

# HIRE + RETAIN BLACK TEACHERS: COMMUNITY-LED RESEARCH TO LOCAL ACTION IN PFLUGERVILLE, TEXAS

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**MEASURE**  
Community Led. Data Driven.



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## ABOUT MEASURE

MEASURE is a research and public education organization led by Black women and dedicated to using data and technology to pursue community-defined goals. Since its founding in 2015, MEASURE has provided over 3,014 hours of free antiracist evaluation support to our community to increase their access to and use of data. In 2021, MEASURE staff and volunteers worked diligently to provide direct support to our community partners through the creation of tools and technology that can be used as a backbone to maintain their organizations, convene members, build consensus, coordinate action, collect data, disseminate knowledge, and publicize their results.

## ABOUT EDUCATORS IN SOLIDARITY

Educators in Solidarity (EIS) is a 501c4 organization formed in 2014 after the murder of Mike Brown in Ferguson, MO. Surrounding his murder, there was a national call out for teachers to build curriculum and to talk about police brutality in schools. As time went on, EIS has evolved with a growing understanding of the specific needs of the Austin community as well as in partnering with other organizations. Educators in Solidarity is a group working to build our capacity as anti-racist educators through activism, advocacy, and outreach. As an organization, we support the work of Black and Brown led organizations in their education initiatives or in any other way that we can.



While there is only **1 Black teacher** for every **24 Black students...**



There is **1 white teacher** for every **5 white students.**



## HIRE + RETAIN BLACK TEACHERS

The data shared in this report is intended to inform our community about the crucial need for Pflugerville ISD to hire and retain Black educators. White students are four times more likely than Black students to be taught by a race-alike teacher nationally (1), two and a half times more likely in Texas (2), and nearly five times more likely in Pflugerville ISD (3,4). The lack of Black educators has a tremendous impact on Black students' academic outcomes and self-worth (5). When Black students never have teachers that look like them, academic and discipline disparities continue to exist, and in contrast, when students are placed with a same race teacher, racial disparities diminish (6). Currently in Pflugerville ISD, 63% of teachers are non-Hispanic White compared to 23% of the student population who are non-Hispanic White (7).

The lack of Black teachers and over-representation of White teachers perpetuates disproportionate disciplinary practices in the district. Black students are the most overrepresented in disciplinary actions across the district (8). According to the National Education Association, "Black students do not 'act out' in class more frequently than their white peers. However, Black students are more likely to be sent to the principal's office for subjective offenses, like 'disrupting class,' and they're more likely to be sent there by White teachers" (9). Disproportionate discipline directly connects to the broader issue of the school-to-prison pipeline. The school-to-prison pipeline is the term used for "the practice of pushing kids out of school and toward the juvenile and criminal justice systems" (9).

According to The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, "cultural deficit thinking" plays a huge role in perpetuating the school-to-prison pipeline, as educators "harbor negative assumptions about the ability, aspirations, and work ethic of these students—especially poor students of color—based on the assumption that they and their families do not value education. These racist perceptions create a stereotype that students of color are disrespectful and disruptive, which zero-tolerance policies exploit." (9,10)

