Equity in Secondary Schools: Building a Strong Sense of Belonging for Students of Color as a Foundation for Academic Success

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

EQUITY IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: BUILDING A STRONG SENSE OF BELONGING FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR AS A FOUNDATION FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

A CAPSTONE PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

PROGRAM IN ADMINISTRATION AND SUPERVISION

BY

JOSEPH JOAQUIN STEPHENSON

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MAY 2021
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank my indigenous Mexican ancestors who have given their lives to bring me to where I am today. I, and others like me are their hope and dream. I want to thank my mother and father who sacrificed so much to raise me and my two brothers. Thank you for raising us to always hold on to what is true and to fight for those who are unheard. I want to thank my brothers, who protected and guided me in order to move freely as I pursued my education absent of distractions. They have shaped and inspired me to be the man I am today. I want to thank my nephews and nieces who were always on my heart and mind pushing me throughout my journey to completion. May this always be a reminder that the only limitations are the ones we put on ourselves. I want to thank Loyola University and its amazing faculty. I have had the greatest professors in the world and am so grateful for their impact on my professional and personal learning. To my dissertation chair Dr. Edejer, you were my rock and ultimate motivator. Thank you for your unwavering support in realizing my dream.
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ABSTRACT

The problem of practice I am investigating are students who identify as Black and Latinx who are experiencing a statistically significant low sense of belonging at Riverview High School in comparison to their White and Asian counterparts, based on survey data for the past two years. Research has shown that students’ sense of belonging stem from four major factors (1) friendship nominations, (2) time on extracurricular activities, (3) bonding with teacher, and (4) perceived discrimination. By focusing on targeted programming, this study aims to determine the two solutions that can target low sense of belonging for Black and Latinx students. Sense of belonging is addressed through the use of the CASEL SEL framework and racial equity professional development by way of Beyond Diversity to set the conditions to designing and implementing SEL curriculum while targeting the elimination of racial bias among staff. These two solutions strengthen the aforementioned four dimensions of student sense of belonging in a high school setting.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Knowing thyself, as the term goes, is an essential foundation for students and staff. Who we are and where we want to go in terms of making a positive contribution in the world to support others and honor our ancestors is important to sustain a true sense of self.

I am a brown Mexican-American, cisgender, heterosexual, bilingual (English and Spanish) person who was born and raised in the northwest side of Chicago’s Humboldt Park neighborhood. Raised by a single mother with two brothers, I attended Chicago Public Schools for most of my K-12 experience outside of a two-year stretch in a suburban High School just outside of Indianapolis, Indiana. My mother has always told me for as long as I can remember, “Whatever your school doesn’t teach you about your culture, the contributions of Mexican Indigenous and Mexican-American people of this country, I will.” She would remind me that Mexican Indigenous people have occupied these lands long before European settlers arrived at the eastern shores. I have always been so thankful that my mom filled gaps of historical learning for me which has largely impacted the positive connection I had with school overall.

Knowing my cultural-ethnic history while stepping into classes where I was being taught a curriculum that it was absent in was a clear understanding of whose history was important enough to teach and whose was not. My teachers not highlighting or teaching
in-depth lessons with anyone that looks like me brought me too many moments of cognitive dissonance of what I was learning about the “American Dream” and who really had equal access to that belief. This quote resonates for me as I look back at my public education, Rich (1994) describes,

When those who have the power to name and to socially construct reality choose not to see you or hear you... when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium as if you looked in the mirror and saw nothing. (p. 59)

The first time I have ever heard, seen, or learned about Mexican-American culture and contributions to this country was during my doctoral course work at Loyola University Chicago. It took me 21 years of investing in the educational experience that my country, state, and my city had to offer before one professor, who identified as an African American man, gave me a mirror to see myself, my people, my history, and the legacy that is resonant today for Mexican Indigenous and Mexican-American people.

What would the experience for me and other students of color have been if schools, curriculum, teachers, support staff, and administration worked to not only shift what is being taught in terms of a culturally responsive curriculum but also the hiring of teachers and staff who are warm demanders (Hammond, 2015) with high expectations for their students? The New Teacher Project (TNTP, 2018) report describes its findings that kids need these four key resources in their daily school experiences:

1. Consistent opportunities to work on grade-appropriate assignments.
2. Strong instruction where students do most of the thinking in the lesson.
3. Deep engagement in what they are learning.

