
Racing to Equity

Racial Equity Environmental Assessment
Edmonds School District

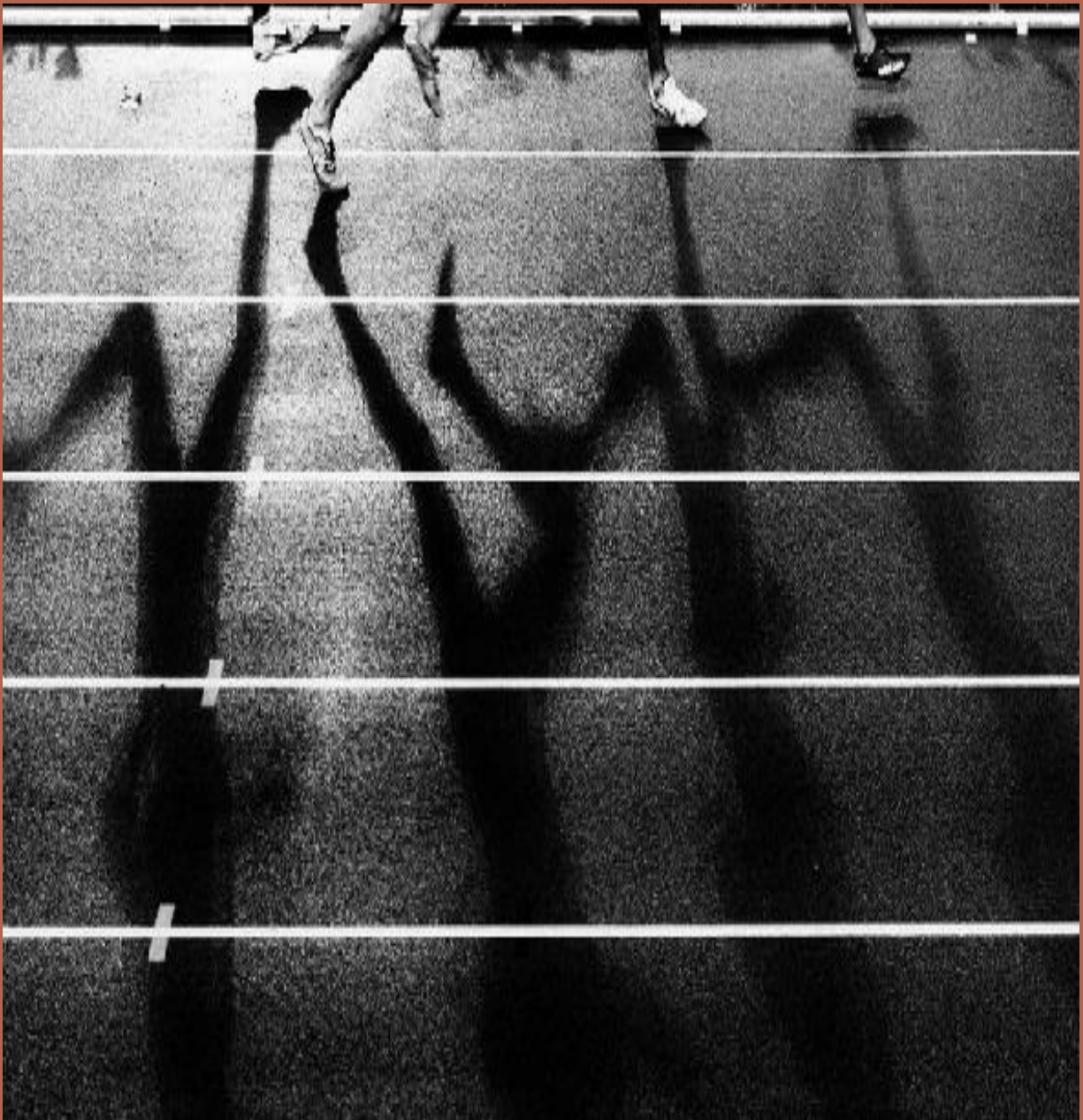




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On behalf of Racing to Equity...

On behalf of the *Racing to Equity* consulting group, we are pleased to present the Racial Equity Environmental Assessment of Edmonds School District. We have purposefully built on the legacy of this school district while providing a recommended equity-focused direction for the future. We believe this direction has the potential to transform Edmonds School District into a national leader in eliminating the opportunity gaps in student learning.

Developing this report was truly a collaborative process that documented numerous interviews, community & teacher forums, middle & high school student focus groups, private conversations, online survey questions and comments. This process began as part of Dr. McDuffy's unwavering commitment to racial equity as a new superintendent, and then continued as a purposeful collection of stakeholder input centered on a community-informed vision of Edmonds School District. In the spring of 2017, we engaged with various District's internal stakeholders, along with current leaders from the business, higher education, faith based and civic communities, parents, students, teachers, principals and central office staff.

The purpose of this extensive data gathering was to deepen our understanding of the district from the perspective of its internal and external stakeholders. This report captures those perspectives and translates them into a set of informed priorities for the District. The report sets forth recommendations that are purposeful and directed toward setting higher standards for our students and ourselves, driven by the values of *Racial Equity & Excellence*.

Edmonds' students were particularly active and contributed insightful suggestions based on their lived experiences in schools. They called for passionate and socially-just teaching that applies learning to the real world and personalizes learning when necessary, better strategies to meet the needs of students experiencing racism and poverty, more proactive guidance in preparing students for post k-12 experiences and for a prominent student voice to inform school and district decisions.

Parents called for a more racially and ethnically diverse workforce, for relational and reciprocal communication with schools, and opportunities to improve their navigational skills within the U.S. educational system, as well as college & career systems for their children.

Teachers prioritized the need for mandated & compensated professional development informed by ESD educators to integrate equity and culturally responsive teaching more effectively, advocated for the on-going implementation and efficient support for school-based Equity Teams, as well the creation of policies and procedures that lead to the distribution of resources based on student and community needs.

Many community stakeholders urged for the District to honor and values families as the agents of educational transformation for their children and that the District creates and fosters stronger external partnerships with businesses, local regional higher education institutions, government and career focused organizations within the city of Edmonds and other surrounding municipalities.

The recommendations call forth the creation of a whole system of educational excellence, rather than pockets of excellent schools. Edmonds School District must ensure that every school accelerates rigorous learning and provides systems of support to eliminate its opportunity & achievement gaps. In addition, every school must provide college and career readiness through a range of accessible, high quality pathways and partnerships. In short, the key recommendations have been informed and developed by community and highlight the need for the systemic & cultural transformation of Edmonds Schools.

The implementation of the recommendations will continue to rest on sustained community engagement and developmental improvement progress checks. It is fundamental to the success of every Edmonds school to ensure ample opportunities for student and family voices from ethnically and linguistically diverse communities to inform these progress checks as they provide us with the realities of those whom ESD is committed to serving.

