Quincy Public Schools
Assessment of Racial Climate

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Assessment Process

An online survey was created and distributed that school community members were invited to participate in.

❖ After several meetings with the Equity Working Group set up to collaborate on the assessment process, several surveys were sent out to the community. The surveys were designed to glean information from three different groups, Educators, Parents/Guardians and Students.

Parent Guardian			Educators			Students	
Asian /Pacific Islander	35		Asian /Pacific Islander	12		Asian /Pacific Islander	636
Bi-racial /Multi-racial	15		Bi-racial /Multi-racial	5		Bi-racial /Multi-racial	128
Black /African Descent	13		Black /African Descent	3		Black /African Descent	133
Hispanic/Latinx	11		Hispanic/Latinx	2		Hispanic/Latinx	99
White /European Descent	13		White /European Descent	18		Indigenous /Native American	12
	1			6		White /European Descent	748
Total	20 6		Total	20 8		Total	175 6

The respondents were asked several questions ranging from comfort level in the schools to behaviors across difference to responsiveness of the district/schools to concerns, issues and incidents related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (for a complete list of questions, see Appendices A – C in Executive Summary).

In addition to the questions on the survey using a Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree, the survey also contained several open-ended questions designed to hear more from the respondents about how they felt about the racial climate, providing examples if they chose to do so.

Assessment Process

Participants and Process – focus groups

❖ There were two separate processes for the focus group participation:

- ➢ A total of 36 groups took place; groups were scheduled from 4/5 – 4/15 – however, due to lack of attendance and registration, VISIONS and Quincy decided to postpone the group for a few weeks later, attempting to give the community greater notice in hopes of increased participation.

- ➢ The second set of focus groups were scheduled for 4/27 – 6/1 – and the response was a little better; on many occasions the groups registration was full (capacity of 8 people), yet between 2 and 7 participants actually appeared for many of the focus groups. It is possible that circumstances related to the impact of COVID on everyday life's schedules may have played a role in attendance.

- ➢ The breakdown of the groups is on next page

Assessment Process

❖ **Students --** A total of 43 students attended 12 focus groups:
  ➢ Portuguese speaking students – 5
  ➢ Mandarin speaking students – 7
  ➢ Spanish speaking students – 7
  ➢ Cantonese speaking students – 3
  ➢ Black students – 6
  ➢ Biracial students – 3
  ➢ MENA students – 2
  ➢ Asian students – 2
  ➢ Students Receiving special education services – 4
  ➢ LGBTQ students – 1
  ➢ White students 3

❖ **Parents --** A total of 64 parents attended the 22 focus groups:
  ➢ Black parents – 9
  ➢ Cantonese speaking parents - 6
  ➢ Mandarin speaking parents – 1
  ➢ Parents of students receiving special education services – 5
  ➢ White parents – 8
  ➢ MENA parents – 1
  ➢ Arabic speaking parents – 3
  ➢ New Immigrant parents -- 2
  ➢ EDI city wide parents – 6
  ➢ English speaking Asian parents – 4
  ➢ Parents of LGBTQ+ students - 6
  ➢ Parents in multiracial families – 7
  ➢ Portuguese speaking parents – 5
  ➢ Vietnamese speaking parents – 1

❖ **Educators --** A total of 11 educators attended 2 focus groups:
  ➢ White Educators – 7
  ➢ Educators of Color -- 4

Focus Group Questions

❖ We provided the following definitions to frame in context the conversations that we planned to invite the participants to take part in:

➢ **Diversity** -- is the presence of difference within a given setting; such as, different identities (like race, gender, age, etc.), different points of view, different feelings, styles of clothing, etc.

➢ **Inclusion --** Inclusion is about people with different identities and perspectives feeling and/or being valued and welcomed within a given setting.

➢ **Equity or Fairness** -- Equity is an approach that ensures everyone has access to the same opportunities. Equity recognizes that advantages and barriers exist; it is a process that begins by acknowledging that unequal starting place and makes a commitment to correct and address the imbalance.