4. Teachers who hold high expectations for students and believe they can meet grade-level standards. (TNTP, 2018)

Having those four resources as a part of my learning would have been greatly beneficial. At the conclusion of this research study, I hope my plan can be a resource for current and future high school administrators to guide schools through systems change via an increase in students’ sense of belonging and racial equity transformation to improve educational achievement outcomes for students of color.

**School Site**

Since 2014, White students are no longer the majority student population in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2018) public schools. Public schools have shifted to a minority, majority for students of color. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2018) the percentage distribution of teachers in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity is as follows: White 79%, Black 7%, Hispanic 9%, Asian 2% and Other 3%. With the understanding that our U.S. teaching force holds a disproportionate number of who holds positions in public schools, based on race/ethnicity and at the same time students of color are now the majority, I believe this charges us to investigate student demographic data a bit further.

This capstone project focused on my current leadership role as Associate Principal at Riverview High School (HS). Located outside of a major Midwestern city, Riverview HS is known for its famous alumni, and is a three high school district (Riverview HS, Riverlane HS, and Riverbed HS) serving a total students population of
6,275 students and 388 teachers. At Riverview HS, I serve a total student population of 1,826. Student demographics include 41.2% students who identify as White, 31.9% Asian, 20.2% Hispanic/Latinx, 4.2% Black and 2.5% two or more races (see Table 1).

Table 1

**Demographics of Teacher and Student Population - Riverview HS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics by Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>91.8%</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latinx</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the fall of 2019, Riverview HS started a collaboration with Panorama Education which is a data research company, based out of Boston, that have created scientific based research surveys for schools to get a clear sense of students' social emotional and equity and inclusion well-being. Riverview decided to collaborate with Panorama as it supports over 10 million students in 17,000 schools, 1,500 districts, 49 states, and 15 countries. Over the past eight years, they have seen how data play a powerful role in improving school climate and culture, teaching and learning, family and community engagement, and students' social-emotional learning. The social emotional learning (SEL) and the equity and inclusion surveys are the instruments Riverview decided to prioritize in order to gather aggregate data directly from students. The analysis of the data has given us a clear understanding of our students' perceptions and lived
experiences in relation to SEL and equity and inclusion at Riverview. Following the 2019 administration of the Panorama student survey at Riverview, the equity and inclusion portion showed a stark reality of how students are experiencing school-based from four categories: Diversity and Inclusion, Cultural Awareness and Action, Teacher Student Relationships, and Sense of Belonging (see Table 2). The data allowed me to see clearly two specific problem areas to focus on. These areas of Teacher Student Relationships and Sense of Belonging situated us in the lowest percentile group (0-19th) based on student responses. The student response rate for the 2019 survey was 85%.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Percent Favorability</th>
<th>Compared to Others Nationally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity &amp; Inclusion</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>40th - 59th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Awareness &amp; Action</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>20th - 39th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Student Relationships</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>0 - 19th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Belonging</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>0 - 19th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Action steps to follow were to conduct two school wide student voice Panorama survey presentations. The first presentation was a qualitative approach, where five students either wrote a letter to be read by a staff member or submitted a voice over, with images the students wanted teachers to see while their personal stories of experiencing racist practices were elevated in August of 2020. The second presentation was in October of 2020, which focused on the quantitative of the areas of growth. This allowed us to
present the data in aggregate as it was important based on unfortunate feedback received from teachers as they continued to move away from the issue at hand by devaluing the aforementioned student experiences. By November of 2020, the second student survey administration was completed, and needless to say, many stakeholders were eager to view the results (see Table 3). The 2020 survey gave us, as a building, a few glows and one glaring grow. The favorability rating increased in four out of the four categories which was a clear indication that teachers were responding in new ways with students. One category of growth drew our eye, as it was still the lowest of the four, sense of belonging. I then investigated the response favorability per question under the sense of belonging topic (see Table 4). Under the sense of belonging category, we found a decrease by 1% in the response favorability for, “How connected do you feel to adults at your school?” Subsequently, the next step was to take that same question from 2019 and 2020 and disaggregate the responses by race/ethnicity. The findings were visible and told the story of a problem that exists with students’ sense of belonging at Riverview and the work ahead (see Table 4).