We hope that this report elevates the voices of the community who provided their invaluable input and that their experiences are reflected in our findings and recommendations. We are heartened as we continue to lean forward towards racial equity & educational excellence with Edmonds' amazing students, committed staff and engaged community.

In solidarity,

Racing to Equity Consulting Group

"There are forces at work that separate us and say we are equal. Forces at work that tell us that this is the land of opportunity and you can be whatever you want, only ...you can't."

-ESD High School Student

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Edmonds School District (ESD) has over 21,000 students and while this number has fluctuated little in the last two decades, the demographic make-up of the student body has changed greatly. In the 1998-1999 school year, the student body included 78% White students and currently, that number is just under 50%. ESD leadership has implemented systems initiatives to address emerging needs that have arisen from the rather sudden demographic shift. Some of the most visible changes are establishing numerous School-Based Equity Teams, providing the opportunity for 300+ ESD staff to participate in Racial Equity Professional Development and the creation and development of the Department of Equity and Outreach.

Although the results of previous systemic initiatives have been fruitful, ESD's leadership recognizes that there is further work that needs to be done in order to meet the needs of each and every student it educates.

The purpose of the Racial Equity Environmental Analysis of Edmonds School District was to analyze the District's current systemic efforts by reviewing data, conducting interviews, hosting student and teacher focus groups, as well as facilitating family and community forums. In addition, we surveyed ESD staff & other internal stakeholders. Stakeholders conveyed numerous current efforts of ESD as positive initiatives to address educational inequities and to better serve students that are linguistically and ethnically diverse. Internal stakeholders also identified,

with great specificity, the necessity to equitably address and meet the needs of students experiencing poverty and racism.

The firm's dedicated research informed the creation of a set of questions, which with minimal adjustments, were asked to gather specific information from numerous ESD stakeholders.

During the months of April to June 2017, direct interviews were conducted with the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, ESD Cabinet members, ESD School Board members, ESD Central Office Staff, and Instructional Leaders (Principals & Assistant Principals). Individuals interviewed received and were asked to complete a follow-up online survey that served to provide a comprehensive Racial Equity Literacy snapshot of the school district. Additionally, we held four student focus groups at local high schools, three teacher focus groups (including one off-site educator of color focus group requested by the Edmonds Education Association) and, lastly, four family & community forums.

Our findings highlight that sustainable solutions are most likely to come from deliberate actions in terms of policy, the implementation of concrete steps in terms of classroom practices that are focused on improving culturally responsive teaching, and sustaining practices that prove to be effective.

This process sought to identify key Racial Equity areas of focus for Edmonds School District through inclusive stakeholder engagement. The opportunity to conduct this

Racial Equity Environmental Assessment has provided necessary insight into areas of improvement around policymaking, the delivery of ESD services, program development, and community engagement. This process has provided data-driven evidence for the next steps that the ESD Leadership & School Board can take to ensure that Edmonds School District continues to strive for equitable gains. Findings reported throughout this literature will serve in the creation of a district-wide equity strategy and will inform process and policymaking in the future.

It is clear from the information we gathered that Edmonds School District faces critical opportunities as they continue to address systemic educational inequities. But with committed stakeholders willing to put new strategies and structures in place and to infuse resources into proven and promising programs, great progress is possible. We recognize progress will require a sustained effort involving multiple strategies designed to eliminate the impact of structural racism and the ongoing vestiges of past policies and practices. Although disparities appear across a wide range of outcomes, this study focused on furthering racial equity initiatives through the lenses of systemic, school-based, and instructional improvements. Consequently, our recommendations focus on those areas. Across these categories, collecting data and related information to track progress toward dismantling structural barriers will be critical.

WHAT TO EXPECT

FROM THIS REPORT

The content of the Edmonds School District Racial Equity Environment Assessment is to inform the development of policy and organizational change, as well as inform instructional and family & community engagement practices that will reinvent, reinvigorate and bring up-to-date the District's efforts to ensure educational excellence and racial equity for the students whom have been historically underserved by the District. Furthermore, it is our hope that the implementation of the suggested recommendations that are presented in this report improves Edmonds' *Coherence, Alignment & Leadership, Culturally Responsive Teaching and Family & Community Engagement*.

Ultimately, we hope that the foundation of our work also serves as a model for other School Districts to recognize and maximize the brilliance and funds of knowledge that students of color bring into our classrooms.



Coherence, Alignment & Leadership

The recommendations in this area include identifying and sustaining common short-term and long-term goals and connections among/across seemingly disparate initiatives and take advantage of opportunity to maximize efforts by creating a coherence and alignment tool. It focuses on systematic and mutually reinforcing policy, programs, initiatives and actions, with a aim toward achieving the shared goal of eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps in the Edmonds School District.

Cultural Responsive Teaching

Ensure that every teacher in every classroom, from very experienced to rookies, engage in culturally responsive professional development and continuous-improvement strategies. These experiences will provide them with the opportunity to learn from each other, raise their racial awareness and learn the tools and strategies they need to meet the needs of our students of color and thrive in their practice, wherever their classrooms may be in the District.

Strengthening Family & Community Engagement

Family Engagement in our schools nationally is shifting from a low priority initiative to a viable instructional strategy to increasing student achievement while eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps. Raising the next generation is a shared responsibility. When families, communities and schools work together as equitable partners in the education of our children, students' academic achievement, behavioral issues decrease and teachers stay longer in the profession.

"I want to matter to my school... I want so see myself in books, in classrooms, in teachers and in principals"

-ESD Middle School Student

INTRODUCTION

LEADING WITH *RACIAL* EQUITY

Racism has been a constant in America since the first settlers set foot on this land and declared it their own, expunging the rights of Native Americans who had lived here for centuries before any colonizers arrived. When Africans were brought to Jamestown, Virginia in 1619 to harvest tobacco and later cotton, it furthered a system of racial hierarchy that forced them into slavery. The belief in a hierarchy of human value has persisted through abolition, the Civil War, Jim Crow, internment of Japanese Americans, Civil Rights Movement, immigration debates and even the election of the first black president of the United States. Clearly, the question of racism and its consequences is one of the most confounding issues that Americans have faced not just for decades, but for centuries.

If we are to ensure a promising and productive future for our nation and children, we must address racism at every level that it manifests in society, and we must especially combat the inequities perpetuated by the U.S. K-12 public education system. This report seeks to uplift ways in which Edmonds School District can lean into the future with racial equity at the forefront of its values, leadership, strategies and actions. In doing so, Edmonds can shift educational paradigms and transform inequities that have for decades held many of our children back from success, especially as children of color quickly compose an emerging majority of children in the United States within the next decade.

In Washington State, the student body demographics have been changing drastically within the past decade. That reality is collectively shared among neighboring school districts. Locally, Edmonds Schools has experienced a significant shift in the racial/ethnic composition of its student population and the same rings true, to an even greater degree, for student populations in Bellevue, Mukilteo, Kent, Seattle, Renton, and dozens of other districts where the students of color occupy most classroom seats.