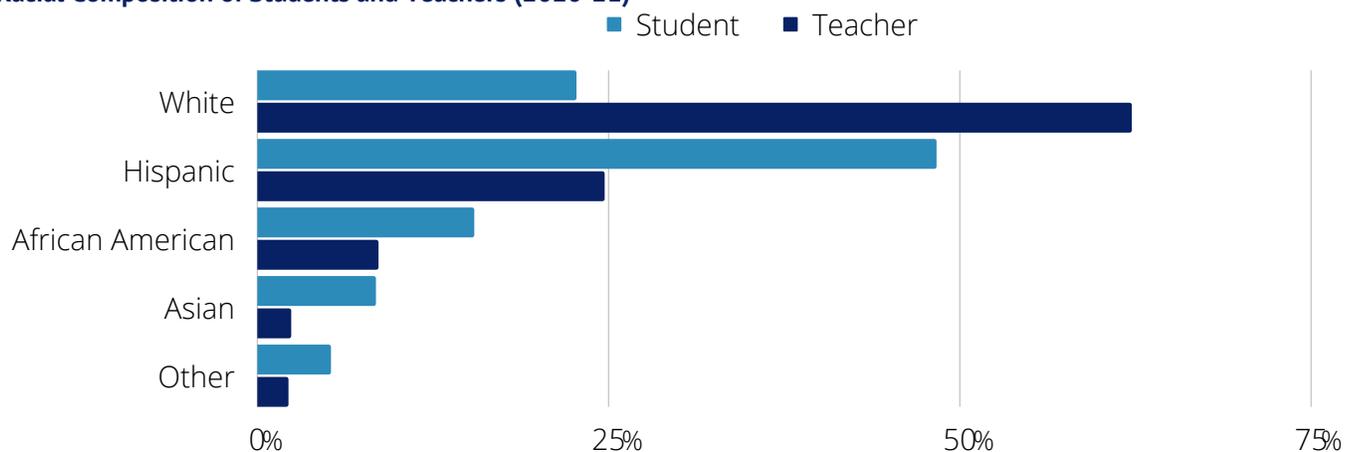
## BACKGROUND

The city of Pflugerville, a suburb of Austin, experienced a period of rapid growth and diversification in the last two decades. Between the 2010 and 2020 Census, the population of Pflugerville grew by roughly 40% (11). As a result of continued gentrification in Austin proper, the surrounding suburbs have experienced demographic shifts as Black and Brown residents relocate to more affordable communities. Pflugerville has the highest percentage of Black residents compared to other communities in the Austin metro area (12), with approximately 16% of the population identifying as Black (13).

The Pflugerville Independent School District (PflISD) provides public education to the community, serving over 25,000 students (4). The student population mirrors the racial diversity in the community, with 15% of students in the district identifying as Black (4). As of the 2021-2022 academic year, there are only 161 Black teachers employed in PflISD, representing 9% of all teachers (4). Until recently, one of the district's elementary schools had not employed any Black teachers for at least a decade (3). Students are more motivated to follow classroom rules when they feel accepted by their teacher (14). White students are more likely to experience a sense of belonging at school, which relates to multiple positive student outcomes, while Black and Brown students see the greatest incremental gains from efforts to increase a sense of belonging. (15,16,17).

When assigned to a teacher of the same race/ethnicity, Black and Latino/a students receive more favorable ratings of classroom behavior and academic performance, score higher on standardized tests, and have more positive behavioral outcomes (16). Particularly for Black elementary students, the experience of having a Black educator is associated with reductions in the probability of dropping out of school and increases the likelihood of attending college (18, 19). Studies show that Black students who had two Black teachers were 32% more likely to go to college compared to peers who had no Black teachers (20). In PflISD, where “diversity is our strength,” ensuring Black students are represented in their schools is paramount for the safety, education, and futures of Black youth (21).

### Racial Composition of Students and Teachers (2020-21)



## SUMMARY OF NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

Compared to White students in 2020-2021, Black Pflugerville students were...



\*Disciplinary Alternative Education Program

## ELIMINATE DEFICIT THINKING

MEASURE works to educate our community on how data can be used to create community power. As such, we call out the misinterpretations of data that may lead to deficit thinking. In general, deficit thinking places blame on people from historically oppressed populations for the challenges and inequalities that they face and, in doing so, fails to place accountability with oppressive structures, policies, and practices within educational settings (19). This can result in the perpetuation of racial stereotypes that hijack the narrative of Black students and their experiences. As we share data about the inequities in our communities, we both share our stories and place blame on systems instead of people.

The data shared in this report is intended to inform our community about the authentic experience and expression of Black and Brown students and to demonstrate how structural racism has impacted their livelihood. "Structural racism is the normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics – historical, cultural, institutional, and interpersonal – that routinely advantage whites while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of color" (22). Deficit thinking lends additional harm within our classrooms where an educator's racialized assumptions around why a student may be struggling heavily impacts how, or if, the student receives proper support (23, 24).

## HAVING AT LEAST ONE BLACK TEACHER IN GRADES 3-5 IS ASSOCIATED WITH:

**DECREASE**  
in probability that a **Black male student will drop out of high school**, especially for low-income students (19).

