# Lincoln Public Schools Equity Audit 2021

Conducted by the LPS AIDE Advisory Group (LAAG)
--Antiracism, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity--

# Executive Summary

*The following includes a series of excerpts intended to briefly summarize the overall report for those unable to read it in its entirety. In order to learn more about any component, please reference the full report that follows.*

This report intends to hold up a mirror for the district so that the Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) can collectively see the current reality across our schools in relation to race and equity. Just as systemic racism is woven into the fabric of our country and our community, it is also woven throughout our school district. Conducting a thorough audit allowed LAAG to gather specific information to guide the district's decisions, and enable LPS to effectively and intentionally dismantle inequities and discrimination.

LPS used an equity audit process to collect qualitative data to give the district a better understanding of ways to 1) build upon our strengths; 2) inform our process of removing barriers to equitable outcomes for every student; and 3) align resources to meet the needs of our diverse students, staff, families, and community. Through examining results from focus groups and surveys, and engaging in many conversations with one another, the LPS AIDE (Antiracism, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity) Advisory Group (LAAG) was able to gain a better understanding of the experiences for many students, families, faculty, and staff who reported not feeling a strong sense of belonging. We concluded that our overall culture and outcomes of our district are not equitable and require immediate action. These are not opinions that can be debated; on the contrary, they are factual realities for some people in our district--particularly people of color.

LAAG reviewed 19 areas as part of the equity audit process, rating each on a 5-point scale (seen below). Ultimately, 9 were rated "Not Yet Started/Not at all," 9 were rated "Ready to Start/Well Positioned" and 1 was rated "Launched/A little." No areas were rated "Well on the way/Happening with results" or "Exemplary/Exceptional."

| *Not Yet Started / Not at all* | *Ready to Start / Well positioned* | *Launched / A little* | *Well on the Way / Happening with results* | *Exemplary / Exceptional* |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| **People** | **Environment and Culture** | **Structures, Systems, and Supports** |
|---|---|---|
| District Leadership | Staff Diversity | Mission/Vision |
| School Leadership | Curriculum | Policies |
| School Committee | Pedagogy/Instruction | Resources/Infrastructure |
| Staff | Accountability | Professional Development |
| Families & Community | School Climate/Environment | Assessment |
| Students | Classroom Environment | Data |
| | | Communication |

LAAG identified the following strengths for the district to leverage in the coming years:
1. Some individuals and teams already model AIDE
2. A beginning foundation in 2020-21
3. Strong resources to support AIDE work

The team identified the following areas for growth:
1. A need for training
2. Recruitment, hiring, and retention of faculty, staff, and administrators of color
3. Representation in leadership positions
4. Centering student voice and experience
5. Consistent school discipline procedures, and practices across the district
6. Teaching and learning
7. Leadership around AIDE--building internal capacity
8. Support and accountability
9. Strong partnerships between staff and families

In addition, LAAG drafted a series of recommendations in each audit category for the district to consider in constructing a multiyear action plan. This report is merely an initial step in a deep investment that will prove useful in facilitating critical conversation and significant change. This change will surely be difficult and likely uncomfortable, but it is essential in order to create a district where every student, family, staff member, and community partners feels a sense of belonging and success.

# Gratitude

Sincere gratitude is extended to the LAAG team for their incredible investment of their time and their vulnerability in sharing personal experiences; to all stakeholders who provided feedback through surveys and focus groups; to Evolution LLC and National Coalition Building Institution (NCBI) for their partnership; and to LSF, MCC, and PTO for their financial support of this work.

# Tribal Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we are on the occupied territory of the Pawtucket and Massa-adchu-es-et people and that they are the past, present, and future caretakers of this land. We uplift the fact that Indigenous people continue to contribute to what is now known as the United States and recognize the importance of Indigenous culture within our communities and within the land that we gather, live, learn and work on. We vow to continue educating ourselves in order to better cultivate relationships with the many diverse Indigenous people who are connected to this land. This report is representative of one step that we are taking to acknowledge the experiences of the Indigenous people within our community and foster more positive relationships moving forward.

# Defining Terms

The district adopted the acronym AIDE to describe the areas of work the district is committed to embodying, which stands for antiracism, inclusion, diversity, and equity. This report utilizes the following definitions for these terms, but LAAG suggests developing ongoing definitions the district will use for each of these terms (and many others) in the near future.

*Antiracism:* the active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices, and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably.[1]

*Inclusion:* a value and practice of ensuring that people feel they belong and that their input is valued by the whole (group, organization, society, system, etc.), particularly regarding decisions that affect their lives. While an inclusive group is by definition diverse, a diverse group isn't always inclusive, and recognition of unconscious or implicit bias helps organizations address issues of inclusivity.

*Diversity:* differences including race, ethnicity, gender identity, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, cognitive/neurological styles, and much more. Valuing diversity means embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of difference that exist in groups.

*Equity:* promoting inclusion throughout LPS and creating the conditions in which everyone can participate, prosper and reach their full potential.[2]

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[1] "Anti-Racism."*Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre*, www.aclrc.com/antiracism. Accessed 14 May 2021.

[2] Definitions for inclusion, diversity, and equity adapted from Race Forward, *Race Reporting Guide*. 2015, www.raceforward.org/sites/default/files/Race%20Reporting%20Guide%20by%20Race%20Forward_V1.1.pdf.

# Introduction

At its core, this report holds up a mirror for the district so that Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) can collectively see the current reality across our schools in relation to race and equity.

## Why did LPS do this work?

The LPS vision for our students is that they acquire essential skills and knowledge, think creatively and independently, exhibit academic excellence, appreciate and respect diversity, display creativity, value reflection, and demonstrate social and emotional competencies.

One of our district's core values states: *our community strives to embrace our differences and build upon our similarities. We strive to create a safe, inclusive learning environment that values our varied beliefs and differences in race, ethnicity, culture, language, socio-economics, gender identity, sexual orientation, learning differences, and family configurations. We work to engage in conversations that deepen our understanding of our differences and to learn from our collective experience. We acknowledge our biases in order to build empathy and understanding. We strive to develop understanding of world cultures beyond our community to assist our students in becoming contributing members of the global society.*

In order to authentically embody this core value, and in light of the unrelenting racial injustice that people of color continue to face today, the district felt an urgency to name the focus of our work--antiracism--and not just use words such as inclusion, diversity, and equity. At LPS, it is important that every student, family, staff, faculty, administrator, and community member feels seen, safe, valued, and respected. We recognize the need to better understand the extent to which our organizational structures (policies, practices, systems, behaviors, and culture) impact inequitable outcomes for students. We have committed to assessing our individual biases and examining how racism impacts us as racialized individuals.
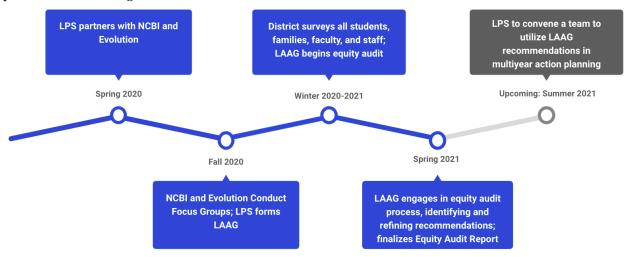
Just as systemic racism is woven into the fabric of our country and our community, it is also woven throughout our school district. Conducting a thorough audit allowed LAAG to gather specific information to guide the district's decisions, and enable LPS to effectively and intentionally dismantle inequities and discrimination. It is vital that we recognize this as an ongoing journey that will require <u>every</u> LPS student, staff, faculty, family, community liaison, and school committee member to be fully engaged so that we disrupt and uproot any system, programmatic structure, or behavior that impedes social justice and equity for all.

## Purpose and Timeline of the LPS Equity Audit

The purpose of the equity audit was to collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data to give the district a better understanding of ways to 1) build upon our strengths; 2) inform our process of removing barriers to equitable outcomes for every student; and 3) align resources to meet the needs of our diverse students, staff, families, and community.

Below is an overall timeline of the core components of the audit process starting in the 2019-2020 school year when LPS engaged in a partnership with Evolution LLC and the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) to begin planning AIDE work for the 2020-2021 school year.

The subsequent sections expound on the focus groups, surveys, as well as the LAAG team, process, and findings.



The equity audit is the first step in a lengthy process toward achieving the following outcomes:
- Ensure a positive inclusive educational experience for all students on both campuses.
- Assist teachers in their classrooms to develop and maintain a safe and welcoming atmosphere and to have culturally relevant materials and culturally responsive teaching[3] methods for all students.
- Assist faculty and staff to be culturally competent and aware of their own privileges and biases.
- Co-create and define a school and learning culture where faculty and staff want to embrace and be accountable for creating a fully equitable, inclusive, and antiracist school environment where all can achieve.
- Partner with and support families to help their children achieve success in an inclusive, integrated, antiracist district.