Table 3

\textit{SEL and the Equity and Inclusion Surveys from Fall of 2020}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Percent Favorability</th>
<th>Compared to Others Nationally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity &amp; Inclusion</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>80th - 99th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Awareness &amp; Action</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>80th - 99th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Student Relationships</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>40- 59th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Belonging</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>20 - 39th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4

*Sense of Belonging Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Sense of Belonging Question</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Percent Favorability Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>How connected do you feel to adults in your school?</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>Asian - 38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Black - 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic/Latinx - 28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Two or more races - 44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White - 38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>How connected do you feel to adults in your school?</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Asian - 39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Black - 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hispanic/Latinx - 30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Two or more races - 38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>White - 37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To get to a place of racial equity for my high school students, I must search for the root cause(s). Research has informed me that there is a strong correlation to a social emotional component, sense of belonging, that has an effect on student academic outcomes. Meeting the social emotional needs of high school students who have become disconnected from school is the challenge of our time in education (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). A focused immersion from past researchers have found the importance of fulfilling the need to belong in educational contexts (Maslow, 1962). These researchers highlight the importance of a caring school environment that facilitates a sense of community and a feeling of belongingness among students (Osterman, 2000). This feeling of belongingness is often defined in the literature as a sense of school belonging. One definition that keeps surfacing as an accepted definition of school
belonging is “the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment” also using the label school membership (Goodenow, 1993). Multiple studies in the last 20 years have concluded that having a sense of school belonging is firmly correlated to student functioning such as students’ school motivation, their social-emotional functioning such as their self-esteem, their classroom behaviour and their academic achievement (Osterman, 2000; Faircloth & Hamm, 2005; St.Amand et al., 2017; Korpershoek et al., 2020; Matthews, 2020; Petrokubi et al., 2019; Simmons et al., 2018)

**Systemic Analysis – Factors Contributing to the Problem**

Factors contributing to the problem supports a two-year trend of our students who identify as White, Asian and Two or More Races experiencing a higher sense of belonging than our Black and Latinx students. The problem of social injustice further extends itself when the question under the sense of belonging category is asked “How connected do you feel to adults at your school?” We see the lowest favorability rating for Black and Latinx youth as low as 19%. The social injustice of not having all students experience a heightened sense of school belonging is ever present in the racial stratification of the Panorama data. The racially homogeneous teaching staff identifies as 91.8% White, while our students who identify as Black represent 4.2% and 20.2% for Latinx students. Mounting evidence suggests teacher–child race/ethnicity matching and classroom diversity benefit Black and Latinx children's academic and socioemotional development (Rasheed et al., 2019). Making a coordinated and concerted effort to recruit and retain educators of color in effort to closer match our student demographics at
Riverview would be a priority in order to mitigate the current negative impact and increase the sense of belonging for our students of color. In addition, I believe we must support our current staff by offering professional development on anti-racism. Based on the construct of current teacher prep programs the probability of our current teachers being exposed to anti-racism training and critical racial self-reflection on one's own social construction of race is unlikely. A professional development plan will act as a pathway of support for our current teachers to deepen their understanding of individual, institutional, and systemic racism. It will also afford us, as a building, to engage in a courageous conversation about race with a common understanding of terms, vocabulary, history, and tools to have productive inter-racial and intra-racial discourse on the impact and implications of the social injustice of racism to the sense of belonging for students of color (Singleton, 2006).

As I stated prior, research has also informed me that there is a strong correlation to a social emotional component, sense of belonging, that has an effect on student academic outcomes. Meeting the social emotional needs of high school students who have become disconnected from school is the challenge of our time in education (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). The focus on constructing a comprehensive Tier 1 building wide Social Emotional Learning (SEL) structure using the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) five SEL competencies will offer Riverview HS a scientifically researched program that, when implemented with fidelity, carries positive results (Petrokubi et al., 2019). As James Baldwin once said, “The paradox of education is precisely this – that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the
society in which [they are] being educated.” SEL implementation will equip all students and staff with the understanding that all learning is social emotional and all learning is mediated by relationships that sit in a sociopolitical, racialized context for all children, not just those who are Black and Brown. Social emotional learning allows us access to a bridge to recognize the accessibility and opportunity to heal and acknowledge that we have all been impacted by the ugly truth of racism and systemic oppression of marginalized communities of color. This also allows us, as a high school, to create learning environments that center student voice and agency. My students deserve to be a part of the critique and development of what they are learning and how they are learning it, especially from students on the margins. Why not have them a part of the change in order to not only see themselves represented in history and curriculum but to ensure they are nurtured and affirmed in their humanity as full citizens. Moving to a school environment where a true sense of belonging is felt by every student (National Equity Project, n.d.). Through the lens of social emotional learning and racial equity, it is important for our students and staff to have a solidification of who they are as racial, cultural, and ethnic beings.

