Every Student, Every Day

An Update on the District's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Initiative

The Root Cause Analysis:
The Findings and Our Future
Session #2

March 28, 2022

Partnerships for Change

Partnerships Make it Possible

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Strategic Partnerships

Without the dedication of financial resources, the Root Cause Analysis process would not have occurred. The District extends its appreciation to the:

Irvington Education Foundation (IEF)
Irvington Faculty Association (IFA)
Irvington Parent Teacher Association (PTSA)

Irvington Board of Education

Brian Friedman, President

David Graeber, Vice President

Beth Propper, Vice President

Maura Gedid, Trustee

Michael Hanna, Trustee (2020-21)

Erin Bernstein, Trustee

Jayne Wissner, Trustee

Susan Brunenavs, Trustee (2021-22)

The Irvington UFSD staff members, faculty, and administrators

The NYU partnership

The NYU Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools - *who are they?*

- The NYU Metro Center advances equity and excellence in education, connecting to legacies of justice work through critical inquiry and research, professional development and technical assistance, community action and collaboration.

- They are committed to social justice and the amplification of youth and parent/community voice, meaningful dialogue and interaction to honor and respect all people.

Considering NYU's 40+ years of community-facing research on this critical subject, the District contracted with them to facilitate Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Lead Learner training and a Root Cause Analysis to provide the necessary learning to guide shifts in the school community and to identify areas where change should occur.

What is Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (CR-SE)?

Through six, full-day learning sessions, a representative group of school community members met to "critically examine the racial and cultural components of their educational institution's beliefs, policies, practices, and procedures, and how each shapes an educator's everyday interactions with students and families. The series works towards cultivating a training experience where educators begin to:

- Develop mindsets that eliminate educational barriers;

- Embrace asset-based pedagogy;

- Understand how to use race and culture to improve educational outcomes;

- Engage in a process of self-transformation in order to ensure equitable outcomes for all; and

- Reach an understanding that education is a social experience that requires both culturally responsive dialogues and relationships to develop."

Root Cause Analysis: The Findings

Root Cause Analysis

What is a Root Cause Analysis and why have one performed?

The Root Cause Process consisted of technical assistance sessions with the District's Root Cause Team. With the support of NYU, the team collected and reviewed qualitative and quantitative data to identify the possible causes of disproportionality, as well as possible solutions to disproportionality and inequitable outcomes.

NYU conducted a six-part series that identified root causes of inequitable outcomes. The goal of the Root Cause Analysis was to:

- Identify the possible root causes and compounding factors of disproportionality and larger inequities;
- Examine and identify beliefs, policies, practices, and procedures that contribute to disparate outcomes;
- Explore how race, culture, and privilege perpetuate inequities and disproportionality; and
- Develop a research based plan designed to address identified root causes.

Root Cause Analysis: What did we learn?

The Findings:

The Root Cause Process identified multiple areas where students of color were disproportionately affected. While the Root Cause Analysis Team's work was comprehensive, data review must be on-going and explore areas not yet explored.

Key Themes and Priorities *(Determined by the Root Cause Analysis team)*:

1. Culturally Responsive Restorative Practices
2. Teaching and Learning
3. Professional Learning and Development
4. Family and Community Engagement

The District supplemented the recommended priorities with an additional goal:

1. Human resources processes and procedures/recruitment and retention of diverse employees

The Findings:

Analysis of the discipline data concluded the following:

- IUFSD's Black and Latino/Latina students are at a disproportionately high risk of receiving disciplinary referrals and/or suspensions when compared to their White and Asian peers. (NYU 11-15 {2018-2019 data}; NYU 15-19 {2019-2020 data})

Note: During the Root Cause Analysis Process other subgroups of students were discussed, such as students with disabilities and those with limited economic resources, as well as discrepancies in disciplinary data for students of color based on gender, but no findings are memorialized in the report. This represents opportunities for further research.

