an independent assessment of their progress on this journey. This assessment aimed to identify the gaps between SSD's values and school experiences among stakeholders and to develop recommendations on how to align and realign their commitment to ensure that each and every one of their 74,263 students receives high quality, culturally sustaining, and socially just education. The SSD's student body is racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse where over 3,200 students have Aboriginal ancestry (First Nations, Métis and Inuit), and the majority of the students speak languages other than English at home. Of the 150 languages spoken among the students, the top five languages are Punjabi, Tagalog, Mandarin, Hindi and Arabic.

Data and Methodology
R2E's racial equity environmental assessment aimed to analyze the SSD's current systemic efforts to advance racial equity and educational justice and develop recommendations. The R2E team conducted 39 listening circles of students, teachers, educators, leaders, families and community members and analyzed the collected data by identifying key themes emerged from listening circles. The team also reviewed SSD's historical documents, reports, policies, practices and procedures, which informed the interpretation of data and recommendations.

Findings
SSD has strong key players who are committed to advancing racial equity and educational justice including SSD leadership, teachers and school staff who invested in student's educational achievement and socio-emotional wellbeing as well as diverse student population, family members and community leaders who are devoted to strengthening SSD for every student. While such key players present many opportunities for SSD's growth, while challenges included lack of coherent strategy and communication by the leadership, inability and discomfort in directly addressing racism and microaggression among all the stakeholders, and limited engagement of students, family and community members.

Recommendations
Recommendations are developed based on the analysis of listening circles and presented in three pillars of advancing racial equity and educational justice: Systemic change, workforce development and stakeholder engagement. Key recommendations include establishing a racial equity and educational justice policy and its implementation plan that are evidence-based, increasing SSD's organizational capacity through diversifying leadership and school staff, staff training on racial equity and justice, developing anti-racist, culturally responsive and inclusive teaching as well as building effective partnership with students, families and community leaders.

Introduction

The Surrey Schools is the largest school district in British Columbia and many cultures are represented by its diverse student body of 74,263 students. There are more than 3,200 students of Aboriginal ancestry (First Nations, Métis and Inuit). More than half of students come from households where a language other than English is spoken. More than 150 languages are spoken at home among the Surrey students, and most frequently spoken languages are Punjabi, Tagalog (Filipino), Mandarin, Hindi and Arabic.

Racism has been a constant in Canada since the first settlers set foot on this land and declared it as their own, expunging the rights of the Aboriginal people who had lived here for centuries before colonizers arrived. When enslaved Africans were brought to New France as a means of demonstrating wealth and status, it furthered a system of hierarchy of human value. This belief has persisted through the racial segregation of schools, the internment of Ukrainian Canadians and Japanese Canadians, the establishment of residential schools, immigration restrictions, and even during the COVID-19 pandemic. Clearly, racism and its consequences are one of the most confounding issues that Canadians have faced for centuries.

If we can ensure a promising and productive future for the nation and children, we must address racism at every level that it manifests in society, and we must especially combat the inequities perpetuated within the Canadian education system. This report seeks to uplift ways in which Surrey Schools District can lean into the future with racial equity and educational justice at the forefront of its values, leadership, strategies, and actions. In doing so, Surrey can shift educational paradigms and transform inequities that have for decades held many of our children back to promote equitable opportunities and outcomes.

In British Columbia, demographics have been changing drastically and that reality is collectively shared among neighboring school districts. Though visible minority status (race) is not generally tracked in the Canadian educational system, there has been an upward shift in the number of students with Aboriginal heritage, with projected increases for the future. This upward trend can also be found in the increase in speakers of non-official languages, the increased proportion of recent immigrants, and the number of people identifying as belonging to a visible minority group. Shifts in demographics predict a minority-majority in British Columbia within the next 20 years. These statistics have significant implications for Surrey schools, given its status as one of the few growing districts in the province.

Understanding Opportunity Gaps and Achievement Gaps

Contrary to popular belief, the terms opportunity gap and achievement gap are not synonymous. To advance racial equity and educational justice, it is important to first distinguish and understand the difference between the terms. Achievement gaps are the results of an educational system that consistently provides different and unequal educational opportunities to students who are Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC). The contextual framing of the achievement gap tends focus the underachievement of BIPOC students and their families rather than on the system that was designed to produce the gaps. It often places blame and responsibility on students and their families instead of the failures of the educational system in providing equal educational opportunities. The term opportunity gap acknowledges structural issues such as institutionalized racism, poverty, and differential treatment or discrimination experienced by BIPOC students. Opportunity gaps are often attributed to the poverty status of students. While poverty inevitably affect the opportunity for BIPOC students, the opportunity gap persists among BIPOC students

regardless of their poverty status. We must address the deep root cause of the opportunity and achievement gaps: institutional racism. We must emphasize that racial equity and educational justice is the condition that would be achieved when student's racial/ethnic identity does not predict their academic attainment. It is critical to identify racial equity as one part of educational justice, and opportunity gaps can be closed through three pillars that were identified through our listening circles: Systemic change, workforce development and stakeholder engagement.

Data and Methodology

R2E's racial equity environmental assessment aimed to analyze the SSD's current systemic efforts to advance racial equity and educational justice and develop recommendations. The R2E team conducted 39 listening circles of students, teachers, educators, leaders, families and community members and analyzed the collected data by identifying key themes emerged from listening circles. Each listening circle lasted about 120 minutes. The team also reviewed SSD's historical documents, reports, policies, practices and procedures, which informed the interpretation of data and recommendations.

Based on the analysis of qualitative data collected from 39 listening circles, we identified opportunities and challenges associated with advancing racial equity and educational justice at three levels that involve different stakeholders: (1) Systemic change (District leadership); (2) Workforce development (teachers and school staff) and (3) stakeholder engagement (youth, family and community). In the following chapters, findings and recommendations will be presented for each level.

Figure 1: Three Pillars of Promoting Racial Equity and Educational Justice
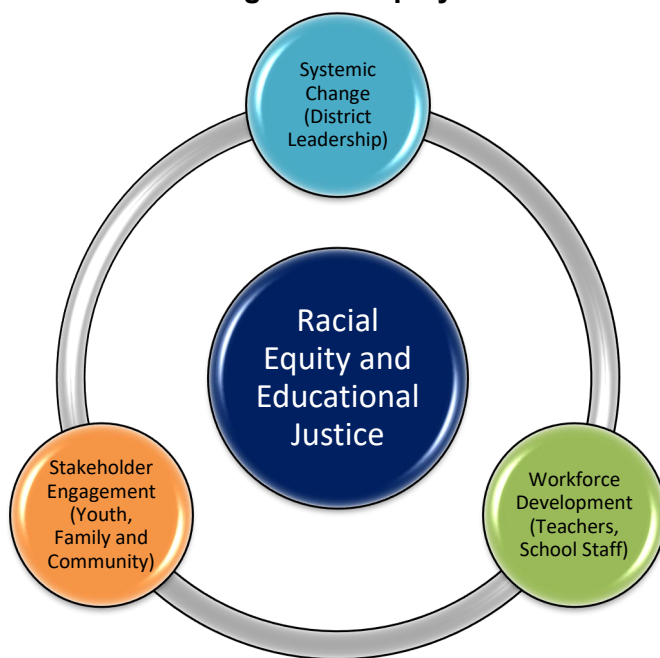
1. Systemic Change

A. Findings from Listening Circles

Opportunities

Strong commitment to racial equity among SSD leadership: Based on our assessment, we found that the central leadership of the district is highly aware of district wide needs and has made considerable efforts to set educational equity and equal access as a priority and has begun enacting steps to advance it across SSD. SSD established a district-wide policy for equity and reconciliation, and the leadership created Annual Anti-Racism and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy Symposium opportunities for SSD educators, which aimed to improve the quality of teaching and learning for each student. More than 3,000 teachers and staff have participated so far. Central office leaders and staff who are focused on supporting schools and their students to enhance academic achievement and social emotional development. The leadership demonstrated an authentic and personal commitment to advancing racial equity. There are also strong community partnership through their PAC and strong collaborative partnership with Aboriginal communities.

SSD has strong players in promoting racial equity and educational justice*. In addition to SSD leadership, there is an* emerging racially and linguistically diverse population of SSD students, who are brilliant, courageous, and committed to strengthening SSD for each and every student. SSD families and community members are interested in being involved in the decision making process; and furthermore, there is an existence of a strong education association committed to advancing racial equity and social justice in the context of their educational union practice.

Challenges

Explicit racism exists*.* Stakeholders expressed specific and personal instances of overt racism that hadbeen unaddressed or inadequately addressed. In particular, the continuous and pervasive use of the most damaging slur for Black Canadians at SSD. It seems that specific social and emotional learning needs to take place in order for students to truly understand the negative historical and present ramifications of saying that slur on a daily basis. This slur not only tremendously damages the mental health and sense of worth of Black students but it also causes tremendous damage to every stakeholder who hears it.