**INCREASE**  
in probability that **low-income Black students will aspire to attend a four-year college** (19).

## DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

This paper makes use of both qualitative and quantitative data to inform the discussion around the lack of Black educators in PflISD. Quantitative data were sourced from the Texas Education Association (TEA) and via Public Records Requests from Pflugerville ISD. All quantitative data were already aggregated to the district level upon reception. The counts provided in the various reports were converted to percentages for comparing racial composition across different data sources. Qualitative data were sourced from the Black Pflugerville Facebook page and a June 2021 Panel Discussion hosted by Educators in Solidarity (EIS). The paragraphs below provide more detail on each data source, what information they contain, and how they were used. **Although the figures presented here represent a single point in time, these snapshots portray enduring sociodemographic patterns.**

### TEA

Both academic and disciplinary data were accessed through TEA's public web site. Math and Reading statistics were gathered from Pflugerville's Texas Academic Performance Report for the 2019-2020 academic year. Disciplinary data from TEA included disciplinary actions taken by student race for school years 2018-2019.

### Public Records Requests from PflISD

Variables received from PflISD include aggregate district student and teacher racial categories for school year 2019-2020 through 2021-2022 and gifted and talented student race categories for the school year 2021-2022. Pflugerville district administration officials also provided disciplinary data, including disciplinary action reason and code by student racial category and sex for school years 2016-2017 through 2020-2021.

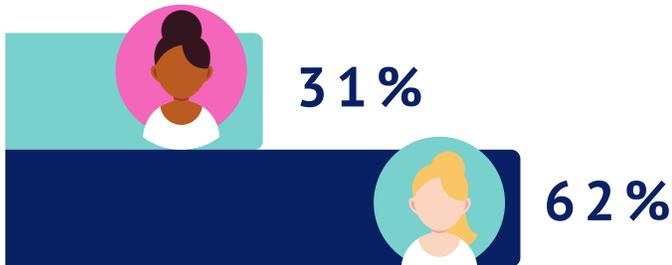
### Lived Experience

Lived experience quotes were pulled from responses to a question posed on the Black Pflugerville Facebook page about the importance of Black teachers. Additionally, EIS composed and submitted a letter to the Trustees and Superintendent highlighting the lack of Black educators and the inequitable service to Black students using panelist responses shared in a June 2021 panel discussion: Redeeming the Pipeline of Educational Success in PflISD. Invitations to the panel discussion included the Pflugerville Superintendent and chief officers, administrators, and trustees, as well as educators and parents from the EIS membership and contact list, including some Pflugerville community members and parents.



RACISM

## TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY REPORT: DATA ANALYSIS

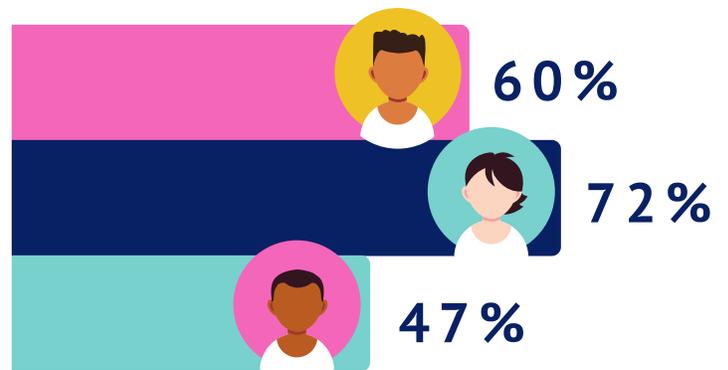


Only 31% of Black PfISD students received “Meets Grade Level or Above” on the 3rd grade reading test compared to 62% of white students (26).

Texas Education Agency (2020). Texas Academic Performance Report. 2019-20 District STAAR Performance for Pflugerville ISD

Less than half of PfISD Black students (47%) passed the 7th grade math test compared to 60% of Latino students and 72% of white students (26).