Key Findings: Academics

The Findings:

Analysis of the academic data concluded the following:

- IUFSD's White and Asian students are overrepresented in AP and Honors enrollment at the secondary level. IUFSD's Black and Latino/Latina students are generally performing at a lower level than their peers at the elementary level and at a disproportionately high level of risk for failing a course (English/Math/Social Studies/Science) at the elementary level (NYU 19-25 {2018-2019 data}; NYU 26-30 {2019-20 data})

Note: During the Root Cause Analysis Process other subgroups of students were discussed, such as students with disabilities and those with limited economic resources, as well as discrepancies in disciplinary data for students of color based on gender, but no findings are memorialized in the report. This represents opportunities for further research.

The Findings:

Analysis of the District's student support systems concluded the following:

- NYU's report concludes that District-provided data "provides a sense of the wide spectrum of supports and interventions [that] students are offered in the District. Particularly from the elementary level there is a distinct vision from leadership of what the multi-tiered system of support looks like and the academic and behavior pathways available to students.

- That said, across the K-12 spectrum, **interventions are not grounded in culturally responsive practices" (NYU 39, see also Table 18d, NYU 39-40). The report recommends that IUFSD should increase the grounding of MTSS Referrals and Tiered Supports in "equity, diversity and inclusion" and "culturally responsive implementation**" (Table 18e, NYU 41).

The Findings:

In June 2021, 120 staff members completed an NYU-developed survey.

- NYU found the following areas of strength:
  - Staff maintains a high level of ownership and accountability for student success;
  - Staff maintains a high level of awareness when it comes to understanding and acknowledging their professional responsibility;
  - Staff focuses on the strengths of students, not on perceived weaknesses (i.e. staff shows a low level of "deficit-thinking" when it comes to students);
  - 91% of respondents feel they can refer students to resources for academic and behavioral interventions.

- **NYU recommends increased professional learning and development targeted to the following areas in need of improvement:**
  - **"Color evasiveness" (avoidance of substantive discussion or acknowledgement of race);**
  - **Racial/cultural understanding and knowledge to improve accommodation to the diversity of cultures represented by students; and**
  - **Feedback on teaching practices related to intervention and referral processes.**

Root Cause-Related Focus Areas

What are we doing now to advance the work?

Four Root Cause Focus Areas:

- Culturally Responsive Restorative Practices
  - Review Code of Conduct/documentation currently used in schools
  - Introduce Restorative Practices and related systems - multi-year process

- Teaching and Learning
  - Expand and provide learning in Culturally Responsive teaching practices
  - Introduce CR-SE scorecard as a tool for looking at curriculum through a DEI lens
  - Book clubs to enrich thinking and teaching

- Professional Learning and Development
  - Provide ongoing training in Implicit Bias/CR-SE framework
  - School-, grade-, and department-based; and District-wide

- Family and Community Engagement
  - Develop proactive, clear messaging and communication with families about this work and the intent
  - Expand community engagement in the DEI initiative - additional community forums

What are the goals for moving this work forward?

Additional District Focus Area:

Hiring, Recruitment, Retention

- Review District Hiring Practices including:
    - Anti-bias training for all interview committees
    - Review of interview questions
    - Expand hiring pipeline
    - Mentoring programs/ongoing support for staff
    - Introduction of Affinity Groups
    - Continued participation in diversity job fairs

We need you!

Community work groups

Tonight your feedback is being sought. The information that is being collected, will help to inform the District's planning and prioritization of its work.

At your tables, please identify school community members to fill the following roles:

- Everyone: record your thoughts on the paper

- Reporter: share the group's thinking with the broader group

- Timekeeper: keep the group on track to complete the tasks

- Facilitator: ensure equity of voice, respectful communication, maintenance of open minds and hearts

Community Norms

- **Equity of Voice**
- Listen with respect
- **Listening to understand and not respond**
- Struggle together
- Speak your truth and keep it real
- Intent vs. impact
- Name check - don't use individual's names
- Confidentiality
- Acknowledging harm is a critical step
- **Expect and accept non closure**

Community work groups

Each group will have 30 minutes to participate in providing necessary feedback:

Dedicate 10 minutes to each of the three questions:

1. What is it, from the presentation tonight or your reading of the Root Cause Analysis reports, that surprised you the most? Why is that?
2. What surprised you the least? Why is that?
3. What should the School District's top priorities be? Why?