Lack of communication by the leadership to convey their commitment*.* Despite the noted commitment among the leadership team, students and school staff indicated that many of these leaders do not seem comfortable with addressing racial inequity and educational injustice in a coherent and systemic manner and they felt that the leadership team is not comfortable with addressing. Many SSD students and educators found it "*completely unacceptable*". Further, we found that educators and staff are often not aware of specific details of SDD's efforts to develop a culture of inclusion and belonging for each and every student and staff. As a result, those initiatives may go unnoticed among students and staff, and its potential impact may be perceived as disjointed and incomplete. Further, participants of the listening circles, within all stakeholder groups, expressed the importance for the Surrey schools to authentically engage in efforts to create substantial progress towards advancing racial equity.
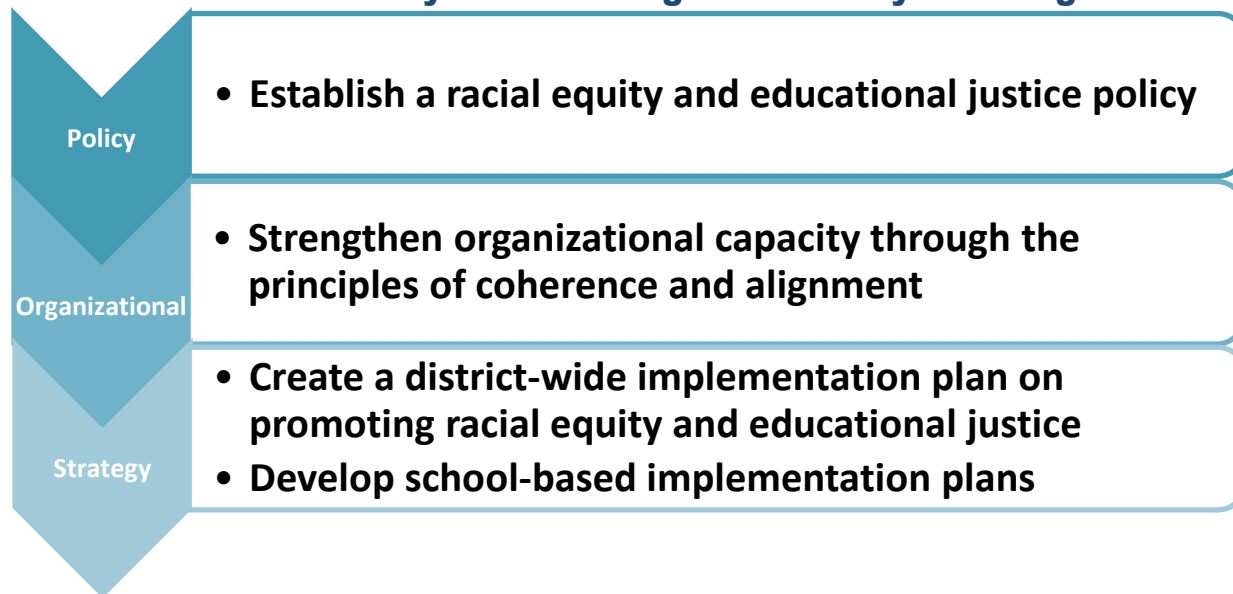
Even though all the participants saw this organizational assessment as a very strong foundation which could be utilized to edify educational justice, there is skepticism that this report would be used to do more than "just check the box".

Lack of a coherent strategy for advancing racial equity across SDD and monitoring the progress. Currently, there is inconsistency of efforts across the district and lack of collaborative process to create a more equitable and just school system. Even though most of the Surrey schools and communities are in agreement regarding the need for formally establishing racial equity work, there is a concerning lack of clarity regarding how to realize these goals. Stakeholders found it very difficult to name and articulate the district's systemic strategies and goals toward advancing educational justice, with some going so far as to doubt that the district had a plan at all. Understandably, they had little knowledge about how, or if, the work was being implemented district wide. Overall, there was a sense that this work is voluntary rather than a formal expectation for each and every leader and staff, and that follow-through is heavily dependent on the individual or team and sometimes follow through is non-existent.

Lack of diversity in leadership team. Educators, teachers and students stated that advocating for the advancement of educational justice and racial equity will be difficult when there is not enough diversity and cultural representation among school administrators and central office leaders. Both of these groups express the desire for SSD to hire more BIPOC educators and administrators that better reflect the student body.

B. Recommendations for Systemic Change and Theory of Change

Policy	• **Establish a racial equity and educational justice policy**
Organizational	• **Strengthen organizational capacity through the principles of coherence and alignment**
Strategy	• **Create a district-wide implementation plan on promoting racial equity and educational justice** • **Develop school-based implementation plans**

Theory of Change

Type of change	Recommendations	Theory of Change
Policy	1. Establish a racial equity and educational justice policy	If SSD leadership adopts and implement a comprehensive racial equity and educational justice policy, then SSD will be acknowledging the complex societal and historical factors that contribute to the opportunity and achievement gap. This will enable SSD to confront the institutional biases and create a strong sense collective urgency to right the historic and current wrongs that thwart our students' opportunities and supports to academic excellence. It will demonstrate authentic commitment among SSD leadership.
Organizational	2. Strengthen organizational capacity through the principles of coherence and alignment	If SDD leadership is committed to the breadth and depth of systemic and organizational transformation through the principles of coherence and alignment, racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse students are provided with more effective instructional strategies and strengthen their sense of belonging.
Strategy	3. Create a district-wide implementation plan on promoting racial equity and educational justice	If SSD leadership develops a comprehensive, cohesive, coherent and clear plan that holds both internal and external stakeholders accountable to educate every Surrey student including BIPOC students, then every student in SSD will have the access, supports and opportunities to reach academic excellence and healthy development.

4.	Develop school-based plans to eliminate opportunity gaps	If every school develops a plan that meets the unique needs of its students and monitor the progress, then student learning will be monitored at all levels with clear lines of accountability to increase student academic achievement for every student.

C. Action Plan for Each Recommendation

Recommendation 1: Establish a racial equity and educational justice policy

✓ Using a nationally or internationally recognized racial equity and social justice framework, establish a racial equity and educational justice policy that will identify, acknowledge, and address the historic and institutional racism in SSD, which has undermined the educational opportunities of BIPOC students. It should include:
  o Setting accountability mechanisms to address micro-aggressions and racism directed to students, staff, and/or families in a timely manner;
  o Normalizing the conversation on racial equity and educational justice to create a common language and clear definitions of what racial equity and educational justice mean, and how to actively dismantle institutional racism and educational injustice.
  o Dr. Ibram X Kendi[1] one of the most prominent and respected international experts on dismantling racism, states that *"Common definitions anchor us in principles. This is not a light point: If we don't do the basic work of defining what kind of people we want to be in language that is stable and consistent, we can't work toward stable and consistent goals. Some of my most consequential steps toward being and antiracist have been moments when I arrived at basic definitions. To be antiracist is to set lucid and common definitions of racism, antiracism, racist, antiracist policies and ideas.".* Furthermore, the concept of district-wide policies must include not only all schools and work sites, but also all staff—not just teachers and administration.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen organizational capacity through the principles of coherence and alignment

✓ To strengthen SSD's organizational capacity, utilize the principle of coherence and alignment to advance equity. As noted by stakeholders, current initiatives are fragmented and siloed across schools and departments, and incoherence and misalignment in educational initiatives and programs can lead to negative consequences. When systems are aligned and coherent, it can better advance equity (Walrond and Romer 2021)[2]. The specific recommendations include:
  o developing culturally responsive and inclusive leadership such as by creating a Department of Racial Equity and Academic Excellence (DREAE) which will lead the racial equity and educational justice initiative and creating a senior leader position such as the Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion to lead DREAE with adequate staff and financial resources;
  o providing adaptive leadership professional development for central office and school leaders;
  o building partnerships with City/Governmental Agencies and Officials so that the District can be better resourced, supported and equipped to meet the social emotional and academic needs of the children.

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[1] Kendi, Ibram X. (2019) *How to be an antiracist*. One world.
[2] Walrond, N., & Romer, N. (2021). An Alignment and Coherence Guide for State Education Agencies. Serving the Whole Person. *WestEd*. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED613595.pdf

Recommendation 3: Create a district-wide implementation plan on promoting racial equity and educational justice

- ✓ The School Board should direct the Superintendent to develop and implement a system wide racial equity and educational justice plan including:
  - o A needs assessment which consists of (a) the implementation of a racial equity analysis tool and (b) the analysis of student demographic characteristics such as race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, and language proficiency to identify disparities in access and outcomes among SSD students by their socio-demographic characteristics; and (c) the analysis of SSD teachers and staff demographic characteristics that measure representation and disproportionality. Racial Equity Tools are often used to analyze and change the policies, programs, and practices that are, advertently or inadvertently, perpetuating educational inequities, as well as used in the development of new policies and programs that produce educationally just outcomes for each and every student. It is recommended that the SSD develops key performance indicators for schools and central office leaders as part of the District Dashboard to identify existing disparities and determinants of these disparities. The analysis of student characteristics should be also broken down by school and grade level so that SSD leadership team, principals, teachers and school staff can utilize the data to make data driven decisions and more efficiently allocate resources based on student need. The analysis of school staff characteristics will also help determine the need for recruiting educators and school staff that reflect the SSD student body.
  - o Anti-racist, culturally responsive and inclusive school curriculum
  - o A plan for culturally responsive and inclusive staff recruitment and development
  - o A district wide plan to strength family and community engagement. SSD should co-develop with its educator to develop the second component of the plan. Superintendent should also direct the Human Resources Department to include a component to measure culturally responsive leadership abilities in both the screening and interview processes. This will ensure that new leaders and staff hired by the Surrey Schools have strong backgrounds in culturally responsive leadership and instruction. SSD should utilize current educators who are willing and able to co-facilitate culturally responsive family engagement to more effectively partner with ethnically and linguistically diverse families.
- ✓ Develop a strong collaborative partnership with the Surrey Education Association to design and offer high quality professional development that are culturally responsive, inclusive and anti-racist.