**Problem of Practice**

The foundation of the problem of practice (POP) is a data informed/student reported low sense of belonging for students at Riverview that identify as Black and Latinx. What is meant by low sense of belonging is a favorability rating of 36% in 2019 and 35% in 2020. When disaggregated by race for the two lowest favorability rates for both years, I see my Latinx students’ sense of belonging favorability rating for 2019 at
28% and 2020 at 30%. When the equivalent is completed for our Black students, I see their sense of belonging favorability rating for 2019 at 20% and 2020 at 19%. This problem has been made clear at Riverview HS for the past two years while using the Panorama Equity and Inclusion survey. What is unknown is how many years prior to 2019 and 2020 Black and Latinx students have felt this way. Other forms of longitudinal data regarding academic achievement, attendance, discipline, over identification in Special Education, and access to Advanced Placement (AP) indicates a pattern of disproportionate outcomes for Black and Latinx students. The data indicates that our Black and Latinx students have been experiencing a low sense of belonging over the past two years, possibly more. This is the problem of practice for the school I serve and is the primary focus of this capstone project.

**Stakeholders and Barriers to Implementation**

Identified barriers that contribute to this problem include (1) the absence of school wide social emotional learning professional development and structures of implementation via Multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) for staff and students at the Tier 1 level (Petrokubi et al., 2019). Another barrier is the absence of a systematic approach to SEL curriculum that reaches across all school contexts is truly missing out on the opportunity for a major contribution to more successful and equitable outcomes for young people (CASEL, 2020). Central to the system of SEL support is a high quality professional learning and the use of data for continuous improvement (CASEL, 2020) and (2) the absence of a scope and sequence of racial equity professional development that will provide a road map for participating in and facilitating interracial dialogue about
racial bias and anti-racism in education to dismantle the aforementioned barriers based on the current structures that act as columns that uphold the status quo of racial oppression (Pollack et al., 2010). Which I believe then disproportionality marginalizes Black and Latinx students’ sense of belonging at Riverview. A research study by Waitoller and Artiles (2013) examined three questions in relation to professional development research for inclusive education. The questions research were: (a) How is inclusive education defined in PD research? (b) How is PD for inclusive education studied? (c) How is teacher learning examined in PD researched for inclusive education? Following their work a recommendation was to design and examine PD efforts using an intersectional approach where teachers can identify and dismantle barriers to learning, engagement, and full participation for all students, especially students of color. Additionally, an acknowledgement from the researchers stated that teacher learning for inclusive education is undertheorized acknowledges the unfortunate barrier of limited research that exists to this day (Waitoller & Artiles, 2013). A resource that will assist me with eliminating barriers is Rucker (2018) who writes about the six flaws of “traditional” professional development which is barrier #3. Rucker illuminates the six biggest downfalls of “status quo” PD. Rucker’s six are (1) traditional PD treats teachers as passive learners, (2) traditional PD is a mile wide and an inch deep, (3) traditional PD involves no ongoing support from an instructional expert, (4) traditional PD isn’t tailored to individual problems of practice, (5) traditional PD doesn’t create space for teachers to reflect on their practice, and (6) traditional PD doesn’t measure its own impact on student
learning. All six are potential barriers to be cognizant of during the construction and implementation of professional learning (Rucker, 2018).

Obstruction and barriers come in many forms, for example another barrier, take for instance to support these two potential solutions we would need as Petrokubi et al. (2019) offered, is an alignment of resources and policies to connect to SEL with larger efforts to transform education in support of equity. We do have the resources to accelerate these efforts but unfortunately, there are no structural policies or procedures to support implementation fidelity and accountability. Another barrier, as inserted by Stegemann and Jaciw (2018), is the absence of a logic model. There must be a strong logic model framework in order to implement inclusive education and unfortunately, there is limited formalized structure at Riverview to allow this work to solidify as a common practice. Addressing this problem of practice with a deliberate, thoughtful, organizational framework for implementation to impact change effectively and efficiently will yield the positive results of increasing students' sense of belonging for our Black and Latinx students. By focusing on the two target areas that will provide students with the support and interventions to meet the specific needs of students across the school. The implementation of CASEL’s SEL framework is a robust, evidence-based model that can be modified to fit the needs of our current problem of practice when implemented with fidelity can provide positive long-term outcomes for our student sense of belonging. A staff/personnel barrier that could surface, based on prior experience, is while being a school without a lack of structure in regards to tier one systems support may situate the
implementation of a formalized SEL curriculum and evaluation alongside racial equity professional development to be met with implicit, explicit, and passive resistance.