The questions the participants responded to:

1. What is going well at your (or your child's) school (in general)?

2. What is going well at your (or your child's) school in terms of diversity, inclusion and equity or fairness?

3. Regarding diversity, equity and inclusion or fairness, what are some areas for growth?

4. In what ways do you feel valued and included in the Quincy schools as a _____(e.g., young person; person of color; member of the g/l/b/t community, white parent, parent of color, etc.)?

Focus Group Questions
(continued)

5. In what ways does your child feel valued and included in the Quincy schools?

6. In what ways do you feel devalued and/or excluded as a --------- (e.g., young person; person of color; member of the g/l/b/t community, white parent, parent of color, etc.)?

7. In what ways does your child feel devalued and excluded in the Quincy schools?

8. What are some changes and/or next steps you recommend?
   a _____(e.g., young person; person of color; member of the g/l/b/t community, white parent, parent of color, etc.)?

Themes

Overall, what is working well at Quincy schools?

Themes were generated after examining the information gleaned form both the survey and the focus groups; themes are outlined in the following sequence:

❖ Organizational Strengths – generally and with respect to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

❖ Organizational Challenges – generally and with respect to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

❖ An explanation of the Levels of oppression and change

❖ Recommendations

Organizational Strengths
Overall, what is working well in the Quincy schools?

➢ Diversity seen as a good thing; students spoke to having clubs, discussions they enjoyed; Many opportunities to connect and share cross culturally, learning from each other

➢ Recognition/acknowledgement that the Quincy schools have challenges related to DEI that need addressing is seen as positive

➢ The increase in DEI conversations are seen as helpful, supportive:
   - '…feel like I can bring things up and discuss them.'

➢ Excitement shared related EDI committee and the start of some trainings for some of the faculty/staff/administration to carry this work forward

➢ Communication – in general, is often seen by many in the parent community as timely and crisp

➢ Students → Many teachers often seen/experienced as supportive

➢ Cultural fairs and events; the flags representing so many countries in the school

➢ Guidance seen as significant support or the students

➢ Increase in translations of communication and materials

Organizational Strengths
Overall, what is working well in the Quincy schools?

➢ Strong EL program

➢ Accessibility to school – throughout the pandemic in general

➢ Flexibility – willingness to look at a situation and come up with creative solutions.

➢ Administration seen as very receptive (a 'both/and')

➢ Communication from the PTO sending info about DEI efforts; committee of parents/teachers/admins from each school

➢ Students are speaking up more and articulating problems in the school

➢ Mascot change; the positive experience students reported in being involved in the discussion about this change

➢ IEP / 504 plan – several parents spoke to the experience they have of their school attending to the needs of their child

➢ Attempts made to have 'in-time' conversations about events impacting the larger community (i.e., Jan 6 events and conversations in the classroom)

➢ Several educators: student body very diverse; the collegiality among staff/faculty

Organizational Strengths
Overall, what is working well at Quincy schools?

❖ Students are noticing the positive ways that teachers are supporting students with different learning styles

❖ Diversity, equity, and inclusion viewed as an active process

❖ Timing of this assessment.

❖ Equity, Inclusion, and Justice committee

❖ Events and gatherings that include parents

Organizational Challenges

What are challenges or areas for growth?

Common Challenges in Quincy Schools in Enhancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

❖ Lack of representation of the community at all levels – faculty, staff/leadership, including stated needs for additional bilingual personnel

❖ Perception across all of the groups of a lack of accountability – of sometimes not acknowledging problems/challenges, and lack of responsiveness to parents' expressed concerns and to incidents of discrimination; district's and schools' email responses to incidents with perception of no follow through or actual consequences; perspective from many students that sometimes teachers ignore racist behavior

  ➢ perspective from the parents is that when bringing up concerns about DEI that impact their children they are sometimes met with resistance/defensiveness; impact of ignoring, minimizing the issues/incidents/impact (might this also be a communication issue? – not letting community/schools know what the response is?)