Recommendation 4: Develop school-based plans to eliminate opportunity gaps

- ✓ Based on the district wide implementation plan, each school should develop a yearly plan that set goals to meet the unique needs of its students based on disaggregated student data and progress should be monitored through data dashboard.

2. Workforce Development

A. Summary of Findings from Listening Circles

Opportunities

Staff are student-focused and committed to equity and justice. All staff members responded "agree" or "strongly agree" to the statement "The Surrey School District should focus on advancing educational equity and social justice for each and every student." When elaborating, five of the staff members related their answer to students and their experiences within the school district. Nearly all respondents referenced a sense of fairness; the idea that everyone should have equal opportunities. Furthermore, all members were able to share examples of how their particular rolecreates or has created a more equitable environment for students. All members expressed the understanding that though their positions are not often student-facing,their decisions have a direct impact on student experiences. Nearly all interviewees expressed the desire for personal growth regarding racial equity and social justice. Rather than devoting time and energy to cultural celebration, staff reported their preference to pursue strategies which might result in better cultural understanding and connection with their students.

Stakeholders acknowledged SSD's progress towards equity and inclusiveness among students with disabilities. Staff members agreed on the district's progress towards a more equitable experience for students with special needs, commenting, "In the past 5 years I've been very impressed; the school district has made an effort to be more inclusive" and "I think Surrey has made a concerted thoughtful effort in really being understanding of students' needs, especially in the department for students with special needs; they really see the kids' potential rather than seeing it as a disability."

Staff wants to know how to communicate. Despite staff's strong commitment to racial equity and social justice, they are often unsure as to how to move towards it. *"How do I put myself out there and let people know that I want to have that dialogue, but I may not be able to do so without saying something wrong or unintentionally upsetting someone?" "I want to talk about it, but I want to be sure that the words and language I'm using are appropriate." "We need more training, including clerical staff--anyone that interacts withfamilies and students."*

Challenges

The celebration of Indigenous cultures exists but largely limited; The treatment and history of indigenous peoples as a reason for concern.
Community members and families also expressed a preference for systemic changes over visual representations of cultural appreciation. Some BIPOC educators and staff indicated that tokenism is prevalent at SSD. Stakeholders referenced both the need for representative curriculum and instruction which encourages genuine cultural understanding and appreciation. In particular, aboriginal stakeholders felt that schools are neither willing nor ready to have conversations about the history of Canada; both indigenous and non-indigenous.

"[Educators and support staff need to] take the time to seek out and learn thehistory of Canada,

which includes indigenous and non-indigenous because it's not our history it's not their history but it's all of our histories together."

Increased representation is critical. BIPOC families viewed increased representation as critical to the cultural instruction of white students. Families referenced the need for greater representation, especially for BIPOC families. According to respondents, representation is necessary in curriculum, amongststaff, and in teaching programs. BIPOC focus groups all mentioned. In each instance, black and non-indigenous families ofcolor referred to injustices towards indigenous groups as reason for pessimism regarding the treatment of people in their own cultural or racial group.

"When I was attending Surrey Schools, I wasn't taught about Chinese or Indigenous history, we only learned about the Canadian history of white settlers. Students should be taught more about the diverse history of Canada to show the consequences that were made."
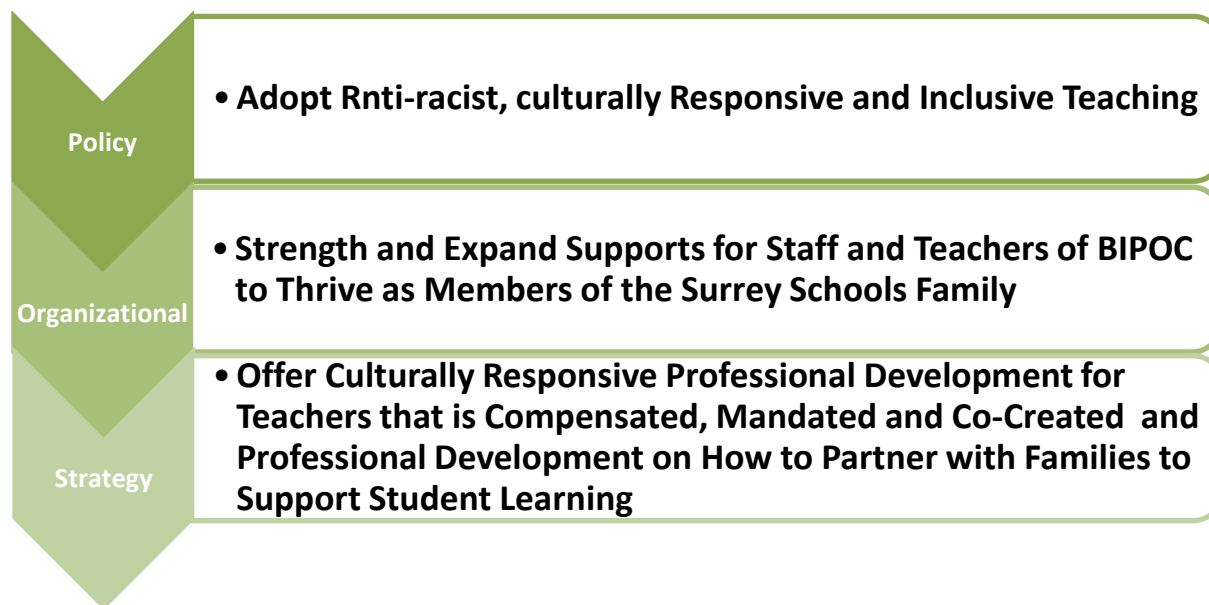
"I don't see how they are going to be knowledgeable and respectful of Black culture because t they can't even address Canada's past regarding the First people on the land."

Lack of safe space to discuss the experiences of racism and microaggressions among BIPOC educators, staff and students. BIPOC stakeholders reported that they are not comfortable talking about their experience because they do not believe that these complaints will be taken seriously or addressed appropriately. Many BIPOC educators and staff indicated that they don't feel respected, honored or dignified as professionals, Others felt unequipped to have dialogues.

Differed perspectives on the available resources for teachers between leadership and staff. Non-leadership group members also referenced the need for district-provided resources and supports: *"The mentorship opportunities for educators aren't there; I've never beenoffered mentorship or opportunities for career development.* The leadership group did mention district supports, commenting *"The resources are there, but it also depends on the education and awareness of the teachers presentingthose resources where I think there is still a gap."* There is evidence of a failure in communication regarding the resources and training available to teachers. The summer institute and the Coaching for Equity book club were mentioned by severalrespondents in both groups as positive examples of helpful training.

Training efforts are not happening at the system level. Even among the leadership group, members reported independently pursuing trainingand learning for equity, but it was noted that these efforts were individual and not systematically embedded. *"It seems like a number of us are involved in equity-based projects or learning groups, but we're not...there isn't really a connection between us."* Further, in regards to training, BIPOC staff members expressed doubt regarding the efficacy of trainings in light of *"performative allyship"*, emphasizing that *"having authentic outcomes is a huge part of the work."*

B. Recommendations for Workforce Development and Theory of Change

Policy	• Adopt Rnti-racist, culturally Responsive and Inclusive Teaching
Organizational	• Strength and Expand Supports for Staff and Teachers of BIPOC to Thrive as Members of the Surrey Schools Family
Strategy	• Offer Culturally Responsive Professional Development for Teachers that is Compensated, Mandated and Co-Created and Professional Development on How to Partner with Families to Support Student Learning

The Theory of Change

Level of Change	Recommendations	Theory of Change
Policy	Adopt anti-racist, culturally Responsive and Inclusive Teaching	If anti-racist, culturally responsive and inclusive components are formally included as part of teaching curriculum and staff evaluations, then SSD will increase racial and cultural awareness that will support staff in honoring, valuing, and dignifying the contributions our students of BIPOC and their families.
Organizational	Strength and expand supports for Staff and Teachers of BIPOC to Thrive as Members of the Surrey Schools Family	If SSD supports teachers and staff of BIPOC in improving their practice, then it will promote staff retention and allow students of BIPOC to have more role models that reflect the student body.
Strategy	Offer Culturally Responsive Professional Development for Teachers that is Compensated, Mandated and Co-Created Offer Professional Development on How to Partner with Families to Support Student Learning	If SSD co-develop, with educators, anti-racist, culturally responsive and inclusive professional development that is mandated and compensated, then every teacher in SSD will be better positioned to meet the needs of students of BIPOC in their classrooms. If SSD provides family engagement professional development for central office, principals, teachers and support staff then internal stakeholders will be more equipped to work with families as equitable partners in the education of their students.