The stakeholders needed for implementation of a possible solution are department chairs, instructional coaches, teacher leaders, social worker, psychologist, counselors, and building administration, the Director of Adult Learning, and the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction. A critical aspect of selection is to focus on the individual's ability to fulfill the functions of the essential role, not just the person’s current position or title (Bertram et al., 2015)
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

As discussed in Chapter I, the purpose of this capstone project is to create an implementation plan to improve the sense of belonging for Black and Latinx students at Riverview HS. This literature review will identify several factors supporting the need to focus on the sense of belonging for students of color. First, it is important to discuss the history of racial inequities in the schools. Then, as Osterman (2000) highlights, adolescents' need for a sense of belonging is widely acknowledged as a factor in student motivation and achievement. Next, Faithcloth and Hamm (2005) suggest that the four dimensions of student belonging include (1) friendship nominations, (2) time on extracurricular activities, (3) perceived discrimination, and (4) bonding with teacher. To define the four dimensions: Friendship nominations equate to social integration with peers at school. Time on extracurricular activities is defined as how many hours per week students participate in extracurricular activities. Perceived discrimination are students’ perceptions of how many teachers, other adults at school, or other students were unfair or negative toward the respondent based on his/her/their ethnic background. Bonding with teachers reflects students’ perceptions that teachers cared for and supported them (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005).

The framework I will be using to impact all four dimensions to increase students' sense of belonging for Black and Latinx students in a positive way consists of (1) SEL
structural implementation using the CASEL 5 SEL competencies curriculum, and (2) racial equity professional development continuum. The structured solutions of action will be implemented with fidelity in order to produce positive outputs for increasing the sense of belonging for Black and Latinx high school students at Riverview HS.

**Overview of Racial Inequities in US Schools**

Based on the problem of practice that I am focusing on, which has a historic racial context in educational spaces that are not isolated to Riverview HS, it’s important to frame how we have come to see, so vividly, racial disparities in education. To frame this historical timeline of United States (US) legislation from a critical racial lens is not to move away from the problem of practice I am focused on but rather to assist with understanding the historical conditions that have brought us, who serve in the field of public education, to what we are grappling with today.

Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of the world. (Freire, 1970)

**Brown v. Board of Education, 1954**

Before 1956, the discrimination and dehumanization towards people of color in their pursuit of equal rights in education have been documented case laws. The Plessy v. Ferguson case of 1896 was coined the “capstone of segregation,” in which the rationale of the Roberts court was implemented as a national standard applying to the Fourteenth
Amendment (Alexander, 2012). The court maintained that an 1890 Louisiana law entitled “An Act to Promote the Comfort of Passengers” provided that all railway companies will supply separate accommodations for White and “Colored” races. At the time, this decision was not unconstitutional because state legislatures had wide discretion in promoting public peace and good order, and such actions were allowed to be upheld as long as they were deemed reasonable. This was the spawn of separate-but-equal rational. Although this was not an education-focused case, its decision would pave the trail for 50 years by Justice Harlan stating the following, “Our constitution is colorblind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among its citizens” (Alexander, 2012). In respect to civil rights, “All citizens are equal before the law” (Alexander, 2012). In 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded and in the 1930’s started a movement to fight racial injustice and search out judicial clarification of the limits of separate-but-equal as a legal basis for segregation.

The establishment of separate-but-equal was sent into disequilibrium by the Supreme Court in 1950, in another case involving the University of Texas Law School. During this timeframe and with the mobilization of the NAACP law schools were good targets because judges and lawyers could more readily see the disparate condition in the legal field (Alexander & Alexander, 2009). In this case, a Black man named Sweatt requested admission to the University of Texas Law School because the law state of Texas had no law schools for Black people. A lower-level court ordered that the state set-up a law school for Black people but the school established was not suitable for the needs of any one person. When Sweatt reasserted his claim and challenged the court’s decision
once again. This time the court had no choice but to grant admission for Sweatt at the University of Texas Law School. Concluding this ruling, soon after, the University of Oklahoma (an all-White school) admitted McLaurin, a Black doctoral student in the College of Education who was compelled to sit and study in designated sections for blacks while in the classrooms, library, and dining hall. The court held this treatment unconstitutional as well. Even though these were critical cases towards deconstructing separate-but-equal, they did little to help the elementary and secondary school children who were continually denied equal opportunities.

Brown vs. Board of Education (1954) was the turning point in American history towards racial educational reform deeming racial segregation of schools unconstitutional. This was a significant Supreme Court decision by Chief Justice Warren which paved the way for local courts in the United States to move from “separate but equal” to the desegregation of schools.