At the national level, U.S. public schools became majority-minority in 2014. The student demographical shift in Washington has been slower – currently at 56 percent white students – and there is evidence that suggests that those shifts will only continue to ramp up. In a largely white Washington, 65 of the state’s 295 school districts now educate more students of color than they do white students. As recently as 2010, Washington’s student body was 64 percent white.

As school districts in Washington continue to strive for educational excellence, it is imperative that they meet the emerging needs of their students by transforming policies, practices and procedures that intentionally promote racial equity and focus on eliminating the widening opportunity gap between students of color and white students.

THE OPPORTUNITY GAP

Contrary to popular belief, the terms *Opportunity Gap* and *Achievement Gap* are not synonymous. The importance of distinguishing each term is critical to this report.

Achievement gaps are the symptoms of a public-school system that consistently provides different and unequal educational opportunities to students of color. The contextual framing of the achievement gap negatively focuses on underperforming students of color and their families. It places blame and responsibility on students conditioned to the failures of educational institutions. It does not situate the responsibility on the public-school system, where it belongs.

The term Opportunity gap acknowledges that there have been and are still structural issues with institutionalized racism, disparate educational opportunities, and different treatment experienced by students of color. However, opportunity gaps can be and have been closed through careful analysis of disaggregated student data, targeted strategies

to provide equitable opportunities to all students, and meaningful partnerships with communities and families.

We need to acknowledge that there are successes in Edmonds School District - there are schools and Instructional Leaders extremely devoted and committed to addressing the systemic conditions that contribute to the pervasive opportunity gaps. Students of color, their families, and communities bring assets to schools, have deep strengths, and when given equitable opportunities by the educational system, are not in the opportunity gap.

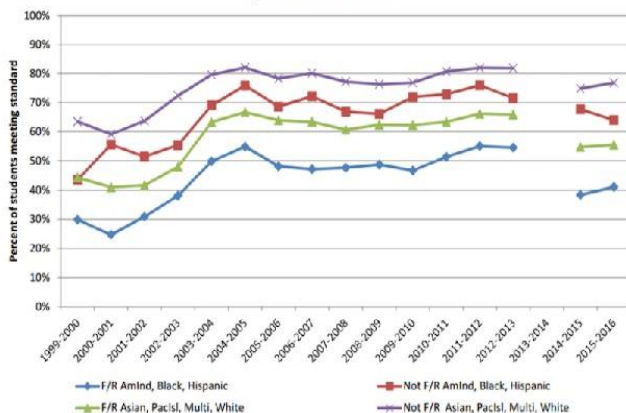
Opportunity gaps are often attributed to the poverty status of students to avoid addressing race. While poverty can compound the opportunity gap for students of color, as illustrated in the following graph, the opportunity gap in Edmonds School District between racial groups persists even among low income and non-low income students of color. It is not acceptable for there to be a consistent and widening gap in student academic achievement.

We must emphasize that racial equity is the condition that would be achieved when student's racial identity no longer predicts, in a statistical sense, their academic achievement. It is critical to identify Racial Equity as one part of Racial Justice, and thus we must include work to address the root causes of inequities, not just their manifestation. To achieve racial equity, Edmonds must work to eliminate policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them.

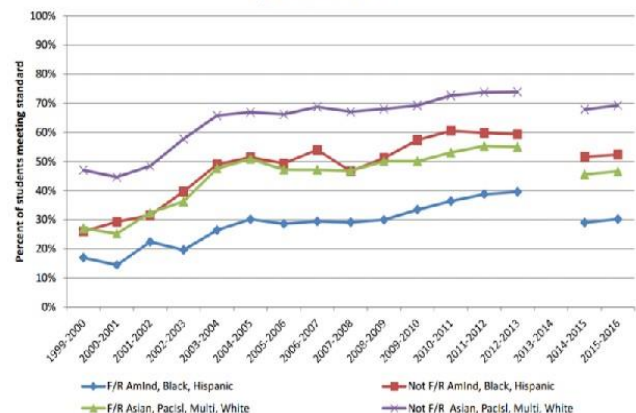
It is imperative that each stakeholder in the district - students, parents, teachers, administrators, and Board Members - bear some degree of responsibility for the issue, and to understand that the only way progress will be made is if each party accepts responsibility for their role in the educational process of each and every one of the students and families served.

The findings and recommendations presented in this report are a call to action. The time is now. It is up to us.

Edmonds School District Grades 3 - 8 State ELA Assessment
by Meal Status and Race



Edmonds School District Grades 3 - 8 State Math Assessment
by Meal Status and Race





METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the Racial Equity Environmental Analysis of Edmonds School District by the *Racing to Equity* consulting group was to analyze the District's current systemic efforts by reviewing data, conducting interviews, hosting student and teacher focus groups, as well as facilitating family and community forums.

Racial Equity Environmental Analysis

Theory of Action

If we do this, we would receive a well-rounded and representative body of information regarding the status of racial equity in the District. If we analyze all the data received, our firm will be able to present a real-time set of findings of that status. If we translate these findings into a coherent set of recommendations to submit to ESD, and if the recommendations are implemented with fidelity; Edmonds will become a model for other districts that want to eliminate their opportunity and achievement gaps.

Goal pertinent to methodology

Perform an environmental analysis of Edmonds School District's racial equity efforts and provide a comprehensive report with key recommendations for identifying and strengthening these efforts to maximize a rigorous and culturally responsive education to their ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse students.

A statistically significant sampling of stakeholders representative of ESD shared their responses and perspectives:

- Scheduling for interviews, student focus groups, teacher focus groups and community forums was done by ESD staff.
- *Racing for Equity* consultants facilitated interviews, focus groups and forums.
- *Racing for Equity* used the same set of research based questions for individual interviews, student focus groups, teacher focus groups and community forums adapting them slightly to accommodate each distinct group.

The purpose of the assessment, institutional context for each distinct group and the assurance of confidentiality was stated at the beginning of each interview, focus group and forum.

Individual interviews

- Sixty-one individual interviews were scheduled at the District office including the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, the Board, the Cabinet, the Department of Equity and Outreach, central office managers/directors and principals.
- Interviews were 45 minutes in length, with all three *Racing to Equity* consultants present for most of the interviews.
- Interviewers alternated asking questions and scribing answers.
- Follow up questions were asked as needed if a participant's response required clarity or additional information. Questions were relevant and in context of the responses they provided & in alignment with the questions on the form.
- Individuals interviewed had the opportunity to ask questions and/or make additional comments as part of the interview process.
- A total of 61 individual interviews were scheduled and 55 were completed.

Online surveys

- Individuals interviewed were requested to complete a 10-minute online survey.
- At the end of the interview, individuals were informed that the online survey would be emailed and were asked to complete it within one-two days of their interview.
- Two additional email reminders were sent to each interviewee encouraging and requesting them to complete the follow-up survey.
- A total of 44 online surveys were received.

Student Focus Groups

- Four student focus groups were scheduled at four high schools and included some middle

school student participation.