C. Action Plan for Each Recommendation

Recommendation 1: Adopt anti-racist, culturally responsive and inclusive teaching

- ✓ Ensure that every teacher in every classroom with varying experience, participate in anti-racist, culturally responsive and inclusive professional development and continuous improvement strategies that provides them with the opportunity to learn from each other, raise racial awareness and learn the tools and strategies that meet the needs of every SSD student including BIPOC students and thrive in their practice

- ✓ Include cultural responsiveness and inclusiveness as part of staff evaluations

- ✓ Provide professional development for central office staff to develop culturally responsive standards on their evaluations

- ✓ Develop zero tolerance policy on the use racial slur at SSD

Recommendation 2: Strength and Expand Supports for Staff and Teachers of BIPOC to Thrive as Members of the SSD Family

- ✓ Establish and provide support for Racial Equity teams in every school to lead culturally responsive teaching curriculum, instructional strategies and practices where the histories are taught accurately, respectfully, in a dignifying manner, and that each and every student, teacher, and staff are living up to our commitments to truth and reconciliation. The team should consist of various stakeholders of diverse backgrounds that reflect the SSD student body.

- ✓ Conduct monthly meeting between the Superintendent and BIPOC school staff to listen to their experiences in SSD, to their concerns and need as well as suggestions for support.

- ✓ Recruit educators and school staff of BIPOC a heritage to be reflective of the SSD student populations

- ✓ Increase resources and scope of the indigenous learning center to promote more cultural exchanges and foment learning of indigenous history within indigenous and non-indigenous students and families

Recommendation 3: Offer Culturally Responsive Professional Development for Teachers that is Compensated, Mandated and Co-Created

- ✓ Mandate all SSD educators and school staff to participate in anti-racist and culturally responsive and inclusive training

- ✓ Compensate staff time for participating in anti-racist and culturally responsive and inclusive training

✓ Develop and implement anonymous staff survey where staff can safely provide input and feedback on leadership, professional development and coaching in advancing racial equity and educational justice at SSD

Recommendation 4: Offer professional development on how to partner with families to support student learning

✓ Offer training on Dual Capacity Building Framework[3] to strengthen family engagement in education;

✓ Offer culturally responsive family engagement training to central office staff, principals, teachers and support staff to better understand how to work with ethnically and linguistically diverse families and community members.

✓ Utilize current educators who are willing and able to co-facilitate culturally responsive family engagement training to more effectively partner with ethnically and linguistically diverse families.

✓ Increase indigenous family and community engagement, particularly elders, in teaching of indigenous histories through story telling

✓ Increase overall BIPOC family and community engagement by inviting BIPOC parents, family members and community leaders as guest speakers to SSD events

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[3] Mapp, K. L. & Bergman, E. (2019). Dual capacity-building framework for family-school partnerships (Version 2). Retrieved from: www.dualcapacity.org

3. Stakeholder Engagement

A. Summary of Findings from Listening Circles

Opportunities

Strong desire to work closely with schools and teachers among community stakeholders. Respondents frequently referenced a desire to work closely with the schools and theteachers in regards to building community and in planning for their students' futures. Similar to other focus groups, participants expressed frustration with negotiating different cultural norms and in establishing two-way communication with the school.

Students are well-supported, academically, and emotionally. Families were overall positive about the academic achievement and support of their students. *"I really feel that you know in regards to emotional, social support in the journey with Surrey School district that if my granddaughters had any kind of barriers or blocks or any kind of experience, whether it's mental wellness, their own personal mental wellness or an experience that really affected them, that all the staff involved would act without any judgement, without any stigma." "I feel quite satisfied that my two granddaughters receive good mentorship and teaching around their academic needs."*
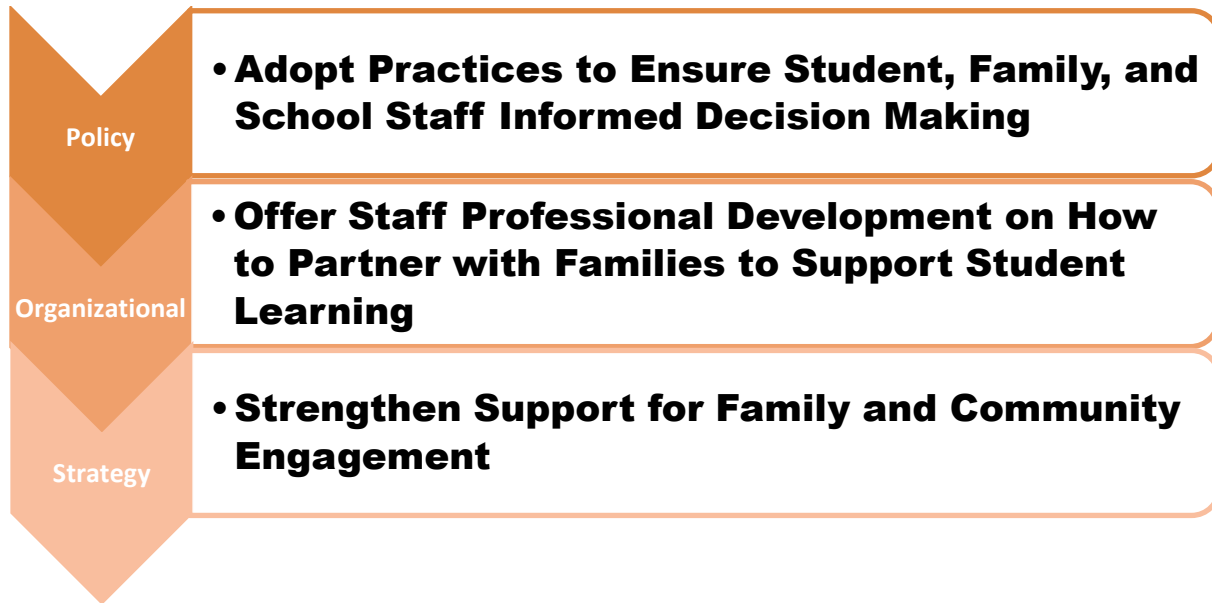*"Each of my boys have a one-to-one support worker to help them with their academics and social skill building and when I have concerns academically they address them they don't ignore it."*

Challenges

Partnership with school is perceived as challenging due to cultural difference, language barriers and lack of communication. Stakeholders discussed that it has been challenging for some people to engage and work with school due to cultural differences and language barriers, and some parents are not aware of available resources. "It's been a challenge for other people mainly related to expression or lack of that expression. Stems from those basic issues--language barrier or somehow a disconnect with the school or parents' lifestyles." "There's also services that are available to parents that SSD doesn'tcommunicate or make available to parents." *"There are a lot of great resources in place, I think it would be really helpful ifwe could improve communication so that families know about it."*

Experiences of language-based inequity is reported by stakeholders, including discrimination or barriers due to English fluency and perceived English fluency, microaggression in the mispronunciation of names and centering white western culture and perspectives. *Given cultural expectations regarding family relationships and responsibilities, there was distress when the individualistic culture predominantly adopted in white Western culture is presented to students as the default (and preferred) option. "My older son has a really hard time with the teachers pronouncing his name. Kids would feel more connected to their teachers if the teacher takes the extra time to learn how to pronounce their names." A parent elaborated that her 18-year-old child "was told she doesn't have to live with me. She could continue to go to school, and they can support her."*

B. Recommendations for Stakeholder Engagement and Theory of Change

Policy	• **Adopt Practices to Ensure Student, Family, and School Staff Informed Decision Making**
Organizational	• **Offer Staff Professional Development on How to Partner with Families to Support Student Learning**
Strategy	• **Strengthen Support for Family and Community Engagement**

The Theory of Change

Level of Change	Recommendations	Theory of Change
1. Policy	Adopt Practices to Ensure Student, Family, and School Staff Informed Decision Making	*If Surrey Schools Leadership engages students, families, and school staff on a regular basis to ask for their input and feedback, then, classroom, school and district decisions will be co-designed, and students will be more vested in their learning.*
2. Organizational	Professional Development on How to Partner with Families to Support Student Learning	If the District provides family engagement professional development for central office, principals, teachers and support staff then internal stakeholders will be more equipped to work with families as equitable partners in the education of their students.
3. Strategy	Strengthen Support for Family and Community Engagement	If the District strengthen support to encourage family and community engagement, then families will be better equipped to support the healthy development and educational attainment of their children.

C. Action Plan for Each Recommendation

Recommendation 1: Adopt Practices to Ensure Student, Family, and School Staff Informed Decision Making

- ✓ Enhance a student survey to include responses regarding culturally responsive teaching and leadership.

- ✓ Hosts student forums for middle and high school students to actively participate in the decision-making process.