The Civil Right Act of 1964

Ten years after the historic desegregation of schools ruled by Brown v. Board of Education, discrimination was at an all-time high. Even though students were allowed to learn in the same environment, the violence and dehumanizing images of injustice that cloaked the lives of Black students were devastating socially and educationally. Following the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Caesar Chavez, Whitney M. Young, Malcolm X, T.R.M. Howard, and many others united the oppressed in many communities, as well non-minorities, who all stood for a common purpose, equal rights for all. On July 2, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act
into law forbidding any racial discrimination in any activity of program that receives any financial support from the Federal Government. This means that public schools may not administer programming with any racial distinctions or with government funding will be revoked. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires that “Racial discrimination be eliminated from classrooms, services to pupils, educational facilities, hiring and assignment of faculty, and parents participation in appropriate school activities” (The United States Commission on Civil Rights, 1966).

*A Nation at Risk 1983*

A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform is the title of a report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education, United States Department of Education. This report is considered a landmark event in modern American history. Commissioned by President Ronald Reagan (1981-1989) to address the educational system failing to meet the national capacity for a competitive workforce. The National Commission on Excellence in Education was led by Secretary of Education T.H. Bell whose commission consisted of 18 members, ranging from the private sector, education, and government. The commission’s focus was to assess the quality of teaching and learning at the primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

The results of the commission who published the Nation at Risk report pointed to national and international underachievement of students in the United States. For example, the report notes that average SAT scores dropped “over 50 points” in the verbal section and “nearly 40 points” in the mathematics section during the period 1963-1980.
Nearly 40% of 17-year-olds tested could not successfully “draw inferences from written material,” and “only one-fifth can write a persuasive essay; and only one-third can solve a mathematics problem requiring several steps” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 11). In comparison to our international industrialized countries, we were not stacking up to the potential of the most powerful country in the world. Our education system was failing our students and in return, the commission made 30 specific recommendations spread over five major categories; standards and expectations, content, time, teaching, leadership, and fiscal support.

To this day, not many states have passed educational reform legislation that impacts the recommendations of the commission. Politicians have given a half-hearted effort, looking different in each state, with bipartisan stalemates, organized special interest groups swaying the momentum, and political inertia seem to be the enablers to mobilizing change. Students suffer the most during this debate and paralyzation to act.

**No Child Left Behind, 2001**

On January 8, 2002, George W. Bush signed Public Law 107-10-No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, “To close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice so that no child is left behind” (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002). Title I - Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged (NCLB, 2002) is a major contributor that changes school districts focus on overall achievement that must be linked to the achievement of all children at the state and local levels. In Section .1001 Statement of Purpose details the following:
The purpose of this title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments. (NCLB, 2002)

Provisions added to Title I that speak to closing the achievement gap or what I would say is a “racial achievement gap” does so by citing 12 purposes of accomplishment. Purpose (1) speaks to what all teachers currently live each day in education, “accountability.” High-quality academic assessments, professional development training, and curriculum must be aligned to state academic standards for the purposes of students, teachers, parents, and administrators to measure progress against common expectations for student academic achievement (NCLB, 2002). Purpose (2) contains language directing state and local educational institutions to meet the educational needs of all students regardless of the limitation, language proficiency, poverty rate, or disability. Purpose (2) highlights one ethnic classification of people for whom this purpose must serve “Indian children” [Native Americans] (NCLB, 2002). This research will probe the rationale of why only one ethnic classification was documented when disparities exist in the U.S. that encompass more than Native Americans (NCLB, 2002).

Purpose (3) sets the charge to specifically close the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students and students with means and others who function at low-income levels. Purpose (4) communicates holding schools, local educational agencies, and States accountable for improving the academic achievement of each
student. Additionally, stated is the responsibility to identify schools performing at a low level and making necessary “turn around” changes in order to provide a high-quality education for the student it serves. Providing students with alternatives in low performing schools to attain a high-quality education is also stated in section 101 of Title I, purpose (4). Alternative options can include charter schools, alternative schools, independent schools, and home-based learning. Purpose (5) direct states and local educational agencies to target resources to “sufficiently” make an impact on school districts and schools with the greatest need (NCLB, 2002).