❖ Communication (a 'both/and' issue) – even though all groups reported improvements, still seen as a major challenge given the diversity of the community and expressed needs for additional language translation

❖ Needed support around LGBTQ++ lives, rights and challenges

Organizational Challenges

What are challenges or areas for growth?

➢ Many (students in particular) reported need for updating/changing curriculum in many ways: to include various cultural historical perspectives African Diasporic, Asian American, Native American, Muslim American history; religious perspectives (overemphasis on Christian perspective, including holiday observance)

➢ Parents and Students: More inclusion of perspectives of People of Color – something that acknowledges/informs people about all the accomplishments and history of POC – in curriculum, programs

❖ Students' perspectives on differential treatment
  ➢ Some of the white teachers do not seem to give as much credit to the black students – a punishment mentality rather than support

  ➢ 'When we go to the nurse's office the white kids are lounging around and hanging out; we get treated and sent out right away while others are hanging out'

❖ Student perspective on Discipline
  ➢ When it comes to punishment – black kids get expelled when white kids get suspended for a brief time

Organizational Challenges
What are challenges or areas for growth?

❖ Student perspective on Discipline (continued)

  ➢ Incidents involving physical altercations between students seen as treated differently depending upon the student;

    • 'There have been girls who have graduated and jumped another girl and were later at the school laughing with a teacher – the black kids were suspended while other girls were not'

    • 'Freshman year there were some fights on the football team – one kid was suspended and the one who was perceived as defending himself had a harsher response'

    • Enforcing more fairness – we are not allowed to wear hats at school – 'this white student wore a Trump hat and the teachers were telling jokes with the kids; and a black student wore a durag and was disciplined'

Organizational Challenges
What are challenges or areas for growth?

❖ Macro aggressions
- ➢ Racism demonstrated by teachers – 'one has retired and was racist – just assumed everyone was Chinese and refused to work hard to pronounce people's names – just made-up names'

    - • Students reported witnessing a teacher speaking Asian American stereotypes

    - • 'Blatant' Islamophobia from teacher witnessed in front of class

- ➢ Parents reported that there are many instances where people have said blatantly racist things and faced little to no punishment.

Organizational Challenges
What are challenges or areas for growth?

❖ Micro-aggressions
- ➢ Students expressed desire for the teachers to speak up/ actively begin conversations that point to fairness; i.e., Teacher was explaining a lesson about Muslims being forced to switch to Christianity. A student said, "What's the problem with that?" No one spoke up, not even the teacher. I really wish the teacher, the one with power, needs to correct moments like that

- ➢ Sometimes students perceive/experience teachers as expecting the only black child in the class to educate the rest about race

- ➢ Students' experience that some teachers not making an effort to pronounce names correctly or having difficulty telling students apart

- ➢ Students: A.P. History textbook is reportedly 30 years old and the way it discusses slavery and the Black experience is experienced as abhorrent with nothing provided for balance

- ➢ Students reported they have witnessed ESL students not being treated with sensitivity in presentations