- ESD Staff and then publicized within the school
- Respective school staff members were only present if requested by students.
- *Racing to Equity* and DEO staff scribed answers and checked with students to ensure fidelity and accuracy.
- A few students chose to write and submit their individual responses.
- 100+ students participated in the student focus groups.

Teacher Focus Group

- Three teacher focus groups were scheduled.
- Two teacher focus groups, one for secondary and one for elementary, were scheduled back to back at a middle school.
- One teacher focus group for educators of color was conducted at the Edmonds Education Association center (per EOC request).
- *Racing to Equity* facilitated the secondary and elementary teacher focus groups.
- One *Racing to Equity* consultant facilitated the EOC focus group (per their request).
- *Racing to Equity* and staff scribed answers and checked with educators to ensure fidelity and accuracy.
- A total of about 60 educators participated in the teacher focus groups.

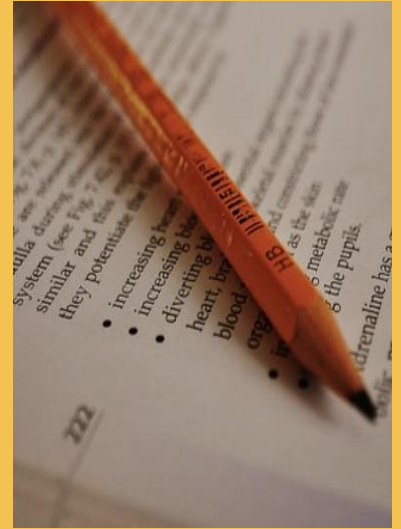
Community Forum

- Four community forums were scheduled: three were held at the District office and one at a middle school
- Translation services were made available.
- All three *Racing to Equity* consultants facilitated the community forums.
- *Racing to Equity* consultants scribed responses and checked with participants for fidelity and accuracy.
- A total of about 40 family and community members and students participated in the community forums.

SNAPSHOT OF ESD RACIAL EQUITY EFFORTS

EDMONDS SCHOOL DISTRICT HAS...

- FUNDED & CREATED THE DEPARTMENT OF EQUITY AND OUTREACH
- AN EMERGING ETHNICALLY & LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE STUDENT POPULATION
- A STRONG COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS
- FAMILIES & COMMUNITY MEMBERS REQUESTING TO BE PART OF DECISION PROCESS
- DRAFTED A DISTRICT-WIDE RACIAL EQUITY POLICY
- HIRED (.5) FTE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT LIAISONS FOR 11/20 ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS
- ESTABLISHED NATURAL LEADERS PROGRAM FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS & FAMILIES
- SUPPORTED THE EAACH (EQUITY AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT) ADVISORY GROUP
- IMPLEMENTED 15 SCHOOL-BASED EQUITY TEAMS
- PROVIDED ~400+ STAFF WITH UNDOING INSTITUTIONAL RACISM TRAINING
- ESTABLISHED DISTRICT-WIDE EQUITY BASED STRATEGIC DIRECTION



SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Our review of Edmonds School District (ESD) revealed that the central leadership of the district is knowledgeable, hardworking and aware of district-wide needs. The leadership has set equity and access as a clear priority in its strategic direction and has begun articulating a clear vision as to how this can be achieved. It has also attempted to implement research-based programs and initiatives to improve the quality of learning and teaching. However, many of the promising initiatives that ESD has undertaken have not been fully implemented, nor have they been systematically evaluated. Through our interactions with school leaders, we learned that most new equity-based initiatives - including Equity Teams, the Undoing Institutional Racism, and the review and development of policy - have not been clearly understood; and in many cases, are being implemented unevenly. As a result, the impact of these initiatives on the effort to reduce disparities and improve student learning generally, have not been realized. Although steps toward attaining tangible outcomes have begun, there is a long-road ahead.

According to our research, we found that frequent changes in leadership at both the district and school levels, have contributed to a lack of follow-through and incomplete implementation of promising initiatives. Most of these initiatives should be subject to rigorous evaluation, which will lead to a higher degree of belief and trust among staff in the future. Lack of follow through and distrust among staff and community members, according to our research, has become an obstacle to ongoing implementation efforts and the solution to this problem will be imperative to future progress.

Establishing a District-Wide Definition of Educational Excellence & Racial Equity

Establishing a coherent and clear definition of educational and racial equity for ESD is crucial to galvanize staff efforts on infusing an equity lens or framework in everyday work and moving these efforts forward in a cohesive manner. The Racial Equity Literacy work at ESD should be guided by this clear definition rather than relativistic perspectives regarding racial equity.

Clarity and Coherence

Throughout the interviews with District Senior staff, central office directors and managers, school building leaders, teachers and support staff, the common theme we heard was that there is a lack of focus, clarity and coherence throughout the ESD, which has pervasively undermined many of the strategies aimed at eliminating the opportunity gap. Furthermore, lack of tangible progress in increasing academic achievement for students of color can be attributed to the tremendous amount of responsibilities that may not directly impact academic student achievement. These responsibilities often become priorities that take time away from the main focus of ensuring academic excellence and racial equity for every student.

The stakeholders, with whom we spoke, agreed on the necessity for Racial Equity Literacy work in the ESD to meet the needs of the growing students of color population. However, they found it difficult to name and articulate the systemic strategies and goals to do the work that the district has in place. Additionally, they had little knowledge about how, or if, the work was being implemented district-wide. When they were aware of some strategies, there was a sense that it was voluntary rather than an expectation for all and that the follow-through was inconsistent.

Of concern, is a lack of a collective understanding about the benefit and necessity of a district-wide racial equity focus. A belief exists that having a racial equity focus is important for some areas of the District but not others. This is accompanied by a fear that racially impacted areas in the District will lose something (budget, resources, staff) if a racial equity focus is gained by everyone. The racial equity focus in some areas in ESD with a relatively low concentration of low-income and/or minority students is not deemed a primary concern.

To numerous internal stakeholders more closely connected to schools with a majority population, efforts to become a racial equity-focused district is seen as a possible threat to their ability to access district staff and resources for their students/children. When the schools or programs serve gifted and/or advanced students, the fear is even greater.

The high degree of individualism in schools across the district exacerbates the uneven understanding, and non-adherence, to district strategies and goals. Creating a uniform perception and understanding of the ESD Racial Equity Literacy focus will generate an authentic loyalty by district personnel at all levels and the families they serve.

The rapid change in ESD demographics and the urgency of the needs accompanying that change should be articulated and understood to mitigate the distrust and apprehension that change engenders. Racially exclusive attitudes and beliefs may be interpreted as feelings of being marginalized by the families of color ESD is serving in large and growing numbers

Leadership Matters & It Matters Greatly

The Superintendent, Senior Staff and School Board leadership is paramount for creating a systemic paradigm shift and ensuring a transformational educational and racial equity focus that will change the District's culture. This was a universal finding and recommendation from every group we interviewed. The District needs to define, secure, and clearly demonstrate, with systemic actions, its unwavering commitment to eliminating opportunity gaps for historically underserved students. The leadership in the work should be fully embraced from central office leaders and be inclusive all the way to the students and families they serve. Such marginalization is a state and nation-wide and the ESD has the opportunity to become a leader in taking on this necessary work.