The provisions stated in NCLB (2002), Title I, section 101 in purposes 1-5 focuses on closing the achievement gap by increasing the achievement levels of all students by making informed decisions based on data in order for districts to decipher who and what classification of students are being left behind academically. The local identification of achievement does not end with the individual or group of students but expands the identification for schools and districts that have been functioning as low performing educational agencies, as it states in purpose (4) and (5). Implementing the expansion of interrupting the reality of the student achievement gap, that exists at all levels, was one of the key factors to directing a plan to finally address what the researcher calls the “racial achievement gap.” The progress of states meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of student achievement, based on standardized test scores, is directly linked to funding. As stated,

Each state shall establish a timeline for adequate yearly progress. The timeline shall ensure that not later than 12 years after the 2001-2002 school year, all
students in each category described in subparagraph (C)(v) will meet or exceed
the State’s standards. (NCLB, 2002 section 111)

Purposes 1-5 in section 101 in NCLB forced each state and local educational agency to
expose the painstaking reality that, when looking deeper than a school’s overall
achievement, communities will see the true disparity that exists between the
privileged/entitled and the voiceless. How will the district prepare to narrow the gap?

Purposes (6) through (12) offer additional levels of preparation for state and local
educational agencies in terms of teacher preparation and additional accountability
measures related to job performance.

Purpose (6), (7) and (8) read as follows:

(6) Improving and strengthening accountability, teaching, and learning by using
State assessment designed to ensure that students are meeting challenging State
academic achievement and content standards and increasing achievement overall
but especially for the disadvantaged. (NCLB, 2002)

(7) Providing greater decision making authority and flexibility to schools and
teachers in exchange for greater responsibility for student performance. (NCLB, 2002)

(8) Providing children an enriched and accelerated education program, including
the use of school-wide programs or additional services that increase the amount
and quality of instructional time. (NCLB, 2002)

In purposes 6-8 of NCLB, Title I adds an emphasis on streamlining practices of
assessment at the state level. Stemming from this provision, many school districts have
naturally aligned aspects of their curriculum to prepare students for state standardized
tests and have increased the level of continuity of assessments administered at a district-wide level. The absence of alignment to the NCLB mandates hinders the opportunity
districts present themselves of preparing students for the reality, which exists currently, with measuring achievement by administering standardized testing. The unsettling piece, for some educators, is the reality of change that harshly arrives at your classroom threshold, informing a teacher that segments of your favorite lessons throughout the year must be altered in order to reinforce alignment to common assessments and standardized tests. The flexibility and responsibility of teachers highlighted to this effort in purpose (7) speak to stronger accountability at the teacher and classroom level. If schools do not meet their Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) this decrease in school performance is a shared responsibility of the teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders. Purpose (8) leads the focus on providing students with honors, advanced placement, international baccalaureate, and other accelerated academic programs that increase the amount of quality instructional time.

Purposes (9) and (10) gives direction to school leaders and teachers for promoting school reform based on the inequities that exist in students achievement data and providing students with a curriculum and teaching strategies that are no longer subjective but add an emphasis to incorporate teaching strategies that are scientifically based and proven to be rigorous and effective. This ambitious movement of elevating the quality of instruction must be supported by quality professional development as mentioned in purpose (10) (NCLB, 2002). Differentiations of support are needed for teachers that
range, generationally, in three different categories (Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials) to fortify effective instructional pedagogy into their daily lessons.

Lastly, purposes (11) and (12) accentuates the prevailing fact of existing local educational agencies that cannot accomplish the expectations of NCLB alone nor does the purposes (1-12) stated in Title I (section 101) promote functioning in isolation. On the contrary, in purposes (11) and (12) calls for coordinating services under all parts of Title I. Other community agencies that provide services for children, youth, and families in the community will be better served if efforts are aligned for the common purpose of providing the best educational and social supports that translate to academic success for all students. “Affording parents substantial and meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children” (NCLB, 2002).

It is clear, based on the directives under NCLB many states including Illinois are intentionally reporting achievement gaps progress by race, yet state and local educational authorities continue to coin this initiative as narrowing the “achievement gap.” Purpose (2) there is only specificity on addressing achievement disparities between minorities and non-minorities and Indigenous children [American Indian] (NCLB, 2002). Why report achievement disparities by race using Black and Latinx if the achievement gap exists between all minority groups and non-minority groups? If data supports the largest achievement disparities exist between the Black and Latinx community why is this not directly addressed in the NCLB act? This is most concerning when the achievement gap shows the greatest disparities not only in our Black population but specifically with Black males. The National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) is a program within
the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of
Education. The 2009 release of the Nation's Report Card shows the illustration of the
disparity gap when measuring GPA by race/ethnicity from 1990 to 2009 (NCES, 2011).