The district will be able to utilize the audit to establish a clear vision for AIDE work, develop a multiyear action plan for the district as well as action plans specific to each campus, and build targeted AIDE training for students, faculty, staff, and families.

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[3] Zaretta Hammond, author of *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* defines culturally responsive teaching as, "helping culturally and linguistically diverse students who have been marginalized in schools build their skill and capacity to do rigorous work." From 'Culturally Responsive Teaching': An Interview With Zaretta Hammond, Education Week. July 8, 2015, https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-culturally-responsive-teaching-an-interview-with-zaretta-hammond/2015/07

# Data

## Focus Groups

A core component of our work this year was to gather information, experiences, and perspectives. To do this, LPS partnered with Evolution NCBI to conduct a series of virtual affinity-based focus groups. We offered 19 focus groups and, based on participant availability, held 12 sessions that included 72 participants including students, family members, and staff. The purposes of the focus groups were to:

- listen to and record first-hand experiences of Lincoln Public Schools students, parents, and staff of color and those who are White;
- engage a cross-section of the school community in the discussion and direction of the LPS's AIDE initiative; and
- identify common AIDE issues that participants believe need to be addressed in order to reach the AIDE goals of the district.

Throughout the focus group sessions, the facilitators from Evolution and NCBI identified a set of themes that were consistently expressed. Key strengths and issues to address, along with a set of recommendations are below. We have adjusted the report's language to reflect the terms we use in our district. To read the report in its entirety, please see Appendix A. Please note that students, faculty, and staff from the Hanscom campus participated in focus groups, but no Hanscom families attended the sessions offered. Due to this, one of the "issues to address" about family communication is focused on the Lincoln campus because it was raised by Lincoln-campus families. Another issue to address around the Boston-Lincoln connection is also Lincoln-focused. All other strengths and issues that emerged as themes came from cross-campus input and apply to both the Lincoln and Hanscom campuses.

**Key Strengths**
1. *Engagement and caring:* Students, parents, and staff volunteered on their own time to participate in the focus group. They were engaged in the questions and wanted to help improve the school environment to be inclusive and more equitable.

2. *Supportive relationships with staff:* The majority of participants responded that they had a relationship with a staff member and/or a teacher.

3. *Support for diversity, equity, and inclusion improvements:* Groups expressed a desire for more support, tools, activities and opportunities to foster a more equitable school environment. Students, parents, and staff shared examples they would like to see more of.

4. *Building upon successful outcomes:* Students, parents, and staff gave examples of activities, interventions and approaches that had helped to interrupt and correct bullying and bias as well as to help students of color have more of a sense of belonging in their school.

**Issues to Address: District-wide**
1. *Racial bias:* In the district, White focus group participants and participants of color noticed how students of color were often treated differently. White students and students of color could be exhibiting similar behaviors or participate in the same

incident and a White student's behavior would be described in "developmental terms" (student is assertive). While a Black student's behavior would be described in "behavioral terms" (student is aggressive or acting out).

2. *School discipline:* Two main concerns were in regards to school disciplinary practices. First, students of color expressed, and others perceived, that they received stricter and more disciplinary actions by teachers than White students. Secondly, all groups noted that there were inconsistencies in how discipline was administered. Participants stated that there seemed to be no clear policy and practice that was being followed by staff.

3. *Staff diversity:* The one AIDE issue that all groups advocated for was more Black and diverse staff. Students of color expressed how important it is to have a teacher that "looked like me" for a sense of belonging. White students, parents, and staff also agreed to the benefits of a more diverse staff to everyone's education as well as overall.

**Issues to Address: Lincoln-campus**
1. *Family communication:* On the Lincoln campus, White families reported higher satisfaction in being listened to and respected by school staff than families of color. Families of color expressed frustration in how they had to advocate for themselves in order to have their concerns addressed. A key factor was the timeframe it took for a concern to be addressed. Both White families and families of color also described examples of support from the district.

2. *Boston–Lincoln connection:* Students, staff and parents expressed a wish for more structure and support for students and families to interact and have shared activities. It was noted several times that there seemed to be more structured events in prior years.

**Suggestions**
1. *Include AIDE as part of the staff development program to address racial bias and provide staff a full understanding and a skill set to be an AIDE educator. Topics include, but are not limited to:*
   - Understanding the impact of systemic racism and implicit bias, and implementing corrective measures
   - Communication skills to discuss race, privilege and bias with students, peers and families
   - Intervention strategies when there are incidents dealing with microaggressions and bias
   - Culturally relevant and social-emotional-focused K-8 curriculum
   - Learning approaches that build trust and rapport across race, class, and culture to ensure enhanced communication

2. *Establish a consistent school discipline policy and practice that:*
   - Provides guidance for staff, students and parents
   - Is monitored on an ongoing basis to check for any disparity in its application
   - Provides staff training and coaching to support discipline practices that are bias-free and developmental instead of punitive

3. *Hire and support a diverse staff*
   This will take an intentional plan of action to identify a pool of diverse candidates for school district openings. This plan should also include a system for current minority

staff and new hires to support their full participation and recognition in district activities.

4. *Build internal capacity*
Develop an AIDE Advocate Team. This team could provide support and assistance in monitoring and addressing the issues from focus groups as well as in the following areas to support the district's AIDE goals:
   - Act as "bridge builders" to strengthen relationships across the school community
   - Act as advocates to ensure district policies and practices operate without bias
   - Provide training and resources to the school community to enhance the awareness of diversity, equity and inclusion
   - Be a response team when incidents occur related to bias and prejudice
   - Provide support for the coordinator(s) of the district's AIDE work

5. *For Lincoln Campus: Foster Boston-Lincoln communication and connection[4]*
There is a built-in structural as well as a racial divide between the two communities. Even with best intentions by the district and individuals from both communities, it is a challenging bridge to cross. It will take an intentional program approach to build the relationships and trust between Boston parents and school staff. It will be important to continue the conversations with the Boston parents and staff to ensure their concerns are heard and addressed. In addition, planned activities and strategies will be needed to build relationships between Boston and Lincoln students and their families.

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[4] Other data indicates that Lincoln-resident families of color also experience divisions between them and White families in town, as well as divides between Boston and Lincoln families of color, though neither of these emerged as themes across focus groups this year.

# Surveys

In January of 2021, the district surveyed all students in grades 3-8, faculty, staff, and all families, preschool through 8th grade, to understand their perspectives in relation to how the school year was going in our COVID-model and their experiences across their entire time in the district around race and equity. The survey questions used were based on research and model surveys developed by Panorama Education in partnership with the RIDES (Reimagining Integration: Diverse & Equitable Schools) Project at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Below are some of the quantitative data we were able to gather through these surveys.

**How to read the following charts**
Each survey asked a series of questions within a larger category, such as School Belonging or Teacher-Student Relationships. Respondents answered each question indicating their feelings, perceptions, or experiences on a scale of five choices. For instance, one question on the survey for students was "How well do people at your school understand you as a person?" and the response options were: "a) completely understand; b) understand quite a bit; c) understand somewhat; d) understand a little; and e) do not understand at all." Using this 5-point scale, the first two options are considered "positive." To see a list of the questions that were asked within each category, please see Appendix B.

In the charts below, in the first row of data you will see the average percentage of <u>all</u> respondents in a given survey (e.g., 3rd-5th graders) who answered questions with positive options. The subsequent rows of data show subgroups' deviations from all respondents' averaged percentages.

As an example, In the chart on the following page you can see that:
- 72% of 308 students in grades 3-5 across the district ("all respondents") indicated an overall positive climate in their school.
- Compared to all respondents, +1% (equaling 73%) of the 106 students in grade 3 across the district reported a positive school climate in their school.
- Compared to all respondents, +3% (equaling 75%) of the 109 students in grade 4 reported their school climate as positive.
- In contrast, compared to all respondents, -4% (equaling 68%) of the 90 students in grade 5 reported their school climate as positive.

The charts that follow illustrate data across a range of stakeholders including students in grades 3-5, 6-8, faculty, staff, and families of students from preschool through 8th grade. Each chart disaggregates data by grade, different racial groups, or other subgroups. In some instances you will see the term "confidentially protected." This indicates that the number of respondents in other categories was so small that respondents could be identified. To protect respondents' identities, responses have been aggregated into this "confidentially protected" category. For each chart we highlight a couple of interpretations that jump out to us, but the data tells many more stories that we hope you take the time to consider.