In every school district where equity is emerging as a clear and promoted foundation priority, the Superintendent, Senior Leadership and School Board have stepped up as engaged leaders, champions, and spokespeople.

Leading Racial Equity Literacy begins with stating goals or mentioning racial equity in a strategic priority or mission statement however, leaders must operationalize their stated dedication to racial equity by placing cabinet, district leaders, and principals in charge of elevating the issues, providing anti-racism training, monitoring data for racial disparities, and holding schools accountable for equity outcomes. The Edmonds School Board also plays a critical role in passing the Educational Excellence & Racial Equity Policy. Racial equity will become the umbrella

“We have to transform every moment into a movement. Eliminating the Gaps. Racial Equity. Educational Excellence. It is all up to us!”
-ESD Central Office Leader

SURVEY RESULTS

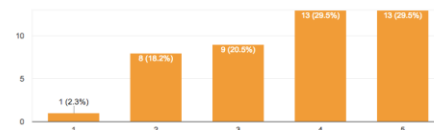
WE ASKED 55 ESD STAFF TO RATE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ON AN AGREEMENT SCALE OF 1-5.

(5) REPRESENTS INTERVIEWEES STRONG AGREEMENT WITH EACH STATEMENT & (1) REPRESENTS STRONG DISAGREEMENT.

44 RESPONDED.

Edmonds School District demonstrates a commitment to Eliminating Opportunity Gaps.

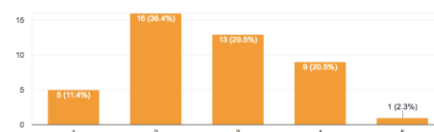
44 responses



The analyses of survey data show that ESD Leaders believe that the district is committed to Eliminating Opportunity Gaps, but that it lacks the proper procedures and practices to transform the belief into action.

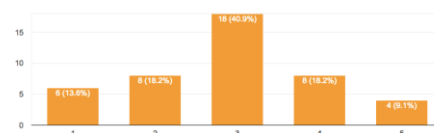
Edmonds School District provides adequate supports to Native American students and their families.

44 responses



In my department/school, input from communities of color and ethnically & linguistically diverse students and families is sought and valued.

44 responses



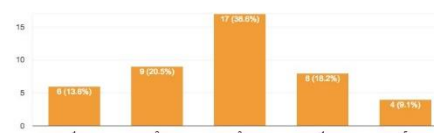
The results from the survey paint a blurry picture about the perception internal ESD stakeholders have of the services they provide to students of color and other historically marginalized populations.

This information, coupled with feedback received during interviews, point to the misalignment between what stakeholders perceive as “Eliminating Opportunity Gaps” strategies and the lack of clarity around how to eliminate opportunity gaps that impact student performance.

In short, ESD leaders believe they are committed to eliminating the opportunity gaps, yet they are not able to 1) identify which opportunity gaps they are eliminating and 2) specify how their professional role is either perpetuating and/or mitigating the impact of institutional racism within Edmonds Schools.

At my work setting, we have protocols in place to ensure that support for refugees and immigrants is readily available.

44 responses





under, which all other District initiatives must come. Then, the Superintendent and ESD staff will be assigned to develop and implement accountability measures for closing the various opportunity and achievement gaps.

We heard from central office administrators that they are dedicated to serving Edmonds students and work very hard to ensure that this happens. They are professional and take their responsibilities seriously. However, school building leaders and teachers stated that they need to be present in schools more consistently to be seen as a valuable resource to address the challenges school leaders and staff face.

It is necessary to establish consistent, clear, transparent and coherent communication about District and school improvement efforts to the school leaders, teachers and support staff. Interviewees also made an observation that there exists a lack of systemic vision to eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps District-wide. As a result, collaboration to accomplish District and school goals is currently diminished.

Interviewees stated that school expectations, priorities and procedures would be better understood by all stakeholders if they were consistently and clearly applied. This lack of clarity, hereby thwarts teachers' understanding and efforts of how to meet the

needs of ethnically and linguistically diverse students.

Even though principals provide information on opportunity and achievement gaps to school staff, they are not yet equipped with the necessary skills nor are they comfortable leading culturally responsive professional development at their schools. This creates a gap in the staff's understanding on the use of disaggregated data to meet student needs and of effective culturally responsive teaching strategies. This suggests that more work needs to take place with the principal corps to achieve school and District-wide coherence about the goals and priorities set by the Superintendent and ESD Senior staff. This work may have to be co-facilitated with district leaders ready to take on the challenge and outside experts.

We heard that culturally responsive teaching practices are randomly and incoherently implemented across the District and at individual school sites.

It was shared during the interviews that not every school has set SMART goal benchmarks to eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps for specific student groups. This creates a barrier to monitor progress in a timely manner to objectively improve professional practice and meet the specific needs of ethnically and linguistically diverse students.

The majority of school leaders will need to gain more in-depth knowledge of how to recognize culturally responsive instruction in the classroom or the lack thereof in order to progress. We heard from the interviewees that school leaders must spend more time observing classroom teaching on a daily basis to be able to accurately assess the quality of instruction and provide coaching to teachers on how to improve their professional practice to better serve students of color. It was also stated that there is sound culturally responsive instruction taking place by some teachers at some schools at the schools. It was suggested that school leaders create more formal opportunities for teachers to collaborate with, observe and learn from their colleagues more often.

Interviewees expressed that not all central office or school staff have a clear sense of how to utilize disaggregated data to identify, understand, and monitor efforts to consistently and sustainably improve student performance and eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps.

Disaggregated student data is not currently available and therefore not regularly utilized to inform practice, meet students' needs or provide access and adequate supports to students of color in a timely manner.

Disaggregated Data Must Drive Work & Conversation

Several interviewees shared the importance of using disaggregated data to point out where specific inequities lie within the Edmonds School District. Disaggregated data provides an objective and factual picture of what is happening to historically underserved student populations. This can create a paradigm shift for school leaders, teachers, support staff and central office leaders. It also offers an objective way to engage in conversations about institutional racism, implicit bias, microaggressions, and other topics that require exploration.

Measuring Educational Equity Progress Will Create Challenges & Opportunities

Edmonds School District central and school building leadership have created and developed strategies for incorporating racial equity into their work. However, people whom we interviewed were unable to clearly define how these strategies will be implemented and how outcomes will be attained and assessed. The educational and racial equity lens is currently not built into staff performance goals or tracked through a formal process of performance evaluation.