- ➢ Students and parents both stated these incidents also have significant impact on students witnessing these incidents
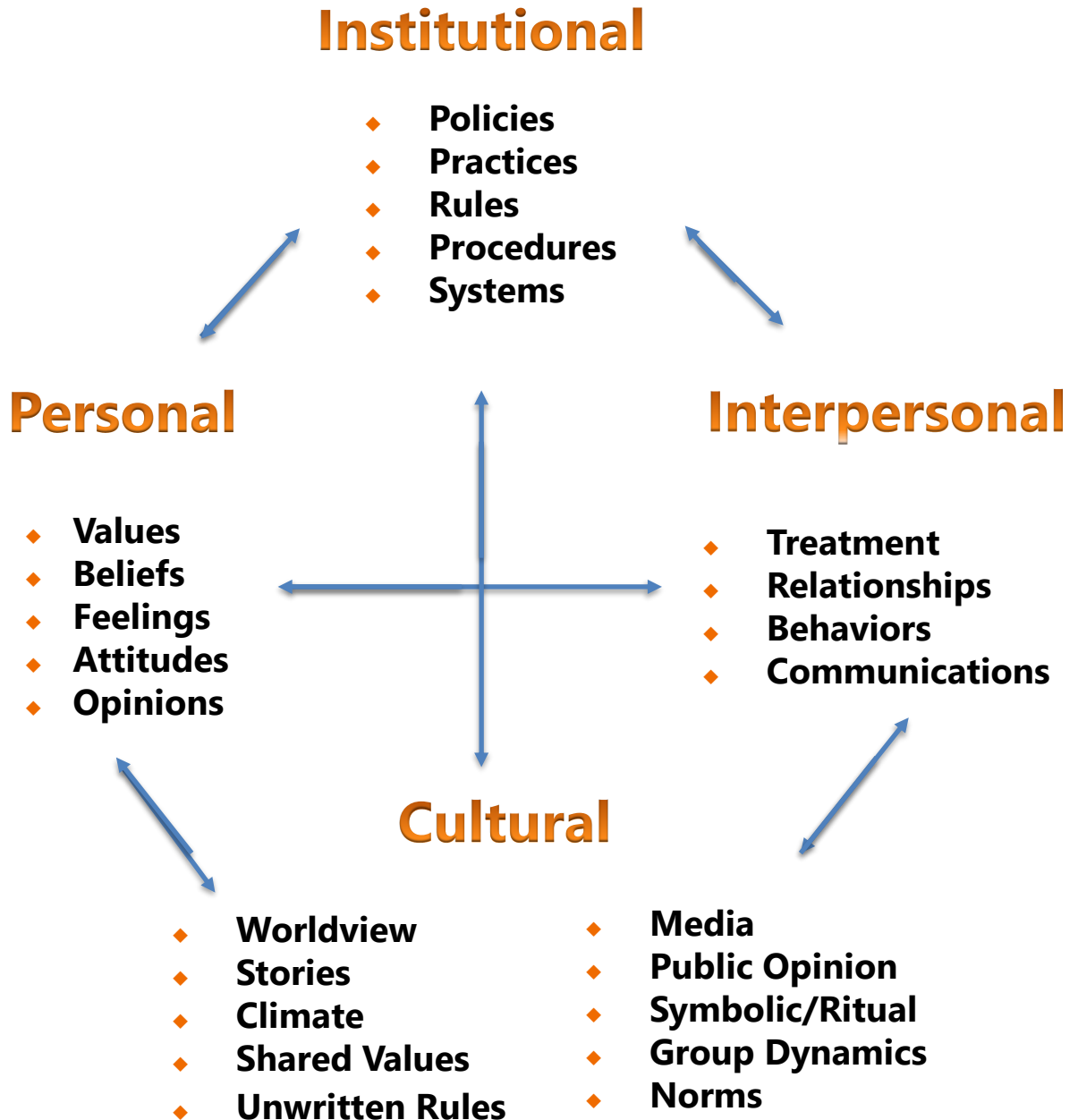
Organizational Challenges
What are challenges or areas for growth?

➢ Some Asian students reported being placed in a class for non-English native speakers even though they were fluent and born in U.S.; parents not consulted
  - A few of the parents reported similar assumptions being made about their language level

➢ Asian students report many occasions where they were repeatedly told to speak English during informal time (breaks between classes, lunch, etc.)

➢ Teachers are perceived to feel okay about saying the 'n' word b/c it is in the text of a book, and do not see the harm and pain it causes; also, teachers seen as not responding when they hear white students using the 'n' word

➢ Girl students reported they should not be responsible for boys' behavior; boys need to be taught differently – concern about spaghetti straps if we are still covered anyway

➢ Students reported perception/experience that teachers get overwhelmed and give up when they see students' persistence with bullying others based on their sexual orientation

Recommendations

Levels of Oppression and Change

Institutional

- Policies
- Practices
- Rules
- Procedures
- Systems

Personal

- Values
- Beliefs
- Feelings
- Attitudes
- Opinions

Interpersonal

- Treatment
- Relationships
- Behaviors
- Communications

Cultural

- Worldview
- Stories
- Climate
- Shared Values
- Unwritten Rules

- Media
- Public Opinion
- Symbolic/Ritual
- Group Dynamics
- Norms

Recommendations

1. Representation (Institutional)

   Hiring for diversity at all levels in the school district; increase staff and faculty of color to more accurately reflect the community and provide modeling for students

   ➢ Involves examination of all current aspects related to the hiring process – outreach, committees, CV review, interviews, etc.