- ✓ Provide opportunities for the Superintendent, Central Office staff and Principals to engage with and learn from students to improve professional practice.

- ✓ Develop systems to ensure that families participate in informing District decisions that impact students.

- ✓ Create regular opportunities to capture and respond to feedback provided by families (provide interpreters for non-English speaking parents)

Recommendation 2: Offer Professional Development on How to Partner with Families to Support Student Learning

- ✓ Offer training on the Dual Capacity Building Framework to strengthen family engagement in education

- ✓ Offer culturally responsive family engagement training to central office staff, principals, teachers and support staff to better understand how to work with ethnically and linguistically diverse families and community members.

- ✓ Utilizes current educators who are willing and able to co-facilitate culturally responsive family engagement training to more effectively partner with ethnically and linguistically diverse families.

- ✓ Increase indigenous family and community engagement, particularly elders, in teaching of indigenous histories through story telling

- ✓ Increase overall BIPOC family and community engagement by inviting BIPOC parents, family members and community leaders as cultural instructors (for bothstudents and staff)

Recommendation 3: Strengthen Support for Family and Community Engagement

- ✓ Adopt US Department of Education's Dual Capacity Building framework which lays out a process to guide school and district staff to engage parents/families and to help

parents/families work successfully with the schools to increase student achievement." US Department of Education.

✓ Develop a Family Academy/University for Families to meet at least four times per year to strengthen families' abilities to more effectively advocate for their children's learning, their schools and SSD.

✓ SSD's Family Academy/University should include following classes: Family engagement best practices, data analysis, grass-roots organizing, co-leading at District sponsored committees, meeting facilitation, navigating the school district and engaging in Effective Meetings with District Staff;

✓ Provide training for families of color to navigate the application processes more effectively
✓ Inviting families and community members to be providing instruction to parents unfamiliar with navigating the school system

✓ Proactive communication with families regarding disciplinary issues

✓ Working with families in planning for their students' future

Conclusion

For far too long, Canada as a nation has carried the burden and the weight of the mythology of a hierarchy of human value, allowing it to weigh our Black, Indigenous and other Communities of Color down and negatively impact their lives outcomes. This gives a special sense of resolve to our racial equity and educational justice hypothesis that proactively, meaningfully, and intentionally addressing these inequities with culturally sustaining leadership and practices can lift each and every one of our students to academic excellence. Most of the children born today in Canada and the world are children of color, thus creating an inclusive environment that allows them to realize their full potential must be one of the most important things this country and the Surrey School district does.

It is of paramount significance that through this assessment we have found that a majority of internal and external stakeholders acknowledge that racism still exists, and that it perpetuates racialized bias in the educational opportunities provided within the Surrey Schools.
Overall, the data collected demonstrates that advancing educational justice and racial equity at the Surrey Schools is the best path forward. We are heartened by the brilliance, strength and, courage that your students showcase since a very young age. There is a palpable and solid desire from your educators for a positive change to institutionalize racial equity and educational throughout the district and to eliminate the opportunity and achievement gaps that BIPOC students are currently experiencing at the Surrey Schools.

Adaptive leadership for racial equity means that leaders are not seen as heroes but now are seen as hosts who promote, enhance and tap the inner workings of productive human interactions and relationships. It is important to emphasize that advancing racial equity and educational justice at Surrey Schools is a lifelong journey that never ends. It is far more than a districtwide formal conversation about race. While dialogue is strongly encouraged, if that is the only action, it minimizes the broader, comprehensive work that needs to be done to support the academic and social emotional well-being of each and every child who comes into your care.
The assessment indicated that the Surrey Schools stakeholders can identify the negative impacts that advertent or inadvertent acts of racism, marginalization, and othering have on students and staff impact of racism across the District. We are inspired to share the optimism shown by the many members of each of your stakeholder groups are ready and willing to courageously engage in this crucial work.

Today's changing demographics coupled with historical systemic inequities are now driving public discourse towards a tipping point on the necessity to address racism and educational justice head on through policy development, strategic actions, and prioritization and tangible positive outcomes for the children we serve.

In closing, we would like to revisit the quote from George Erasmus at the beginning of this report:
"*Where common memory is lacking, where people do not share in the same past, there can be no real community. Where community is to be formed, common memory must be created.*"
This racial equity and educational justice organizational assessment of the Surrey Schools serves as the foundation from which to edify your common memory as a District.

Appendix: Summary of Themes and Group and Recommendations from Listening Circles

Black Families and Community Members

Responses within this group generally addressed systematic and institution concerns, with occasional references to larger societal and historical problems. Overall, participants seem to have positive experiences with the district, but want changes to move from "great so far" towards a system which helps all students thrive.

Group Discussion Summary

Themes	Examples
Surrey District is doing well, but can do better	*"It has been great so far, but there have been a few things that have happened regarding the N word, but there is more room for improvement."* *"I feel the Surrey district is doing a good job, but the staff, especially the teachers need to focus on ensuring that every kid has a feeling of belonging* *"Surrey School District has evolved for the better and continues to improve thanks to many diverse talented individuals that have been employed."* *"I am very proud to live and work in Surrey --it's very diverse and multicultural."*
Black students are not encouraged to excel.	Stakeholders discussed low academic expectations for Black students where Black students are not supported when they excel and lack of access to higher education opportunities such as being encouraged to apply for scholarships or go to colleges.
Schools are unwilling or unprepared to address race and culture	When asked *"Are school staff knowledgeable and respectful of ethnically and linguistically diverse cultures"*, there were no positive responses, one potentially neutral response, and five negative responses. *"The answer is a simple NO."*
Ignorance and avoidance among staff	*"I think the staff have good intentions, they want to be respectful of our ethnicity and languages, but most of them are ignorant."* *"I don't see how they can break this mold of social conditioning when they're still denying that they didn't do this or they didn't do that."* *"They try to be respectful but they don't know how to so there is a need for more education."* *"I think school personnel are not willing to deal with anything racial."* *"More work needs to be done by district to educate staff to not downplay the concerns and feelings of students and treat all cases of racially abusive language/racism seriously rather than tagging them "very sensitive" and avoiding to talk about them."*
Students need more representation	*"Surrey School District has evolved for the better and continues to improve thanks to many diverse talented individuals that have been employed. As for curriculum additions African History education will be welcomed by many within this diverse community we live in."* *"I think we can do better in terms of representation...Representation is not only important for our kids to have a sense of belonging but the white kids also need to be educated. "* *"Surrey school district should involve more Africans to take roles in Teaching, support system, and many additional support curriculums."* *"We need representation and encouragement to be actively involved in the school."*

Black culture as a monolith	*"Difficult to allow a specific African language to be honored, respected, or adapted since we have 54 nations that speak different languages (more orless) and different dialects. It's not like we have one universal language in Africa."* *"Black culture is diverse – if we want to see it represented in the curriculum the questions may still bewhich culture should be represented."* *"The media continues to educate and culturally condition white and othercultures on Black Community."* *"White kids are walking around with their pants below their butts, subscribingto an ignorant sense of "blackness" learned in the media."*

<u>Group Suggestions</u>

Group Suggestions	Examples
Increase representation through community partnership	*"Have black professionals give presentations and seminars at the schools."* *"Get Black students to be their OWN story-tellers!"* *"Black people and guest invitees to do presentation of our diverse stories andrich history."* *"The school district needs to focus on the media and get black kids excited totell their stories so they can get black students to be a part of [the media] industry."*
Prepare staff to confront racial issues	*"They respect people speaking different languages, but it's different with my accent because it isn't Canadian. So the entire staff should be educated on what to do, they have to be informed more and they lack empathy so it's hardto acknowledge and respect humanity in the person."* *"They try to be respectful but they don't know how to, so there is need for more education. As a black teacher I can speak on this situation because I gothrough it every day."*
Encourage academic excellence and achievement for _all_ students	*"The focus should be on providing a quality education woven with examplesthat advance educational equity and social justice."* *"Our children will thrive and achieve the best they can achieve as long as they see/feel/experience educational and social equity in the schools."* *"The staff especially the teachers need to focus on ensuring that every kidhas feeling of belonging."* *"Dreams and expectations we have is the end result of children's education tobe a success."*

South Asian Families and Community Members

Though participants are hopeful about the possibility of change, SSD must first address several issues rooted in cultural and linguistic differences. Respondents frequently referenced language (specifically the condition of being multi-lingual or having a home language other than English) when describing concerns. Group members generally spoke of interactions between families and schools rather than with individual teachers, and problems are framed more frequently at the school level than an institutional level.