In the chart below we notice that as elementary students age in our district, they report a less positive experience in nearly all categories. Overall, 82% of 3rd-5th grade students across the district indicated that they felt they were held to rigorous expectations but only 53% said that school was engaging for them.

| Students 3-5 | Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment | School Belonging | School Climate | Engagement | Rigorous Expectations | Teacher- Student Relationships |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All respondents (308) | 66% | 69% | 72% | 53% | 82% | 79% |
| Grade 3 (106) | +2 | +4 | +1 | +6 | -1 | +4 |
| Grade 4 (109) | +1 | 0 | +3 | +1 | -3 | -5 |
| Grade 5 (90) | -4 | -7 | -4 | -9 | +4 | +1 |

In the data below Black and Latinx students in grades 3-5 shared a significantly less positive experience in all categories than peers of other races. In particular, based on the questions in the category of School Belonging, Black students indicated that they did not feel understood, supported, or respected as much as their peers. White students were the only ones whose responses were higher than the average in every category.

| Students 3-5 | Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment | School Belonging | School Climate | Engagement | Rigorous Expectations | Teacher- Student Relationships |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All respondents (308) | 66% | 69% | 72% | 53% | 82% | 79% |
| Black (32) | -11 | -16 | -8 | -7 | -10 | -7 |
| Latinx (63) | -2 | -9 | -2 | -3 | -1 | -7 |
| Multi-race, Non-Latinx (34) | 0 | +8 | +7 | +3 | -5 | +2 |
| White (160) | +3 | +3 | +1 | +1 | +3 | +4 |
| Confidentially protected (16) | +1 | +8 | +4 | +4 | 0 | -4 |

While looking across subgroups we notice that some (e.g., female students, those who are not English Learners (ELs), do not receive free and reduced lunch, or do not qualify as "high needs") report significantly more positive responses across all categories as compared to their peers. In particular, English Learners (EL) and students who receive free or reduced price lunch (FRPL) reported starkly more negative experiences across all categories.

| Students 3-5 | Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment | School Belonging | School Climate | Engagement | Rigorous Expectations | Teacher- Student Relationships |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All respondents (308) | 66% | 69% | 72% | 53% | 82% | 79% |
| Female-identified (150) | 0 | +1 | +2 | +4 | 0 | +1 |
| Male-identified (155) | -1 | -3 | -1 | -5 | 0 | -1 |
| | | | | | | |
| Not EL (290) | 0 | 0 | +1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| EL (15) | -2 | -5 | -11 | 0 | -11 | -11 |
| | | | | | | |
| Not FRPL (255) | +2 | +2 | +1 | 0 | +2 | +1 |
| FRPL (50) | -10 | -12 | -6 | -5 | -10 | -7 |
| | | | | | | |
| Not Special Education (249) | 0 | -1 | -1 | 0 | 0 | +1 |
| Special Education (56) | -1 | -1 | +5 | -1 | -2 | -4 |
| | | | | | | |
| Not High Needs (203) | +2 | +1 | +1 | 0 | +3 | +3 |
| High Needs (102) | -4 | -5 | -2 | -2 | -5 | -5 |

Students in grades 6-8 answered more questions across more categories than younger students. Trends seem less consistent than in grades 3-5; some categories--like Cultural Awareness and Action (Students)--show increasingly positive ratings with each sequential grade level, but others show the inverse (like Teacher-Student relationships) in which positive responses decrease from 6th to 8th grade. Still other categories appear to have no clear patterns from grade to grade. Of note, less than a third of 6th-8th grade students reported net-positively about their engagement in school and in their learning.

| Students 6-8 | Cultural Awareness and Action (Adults) | Cultural Awareness and Action (Students) | Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment | Diversity and Inclusion | School Belonging | School Climate | Engagement | Rigorous Expectations | Teacher-Student Relationships |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All respondents (278) | 71% | 47% | 62% | 78% | 45% | 62% | 29% | 77% | 66% |
| Grade 6 (94) | -3 | -8 | 0 | +1 | -6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | +5 |
| Grade 7 (99) | -2 | +2 | -1 | -6 | +4 | +3 | +1 | -1 | -1 |
| Grade 8 (85) | +7 | +7 | +1 | +6 | +2 | -2 | -2 | +1 | -5 |

Black students in grades 6-8 across the district reported experiences related to Cultural Awareness and Action (Adults) and Diversity & Inclusion that were 15-16 percentage points lower than their peers of other races. Only 47% of all students indicated that they perceived Cultural Awareness and Action (students) positively and all students of color rated it lower than their White peers; only 35% of students who were "confidentially protected," (i.e., Asian American and Pacific Islander, Arab-American, or Indigenous) answered positively.

| Students 6-8 | Cultural Awareness and Action (Adults) | Cultural Awareness and Action (Students) | Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment | Diversity and Inclusion | School Belonging | School Climate | Engagement | Rigorous Expectations | Teacher-Student Relationships |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All respondents (278) | 71% | 47% | 62% | 78% | 45% | 62% | 29% | 77% | 66% |
| Black (29) | -15 | -5 | 0 | -16 | -3 | -5 | -1 | +8 | +1 |
| Latinx (47) | 0 | -1 | -3 | +1 | -12 | -4 | +2 | +2 | -9 |
| Multi-race, Non-Latinx (27) | +1 | -5 | -7 | +6 | -10 | 0 | -5 | -5 | -1 |
| White (165) | +3 | +3 | +2 | +1 | +6 | +2 | 0 | -1 | +3 |
| Confidentially protected (10) | +4 | -12 | +8 | +4 | +10 | +6 | +1 | +5 | 0 |

Similarly to students in grades 3-5, certain subgroups report less positive experiences in nearly every category compared to the aggregate, including those who receive free and reduced price lunch, special education services, or are considered "high needs." In particular, EL students in middle school report a starkly different experience than their non-EL peers.

| Students 6-8 | Cultural Awareness and Action (Adults) | Cultural Awareness and Action (Students) | Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment | Diversity and Inclusion | School Belonging | School Climate | Engagement | Rigorous Expectations | Teacher-Student Relationships |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All respondents (278) | 71% | 47% | 62% | 78% | 45% | 62% | 29% | 77% | 66% |
| Female-identified (147) | -1 | +2 | 0 | 0 | -5 | +2 | +2 | 0 | +1 |
| Male-identified (131) | +2 | -2 | +1 | 0 | +7 | -2 | -3 | 0 | -1 |
| Not EL (272) | +1 | 0 | 0 | +1 | +1 | +1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| EL (6) | -38 | -16 | +3 | -31 | -7 | -12 | -2 | 0 | -6 |
| Not FRPL (237) | +2 | 0 | +1 | +1 | +2 | +1 | 0 | -1 | +2 |
| FRPL (41) | -6 | -2 | -1 | -6 | -6 | -5 | +1 | +4 | -11 |
| No Special Education (225) | +2 | +2 | +2 | +2 | +1 | +1 | 0 | +1 | +2 |
| Special Education (53) | -6 | -9 | -6 | -7 | -4 | -2 | -3 | -5 | -8 |
| Not High Needs (196) | +3 | +2 | +2 | +2 | +2 | +2 | 0 | 0 | +3 |
| High Needs (82) | -7 | -4 | -3 | -4 | -3 | -4 | -2 | 0 | -7 |

Families of students in preschool through 8th grade responded to questions about School Climate and School Fit. Those enrolled in the youngest grades provided more positive responses than families of middle school students, in some cases by a 20-30 point differential.

| Families | All respondents (456) | Pre (34) | K (28) | 1 (41) | 2 (63) | 3 (47) | 4 (55) | 5 (43) | 6 (48) | 7 (54) | 8 (34) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| School Climate | 80% | +11 | +6 | +13 | +6 | +2 | -2 | +2 | -10 | -16 | -3 |
| School Fit | 70% | +16 | +5 | +14 | +7 | 0 | -3 | +3 | -8 | -18 | -1 |

The chart below illustrates that the families of Asian and Black students indicated a more negative response in both categories of School Climate and School Fit compared to families with students of other races. Of particular note are the significantly more negative experiences of families in races who were confidentially protected.

| Families | School Climate | School Fit |
|---|---|---|
| **All respondents** *(456)* | 80% | 70% |
| **Asian** *(30)* | -7 | -2 |
| **Black** *(33)* | -3 | -3 |
| **Latinx** *(30)* | +7 | +6 |
| **White** *(249)* | +1 | +4 |
| **Two or More Races** *(85)* | +2 | -1 |
| **Confidentially Protected** *(18)* | -26 | -32 |

Families of non-binary students and those who identified as "other" reported the school climate and their school fit was significantly lower than the families whose students identified as female or male.

| Families | School Climate | School Fit |
|---|---|---|
| All respondents *(456)* | 80% | 70% |
| Student is EL (27) | +8 | +2 |
| Student is not EL (416) | -1 | 0 |
| | | |
| Yes IEP or 504 (90) | -1 | -3 |
| No IEP or 504 (350) | 0 | +1 |
| | | |
| HAFB (170) | +4 | +3 |
| Boston (52) | 0 | -3 |
| Lincoln (217) | -3 | -1 |
| Other (13) | -1 | +3 |
| | | |
| Female-identified (215) | +1 | +3 |
| Male-identified (211) | 0 | 0 |
| Non-binary (5) | -17 | -30 |
| Other (12) | -20 | -22 |

Faculty of color (who are confidentially protected below so as to not identify them if disaggregated by specific races) experience a significantly lower sense of belonging, and more negative experiences with cultural awareness and learning about equity in the district. Staff-Family Relationships is the category rated most positive overall and is also the only category in which faculty of color report more positive experiences in comparison to their White peers.