Many interviewees voiced that if strategies for incorporating racial equity into their work were clearly defined and accurately measured in their performance evaluation, they could better lead this important work. Doing educational and racial equity work begins with creating awareness and shifts in thinking, which can be hard to measure. Our experience indicates that increased racial awareness of ourselves and others as well as those shifts in thinking, which can still be difficult to quantify, are the actions that will change the narrative, culture and actions. Seeking input from all the department leaders and staff on how to create a rubric for this work using a race and equity lens will make it possible to track, evaluate and make progress.

“A public school in desperate need to talk about race, but chooses not to. That is my reality.”

-ESD High School Student

Analyze Professional Practice & Share Staff Stories and Experiences

Educational and Racial Equity should start from within the Edmonds School District Central Office. Almost every one of the interviewees we spoke with pointed out that the District Office must incorporate educational and racial equity principles into everything they do. Asking teachers and support staff to explore significant instructional and cultural shifts without Central Office's leading these efforts would mean an inauthentic institutional commitment to doing so.

True shifts in student academic achievement only come from very personal and interpersonal discussions about life experiences and effects of racism or inequity.

Students, families, community members and staff should be consulted for feedback on decisions impacting their students' academic achievement.

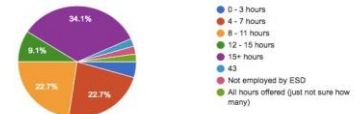
Many of the students, staff, and families we interviewed indicated that it was a necessity for them share their stories as people of color in the Edmonds School District and to have their experiences be believed. It is this type of sharing and listening that will enable all parties to arrive at a deeper understanding of the concerns and how to work together to make the best decisions to improve the situation where each and every student benefits.

Ensuring Educational & Racial Equity is a Journey, not a Destination

The pursuit of educational and racial equity never ends. We can't ever check it off the list. However, many of the promising educational and racial equity initiatives that have been undertaken by the Edmonds School District have just begun. In our interviews, we learned that newest initiatives, including Racial Equity Teams, attending the Undoing Institutionalized Racism training, Strengthening Family Engagement, etc., are not regularly and clearly communicated or understood or depend on a person/personality. As a result, the impact of these initiatives on the effort to reduce disparities and improve student academic achievement for students of color have not reached significant milestones.

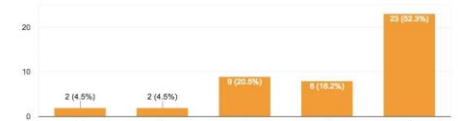
In the past 12 months, I have participated in ____ of Equity & Race focused professional development.

44 responses



The Equity & Race professional development I have been provided by Edmonds School District (ESD) has been relevant to my professional practice.

44 responses



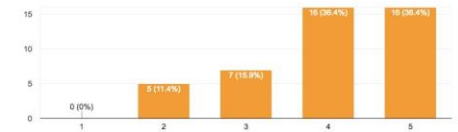
Stakeholders' perspectives on professional development and professional learning communities varied, but the majority of people responding to the survey leaned positively on the professional development and training provided by the School District. Most of the stakeholders indicated that their professional development was closely connected to their professional practices.

It regards to the professional development offered, it is important to note that ESD has provided extensive Undoing Institutionalized Racism Professional Development to ESD Central Office Leaders & School-based Racial Equity Team Members, but the opportunity has not yet been incorporated as part of Edmonds' strategy to Eliminate the Opportunity Gaps.

In other words, the majority of ESD stakeholders surveyed reported an increased awareness on issues regarding institutional racism, but they lacked the organizational support to identify, strategize and operationalize a racial equity lens as part of their professional practice.

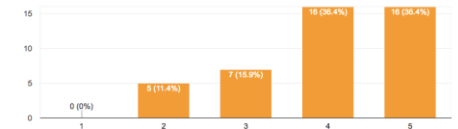
Institutional Racism and Racial Equity are part of the conversation and/or decision-making in my department, school or program.

44 responses



Racial Equity is part of the decision-making process in my department, school and/or program.

44 responses



There is a perception by the participants surveyed that the district is not only committed, but willing to lead with racial equity at its forefront. It is up to ESD to maximize on this opportunity and to advance racial equity beyond policy and into programs, practices, and procedures that center the students of color and other marginalized populations in order to eliminate the opportunity gaps.

You can access the complete survey results at:

www.tinyurl.com/Racing2Equity

RECOMMENDATIONS

After conducting the Racial Equity Environmental Assessment, Racing to Equity is putting forth the following recommendations. These recommendations are intended to meet the needs of students of color by improving three crucial education areas: 1) Coherence, Alignment and Leadership (Systemic Work), 2) Culturally Responsive Teaching (Classroom Work) and 3) Strengthening Family and Community Engagement (Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships). If the above areas are intentionally, systemically and sustainably improved, then the District and its staff will be equipped to increase student academic achievement for each and every child and eliminate pervasive opportunity gaps for students of color.

- 1. Coherence, Alignment and Leadership:** The recommendations in this area include identifying and sustaining common short-term and long-term goals and connections, among seemingly different initiatives, by creating a coherence and alignment tool. It focuses on systematic and mutually reinforcing policies, programs, initiatives and actions; with an aim towards achieving the shared goal of eliminating opportunity gaps in the ESD.

Create a District-wide Eliminating Opportunity Gaps Strategy & its Implementation Plan

If the ESD develops a comprehensive, cohesive, coherent and clear plan to eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps that holds both internal and external stakeholders accountable to educate our students of color effectively, then every student in the District will have the access, supports and opportunities to learn and will develop the knowledge and skills needed to reach and excel academic standards. This will develop a system of high performing schools serving each and every child. This plan should have a professional development component to build systemic capacity in culturally responsive leadership, pedagogy and decision making.

- It is recommended that the School Board directs the Superintendent to develop and implement a system-wide racial equity plan with clear accountability and metrics, which will result in measurable academic improvements for ESD students. The Superintendent shall regularly report progress to the School Board on the plan and outcomes.

Establish a Race & Equity Policy with Its Implementation plan

If the ESD adopts and implements a comprehensive Racial Equity policy, the District will be acknowledging the complex societal and historical factors that contribute to the opportunity gap. This will enable the District to confront the institutional bias that results in predictability of student performance based on race, background and/or circumstances. This policy resolves to address the opportunity gap at every level of the organization through policy, procedure and practice.

- The recommendation is to establish and implement a race and equity policy will identify and address the historic and systemic racism in the ESD which has thwarted the educational opportunities of children of color.
- It is recommended the School Board directs the Superintendent to develop an implementation plan for a system-wide roll out of the Racial Equity Policy.
- It is recommended this plan include clear accountability and metrics, which will result in measurable academic improvements for ESD students of color. The Superintendent shall report monthly progress on the policy implementation plan and its outcomes.

Implement a Racial Equity Tool

If the ESD implements a racial equity tool, then it will support individuals, groups, departments and schools in reflecting about the goals and decisions they make. This tool will delineate a process using specific questions to analyze issues and address their impact on eliminating opportunity gaps.

- It is recommended that the ESD create a Racial Equity Tool to ensure that a racial equity lens is applied when making decisions that will have an impact on students of color and their families.