Texas Education Agency (2020). Texas Academic Performance Report. 2019-20 District STAAR Performance for Pflugerville ISD

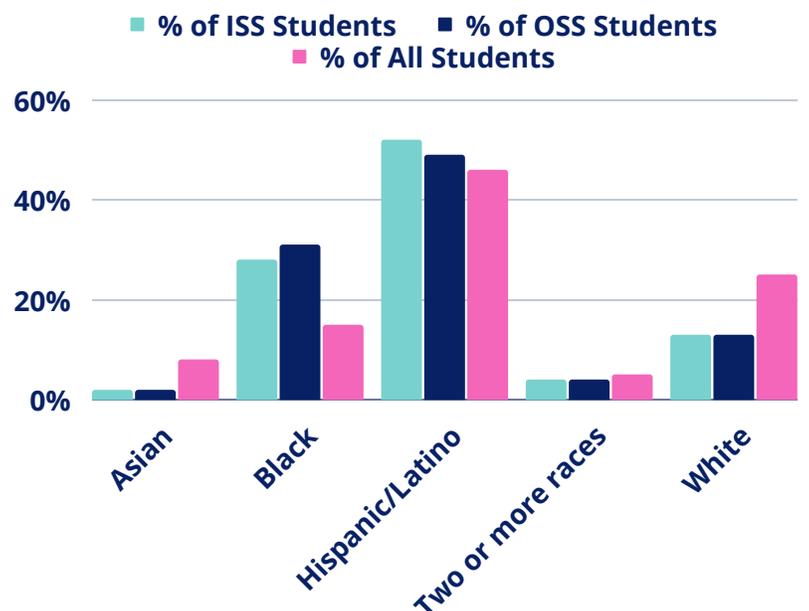


## DISTRICT DISCIPLINE ACTION GROUP REPORT: DATA ANALYSIS

Data from the 2018-2019 school year show that a disproportionate share of PfISD Black students are subject to suspension when compared to their peers. While Black students make up only 15% of the student population in PfISD, they **comprise almost a third of all students subject to in school suspension (ISS) and out of school suspension (OSS)** (27).

Texas Education Agency (2020). District Discipline Action Group Summary for a Selected District

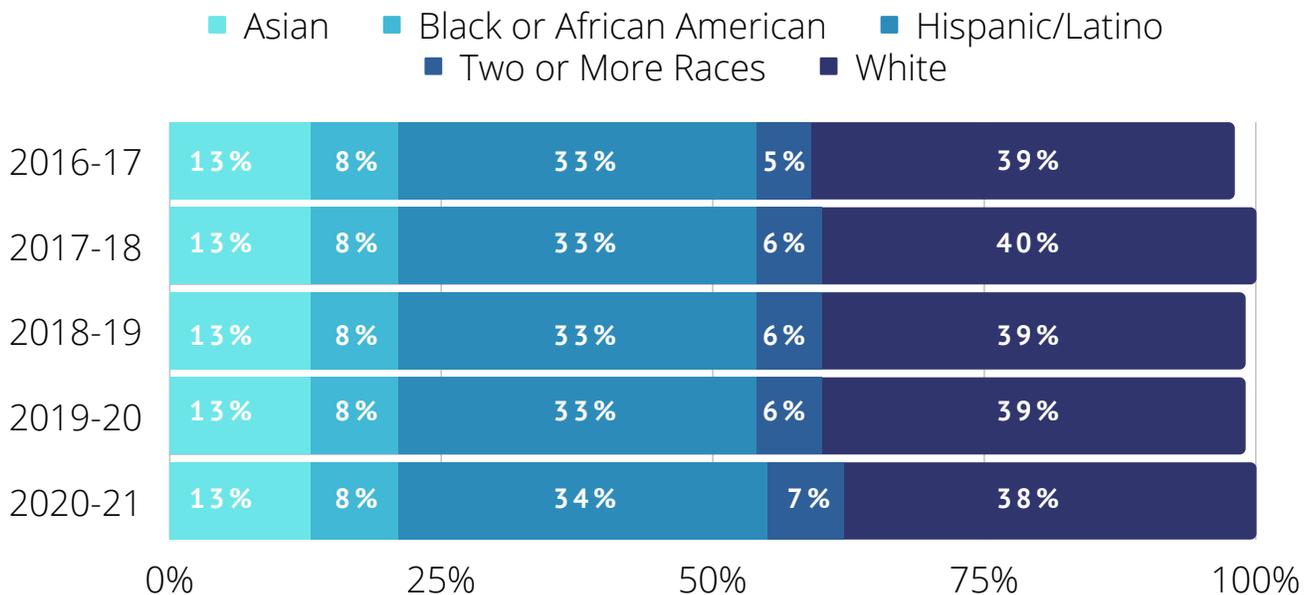
Disciplinary Action By Student Race Compared to Total Student Composition, 2018-2019