| Faculty | Belonging | Cultural Awareness and Action (Adults) | Cultural Awareness and Action (Students) | Educating All Students | Professional Learning about Equity | Staff-Family Relationships |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| All respondents (149) | 63% | 69% | 59% | 68% | 65% | 77% |
| Female-identified (130) | -1 | 0 | -1 | +1 | 0 | -1 |
| Male-identified (19) | +10 | -2 | +6 | 0 | -1 | +8 |
| | | | | | | |
| White (142) | +1 | 0 | +1 | +1 | 0 | 0 |
| Confidentially protected (7) | -15 | -17 | -18 | -6 | -15 | +2 |

Significant gaps also exist between staff of color and White staff who are not in faculty positions. Male-identified faculty and male-identified staff reported a more positive sense of belonging and set of experiences with professional learning about equity when compared to female-identified staff and faculty. Faculty overall gave similar ratings to Professional Learning about Equity, Belonging, and Cultural Awareness and Action (Adults), but staff who are not in faculty roles rated Professional Learning significantly below the other two categories.

| Staff | Belonging | Cultural Awareness and Action (Adults) | Professional Learning about Equity |
|---|---|---|---|
| All respondents (47) | 71% | 71% | 53% |
| Female-identified (40) | -4 | -1 | -1 |
| Male-identified (7) | +23 | +6 | +7 |
| | | | |
| White (40) | +4 | +5 | +3 |
| Confidentially protected (7) | -22 | -30 | -17 |

# LPS AIDE Advisory Group (LAAG)

In order to achieve the district's desired AIDE outcomes, LAAG was formed in December 2020. The Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and METCO Director[5] informed the community of the plan to establish this group and sent out a call for volunteers to students, families, faculty, and community leaders. There was a great response from the school community, and the group was formed with a strong focus on ensuring that there was representation of diverse and often-marginalized voices. The composition of LAAG is a mixture of students, parents, staff, administrators, school committee members, and community leaders from diverse races and backgrounds. LAAG has 24 members in total and of that number, 12 identify as White and 12 identify as people of color. Many members had dual or tri-faceted roles, like those who are current parents of students, but serve on community boards connected to the school or town which allowed unique perspectives in conversations.

| Name | Role |
| --- | --- |
| Azzure Annacacis | Lincoln Student |
| Justin Byrd | Lincoln Parent |
| Sarah Collmer | Lincoln Principal |
| Maurisa Davis | Lincoln Faculty |
| Samantha Donaldson | Lincoln Student |
| Pilar Doughty | Lincoln Community Member/Parent |
| Claudia Fox Tree | Lincoln Faculty |
| Morgan Gibson | Hanscom Student |
| Lissette Gil-Sanchez | Lincoln METCO Parent |
| Trintje Gnazzo | School Committee/Lincoln Parent |
| Marika Hamilton | METCO Director |
| Sharon Hobbs | Lincoln Principal |
| Jen James | Community Member/Former School Committee Member |
| Erich Ledebuhr | Hanscom Principal |
| Catherine Martus | Hanscom Faculty |
| Jason Packineau | Lincoln Parent |
| Tommy Plourde | Hanscom Student |
| Jessica Rose | Assistant Superintendent |
| Jena Salon | Lincoln Parent/Former School Committee Member |
| King David Sibley | Lincoln METCO Student |

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[5] METCO: Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (a voluntary school integration program, of which Lincoln was a founding district in 1966)

| Ian Spencer | Community Member/Lincoln Detective & Public Safety Liaison |
|---|---|
| Susan Taylor | School Committee/Community Member |
| Melissa Webster | Lincoln Faculty |
| Jenn Williams | Hanscom Faculty |

LAAG held frequent meetings which were co-facilitated by the Assistant Superintendent and the METCO Director. The breakdown and configuration of roles that we planned is as follows:

- 5 students from both campuses
- 5 faculty from both campuses
- 5 administrators from both campuses and the central office
- 3 community members
- 4 parents
- 2 members of School Committee

LAAG is one of the most diverse groups in the district on a number of fronts. Coordinating 24 individuals' schedules for meetings, trainings, and small group discussions proved to be a major feat; however, members were able to come together in a cohesive manner to govern the equity audit process, reach consensus on audit rankings, and develop prioritized recommendations for the continuous advancement of antiracism work in the district.

The team used a multi-phase approach involving the 3 L's: listen, learn via reflection, and launch.

1. **Listen** to marginalized voices and engage diverse stakeholders (students, families, faculty/staff, and community members) in reflective and honest conversations about the current reality of our district as it relates to equity and in comparison to our intent and goals.
2. **Learn** to use an equity-lens while gathering information about LPS's students, families, staff, district and school leadership, culture, policies, and infrastructure related to antiracism, inclusion, diversity, and equity.
3. **Launch** the district forward by providing recommendations that focus efforts and resources on fully supporting our diverse stakeholders and that ensure equitable practices and policies are used throughout our schools. Through careful listening and learning, the district can take necessary action in intentional and inclusive ways.

Simply put, this has been a foundational year for the district. To learn and to enhance our awareness LAAG considered three key areas: **self, other, and organization**. This framework, introduced to us by Evolution and NCBI, became a core method for us as we conducted the audit and worked as a team.
- **Self**: how our own identity, biases, and strengths and challenges help us in our learning on how to become an antiracist
- **Other**: how others experience the impact of bias and then apply that awareness to allyship
- **Organization:** how programs, policies and practices hinder or support an antiracist learning environment

# Equity Audit Process

Between December 2020 and May 2021, LAAG convened virtually 13 times as a whole group, and small groups met approximately 3 times. While we originally envisioned meeting every other week, we quickly realized we needed more sessions in order to engage in deeper conversations across so many important topics. In addition, every member of LAAG had independent work to complete between meetings in order to propel work forward and maximize our time together. Our sessions proceeded as follows:

1. Formed group, initial team building, and clarified the scope of work.
2. Identified components of equity audit tools that felt important to include in the process.
3. Reviewed data (qualitative and quantitative) from the district and asked LAAG members to share their individual experiences.
4. Each LAAG member completed the audit tool to capture the unique voices of all and ensure everyone's voice was documented so that no one's perspective was lost in conversation.
5. Worked with NCBI and Evolution to learn about self, other, and organizational awareness as a framework to engage in dialogue with one another.
6. Engaged in a series of conversations around each section of the audit.
7. Captured strengths, areas for growth, and recommendations in small groups, using overall LAAG input.
8. Reviewed and provided feedback to all sections and prioritized recommendations.
9. Consolidated findings into a draft report.
10. Reviewed report, provided feedback, and confirmed consensus that the report captured essential components.

After reviewing a few different approaches to equity audit tools, LAAG identified 19 areas of the district that the team wanted to have targeted conversations around. These included:

| District Leadership | Students | Curriculum | School Climate & Environment | Mission/Vision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| School Leadership | Families & Community | Pedagogy & Instruction | Classroom Environment | Policies |
| School Committee | Staff Diversity | Assessment | Communication | Resources & Infrastructure |
| Staff | Data | Accountability | Professional Development | |

For each area the group considered a variety of facets, responding to a series of prompts to guide our conversations to identify strengths, areas for growth, and recommendations. In our conversations we recognized that often multiple categories have significant overlap and exist in relationship with one another, influencing one or more other areas.

Ultimately, we rated each overall area using the following scale:

| Not Yet Started / Not at all | Ready to Start / Well positioned | Launched / A little | Well on the Way / Happening with results | Exemplary / Exceptional |
|---|---|---|---|---|

Engaging in conversation around each area required LAAG members to commit a significant amount of time to our sessions as well as a level of vulnerability in sharing their own perspectives and experiences. We must acknowledge that for members of color this meant recounting traumatic and painful experiences at times. Very often when we began conversations, members' initial ratings ranged widely. Through talking in small and large groups, the team worked to come to consensus as we considered the district as a whole.

## Findings

Through conversations, LAAG rated each area. Out of the 19 categories, 9 were rated "Not Yet Started/Not at all," 9 were rated "Ready to Start/Well Positioned" and 1 was rated "Launched/A little." No areas were rated "Well on the way/Happening with results" or "Exemplary/Exceptional."

| People | Environment and Culture | Structures, Systems, and Supports |
|---|---|---|
| District Leadership | Staff Diversity | Mission/Vision |
| School Leadership | Curriculum | Policies |
| School Committee | Pedagogy/Instruction | Resources/Infrastructure |
| Staff | Accountability | Professional Development |
| Families & Community | School Climate/Environment | Assessment |
| Students | Classroom Environment | Data |
| | | Communication |

## Areas of Strength

*Some individuals and teams already model AIDE:* Whether we were discussing district leadership, school leadership, students, or staff, in many of our conversations, LAAG members consistently noted that across our district we have pockets of people, whether they are individuals or small teams, who model AIDE leadership in their role in some capacity.