Group Discussion Summary

Themes	What Family and Community Members Said
Educational equity and social justice are not (yet) served for all students	All respondents indicated Strongly Agree or Agree to the following *statement: The Surrey School District should focus on advancing educational equity and social justice for each and every student."* *"People from different cultures feel like they are being looked down on. For example, a girl was having problems at school and she could not speak English well."* *"I am proud ofbeing part of Surrey School district but there is a lot to be done."*
Stakeholders are hopeful.	In a one-word check-out closing ritual *included "hopeful, grateful, honored, humbled, co- creation."*
Discrimination or barriers due to English fluency and perceived English fluency	*"I feel like you have to prove yourself to be a smart parent who cares. If not, then you are seen as someone who doesn't know the system or the language. You are nothing. The best service the school can offer is a translator and there might be some families that are new to translators."* *"The learning circles itself can be a barrier for other non-English speakerswho are parents and are experiencing much more difficult problems."* Respondents observed that interpretation and translation services do not guarantee access to the school system. While these services seemed appreciated, group memberswere frank about their limitations. Parents also noted that simply providing information does not equate to family engagement.
Microaggression in the mispronunciation of names	*"My older son has a really hard time with the teachers pronouncing his name.* *Kids would feel more connected to their teachers if the teacher takes theextra time to learn how to pronounce their names."* *"My child kept mispronouncing another South Asian's name wrong becausethe teacher has been pronouncing it wrong and that is not right."*
Families are fighting to honor cultural identity: Assimilation-only expectations	*"When immigrants come here, we hear things like "If you want to be Canadian, you do this." It's like someone is trying to rip me off of my identity. Iwant to be part of a new community but I don't want to give up my identity or assimilate."* *"My son takes cultural food at school and he is told it smells. They do not accept who we are and we have the mindset about what a perfect Canadianis. And we try to mold people to be like Canadians."*

Centering white culture and perspectives	When speaking about the school system, respondents expressed frustration at the presumption of white culture and values. One parent stated, *"I see the school system as an extension of the residential school system. You are stripped from your culture, reality, the parents are separated from the kid. They are non-inclusive at the school…The schools and certain principals have been completely dismissive. They excluded me from the school events and things that were happening with her. They are removing the parents from parenting and how they are raising their kids."* The parent elaborated that her 18-year-old child *"was told she doesn't have to live with me. She could continue to go to school, and they can support her."* Given cultural expectations regarding family relationships and responsibilities, there was distress when the individualistic culture predominantly adopted in white Western culture is presented to students as the default (and preferred) option.
Families want better school community	Many participants expressed the distrust regarding the school and its interest in their students and families.
Lack of proactive communication	You don't have an open door at the school." *"It takes years to learn the system and information. We don't know what choices there are to get the service we want for our children."*
Communication problems between school staff and parents regarding disciplinary issues	*"Parents are feeling defensive. One of the factors could be their lack of trust. I feel that trust is definitely missing in the school."* *"I found out that in the community when their son or daughter gets suspended, they always think that the school district is doing something wrong."*
Negative past experiences with the schools and staff	Participants also mentioned segregation several times, citing issues of class, race, and culture: *"Classism is a huge issue in the Surrey School District. The school can do better."* *"If you need help, you have to look for someone in your own community to help you. This is still segregation. We don't interact with other races or classes."* *"The school system has allowed grouping of kids of the same culture, and they are not teaching kids to interact with other cultures."* *"We are seeing people switching to different schools based on racial representation. For example, this school is mostly South Asian students, or this school is mostly White students."* The general perception is that both the schools and their respective communities are not cohesive and welcoming.

Group Suggestions

Suggestions	Examples
Develop trust and through communication	*"I think the school district can do better in terms of communicating with the parents and letting us know what they have to offer."* *"A lot of our discussion has been about lack of empowerment today and we need to empower parents and give opportunities to parents to show them that the district cares."* *"The district needs to do better advertising about [the Strong Start Program] because it helps a lot of students in the future."*
Partner with families to create community	*"Maybe having a program for new parents in decision making."* *"Try to include parents no matter what or how."* *"If the school could set up a blog for parents to talk to each other, we can do so much more for our community and reduce barriers for parents."*
Move beyond cultural celebrations	*"The approach should be "this is how we do it, how do you do it?"* *"Take pride in the beauty of our culture. Maybe showcasing specific cultures."* *"Our focus needs to shift from talking about diversity to talk about being ahelping hand and supporting all cultures who are struggling."* *"Morals and values of the school to be based on morals of (sic) values of theworld, not just English standards."* *"The district needs to put more emphasis on not just the type of food we eatbut also why we do it and the culture around it."*
Train staff regarding diversity and cultural differences	*"If there is a student from a unique background, school staff need to ask folksto come and educate them about this culture that they aren't familiar with."* *"Kids would feel more connected to their teachers if the teacher takes the extra time to learn how to pronounce the name...This makes them feel seen."*
Consider the new generation's needs	*"The education system has to be adapting with the changes in society and differences. We need to teach kids inclusiveness from a young age."* *"We need to start teaching people how to be themselves, but just learn a few new things."* Parents commented especially on the need for schools to consider technology and topartner with families regarding the role of technology in their students' lives: *"We need to include education for parents on parental control, apps, andother stuff. Educate parents about how their kids need to be safe on the internet."* *"Stop kids from bringing phones to school."* *"Teaching parents about parental control and how to use the internet. A lot of things are happening online including racism, so we need to teach parents how to address this."*

Aboriginal Families and Community Members

Respondents in this community group alluded to personal interactions with the district, recalling positive experiences with individual schools while raising concerns about systemic issues. These issues include lack of opportunity and resources given for the learning of indigenous history and culture. Group members also spent some time negotiating their own stances on how to reconcile Aboriginal culture and history with the public school system.

Themes	What Family and Community Members Said
Celebration of indigenous cultures exists...but largely symbolic.	*"I feel like they're trying. I noticed that in school assemblies before COVID and now with video updates that go out, they try to acknowledge the lands that they're on."* *"I feel that there is a strong like promotion of indigenous ways of learning, because my granddaughter asked me to speak at her school."* *"We used to raise money and add to the school's budget for presentations and have at least every other year an Aboriginal presentation."* *"My granddaughter made me a necklace and I was happy to see that she was creating cultural items."*
Limited frequency, resources and scope of providing culturally responsible and inclusive services for indigenous stakeholders	*"I have two elementary children, the one in Grade 6, he's had a lot more time with the Aboriginal childcare workers over the years so he's actually gotten to learn more about the cultures and such, but my youngest one doesn't really have a lot of contact, because they're also special needs so they have pullouts for other reasons."* As meetings with the Aboriginal staff were scheduled out of regular instructional time, they sometimes conflicted with the pull-out support programs. Given the limited frequency of these visits, some students missed out on critical opportunities for cultural connection. *"I know that there's not nearly enough support workers in the schools, but I think if they could do smaller group pull outs, especially if they're teaching about Aboriginal history and cultural traditions."* *"Even [the educators] don't know where the [indigenous cultural training] resources are."* *"I think we need to focus more on bringing more of that into the classroom for all the kids, not just those who are from the Aboriginal communities."* *"I think they do the best they can, but there could be more coming in not just for our children but for the entire classroom."* *I think smaller groups for more intensive learning on cultural traditions would be more helpful."*
Students are well-supported, academically, and emotionally	Families were overall positive about the academic achievement and support of their students. *"I really feel that you know in regards to emotional, social support in the journey with Surrey School district that if my granddaughter's had any kind of barriers or blocks or any kind of experience, whether it's mental wellness, their own personal mental wellness or an experience that really affected them, that all the staff involved would act without any judgement, without any stigma."*

	"I feel quite satisfied that my two granddaughters receive good mentorshipand teaching around their academic needs." *"Each of my boys have a one to one support worker to help them with their academics and social skill building and when I have concerns academicallythey address them they don't ignore it."* One family member, however, noted that these aspects are considered separately fromissues of culture and identity: *"I don't know how much of that is due to the fact that they're just because they're special needs, I don't think that it has anything to do necessarily with their Aboriginal ancestry."*
Schools need to discuss indigenous history	*"I don't feel like we've done enough to really address what has come before,we've covered up so much and ignored so much history that I don't know where to begin."* *"[Educators and support staff need to] take the time to seek out and learn the history of Canada, which includes indigenous and non-indigenous because it's not our history it's not their history but it's all of our histories together."*

Group Suggestions

Suggestions	Examples
Increase resources for indigenous cultural learning	*"I think our school would be welcoming. We just don't get enough time with exposure to it."* *"I don't feel like we have enough connection with our Aboriginal Child Support Worker because he only gets to be there one day a week or two days a weekat the best of times, he's spread between too many schools."*
Increase scope of indigenous cultural learning	*"Work on their own…. they take that time and dedicate to learning…just start that journey of learning so it can create a better understanding of who's standing in front of you or who's sitting in front of you in the class."*
Increase number of indigenous staff	*"They should decolonize the hiring practices of folks coming into the district and bring more people with indigenous heritage into the district as a whole."*
Invite families as valued educators	*"Welcome more elders and residents in the school system. In many areas, all the children benefit from the storytelling supporting both indigenous and non-indigenous."*

<h1 style="text-align:center">Families and Community Members (General)[4]</h1>

Responses from this group were focused on the relationship between the family and theschool, and answers in general conflate experiences at an individual school as the experience with the district. That is, answers seem to consider the terms "school" and "district" interchangeable.