Provide Adaptive Leadership Professional Development

If the ESD builds the capacity of its leaders to solve the adaptive challenge of eliminating the opportunity and achievement gaps, then its leaders will be able to influence long-lasting change that will enable every school district student in the District to thrive.

- It is recommended that the ESD provide Adaptive Leadership professional development for its central office and building leaders.
- It is recommended that the ESD looks at issues and challenges through an Adaptive Leadership lens to eliminate the opportunity gap.

Re-Organize the Department of Equity & Outreach (DEO)

If the DEO is reorganized, then it will more efficiently meet the needs of schools and departments to strengthen culturally responsive practices district-wide.

- It is recommended the focus of the DEO be to support District departments and schools in identifying and addressing systemic racial inequities to ensure that every student has access to a rigorous education in a culturally responsive manner.

It is recommended to re-organize the DEO in the following manner:

- Assign the Department of Native American Education to the Department of Teaching and Learning to create a bigger impact in the education of Indian and Alaskan Native American students.
- Analyze the impact that the work of Native American Department is having on eliminating opportunity gaps for Indian and Alaskan Native students.
- Assign the McKinney-Vento Department to the Title I Office to enhance its impact in benefiting the homeless population in the ESD.
- Re-write the job descriptions of

the Family Engagement Liaisons to identify and focus on the most crucial roles of this position to strengthen family and community engagement at their schools.

- Hire four Equity and Race Specialists to support and coach staff and principals and to develop and sustain Racial Equity Teams at every school.

Student & School-Staff Informed Decision Making

If the ESD leadership engages students, teachers and staff on a regular basis to ask for input and feedback, then, classroom, school and district decisions will be co-designed and students will be more vested in their learning.

- It is recommended to enhance a student survey to include responses regarding culturally responsive teaching and leadership.
- It is recommended that the ESD develops and implements a comprehensive staff survey to include responses regarding culturally responsive building leadership, professional development and coaching.

Create System for Disaggregation and Use of Data Accurately Identify & Eliminate Opportunity Gaps

If the ESD disaggregates student achievement data, then, District staff will use these data points to show the variances and discrepancies of student groups, program development and progress monitoring.

- It is recommended that disaggregated student data becomes available to teachers, principals, support and central office staff to make data driven decisions and more efficiently allocate resources based on student need.
- It is recommended that teachers and principals regularly utilize disaggregated student data to inform pedagogical and programmatic decisions.

“When it comes to decision making at the District... If we are not at the table, we are on the menu!”

-ESD Parent & Community Member

Hire Culturally Responsive Focused

“Addressing the systemic inequities that our students face today will take more than a policy.”

-ESD Parent & Community Member

Leaders and Staff as Attrition Occurs

If the ESD hires culturally responsive focused leaders and staff, then the District will more effectively meet the needs of students of color.

- It is recommended that the Superintendent directs 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 ESD have strong backgrounds in culturally responsive leadership and instruction.

Provide the Needed supports for Staff and Teachers of Color to Thrive as Members of the ESD Family

If teachers and staff of color are supported by the ESD, then they will improve their practice, stay longer in the profession and students of color will have more role models who look like them.

- It is recommended that the Superintendent meets with educators of color on a monthly basis to listen to their experiences in the ESD, to their concerns and needs as well as suggestions for support.

Develop Culturally Responsive Leaders and Staff at the Central Office by Formally Including Culturally Responsiveness as Part of Their Evaluations

If culturally responsive components are formally included as part of the central office leaders and staff evaluations, then the ESD will increase racial and cultural awareness that will support staff in honoring, valuing and dignifying the contributions our students of color and their families bring to our schools.

- It is recommended that the ESD provides professional development for Central Office Staff to more effectively meet the culturally responsive standards on their evaluations.

2. Culturally Responsive Teaching: Ensure that every teacher in every classroom, from very experienced to rookies, engage in culturally responsive professional development and continuous-improvement strategies that provides them with the opportunity to learn from each other, raise their racial awareness and learn the tools and strategies they need to meet the needs of our students of color and thrive in their practice.

Adopt Practices to Ensure Student Informed Decision Making

If ESD Leadership and Teaching staff engage students 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.

- It is recommended the ESD enhance a student survey to include responses regarding culturally responsive teaching and leadership.
- It is recommended the ESD hosts student forums for middle and high school students to actively participate in the decision-making process.
- It is recommended that the ESD provide opportunities for the Superintendent, Central Office staff and Principals to engage with and learn from students to improve professional practice

Support Established School Based Racial Equity Teams at Every School

If current school based Racial Equity Teams are supported in a meaningful, intentional and strategic manner, then their capacity to establish and maintain systemic racial equity and culturally responsive instruction in their schools will increase.

- It is recommended that the District increases support to the existing School Racial Equity Teams to enhance their effectiveness regarding culturally responsive practices.

Develop School Plans to Eliminate Opportunity Gaps

If every school develops a plan for eliminating opportunity gaps using disaggregated student data, then student learning will be monitored at all levels with clear lines of accountability to increase student academic achievement for every student.

- We recommend that each school develops a yearly plan with specific actions and metrics to eliminate opportunity gaps.

Offer Culturally Responsive Professional Development for Teacher that is Compensated, Mandated & Co-Created

If the ESD co-develops, with educators, culturally responsive professional development that is mandated and compensated, then every single teacher in the District will be better positioned to meet the needs of students of color in their classrooms.

- It is recommended that the District co-develops with its educators the components of culturally responsive professional development that is designed to build the capacity of its teachers and staff.
- It is recommended that this plan be comprehensive, ongoing and designed to support and include all educators in the District within three to five years.
- It is recommended that the ESD utilizes current leaders who are willing and able to co-facilitate culturally responsive professional development.

Develop Culturally Responsive Instructional Leadership

If principals at the ESD are culturally responsive instructional leaders, then they will be able to recognize culturally responsive instruction in the classroom and coach teachers on how to improve their professional practice.

- It is recommended that the District provides professional development for principals to build their capacity to recognize and coach for culturally responsive instruction in every classroom in their schools.
- It is recommended that the ESD utilizes current leaders who are willing and able to co-facilitate culturally responsive professional development.

Implement plan to Eliminate Disproportionality in Discipline

If the ESD creates a plan to eliminate disproportionality in referrals, suspensions and expulsions, then the access of students of color to valuable instructional time will increase.

- It is recommended that the District develops a system wide action plan to effectively address disproportionality in suspensions and expulsions for students of color. Reductions in office referrals, suspensions and/or expulsions increases student access to valuable instructional time.
- It is recommended the ESD utilizes any disaggregated data that will assist it in identifying the root causes of the discipline disproportionality.

Eliminate Underrepresentation of Students of Color in Advanced Learning, Gifted and Honors Programs

If the ESD focuses on providing the access,

opportunities and support that students of color need to thrive in Advanced Placement, Gifted and Honors programs, then the number of students of color in these programs.