*A beginning foundation in 2020-21:* AIDE was the focus of professional development, Collaborative Practices, and evaluation goals for the 2020-2021 school year. This has proven to be transformative for many faculty, but our work has only begun.

*Strong resources to support AIDE work*: Lincoln is a well-resourced district and has already taken steps to prioritize and financially support AIDE, as have multiple community partners. LAAG recognizes how fortunate the district and all its stakeholders are to be in such a position.

## Areas for Growth

Through months of varied conversations, the following nine overarching areas for growth continued to emerge. While the LAAG team has recommendations across each category of our audit tool, these areas for growth often span across multiple categories and felt important to the team to highlight. They are in no particular order.

*A need for training:* Throughout the audit areas that are focused on people, feedback on awareness, training and repeated behaviors serve as evidence of the need for significant and intentional AIDE learning (understanding and skills). Faculty and staff need opportunities to apply learning in their practice and receive feedback.

*Recruitment, hiring, and retention of faculty, staff, and administrators of color:* The audit process solidified District administrators' focus on the need to recruit and hire staff of color, and highlighted a need for retention efforts, including but not limited to creating affinity opportunities for staff of color, fostering significantly more opportunities to listen to staff of color, and concerted efforts to take action and improve their sense of belonging.

*Representation in leadership positions:* Of the 13 administrators and 5 voting School Committee members in Lincoln, only two are people of color. This lack of diversity is a concern that was consistently raised by LAAG members.

*Centering student voice and experience:* LAAG members repeatedly recognized the power of having five students in the group and in our conversations. The team noted that it felt rare to have students as active participants in decision-making governance and this helped to highlight the need for each school and the district to center student voices and experiences significantly more in all our work.

*Consistent school discipline procedures, and practices across the district*: The focus groups in particular highlighted that students throughout our district experience different expectations and are held to different behavioral standards based on their race.

*Teaching and learning:* Curriculum (what we teach) across content areas is not consistently culturally responsive or engaging for our students. Additionally, instructional strategies (how

we teach) across grades are also not always culturally responsive, inclusive, or equitable. While LAAG members, focus groups, and survey responses indicate that there are individuals or pockets of strength in this area, the district's overall curricular experiences and the teaching practices used to implement them need significant development.

*Leadership around AIDE--building internal capacity:* There needs to be a clear understanding and distinction around the leading of AIDE work at the district and school building level. Staff are at varying levels on their AIDE journey; all leaders will need to assess what training and systems need to be set in place to ensure that every staff and faculty member is prepared to meet the needs of our diverse student body. Due to the small size of our district, Central Administrators assume multiple roles, and it will be necessary to build an organizational structure that supports ongoing AIDE training and work.

*Support and accountability:* All students, faculty, staff, and families will need additional training and resources to continue on the continuum of growth in our AIDE journey. Additionally, we must build in systems of accountability so that we do not become stagnant, but instead move forward to become the change that we so desperately need.

*Strong partnerships between staff and families:* Establishing strong relationships with families, early on in the year, is essential to building trust and cultivating an experience for students where they have a network of support. Survey results clearly indicate that we need to develop a stronger comfort level in fostering relationships with families and in return, families will feel more connected to us.

## Prioritized Recommendations

The chart below includes prioritized recommendations from LAAG to the district on each of the categories examined through the audit. LAAG has attempted to draft recommendations on *what* the district should focus on, leaving the district to determine *how* recommendations might be enacted through action planning processes that include diverse stakeholders. LAAG has bolded recommendations to emphasize areas that require more immediate action.

| People | Recommendations |
|---|---|
| District Leadership | <ul><li>**Create a position to oversee and lead AIDE work across the district**</li><li>**Take deliberate steps to establish ongoing training and create a culture of support and accountability throughout the district in regard to AIDE work for faculty, staff, and administrators**</li><li>**Hold quarterly sessions with students, faculty, staff, and families of color to intentionally hear about their ongoing lived experiences in the district**</li><li>Be more resolute in messaging and tone when situations connected to AIDE in the world or our district impact members of the LPS community</li><li>Identify ways to increase transparency about processes that demonstrate the work district leadership does to support and enable school leadership and AIDE across the district, including district leaders' own AIDE work</li></ul> |
| School Leadership | <ul><li>**Principals "lead by example" in their schools with regard to AIDE work**</li></ul> |

| | |
|---|---|
| | - **Implement equitable and consistent processes for restorative justice at all schools** <br> - Hold faculty and staff members accountable for ongoing growth in regard to AIDE <br> - Establish a culture where all faculty feel responsible, empowered, and supported to lead AIDE work through their roles <br> - Collaborate with existing organizations (i.e., School Council, Boston Parent Board, MCC, PTO, LSF, etc.) to maximize AIDE education for students and families |
| School Committee | - **Adopt a mission statement for School Committee that directly connects to AIDE in LPS** <br> - **Create and implement a multiyear plan for School Committee members to develop antiracist skills** <br> - **Create and implement plans to diversify School Committee** through a targeted recruitment plan and on-boarding process <br> - **Investigate the legislative constraints around Hanscom- and Boston-parent participation as voting School Committee members and advocate for representation that matches our school community** <br> - Identify which practices in School Committee meetings (e.g. public comment) are set practices across the state and which practices the Lincoln School Committee has flexibility; alter practices to encourage active participation from and with the public |
| Staff | - **Faculty and staff identify and actualize personal steps for growth around AIDE with benchmarks for growth that demonstrate application of skills** <br> - Create genuine connections and relationships with students and families while understanding that the goal is not to assimilate but to bridge family and school culture <br> - Faculty mentors should demonstrate an ability to support colleagues in AIDE |
| Families & Community | - **Create a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere for all families in order to sustain trust and foster deep connections** <br> - Create a system for all members of our community to provide regular feedback to the district, particularly if there are concerns <br> - Parent-led school organizations (e.g. PTO/MCC, LSF, Boston Parent Board, School Councils, etc.) develop strategies for inclusive activities, diversifying leadership, equitable funding and fund-raising, and increased access for families and staff (and wider community when appropriate); annual reports to school principals and/or the School Committee include progress on AIDE <br> - **Build support for our schools and the district AIDE work in the wider community**: <br>    - Inform and engage community members and local businesses about work in our schools <br>    - Develop a training tool for all external/guest staff and visitors (e.g. Resource Officer, external consultants, artists-in-residents, etc.) for how to engage in our community in antiracist and inclusive ways <br>    - Ensure visitors uphold district core values at all times |

| Students | <ul><li>**Cultivate more opportunities for students to contribute to decisions at the school and district level; develop stronger ways to include young voices (PreK-4)**</li><li>Train student leaders at all grade levels to engage in dialogue with peers and lead fellow students in AIDE work</li><li>Include students in presentations and professional learning</li><li>Increase student access to student-led groups like Student Council, Diversity Council, BLM@lincoln, SAGA, etc.; create student affinity groups</li><li>Schools and grade-level teams identify and implement culturally relevant celebrations at each grade level and proactively educate students on many cultures</li></ul> |
|---|---|

| Environment and Culture | Recommendations |
|---|---|
| Staff Diversity | Retention<ul><li>**Create affinity groups and safe spaces for staff of color to be connected and share about their experiences throughout each year**</li><li>**District and school leadership offer to hold quarterly meetings with staff of color in order to hear feedback about their experiences and develop responsive action steps**</li><li>Implement exit interviews to identify why staff and faculty of color decide to leave</li></ul>Hiring Practices<ul><li>**Significantly increase the number of faculty, staff, and administrators of color across the district in the next 3-5 years through a multifaceted recruitment strategy**</li><li>Ensure all hiring committees utilize equitable selection processes (including training of committee members) with intentional focus on recruiting candidates of color</li><li>Hiring teams include a staff member of color in the hiring process whenever possible; candidate pools must be diverse in order for first round selections to take place</li><li>Job descriptions highlight the district's commitment to AIDE and the how the position connects to AIDE</li><li>Hiring teams always ask interview questions about AIDE to all candidates</li></ul> |
| Curriculum | <ul><li>**Document the curricular continuum for all grade levels detailing curricular content, skills, and common language PK-8** with the belief that if our curriculum is not documented and shared with one another, it heightens the chance for bias to occur in learning</li><li>**Implement consistent processes for faculty to collaboratively examine and refine curriculum through an AIDE lens**, considering the media, materials, and activities chosen; avoid perpetuating stereotypes or triggering trauma; focus on representation that emphasizes power, accomplishments, contributions, and joy in addition to marginalization, bias, and discrimination</li></ul> |