Group Discussion Summary

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Themes	Notable Quotes
The SSD/school's proactive and frequent communication with families	"In the [Learning Center, the principal] meets with the students and family if anything is going on. Engages every one as much as he can. If the counseloris busy, he'll do it." "I've had meetings with them every year about academic goals and my kid's challenges." "My daughter has friends at the regular schools who need help and support and it's taken forever for her family to be able to advocate for her and get to apoint where she has any level of support." "I have a relationship with teachers, the principal."
Individualized support necessary for students in alternative pathways	"The principal is quite amazing with everyone's different needs." "They tailor things specifically to the kids and support them in their dreams." "The learning center is more adaptive to kids who have mental healthchallenges or even social development between the teens."
Parental advocacy required for receiving full support for their students	"I don't think regular school would pay much attention unless I wasadvocating as much." "I got quite frustrated with having to wait so long for services--having to wait years." "I had to refer my child to child mental health and then they were the ones that told me about the learning centers where I probably should have heardabout it from the counselor at the school." "The parent has to put in a bit of time and effort."

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[4] This focus group was open to all families and community members, regardless of racial or cultural identification. Focus group members had students attending the district's Learning Center.

Group Suggestions

Suggestions	Examples
Provide opportunities for school community	*"I'd love to see a path for some other parent-involved things. I wish it could be more of a family-based school."*
Communicate with and inform families	*"[The transition from post-secondary to the learning center] was abrupt and stigmatizing. [It will be helpful for parents] to connect with other parents who had gone through it to walk [them] through the process."* *"I found that the traditional schools didn't actually let us know about the learning centers."*
Connect students with the larger community	*"My daughter was involved with the Y group for a long time…and so incorporating more of that kind of stuff would be great just to give them that feeling of you're not an island, there is a world around you. "* *"The school kids got paid one time to do clean up after a parade-cool to be paid to take care of their community. They are looking at what they can do in your direct community."*

Family and Community Members (DPAC[5])

Focus group members discussed personal experiences as a framework for perspectives on district progress towards equity. Members of these groups echoed thoughts discussed in other family and community member focus groups.

Group Discussion Summary

Themes	Notable Quotes
Moving beyond cultural celebrations	*"I wish they taught more about different cultures...I wish that there was moreinclusivity, more effort in acknowledging who you are and celebrating that...Iwish that we could all celebrate all of the differences that we have."* *"I want the regalia to be viewed as a part of who we are and not as a costume, and that needs to be taught."* *"To a certain degree, our school has started to focus on the larger cultures,and the cultures that make up the school."*
Parental advocacy required	*"I'm very connected to the school due to my son's needs. The teachers havebeen supportive. My administrator, on the other hand, is a little bit more challenging to work with, but I just don't back down. In general, when you reach out, you can get that support."* *"I as a parent don't know what's actually happening at the school level. It makes it very frustrating, and it makes it difficult to get the needs of the kidsmet."* *"Unless you know specifically what you're looking for and ask about it yourself, as a parent you don't know what's out there."*
Explicit racism is not being addressed	*"There was an instance of racism where a group of white boys made a clubcalled KKK and sent messages to a SA boy...in this particular instance, theSA family did not feel that they were heard and left the district."* *"In my school, the N word was being thrown around. Older kids were using it,and younger students started to use it not knowing what it means. The schoolsaid this is a home situation and needs to be dealt with at home."* *"My child only speaks English, but we got an ESL letter sent home becauseher last name was [redacted]. All the kids of color were sent home with ESLletters."* Parents expressed confidence in individual school staff but condemned the

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[5] Members of this focus groups are active participants in a district advisory committee.

	systemicissues which allowed racist actions to continue: *"School staff try very hard to be* *respectful. It doesn't always come across that way, and it doesn't always get dealt within a way that one would want it to be dealt with."*
Portables are problematic	Participants commented upon the difficulties posed by portables and modulars. *"These portables do not have running water or bathrooms in any of them. Wedon't want our kids outside in portables."* *"The portable comes with this assumption that it's degraded for lower socio- economic people, it's not beautiful. Absolutely it's derogatory. But for Surrey,it's a temporary fix until they can build more schools."*
Partnership with the school is difficult, but desired	*"It's been a challenge for other people mainly related to expression or lack ofthat expression. Stems from those basic issues--language barrier or somehow a disconnect with the school or parents' lifestyles."* *"Teachers need to have more education around different learning styles andwraparound understanding. We need to actually collaborate."* *"What we find in the school district is that they have all these different committees and working groups, and I don't know if enough parents are invited to those."* *"There's also services that "are available to parents' that the district doesn'tcommunicate or make available to parents."* *"There are a lot of great resources in place, I think it would be really helpful ifwe could improve communication so that families know about it."*

Staff (District Operations)

Group Discussion Summary

Themes	Notable Quotes
Staff are student-focused	All staff members responded Agree or Strongly Agree to the statement *"The Surrey School District should focus on advancing educational equity and social justice for eachand every student."* When elaborating, five of the staff members related their answer to students and theirexperiences within the school district. Nearly all respondents referenced a sense of fairness--the idea that everyone should have equal opportunities. Furthermore, all members were able to share examples of how their particular rolecreates or has created a more equitable environment for students. All members expressed the understanding that though their positions are not often student-facing,their decisions have a direct impact on student experiences. *"Our way of supporting schools is making sure that they have what theyneed."* *"The Long-range facility plan…Sometimes students come to these schoolsand this is the only place where they're acknowledged for who they are, nomatter what that means."*
Things get complicated when dealing with adults	Whereas respondents were confident about positive equity impact with students, they immediately faltered when presented with similar questions regarding colleagues. When asked to express their comfort level in discussing issues of institutional racism, educational justice, and racial equity, three responded with their discomfort (for variousreasons), and another three expressed that regardless of comfort level, these discussions simply did not happen. Inexperience *"I can sometimes feel very uncomfortable in bringing up these topics, just forthe fact that I haven't had the ability to share and develop a baseline of understanding."* Fear: *"We don't know if it's the right time or with the right group to have this conversation…. If you look at the makeup of different departments, it's tellingin that you can see where these conversations are more regular."* *"As adults, we overthink it."* *"I have apprehension to speak out. I don't want to be looked at as so sensitive, or my cultural upbringing of just letting it slide."* *"I don't know what to say, I don't want to say the wrong thing."*

Generational differences in confidence, but not outcome	Several participants referenced age when speaking about comfort levels and confidence. Participants who were older were more likely to express doubt or difficultiesin discussing or addressing inequity. Younger generations were perceived as more capable in discussing race and equity. Examples: *"Personally, I am of the millennial demographic, so vocalizing and voicing ouropinions is a norm to us." "I don't talk about it as much. I do have four kids in the system and they arecomfortable talking about [anything out of comfort zones]." "When I talk with my daughter who is very progressive, I feel like I'm speakinga whole different language."* Despite these attitudes, all participants quoted above expressed that they are eitheruncomfortable discussing racial equity or simply do not discuss racial equity. This suggests that staff may have different barriers to meaningful discussion. Whereas the millennial staff member may feel comfortable talking about race and equity given a clearly defined space, older staff members may need additional supports or time beforethey are ready to share.
Awareness as a want and need	When discussing competence levels, staff members all alluded to the need for or lack ofawareness. However, group members defined this awareness differently. 1). <u>Awareness of inequity</u> *"Don't just be standing by and maybe bringing this awareness to us will help us see more of the little things that might happen around us that we might notrealize could really hurt somebody else."* *"We need to remember to keep an awareness of what's happening around us. Inequity, racism often happens very quietly and it's easy to miss."* 2). <u>Awareness of others</u> *"Whatever is within my focus of control, I'm mindful of it."* *"I really don't know if being a woman in a man's world is equitable. I don't know how to effectively have those conversations or encourage others to have them."* *"I see great diversity. But I just don't know what their experience is."* 3). <u>Awareness of opportunities to dismantle systemic inequities</u> At several points during the focus group, clarifying questions revealed

	that it is nothabitual to self-reflect on processes and policies in order to account for systemic injustice. (A follow-up to a statement regarding diversity and discussion) *"This is great,to see are we truly accessible? I'm guessing probably not."* (In response to a question regarding the protocol for gathering student voice)*"It depends--sometimes we hold events, sometimes students reach out to methemselves.""* *"It's a matter of whether people are asked the question. Who is informing theleadership team in developing these [equity] workshops?"*
Staff do not know about the district strategy for addressing systemic inequity	Of the responses, one group member addressed an outside consultant with guidelines.Another three responses referred to evidence towards the existence of a strategy (suchas inclusive design, diverse hiring, and personal experiences in the district). Three responses expressed skepticism about the existence of a strategy at all. "I don't even know what this question entails or means." "If there is a strategy for addressing these issues, we would like to know it. The fact that, if a strategy exists, this group doesn't know about it, that's a redflag right there."

