

Equity Study Root Cause Report

Presentation to the Westport Board of Education
April 25th, 2022



Rationale for the Study

The Westport Public Schools began the process of an equity study because:

- it is critical to continually assess the extent to which students feel a deep sense of belonging, affiliation, and access to opportunities in our schools.
- the *Comprehensive School Climate Inventory* administered in 2018-19 identified a *Sense of Social Emotional Security* - a sense that students feel safe from verbal abuse, teasing and exclusion as a relative weakness in the district. Out of the 13 dimensions measured, a *Sense of Social Emotional Security* was identified as the area of greatest concern.
- a number of compelling narratives have been shared from our own students and families that warrant our attention.
- there is a national conversation on the topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion in our society.

Equity Study Approach

Transformation of Schools (NYU Metro Center)-Innovations in Equity and Systemic Change (IESC) partnered with Westport Public Schools to facilitate the process of an Equity Study.

Educational Equity:

“incorporates educational policies, practices, interactions, and resources that are representative of, constructed by, and **responsive to every student** such that **each individual has access** to and can meaningfully participate and make progress in **high-quality learning experiences** that support students towards self-determination and reduce disparities in outcomes regardless of individual differences and social identities” (Great Lakes Equity Center, 2011).

Recommendation 1:

Develop Welcoming and Affirming School Communities

- “Students are exposed to a variety of voices and experiences, including the experiences of historically marginalized identities in order to broaden students' understanding of the world and deepen critical thinking.” (pg. 9)
- “Educators as learners, recognize the importance of everyday growth through engaging in difficult dialogues, particularly around critical issues regarding race and equity.” (pg. 9)
- “For the district, much of this work starts with interrogating the impact of a culture of competitiveness has on each and every child, across identity differences...” (pg. 16)

Recommendation 2:

Increase Access to Education Programming for Every Student

- “It is critical that the district foundationally assess the pathways by which students are selected for these tracks and critically engage the disproportionality that currently exists...” (pg. 25)
- “The school district needs to audit the AP, Honors and track B and C programmatic structure.” (pg. 25)
- “[Establish] a system of review and revision to address the disproportionality that exists in behavioral outcomes and IEP classification.” (pg. 25)

Recommendation 3:

Overhaul Data Systems: Disaggregated Data Collection, Analysis, and Usage

- “...there should be a system to document discipline referrals across schools.” (pg. 30)
- “The code of conduct should center restorative approaches and lay out specific restorative practices.” (pg. 29)
- “It is critical to develop fidelity tools for interventions, monitor progress through the collections, analysis and usage of disaggregated data, and evaluate effectiveness of interventions/programs.” (pg. 32)

Recommendation 4:

Invest in Ongoing Professional Learning and Development

- “Any district aiming to create Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts must develop a plan on how they will continue to develop their leaders, teachers, and staff- a plan that is responsive to ongoing student and family needs, and centers equity.” (p. 38)

Next Steps

- “Transformative equity work requires culturally responsive-sustaining education to be on the plate, the foundation by which all other initiatives sit on top of- this will be a critical push for the Westport School District” (p. 40).