| | |
|---|---|
| | ● **Revisit Curriculum Review Process to ensure equity and AIDE lens is an explicit component** |
| Pedagogy / Instruction | ● **Build repertoire of instructional practices that allows all students to experience deep, high-quality learning in culturally responsive ways;** utilize peer observation and models from other schools<br>● Reflect on which instructional practices result in impactful student learning and which do not serve all students to inform change<br>● Implement Learning Walks 2.0 (our term for conducting observational rounds) and foster peer observations<br>● Mandatory training for substitute teachers to ensure that they are prepared to uphold district core values in connection with AIDE |
| Accountability | ● **Shift the culture of the district towards one of continual growth through listening, reflection, feedback, goal setting, and mutual support and accountability**<br>● **Identify systems to hold all staff accountable on growing practice and making sustained progress around AIDE** |
| School Climate / Environment | ● **All staff members become receptive to feedback from students, families, and colleagues about the impact of their actions, regardless of their intent or how difficult it is to hear, and make clear steps to change their behavior; build an understanding of the impact of one's actions for future learning**<br>● Develop robust district-led afterschool programs at each school that support students' identity development |
| Classroom Environment | ● **Preserve Connections block in the morning K-8 with a focus on AIDE and Social/Emotional Learning (SEL); create and document a vertically-aligned Connections curriculum so that this time is used in intentional and culturally responsive ways**<br>● **Cultivate a sense of belonging and center the intersectionality of students' identities in all classes beyond Connections block** |

| Structures, Systems, and Supports | Recommendations |
|---|---|
| Mission/Vision | ● **Complete the Portrait of a Learner process including a wide variety of stakeholders**<br>● Clarify the difference between our mission and vision and **develop a revised mission and a revised vision with a wide variety of stakeholders;** articulate *how* we will enact the mission on a more regular basis in our conversations and work<br>● Develop and implement a process for ongoing vision and mission statement review. Create a review committee that includes a variety of stakeholders (student, faculty/staff, administrator, community, etc), after seeking input from all voices. |
| Policies | ● **Adopt a School Committee antiracism policy that seeks to prevent and** |

| | |
|---|---|
| | remedy racially inequitable outcomes and all forms of discrimination for staff, students, and families<br>● Clearly delineate for all stakeholders when something should be policy vs. procedure<br>● **Adopt a process to ensure new or policy updates are vetted with an equity lens**<br>● **School Committee reviews and revises *policies* while schools review and revise *procedures* with an equity lens and use self/other/org leadership awareness to identity potential missing policies**<br>● Ensure policies are easily accessible to all |
| Resources / Infrastructure | ● Identify which culturally relevant resources are most impactful and needed in our teaching and learning and acquire them.<br>● Continue to prioritize time and funds for professional learning and staffing around AIDE |
| Professional Development | ● **Create differentiated training for all staff** on a variety of topics including but not limited to systemic racism, navigating difficult conversations and repairing relationships after conflict, restorative justice practices, and fostering AIDE and SEL in students.<br>● **Identify ways to include all staff in ongoing AIDE professional learning**<br>● **Create explicit opportunities and accountability structures for faculty and staff to apply their ongoing learning**<br>● **Ensure all new staff and those hired mid-year receive critical AIDE trainings**<br>● **Strategically create opportunities for staff and faculty affinity groups to connect and share about their experiences** |
| Assessment | ● **Adopt a cohesive Multi-Tiered System of Support[6] (MTSS) across the district**<br>● Construct more systemic practices for teachers to collaboratively review student work and student learning data, disaggregate it, analyze it, and then take action, all with an equity lens<br>● Create a process for examining our assessments through the lens of our students' intersectional identities |
| Data | ● **Identify annual measures (Key Yearly Measures) with data from a variety of sources to illustrate ongoing efforts and progress toward our goals around AIDE, our mission, portrait of a learner, and other core district work to be shared with all stakeholders**<br>● **Identify prioritized data and the individuals who need easy access; store data in accessible way; create systems and routines for looking at that data; and consider necessary training needs for staff to understand and use data well** |

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[6] MTSS is a framework for how school districts can build the necessary systems to ensure that each and every student receives a high quality educational experience. It is designed to support schools with proactively identifying and addressing the strengths and needs of all students by optimizing data-driven decision-making, progress monitoring, and the use of evidence-based supports and strategies with increasing intensity to sustain student growth.

| Communication | <ul><li>**Clarify expectations and provide guidance for faculty about how often and about what they should communicate with families; preserve beginning of year conversations, as was done in the fall of 2020**</li><li>Identify the best methods of communications and social media used by each family</li><li>Create a brief "training" for families about where to look for information, and who they should reach out to for different issues</li><li>Identify ways to provide support to families wary of raising issues with their school; create an anonymous channel of communication for those might not feel comfortable sharing feedback directly</li></ul> |
|---|---|

# Conclusion

The LAAG team thanks the district for its support of this important work. This report is merely an initial step in a deep investment that will prove useful in facilitating critical conversation and significant change. This change will surely be difficult and likely uncomfortable, but it is essential in order to create a district where every student, family, staff member, and community partners feels a sense of belonging and success. We look forward to partnering with district and school leaders to determine and carry out action plans that stem from the report's recommendations.

> Any real change implies the breakup of the world as one has always known it, the loss of all that gave one an identity, the end of safety. And at such a moment, unable to see and not daring to imagine what the future will now bring forth, one clings to what one knew, or dreamed that one possessed. Yet, it is only when a *person* is able, without bitterness or self-pity, to surrender a dream *they* have long cherished or a privilege *they have* long possessed that *they are* set free — *they have* set *themself* free — for higher dreams, for greater privileges.
>
> --James Baldwin from "Faulkner and Desegregation" in Partisan Review (Fall 1956); republished in Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son (1961). *Italics indicate language adjustments we made to ungender Baldwin's message.*

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Focus Group Report

**Lincoln School District**
**Anti-Racist–Inclusion-Diversity-Equity (AIDE)**
**Engaging School Community**
**Focus Group Summary Report**
**Fall 2020**

### I. Introduction

Evolution LLC, in collaboration with the Building Caring Schools Program of the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) was hired in the fall of 2020 to conduct a series of focus groups of students, parents and staff of the Lincoln School Community. Twelve focus groups were conducted involving seventy-two participants. (See Appendix I for a list of the groups conducted.) This report will detail key strengths identified from the focus groups that the district can build upon as it develops an AIDE plan. It will summarize areas for further exploration and attention and make suggestions on how to address the issues raised. This report is not meant to be a definitive assessment of the Lincoln SD Anti-Racist–Inclusion-Diversity-Equity experience. It is a reflection of a cross section of the school community we listened to. The issues named were consistently expressed.

### II. Purpose of the Focus Groups

- To listen to and record first hand experiences of both white and non-white students, parents, and staff from the Lincoln School District through the anti-Racist–inclusion-diversity-equity lens.
- To engage and involve a cross section of the school community in the discussion and direction of the Lincoln SD's AIDE initiative.
- To identify common AIDE issues that participants believe need to be addressed in order to reach the AIDE goals of the district.

### III. Questions

In the focus groups, seven themes were explored and participants where asked to respond from their own perspective. Themes explored:

- Being listened to by school staff
- Being respected by school staff
- Staff effectiveness with bullying and harassment
- Impact of race on how school staff treated and disciplined students
- Importance of having non-white teachers
- Positive relationships with staff for support
- Future hopes for the school district

Participants were given a question related to each theme and then presented with the options to vote: yes, no, sometimes or don't know. (The Appendix II chart summaries their voting responses.) Facilitators then asked participants to give examples and to elaborate on their answers. The common issues in this report were identified through the telling of participant's own experiences and also their perception and/or witnessing the experiences of others. The issues described below came from these answers. Participant responses will be noted in the report in italics.

### IV. Key Strengths

There were key strengths identified across all focus groups that could be building blocks for the District as it develops its DEI comprehensive plan.

#### 1. Engagement and caring

Students, parents and staff volunteered on their own time to participate in the focus group. They were engaged in the questions and wanted to help improve the school environment to be inclusive and more equitable.

*"I want diligence on district's part to stay in and work on this. Be realistic and serious about real change."*

#### 2. Supportive relationships with staff

The majority of participants responded that they had a relationship with a staff person and/or a teacher.

*" Online schooling teacher set up program to talk about our feelings. She set up live meets for students who wanted to talk."*

*"Had the best teacher conference in years this year because we talked beyond the academics, we discussed issues of adjustment."*

*"At a faculty meeting the principal looked at everyone, acknowledged their exhaustion and expressed her concern and suggested they leave early and go out for a walk."*

1

### 3. Support for DEI improvements

Groups expressed a desire for more support, tools, activities and opportunities to foster a more equitable school environment. Students, parents and staff shared examples they would like to see more of.

*"I want time to build depth and breadth of this work to create safety in doing this work district wide. I want the time and resources to learn and explore and do this well and be productive. All of this will take time and energy."*

*"We don't want anyone left behind and anyone pushed ahead. This is forever work. Not just a short- term initiative."*

*"I feel like we should have clubs about racial issues similar to the SAGA group to help us learn and be aware of other people and their experiences and have activities related to this as well. To have different ways of learning for people."*

### 4. Building Upon Successful Outcomes

Students, parents, and staff gave examples of activities, interventions and approaches that had helped to interrupt and correct bullying and bias as well as to s help non-white students have more of a sense of belonging in their school.