Group Suggestions

Suggestions	Examples
Space to learn from one another	*"Leadership can proactively have these discussions. This has never been brought to my attention, and as a POC I have never been asked about my experience within the organization."* *"I don't want to upset people, but I want to have that dialogue."* *"If we go to a workshop, it's about our job or our title, not who we are as a person. I think we miss that connection of people because if I could understand who they are and what type of background that they derive from,we all see things from a different light."*
Staff training on terminology and microaggressions	*"I think that the district could proactively support us in sharing what experiences others are having, what the terminologies are…the district can beproactive in exposing us to those things that we may not have experience with."* *"How do I put myself out there and let people know that I want to have that dialogue, but I may not be able to do so without saying something wrong orunintentionally upsetting someone?"* *"I want to talk about it, but I want to be sure that the words and language I'musing are appropriate."*

Staff (DEC Teaching and Learning)

Participants met in two groups: one group contained senior leadership and was majoritywhite; the other group was comprised of non-leadership staff members who largely identified as BIPOC. The results of both groups have been combined in this analysis, with differences noted. Respondents addressed the school system as a whole, often comparing schools and individual roles to larger district trends. Answers also framed the district as an interrelated system--problems in one area reflecting upon flaws within the system as a whole.

Group Discussion Summary

Themes	What leadership and staff Said
Strong emphasis on the idea of fairness for all	All non-leadership staff indicated they Strongly Agree with the statement "*The Surrey School District should focus on advancing educational equity and social justice for eachand every student.*" For leadership, eight members indicated Strongly Agree and two indicated Agree. "*Equity for all means a strong society built up of individuals achieving their full potential and being contributing members.*" "*The school district has a moral purpose to provide learning opportunities for EVERY student. This is the purpose of our existence.*" "*Our work really is to reach all learners, so if we start from a place where ourgoal is not to advance equity for all, then we fail before we even begin.*" "*There is so much diversity in our district, and focusing on explicitly addressing and advancing educational equity and social justice is crucial to include all staff and students and to create a safe environment to learn, grow.*" "*We have a responsibility to remove barriers for all learners so they haveaccess to opportunities for success.*" "*Building an inclusive and just society is fundamental to what we do. Surrey is incredibly diverse and we should be prioritizing the task.*"
Data collection as an aid to equity	"*Part of the issue is that we don't collect data--to understand how parents, students, teachers are perceiving that environment and how equitable it is and if we are acknowledging their culture.*" "*We're not disaggregating our data and we don't know where we're starting from…we need to know where we're starting so having the data would be important.*" "*The only time I have come across data like that was probably 15 years ago…I didn't see the data, it was just a conversation about this.*"
Dissatisfaction among BIPOC staff with regard to the current SSD's leadership effort	*Staff members expressed frustration with the disconnect between supporting performative measures (such as "different days for specific shirt colors") and supporting meaningful action (lack of support for proposals related to the Black Lives Matter movement).*

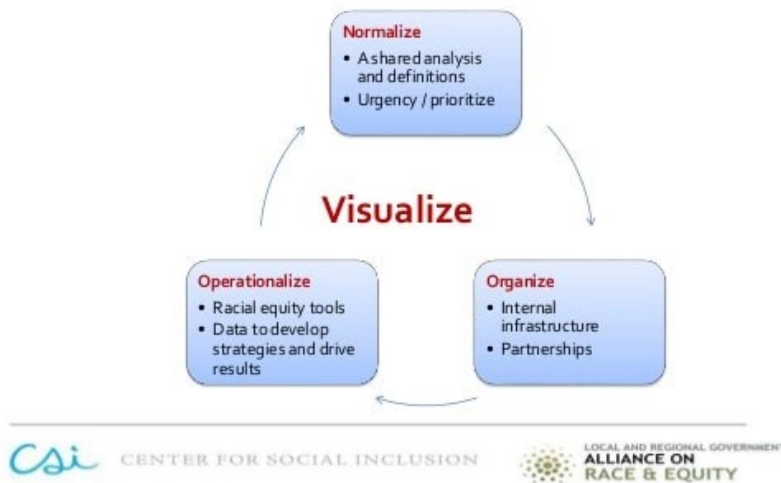|	
	"We're building translations so parents can access forms; the family may be able to read it, but not necessarily make meaning of it." *"surface, token, checkbox" to describe current district efforts in terms of equity for BIPOC students, students identifying as LGBTQ+, and students with disabilities.* *"The honoring seems to be on a surface level; we can be encouraged and it's part of the conversation, but it does feel that it's surface."* *"The first thing that popped into my head was that it pops up on the website-- different celebrations of different communities, attempt to celebrate diversity, technology to translate pages, it looks like we're all trying really hard."* *"I think a piece that Surrey is working on is including queer and gender diverse curriculum; there is the SOGI curriculum but it's mostly checking a box and is focused on teacher training."* *"I feel that there is not enough representation of any group, BIPOC or otherwise in our central office...it feels a bit like tokenism."* *"There are genuine attempts...attempts...to celebrate cultures."* *"There are actions behind the commitment. It is visible. But there is still a long way to go. It is somewhat surface."*

Group Suggestions

Suggestions	Examples
Training for all staff	*"It's not just teachers, it's staff in the front office, everyone in schools. We don't talk about this enough and how integral it is to everyone in the school; we need assistants and front staff there as well, modeling as well."*
Equity has to be achieved at all schools	*"[Perspective and equity] happens in pockets, but not in all schools; really depends on the support that teachers get. Even in schools it happens in pockets...some are experiencing this and others aren't; it's a layered and inconsistent process."* *"Some schools have great welcoming staff that know how to work with adiverse range of people but other schools do not have this."*
All the students should be included	*"An indigenous student at a school with a low indigenous population, the student didn't have access to an aboriginal support worker and it isolated him."* *"Bathroom access; I know trans students who have a history of repeated UTIs because they don't have access to restrooms that they feel safe using."* *"There is a lot of need for a queer support worker in the same way there is an aboriginal support worker."* *"(Referring to the term "hearing loss"), we need to be careful and clear about the language we use; the term loss implies something is missing...language is extremely important, and we need to be careful about how we use it.*
The district needs strong leadership for meaningful change to occur	Participants in the non-leadership group mentioned the need for stronger districtleadership regarding racial equity and social justice issues. Primarily, the district must develop and then enact policies to ensure equitabilityamongst schools. *"I've been here for over 30 years, and I've never seen any kind of genuinedesire to deal with systemic racism and microaggressions."* *"We don't have a clear vision and it doesn't stick...it would be nice to see aclear vision that lasts 3-5 years."* *"Yes, we have the summer institute but from a systems piece, it's leaving too much up to individual teachers to figure it out themselves; it seems kind of crossing fingers and hoping it will materialize."*

Wake to Work to Work: Building a Race Equity Culture

VISIALIZE

Visualize a school district and community where racial equity and educational justice are the norm.

National effective practice

Normalize
- A shared analysis and definitions
- Urgency / prioritize

Visualize

Operationalize
- Racial equity tools
- Data to develop strategies and drive results

Organize
- Internal infrastructure
- Partnerships

CSi CENTER FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION

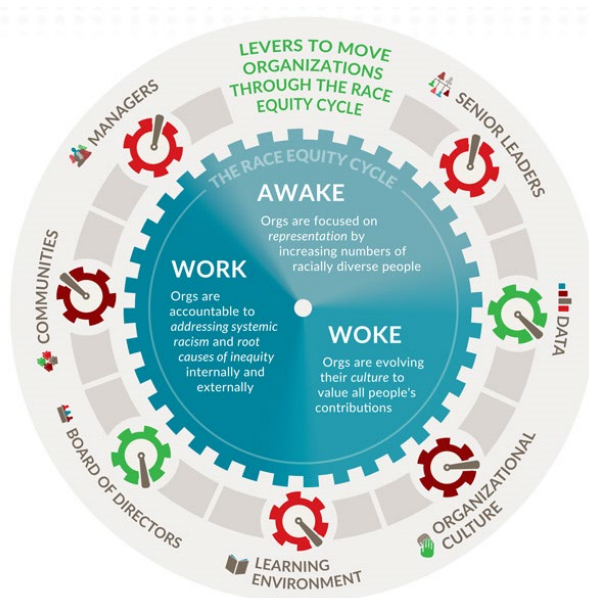LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT
ALLIANCE ON RACE & EQUITY

Also, the Wake, to Woke, to Work Framework from the Equity in the Center in the United States focuses on shifting mindsets, practices, and systems within the social sector to advance racial equity and social justice. The Wake, to Woke, to Work is comprised of the following three phases:

At the AWAKE stage, school districts are focused on supporting people and on building a workforce and boards comprised of individuals from different race backgrounds and lived experiences. The primary goal is increasing ethnically, linguistically and other types of representation, with efforts aimed at increasing the number of people of different race backgrounds and lived experiences.

At the WOKE stage, school districts are focused on building/strengthening a culture racial equity and social justice and on creating an welcoming environment where everyone is

comfortable sharing their lived experiences, and everyone is equipped to talk about race equity and inequities in a way that advances the work in a powerful manner. The primary goals are inclusion, belonging, and internal change in behaviors, policies, and practices. At the WORK stage, school districts are focused on transforming their systems to improve race equity and educational justice. The primary goal is integration of a race equity and educational justice Lasik into all aspects of the organization. This involves internal and external systems change and regularly administering a race equity assessment to evaluate processes, programs, and operation.

Source: The Equity in the Center