## DATA ANALYSIS AND INSIGHTS

The analysis of publicly available data from the TEA and PfISD reveals racialized patterns in academic and disciplinary outcomes for district students with respect to State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) program testing, in-school and out-of-school suspensions (ISS/OSS) and participation in Gifted and Talented (GT) programs. These findings demonstrate that Black students are not being served equitably by their school district.

### PFISD GT PROGRAM PARTICIPATION



Source: Pfulgerville ISD, Records Request #135-2021

In the 2020-2021 school year, only 8% of GT students in PfISD were Black (4). An enduring trend of underrepresentation is evidenced by the last five years of data, which shows only marginal changes in the composition of the GT program across the district, despite calls by local advocates to reassess how students are identified for participation (28). Adjusted for population differences, the data show that White students were three times more likely to be placed in the GT program compared to Black students.

According to the PfISD GT manual, students are referred “at any time by teachers, administrators, counselors, parents, or other interested persons.” (29) This referral process is subjective and hinges upon individual nominations and perceptions of giftedness. An analysis of the trajectory of over 20,000 students throughout the country revealed that Black students who had been previously taught by Black teachers were three times more likely to be referred for the gifted student program, while no other race showed any statistical significance (31). This suggests that our own PfISD students are similarly under-supported due to a lack of Black educator representation.

## TIMELINE OF CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS WITH PFLUGERVILLE ISD

2017



Educators in Solidarity, Black Pflugerville, and MEASURE partner with Pflugerville ISD to address the disproportionately low numbers of Black children identified for the GT program.

2018



A community townhall convenes to discuss data collected that found Black kids were 3.5x more likely to be charged with assault than their peers at Pflugerville schools during the 2017 school year.

2019



The MEASURE Innocence Initiative launches to disrupt adultification bias and to call attention to the disproportionate discipline outcomes for Black girls in Region 13 schools.

2021



Pflugerville parents and residents organize to speak at PfISD Board meetings to bring attention to the lack of Black educators at Riojas Elementary.

2021



"Redeeming the Pipeline of Educational Success in PfISD" panel discussion, organized by Educators in Solidarity, focuses on the importance of hiring and retaining Black educators in Pflugerville ISD. Panelists also discuss implementing sustainable, systemic equity practices across the district.

## COMMUNITY VOICE

Qualitative data was gathered from the panel event, "Redeeming the Pipeline of Educational Success in PfiSD," organized and hosted by EIS in June 2021. The panel consisted of parent, teacher, and advocate leaders from the community, who spoke candidly about the district's shortcomings with respect to diversity and inclusion efforts, particularly in regards to the Black student, parent, and teacher experience. In Spring 2021, there were multiple organized actions on the part of Pflugerville community members and Educators in Solidarity (EIS) to bring attention to the lack of Black educators in PfiSD, specifically at Riojas Elementary.

In March 2021, Pflugerville ISD parents organized to speak at the Pflugerville ISD board meeting to address the lack of Black educators in the district (28). The following month, the human resources department in Pflugerville ISD announced they would restructure "its recruitment efforts to help bring in educators from under-represented backgrounds, as well as increasing the department's presence and engagement online. Hiring recruitment efforts include recruiting from institutions such as the Texas Association for Bilingual Education, the Texas Alliance of Black School Educators and historically Black colleges and universities" (31). Between March and May of 2021, 13 comments were entered into public record at PfiSD board workshops that spoke specifically to the issue of the lack of Black educators in the district.

### THEMES FROM "REDEEMING THE PIPELINE OF EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS IN PFISD" PANEL (6/29/2021):

#### REPRESENTATION MATTERS.

A diverse teaching staff improves student outcomes and enhances school climate. The lived experience of teachers of color is essential for empowering students and for supporting antiracist work among school staff. As Mari Glaza said, "The more we set ourselves up for success with diverse staff, the less the burden falls on the handful that are teachers of color or dedicated to disrupting racial disparities."