2. DEI trainings for employees (Institutional, Interpersonal, Cultural) – school staff/faculty, administration, school committee – that will include:

   ➢ Learning/practicing multicultural tools, skills and processes to allow for cross cultural/cross level communication within meetings as well as informally

   ➢ Options to explore value of/institute caucus or affinity group work (race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) as needed

   ➢ Opportunity for all employees and leadership to improve skills for having cross cultural, challenging conversations; enhance problem solving using a multicultural lens; this, in turn, will support:

   - Development of shared language
   - Greater awareness of intent and impact of language and behavior across difference
   - Embracing the differences that exist among all school community members
   - Holding selves and each other accountable to more respectful interactions

Recommendations (continued)

- Development and practice of skills to interrupt micro-aggressions and more effectively manage implicit/unconscious bias
- Practice and follow through in behavioral change
- Improvement of quality of relationships across all levels in the district
- Leadership in its efforts to maintain a DEI lens as the district works towards its vision of enhanced inclusion and equity

3. DEI Committee: Continued institutional support for the committee on DEI to support its sustainability; consider expansion of representatives from across the district

4. Curriculum (Institutional + Cultural): Examination and change, where relevant, (aspects of) curriculum to include time and content related to these issues, including social justice course offerings

5. Community Building activities (Interpersonal + Cultural): Encouraging an increase in classroom discussions regarding DEI related issues, particularly when it overlaps with content (English, Social Studies, History, etc.); develops skill of being in and managing these kinds of conversations

  - ➢ Students – a forum in which to connect, share perspectives, express themselves
  - ➢ Students – increase the number of clubs; offer clubs connected with students' backgrounds; including a club directly related to inclusion
  - ➢ School specific and community cultural events to facilitate additional cross-cultural engagement and learning

Recommendations (continued)

> Affinity group offerings can be supportive in building community <u>within</u> groups and provide opportunities for sharing learning <u>across</u> groups)

> Consider instituting parent support groups

6. Encourage/support parent support groups that can enhance community building, particularly for those isolated, particularly in the context of the pandemic

7. Communication (Institutional + Cultural):
> Increase transparency and effectiveness in communication
  - <u>Translation</u>: Where possible, continue, plus improve, particularly with respect to anticipated changes
  - Emails to be in the parents'/families' primary language of the person being addressed
  - Provide more translation resources/access to information in native languages; additional resources for those who do not speak English
> Clarity for parents on how to navigate and receive support from the schools and school system regarding different learning styles, special education related meetings; the IEP and 504 process
> Communicate regularly and effectively to the community on the progress and plans regarding the district's ongoing efforts related to DEI related issues and incidents

Recommendations (continued)

> Maintain (Communicate) transparency around responsiveness to incidents, policy changes, community projects, etc.

8. Consider support for leadership (and others as needed) in the form of coaching. This can be conducted through individual sessions with leadership or with a leadership team, to support engaging a multicultural lens in leadership's work

9. Consider trainings/skill building for youth to develop peer leadership model that allows for cycling of youth (as they grow/graduate get replaced) through learning and leading discussions and cultural learning events

9. Re-examine other policies/practices with a multicultural lens to look for changes that would reflect needed enhancements regarding inclusiveness

10. Engage with/collaborate with youth on issues and changes sought

11. Evaluation of Progress: In appropriate time intervals and/or as needed, perform follow-up assessments, to evaluate progress in addressing the core issues addressed by this audit.