- It is recommended that the ESD Develop Key Performance Indicators for schools and central office leaders as part of the District Dashboard to identify the root causes of these disparities.
- It is recommended that the ESD provide training for families of color to more effectively navigate the application processes.
- It is recommended that the ESD support educators in identifying and meeting the needs of gifted students of color.

Intentionally collaborate with ELL and Sp. Ed. Teachers and Support Staff to Serve the Needs of Ethnically and Linguistically Diverse Students and Students with Disabilities

If the ESD pro-actively supports educators to meet the needs of the emerging students of color population, then they will be better prepared to meet the needs of these students.

- It is recommended that the Department of Curriculum and Instruction formally creates collaboration time between ELL, Special Education and core content staff to ensure that the needs of ethnically and linguistically diverse students and students with disabilities are met.
- It is recommended that the ESD utilizes current ELL and Special Education educators who are willing and able to co-facilitate culturally responsive professional development.

3. Strengthening Family and Community Engagement: Family Engagement in our schools nationally is shifting from a low priority initiative to a viable instructional strategy to increase student achievement and eliminate the opportunity gap. When families, communities and schools work together as equitable partners in the education of our children, students' academic achievement, behavioral issues decrease and teachers stay longer in the profession. "The US Department of Education's Dual Capacity Building Framework lays out a process to guide school and district staff to engage parents and to help parents work successfully with the schools to increase student achievement." US Department of Education

Develop a District-wide Strategy for Strengthening Family and Community Engagement .

If the ESD develops a district-wide strategy for strengthening family and community engagement, then they will create intentional pathways to work with families as equitable partners in the education of their children.

- It is recommended that the District develops a clearly defined strategy to strengthen family engagement that is intentional, strategic and linked to student academic achievement.
- It is recommended that the ESD utilizes current educators who are willing and able to co-facilitate culturally responsive family engagement to more effectively partner with ethnically and linguistically diverse families.

Train Existing Family Engagement Liaisons

If the ESD increases the number of trained Family Engagement Liaisons to serve all schools, then schools will have a staff member who plays a critical role in building trust, collaboration and strengthening culturally responsive connections with families to increase student learning.

- It is recommended that the District provides professional development for their current Family Engagement Liaisons for them to better understand the Dual Capacity Building Framework and their role in supporting its implementation at schools and central office.
- It is recommended that the District increases the number of Family Liaisons or Coordinators, gradually each school year, to ensure that every school has the support they need to increase family participation in student learning.
- It is recommended the District rewrite the job descriptions of the Family Engagement Liaisons to identify and focus on the most crucial roles of this position to strengthen family and community engagement at their schools.

Systemic Implementation of the Dual Capacity Building Framework

If the Dual Capacity Building Framework from the US Department of Education is implemented in a systemic way with fidelity, then adults within and outside the District will have the capacity to work together as equitable partners in the education of their children.

- It is recommended that the District provides professional development for staff on how to implement the Dual Capacity Building Framework

to strengthen family engagement in education.

- It is recommended that the ESD creates a system to monitor and assess the implementation of the Dual Capacity Building Framework.

Family Informed Decision Making

If the ESD Leadership and Teaching staff engage families on a regular basis to ask for their input and feedback, then, classroom, school and district decision making will be informed by some of their most important stakeholders.

- It is recommended that the District develops systems to ensure that families participate in informing District decisions that impact students.
- It is recommended that the ESD creates regular opportunities to capture and respond to feedback provided by families.

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.

- It is recommended that the District offers culturally responsive family engagement professional development to central office staff, principals, teachers and support staff to better understand how to work with ethnically and linguistically diverse families and community members.
- It is recommended that the ESD It is recommended that the ESD utilizes current educators who are willing and able to co-facilitate culturally responsive family engagement professional development to more effectively partner with ethnically and linguistically diverse families.

Develop a Family Academy/University for Families

If the District creates a Family Academy or University designed to support families in increasing their capacity to more effectively partner with schools and support their children's learning at home, at school and in the community, then families will be better-equipped to support the education of their children.

- It is recommended that the District develops curriculum for and offers Family Academies or Universities at least four times per year to strengthen

families' abilities to more effectively advocate for their children's learning, their schools and the District.

- It is recommended that the ESD Family Academy classes should include the following: 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.

Partnerships with City/Governmental Agencies & Officials

If the District creates intentionally partners with the city and governmental agencies to support the education of their students, then the District will be better resourced, supported and equipped to meet the social emotional and academic achievement needs of the children who come into their care.

- It is recommended that the District builds, effective, sustainable, intentional and strategic partnerships with the Mayors of the cities in which the District is located, and with city agencies and/or with other governmental officials at the state level to improve the educational and social emotional opportunities and outcomes of their students.
- It is recommended that the District works in partnership with the Mayors of the cities, in which the District is located, and with city department's officials to strengthen family and community engagement supports and participation that are designed to increase student academic achievement.
- It is recommended that the District works with the Mayors of the cities, in which it is located, to align school and community resources that produce successful students, strong families and engaged communities.
- It is recommended that the District partners with city and governmental agencies and officials to combine quality education with enrichment opportunities, health (including mental health) services, family support and engagement, early childhood and adult education, and other supports for the students and families they serve.



CONCLUSION

For far too long, we as a nation have carried the burden and the weight of the mythology of a hierarchy of human value, allowing it to weigh our communities down and hinder the development of our children of color. It is pivotal to understand that most of the children born today are children of color, thus creating an environment that allows them to realize their full potential must be the most important thing this country and 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 Edmonds Schools.

Overall, the data collected demonstrates that there is a palpable desire for a positive change to institutionalize equity throughout the district and to eliminate the opportunity and achievement gaps between affluent white students and students of color experiencing racism and other systems of oppression.

We heard from the staff interviews that there is a readiness on the part of ESD to find innovative ways to improve the outcomes for our children. We are heartened that the assessment suggest that the Edmonds community is ready for new approaches to address and combat racism in every context it manifests. And, we

is far more than a district wide conversation about race. While dialogue is encouraged, if that is the only action, it minimizes the broader, comprehensive work that needs to be done. There is often a tendency to think that when organizations normalize conversations about racial equity, that the opportunity and achievement gaps will eliminate themselves.

The assessment indicated that ESD stakeholders can identify the impact of racism across the District, but it also identified interviewees' inability to recognize how their individual role/work contributes to the impact of racism in their own schools and learning communities. We are excited to share the optimism shown by the fact that scores of people are ready for progress and understand it will take strategy, as well as execution. Edmonds School District must be committed and willing to offer the necessary vision, strategies, funding and courage to lead with racial equity at the forefront.

Today's changing demographics coupled with historical systemic inequities are now driving public discourse towards a tipping point on the necessity to address racism through policy development and beyond. Until Edmonds School District invests the human and financial resources for the protracted work required to unearth and undo the embedded belief in the hierarchy of human value, the ideals of educational excellence and racial equity cannot be fully realized.

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