#### LEADERS NEED TO PRIORITIZE EQUITY, NO MATTER WHAT.

School communities need a channel for communicating their concerns to leadership and to be listened to and believed. Likewise, school leaders need to communicate a clear equity-focused vision to their communities that supports community and family engagement in school decision-making. Leadership also needs to be self-reflective. As Marc Garcia said, leaders need to ask themselves: "How am I doing my job in a way that is lifting up our entire community?"



#### EQUITY IN EDUCATION MEANS HAVING THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN.

District-wide racial disparities in academic and disciplinary data demonstrate the structural nature of the problem—working towards equity means considering students' cultures and identities, every day, and dismantling obstacles to their success.

## LIVED- EXPERIENCE DATA & STORYTELLING

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“ My daughter would be delighted to see someone who looks like her (to help) her excel academically. Her emotional state would benefit. Having a role model played a HUGE factor in my success. I know it would change her future to see a Black teacher represented in the hallways.

- **Mother of Mott Elementary School Student**

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“ How are young Black (boys) supposed to be engaged in class if every teacher is Caucasian or Hispanic? I'm sure if there were more Black male teachers I'm sure the impact for our youth would greatly be meaningful.

-**Father of Weiss High School Student**



our experience makes us  
**EXPERTS**

## CONCLUSION

Concerning racial disparities, some beyond that of national figures, are evident in Pflugerville ISD's public data sets and in the comments shared by Pflugerville community members. These issues are not solely related to academics, but also to concerning evidence that Black children are removed from their classrooms at greater rates than their peers. The literature contained in this paper informs likely causes and effects related to these patterns and informs a promising approach.

Research suggests that a higher level of disciplinary referrals can often be attributed to teachers who hold students to low expectations. Likewise, for every unit that teacher expectations of students increased, racial disparities in disciplinary referrals decreased (24). Experts say the closer understanding of a teacher with a similar background can mitigate the risk of disciplining a student primarily due to negative expectations (24). Indeed, a 2010 study showed that once students are placed with a same race teacher, disproportionate disciplinary referrals disappear (6). Teacher expectation similarly plays a central role in recommendation to gifted student programs, as affluence and Whiteness have shown a higher correlation with gifted designation than with academic performance (23).

Education leaders seeking to change the trajectory of these concerning outcomes have much to hope for. Promising research indicates that building and developing a faculty demographically representative of its student population is likely to bring more equitable disciplinary and academic outcomes. In order to retain Black educators, it is imperative PfISD create an inclusive environment for students, parents, and teachers of all racial backgrounds. This takes intentional and ongoing efforts by the Superintendent, the board of trustees, cabinet leadership team, central office staff, campus administrators, and educators. Further recommendations follow.

## ENSURE SAFETY AND ACCESS IN EDUCATION



## OUR EXPERIENCE MUST INFORM CHANGE

Educators in Solidarity supports the following efforts to accomplish the goal of creating an inclusive environment and retaining/recruiting Black educators:



- Diversify recruitment efforts to include, but not be limited to, partnering with Austin's Historically Black University HT, Prairie View, and other Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) across the nation.



- Annual equity audits completed by external racial equity organizations (such as Pacific Educational Group, or the Institute of Urban Policy and Development at the University of Texas) that are made public.



- Campus equity audits provided to each campus before each Comprehensive Improvement Plan review.
- Review of the grievance process to create safe systems of reporting racial inequity and/or discrimination.
- Establish and hire a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion officer for the district who reports directly to the superintendent.



- Establishing district and/or vertical team affinity groups for Black teachers to connect, collaborate and support one another in a safe environment.



- Work with campus leaders to establish Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committees on campuses to review instructional practices, disciplinary actions, student surveys, gifted and talented representation, and academic outcomes on a monthly basis.
- Provide systemic, required, ongoing cultural proficiency training from the top level, including the Board of Trustees and cabinet leadership team, central office, teachers, and staff positions including bus drivers and cafeteria workers. We firmly believe that all positions that interact with students need to be trained in racial and educational equity.



- Promote racially conscious Black educators into leadership positions, such as, but not limited to, principals and assistant principals.

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