*"As a parent I worked with a teacher when my child was the recipient of bias hazing by another student. Together we talked with the students and the other parents. It resulted in the students taking leadership against bullying and building a stronger relationship with each other."*

*"My child's classroom teachers over several years invited me into their classroom to share information about our culture's history, traditions and celebrations."*

*"I like it when the teacher takes time for us to talk about what is happening."*

*"When I had a Black teacher in elementary school I felt it easier to relate to them and tell them how I feel."*



## V. Issues to Address

### 1. Racial Bias

In a school community that is a majority White, Black, Biracial, and non-White people stand out. In Lincoln SD, Whites and non-Whites noticed how non-White students were often treated differently. White and non-White students could be exhibiting similar behaviors or participate in the same incident and the White student behavior would be described in "developmental terms" – (he or she is assertive). While the Black student's behavior would be described in "behavioral terms" – (he or she is aggressive or acting out).

*"My child has darker skin and she is described as bossy and bully-like and the white kids are described as assertive."*

*"This year – I feel more like a target in class – called out for small things and yelled at but not the white kids. For example if I stand up I get yelled at but not the white kids."*

*"They assume I'm not as smart because I am not from a good educated place."*

*Anecdotal from son: "certain children are disciplined and others get away with more."*

*"Don't always feel our resilience and flexibility is understood and respected."*

### 2. Parent Communication

White parents reported higher satisfaction in being listened to and respected by school staff than non-white parents. Non-white parents expressed frustration in how they had to advocate for themselves in order to have their concerns addressed. A key factor was the timeframe it took for a concern to be addressed. Both White and non-White parents also described examples of support from the district.

*"Been in lots of districts. Feel questions responded to quickly. Feel my student is more supported here."*

2

*"Generally yes and positive in particular around special ed."*

*"I can go to the classroom teacher for help with my child."*

*"We are hands on parents but imagine children and parents who don't feel like they can push back. I have felt like a guest and I have been there for eight years. Some parents just endure."*

*"They are getting a great education. I am still not happy because of how hard I have to fight for my children."*

*"Now I do feel it is happening but it was a process to get there. I had to get involved with the teachers, PTA, and lots of activities. They are especially careful about not walking over my child but it took seven years to get there."*

### 3. School Discipline

Two main concerns were in regards to school disciplinary practices. First, non-White students expressed, and others perceived that they received stricter and more disciplinary actions by teachers than white students. Secondly, all groups noted that there were inconsistencies on how discipline was administered. Participants stated that there seemed to be no clear policy and practice that was being followed by staff.

*"Students of color seem to get more disciplined – impression that has been there for a number of years."*

*"The Metco students are looked at through a racial lens."*

*"Staff often doesn't have a full cultural context to understand the black child experience. They see certain behavior as aggressive by Blacks but not by Whites."*

*"Black students are perceived 'guilty' vs. innocent.*

*"Our consistency can vary."*

*"Depends on student and adults involved – lack of consistency."*

*"When it reaches point that parent is involved, then there is an action plan for how to manage a student."*

*"I can lean on my colleagues and can ask for help, but lack of policy is an issue."*

### 4. Boston – Lincoln Connection

Students, staff and parents expressed a wish for more structure and support for students and families to interact and have shared activities. It was noted several times that there seemed to be more structured events in prior years.

*"Feels like in the past, METCO students and school and community did a much better job of making Boston feel more part of the community. Families used to take them into their homes. Staff and community don't seem to make the same effort as used to happen."*

*"Students used to go to each other's houses. Reverse visiting buses. Events were organized once a month. Now there is definitely less interaction back and forth. Seems increasingly difficult to find people to be host families."*

### 5. Staff Diversity

The one AIDE issue that all groups advocated for was more Black and diverse staff. Non-White students expressed how important it is to have a teacher that *"looked like me"* for a sense of belonging. White students, parents, and staff also agreed to the benefits of a more diverse staff to everyone's education as well as overall.

*"Very difficult to be only one or two in the room."*

*"In Lincoln they need to make more of an effort to recruit teachers of color. This is not the focus of this district. You come into the building and all you see are pictures of white people (students) everywhere."*

*"I think you would learn more about personal experience if you had black teachers. Better way to learn about how people go through racism and also is better for students of color who have someone who looks like them."*

*"Students need to see teachers and administrators who look like them. They need role models."*

*"For us Black students someone to reach out to – can't go to a White teacher all the time – in 5th grade there was a Black teacher and it was very helpful – if I got called out by her– I didn't have to worry if it was racist."*

*"I've had a Black teacher and I learned so much more because I get to learn more personally about their experience."*

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*including their race, have shaped their own education experiences and inform their interpretations of student behavior. White educators need to engage in their own learning and critical self-reflection to understand how their lives and views have been shaped by their unearned advantage and experiences as white people and actively build their knowledge of how the legacy of race, racism, and systemic oppression are operating in schools and communities today."*
*- National Equity Project*



## VI. Suggestions

*"During this painful time, let us work together to be a light to break the darkness that silence can bring. Let us facilitate education, healing, connection, and let us support each other and our communities. Every one of us needs to be part of the solution and we must work together to ensure that there is justice for all." - Taken from the Lincoln SD AIDE statement*

We offer the following suggestions for addressing the issues identified by the focus group participants.

### 1. Include AIDE as part of the staff development program

To address racial bias and provide staff a full understanding and a skill set to be an AIDE educator. Topics to include but not be limited to are:

- Understanding the impact of systemic racism and implicit bias and corrective measures
- Communication skills to discuss race, privilege and bias with students, peers and families
- Intervention strategies when there are incidents dealing with micro-aggressions and bias.
- Culturally relevant K-8 curriculum to give students a historical and social-emotional learning and appreciation of race and diversity.
- Learning approaches that build trust and rapport across race, class, and culture to ensure enhanced communication.

*"Educators need regular opportunities to increase their self-awareness about how their various social identities,*

### 2. Establish a consistent school discipline policy and practice

- That provides guidance for staff, students and parents.
- That is monitored on an ongoing basis to check for any disparity in its application.
- That provides staff training and coaching to support discipline practices that are bias free and developmental versus punitive.

### 3. Hire and support a diverse staff.

This will take an intentional plan of action to identify a pool of diverse candidates for school district openings. This plan should also include a system for current minority staff and new hires to support their full participation and recognition in district activities.

### 4. Foster Boston- Lincoln communication and connection

There is a built in structural as well as a racial divide between the two communities. Even with best intentions by district and individuals from both communities it is a challenging bridge to cross. It will take an intentional program approach to build the relationships and trust between Boston parents and school staff. It will be important to continue the conversations with the Boston parents and staff to ensure their concerns are heard and addressed. In additional planned activities and strategies will be needed to build relationships between Boston and Lincoln students and their families.

### 5. Build internal capacity

Develop an AIDE Advocate Team. This team could provide support and assistance in monitoring and

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addressing the issues raised in this report as well as in the following areas to support the District's AIDE goals.

- Act as "bridge builders" to strengthen relationships across the school community.
- Act as advocates to ensure district policies and practices operate outside of bias.
- Provide training and resources to the school community to enhance the awareness of diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Be a response team when incidents occur related to bias and prejudice.
- Provide support for the District AIDE Coordinator.

## 6. Additional resources

The following organizations have free resources that could assist with the recommendations made in this report and to support AIDE work in the Lincoln School District.

1. Teaching Tolerance – Southern Poverty Law Center: www.tolerance.org
2. National Equity Project: www.nationalequityproject.org
3. Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium: www.maec.org
4. Aspen Institute – Call to Action: www.aspensintitute.org
5. National School Climate Center: www.schoolclimate.org
6. A Guide to Equity and Antiracism for Educators – Edutopia – George Lucas Education Foundation



## VII. Conclusion

The results of the Focus Groups pointed out some strengths as well as areas needing to be addressed. The suggestions give some directions for moving forward. This combined with the District Administrative Council Leadership team commitment to address AIDE as a district priority is a good foundation. (See Appendix III to see the equity items they identified for the district.) As stated earlier there is commitment from students, parents and staff to address the racial disparities identified and to go beyond correction to creating a school community that embraces diversity, equity and inclusion.

In one of the focus groups of students, the facilitator asked: *"If you could wave a magic wand to make a change you'd like to see for Lincoln School District, what would it be?"* One student offered a strong recommendation on how to go forward.

*"If we just had more discussions about race and had a more culturally diverse curriculum it would be good for everyone. Not my White friends fault she didn't know when Black History Month is.  It's a problem – in order to be global citizens, we need to know about who we are going to be sharing the world with.  We can't have ignorant people running the world. "*

Submitted by:
Joyce Shabazz, Evolution LLC
Ira Baumgarten, Building Caring Schools Program
12/18/20

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**Appendix B: Survey Items within Categories**

**Student Survey Grades 3-5**

*Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment*
1. At the beginning of a lesson, how often do you know what you are going to be learning?
2. How often do you understand the main idea being taught in each lesson?
3. How often do your teachers explain what good work looks like on assignments and projects?
4. Do your teachers usually known when you are confused and help you understand?
5. Do your teachers ask you to share what you have learned in a lesson?
6. Do your teachers respect your ideas and suggestions?
7. How often do your teachers show you how to respect different opinions in class?
8. How often do your teachers give you feedback that helps you learn?