Answer each of the questions on the paper on your table by:

- Jotting personal thoughts - 2 minutes in silence
- Identify themes or commonalities - 3 minutes in collaboration
- Determine that which you want to report and write it down - 5 minutes
- Share out to larger group

How can you help?

In the near future, you will receive a communication from the District inquiring if you wish to participate in committees to advance this important initiative. Prior to this evening, we had planned for them to include:

- **Code of Conduct**
  - To be supplemented with students and staff members

Tonight's discussion and community reporting may introduce new opportunities for collaboration that will be identified. Also, feedback from community workgroups will be summarized and shared with the school community.

Thank you!

What have been the District's DEI efforts thus far?

- Partnered with NYU Metro Center to facilitate initial efforts
  - Lead Learner Team participated in learning about Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion
  - Root Cause Analysis Team performed a Root Cause Analysis of District practices, policies, and student opportunities

- Professional Development
  - At various levels, in each school, with <u>multiple partners</u>
  - Community-wide programs
  - District-level professional learning opportunities:
    - Keynote speakers in 2019-20 and 2020-21
    - Led by external experts and District leadership

- Curriculum Review
  - During summer curriculum work & faculty meetings, teachers have begun to use a DEI lens to look at instructional resources

Importantly, this work has been supported by the BOE, PTSA, IEF and IFA

Creation of more targeted, specific goals

Now that the District has completed the Root Cause Analysis and is expanding its knowledge base and expertise, the development of more concise goals are possible.

The following is an example of a goal the District can embrace:

Increase school leaders and teachers' capacity to design, adapt, and implement a culturally responsive curriculum that emphasizes students' intellectual engagement, collaboration, ownership and autonomy.

Evidence of goal attainment can be found in:

- Improved racial literacy to identify and avoid inequities in our schools
- Implementation of equitable classroom practices
- Increase CR-SE literature collections in all classrooms
- Curriculum review progress utilized CR-SE scorecard to assess and revise units of study and assessments
- Revised Code of Conduct

DEI Initiative: What has been our goal?

The District has maintained a goal to: *provide welcoming environments for every student and their families and to provide equal opportunities and access for all students.*

This is work that is *owned and led* within our school community.

- This is not the work or initiative of external voices or consultants; however, it will engage experts in the field
    - But no one single entity shall inform the work

- NYSED guidelines and expectations will be adhered to

- Our faculty members, administrators, staff members, students, parents and community members' voices will continuously be welcomed and honored

- Our progress will be deliberate, steady and purposeful

How have we defined our goal and commitment?

The District is **committed to creating welcoming school communities** for our students and their families. Such a commitment requires the **assurance of equitable access for all students to all opportunities** regardless of their identity, race, economic status, ability, etc.

To achieve such a goal, we must always **assess our own readiness** to deliver instruction and services that is reflective of our community and prepare our students for a global society. Further, **we need to evaluate our programs, practices and policies** to ensure no obstacles will interfere with student access and opportunity.

Here, we knew **we needed support and guidance**.

How have we defined our goal and commitment?

We are a school district that has a **commitment to each student, their success and growth.**

To this end, we are committed to providing the very best, most enriching education in an environment that is **culturally responsive, embraces diversity, equity and inclusion, and is proactive in fostering social and emotional well-being.**

This can be challenging work, which will involve time to assess our readiness and identify the most appropriate entry points.

This work will be never ending!

What have been the District's DEI efforts thus far?

Professional Development & Learning

- November Superintendent's Conference Day - focus on Culturally Responsive Teaching
  - Welcoming & Affirming Environments - Elementary
  - Student Voice - Secondary

- Faculty meetings
  - October/November - Identity
  - December/January - Looking at curriculum through a DEI lens

- Book Clubs
  - Elementary/Secondary - *Cultivating Genius,* Dr. Gholdy Muhammad
  - Secondary - *Culturally Responsive Teaching & The Brain*, Z. Hammond

- Lead Learner Cohort 2 began in January
  - Co-led by District staff

- Addition of a lead CSE Chairperson/Inclusion Coach to support consistent, culturally responsive practices

- Culturally responsive professional development on interview practices is being facilitated

- Planning to introduce Affinity Groups to provide space for conversations

- Budgetary recommendations to support necessary progress and change