*School Belonging*
1. How much support do the adults at your school give you?
2. How well do people at your school understand you as a person?
3. How much respect do students at your school show you?
4. Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?

*School Climate*
1. How positive or negative is the energy of the school?
2. How fair or unfair are the rules for the students at this school?
3. At your school, how much does the behavior of other students hurt or help your learning?
4. How often do your teachers seem excited to be teaching your classes?

*School Engagement*
1. How excited are you about going to your classes?
2. In your classes, how excited are you to participate?
3. When you are not in school, how often do you talk about ideas from your classes?
4. How interested are you in your classes?

*School Rigorous Expectations*
1. How often do your teachers make you explain your answers?
2. When you feel like giving up, how likely is it that your teachers will make you keep trying?
3. How much do your teachers encourage you to do your best?
4. How often do your teachers take time to make sure you understand what you're learning?
5. Overall, how high are your teachers' expectations of you?

*School Teacher-Student Relationships*
1. How respectful are your teachers towards you?
2. If you were upset in class, how concerned would your teachers be?
3. When your teachers ask, "How are you?", how often do you feel that your teachers really want to know your answer?
4. How excited would you be to have your teachers again?

**Student Survey Grades 6-8**

*Cultural Awareness and Action (Adult Focus)*
1. How often do teachers encourage you to learn about people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?
2. When there are major news events related to race, how often do adults at your school talk about them with students?

*Cultural Awareness and Action (Student Focus)*
1. How often do you think about what someone of a different race, ethnicity, or culture experiences?
2. How confident are you that students at your school can have honest conversations with each other about race?
3. At your school, how often are you encouraged to think more deeply about race-related topics with other students?
4. How often do students at your school have important conversations about race, even when they might be uncomfortable?
5. How well does your school help students speak out against racism?
6. How comfortable are you sharing your thoughts about race-related topics with other students at your school?

*Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment*
1. At the beginning of a lesson, how often do you know what you are going to be learning?
2. How often do you understand the main idea being taught in each lesson?
3. How often do your teachers explain what good work looks like on assignments and projects?
4. Do your teachers usually known when you are confused and help you understand?
5. Do your teachers ask you to share what you have learned in a lesson?
6. Do your teachers respect your ideas and suggestions?
7. How often do your teachers show you how to respect different opinions in class?
8. How often do your teachers give you feedback that helps you learn?

*Diversity and Inclusion*
1. How often do you spend time at school with students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?
2. How often do you have classes with students from different racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds?
3. At your school, how often do students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures hang out with each other?
4. At your school, how common is it for students to have close friends from different racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds?
5. How fairly do students at your school treat people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?
6. How fairly do adults at your school treat people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?

*School Belonging*
1. How well do people at your school understand you as a person?
2. How much do you matter to others at this school?

3. How much respect do students in your school show you?
4. Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?

### School Climate
1. How positive or negative is the energy of the school?
2. How fair or unfair are the rules for the students at this school?
3. At your school, how much does the behavior of other students hurt or help your learning?
4. How often do your teachers seem excited to be teaching your classes?

### School Engagement
1. How excited are you about going to your classes?
2. In your classes, how eager are you to participate?
3. How often do you get so focused on activities in your classes that you lose track of time?
4. When you are not in school, how often do you talk about ideas from your classes?
5. Overall, how interested are you in your classes?

### School Rigorous Expectations
1. How often do your teachers make you explain your answers?
2. When you feel like giving up on a difficult task, how likely is it that your teachers will make you keep trying?
3. How much do your teachers encourage you to do your best?
4. How often do your teachers take time to make sure you understand what you're learning?
5. Overall, how high are your teachers' expectations of you?

### School Teacher-Student Relationships
1. How many of your teachers are respectful towards you?
2. If you were upset in class, how many of your teachers would be concerned?
3. If you came back to visit class three years from now, how many of your teachers would be excited to see you?
4. When your teachers ask how you are doing, how many of them are really interested in your answer?
5. How many of your teachers would you be excited to have again in the future?

## Family Survey

### School Climate
1. To what extent do you think that children enjoy going to your child's school?
2. How motivating are the classroom lessons at your child's school?
3. How fair or unfair is the school's system of assessing and grading children?
4. How much does the school value the diversity of children's backgrounds?
5. How well do administrators at your child's school create a school environment that helps all children learn?
6. Overall, how much respect do you think the children at your child's school have for the staff?
7. Overall, how much respect do you think the staff at your child's school have for the children?

8. Overall, how much respect do you think the staff at your child's school have for families?

*School Fit*
1. How much of a sense of belonging does your child feel at their school?
2. How well do you feel your child's school is preparing them for their next academic year?
3. How well do the activities offered at your child's school match their interests?
4. At your child's school, how well does the overall approach to discipline work for your child?
5. How comfortable is your child in asking for help from school adults?
6. Given your child's cultural background, how good a fit is their school?
7. How well do the teaching styles of your child's teachers match your child's learning style?

**Faculty Survey**

*Belonging*
1. How well do your colleagues at school understand you as a person?
2. How connected do you feel to other adults at your school?
3. How much respect do colleagues in your school show you?
4. How much do you matter to others at your school?
5. How much do you feel your voice is heard?
6. Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?

*Cultural Awareness and Action (Adult Focus)*
1. How often do school leaders encourage you to teach about people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?
2. How often do you think about what colleagues of different races, ethnicities, or cultures experience?
3. How confident are you that adults at your school can have honest conversations with each other about race?
4. At your school, how often are you encouraged to think more deeply about race-related topics?
5. How often do adults at your school have important conversations about race, even when they might be uncomfortable?
6. How comfortable are you discussing race-related topics with your colleagues?
7. When there are major news events related to race, how often do adults at your school talk about them with each other?
8. How well does your school help staff speak out against racism?

*Cultural Awareness and Action (Student Focus)*
1. How often are students given opportunities to learn about people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?
2. How often do you think about what students of different races, ethnicities, or cultures experience?
3. How confident are you that adults at your school can have honest conversations with students about race?

4. At your school, how often are students encouraged to think more deeply about race-related topics?
5. How comfortable are you discussing race-related topics with your students?
6. How often do students at your school have important conversations about race, even when they might be uncomfortable?
7. When there are major news events related to race, how often do adults at your school talk about them with students?
8. How well does your school help students speak out against racism?

*Educating All Students*
1. How easy do you find interacting with students at your school who are from a different cultural background than your own?
2. How comfortable would you be incorporating new material about people from different backgrounds into your curriculum?
3. How knowledgeable are you regarding where to find resources for working with students who have unique learning needs?
4. If students from different backgrounds struggled to get along in your class, how comfortable would you be intervening?
5. How easy would it be for you to teach a class with groups of students from very different religions from each other?
6. In response to events that might be occurring in the world, how comfortable would you be having conversations about race with your students?
7. How easily do you think you could make a particularly overweight student feel like a part of class?
8. How comfortable would you be having a student who could not communicate well with anyone in class because his/her home language was unique?
9. When a sensitive issue of diversity arises in class, how easily can you think of strategies to address the situation?

*Professional Learning About Equity*
1. How valuable are the equity-focused professional development opportunities?
2. When it comes to promoting culturally responsive practices, how helpful are your colleagues' ideas for improving your practice?
3. How often do professional development opportunities help you explore new ways to promote equity in your practice?
4. Overall, how effective has your school administration been in helping you advance student equity?

*Staff-Family Relationships*
1. How often do you individually communicate with the families of your students?
2. When you face challenges with students, how supportive are the families?
3. At your school, how respectful are the parents toward you?
4. How challenging is it to communicate with the families of your students?

**Staff Survey**

*Belonging*
1. How well do your colleagues at school understand you as a person?
2. How connected do you feel to other adults at your school?
3. How much respect do colleagues in your school show you?
4. How much do you matter to others at your school?
5. Overall, how much do you feel like you belong at your school?

*Cultural Awareness and Action (Adult Focus)*
1. How often do you think about what colleagues of different races, ethnicities, or cultures experience?
2. How confident are you that adults at your school can have honest conversations with each other about race?
3. At your school, how often are you encouraged to think more deeply about race-related topics?
4. How comfortable are you discussing race-related topics with your colleagues?
5. How often do adults at your school have important conversations about race, even when they might be uncomfortable?
6. When there are major news events related to race, how often do adults at your school talk about them with each other?
7. How well does your school help staff speak out against racism?

*Professional Learning About Equity*
1. At your school, how valuable are the equity-focused professional development opportunities?
2. When it comes to promoting culturally responsive practices, how helpful are your colleagues' ideas for improving your practice?
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