Dating back to 1896 with *Plessy v. Ferguson*, separate but equal milestones for
the time and continuation of dehumanization for people of color to 2013 following NCLB
the achievement gap disparities, by race, proceed to pervasively exist. Respectively
highlighting monumental changes in our nation’s laws and the dynamic servant leaders
who led the way to inspire all who lived the experience of injustice or those who were no
longer going to bear witness to the brutality and racism, played a significant role in
effecting change that has shaped history for the better. It has been 20 years since the
enactment of NCLB. The goal, as stated previously,

Each state shall establish a timeline for adequate yearly progress. The timeline
shall ensure that not later than 12 years after the 2001-2002 school year, all
students in each category described in subparagraph (C)(v) will meet or exceed
the state’s standards. (NCLB, 2002)

Common language and identifications have emerged from history regarding
conversations or legislation from the changes aforementioned from 1896 to 2021.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Legislation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td><em>Separate</em>-but-<em>equal</em> rational. <em>Separation</em> by <em>race/color</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td><em>Accommodations for whites</em> and “colored races” <em>separately</em> in public places, promoting public peace, “our institution is <em>color blind</em>” (Justice Harlan).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>National Association for the Advancement of <em>Colored</em> People (NAACP).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>NAACP initiates a movement to <em>racial</em> abuse and seek clarification on <em>Separate</em> but-<em>equal</em> as a legal basis for <em>segregation</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Civil Rights Act, protection against <em>discrimination based on race, color</em>, sex, national origin, religion, age and individuals with disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>A Nation at Risk commission made 30 specific recommendations spread over 5 major categories; standards and expectations, content, time, teaching, leadership, and fiscal support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – Identifying the educational achievement gap and highlights meeting the educational needs of all students regardless of the limitation, language proficiency, poverty rate, or disability. Purpose (2) highlights one ethnic classification of people for whom this purpose must serve “Indian children” [Indigenous people].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was passed into law in December 2015, by President Obama and his administration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Common words that have emerged from the historical case laws from 1896 to 1964 were separate, racial, color, equal, and discrimination, accommodations for whites, colored races, and color blind. From 125 years ago, the reality is that no one is colorblind in a radicalized country that has socially constructed the concept of race dating back to the 14th Amendment and the Equal Protection Clause signed on July 9, 1868.
Every Student Succeeds Act

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) has taken that accountability to a seemingly granular level, which includes provisions that promote the assurance of equity and access in schools across the country. Despite the guidance of federal acts to support students’ educational access, upward academic mobility, and accountability over the years in our schools nationwide, we see disproportionate racial academic outcomes between White students and students of color (Lee & Ranson, n.d.). When schools aggregate their academic achievement data by SPED, social economic status (SES), gender, emergent bilinguals there are different marginalized experiences that show up in the data. For instance, when academic achievement data is disaggregated by gender there are clear disparities between female-identifying and male-identifying students particularly in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) (College Board, 2019, as cited in National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Female student’s academic achievement scores are disproportionately lower than their male counterparts in STEM. When disaggregating achievement data by SES the disparity of performance is shown between income class with low-income students occupying the lowest categories of academic achievement and high-income students on top. When there is the same filtering for students who receive SPED services, there is a stark disparity of academic achievement with general education students at the top and SPED students at the bottom (College Board, 2019, as cited in National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Schools and educators across our country have a clear understanding that there are disparities in academic achievement between various marginalized identities that I have mentioned.
What may not be as apparent is the racial stratification of academic achievement that exists in each of the aforementioned marginalized identities. For instance, when disaggregating academic achievement data by gender and race, male students are outperforming female students in STEM (College Board, 2019, as cited in National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). If filters are added controlling for both race and gender, Black male students occupy the lowest academic performance categories when their White and Asian female counterparts occupy the highest (College Board, 2019, as cited in National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). When controlling for both SPED and race, SPED students are underperforming when compared to general education students and that within SPED, Black students are occupying the lowest academic performance categories when their White and Asian counterparts are occupying the highest when all of whom have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) (College Board, 2019, as cited in National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). When low-income students underperform in comparison to high-income students and when race is added as a compounding filter, the racial stratification of Black on the bottom and White and Asian on top (College Board, 2019, as cited in National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). It is the same trend for Emergent Bilinguals (EB) who experience disproportionate academic outcomes compared to their native English-speaking counterparts (College Board, 2019, as cited in National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Again take that a step further to control for race with EB and we see once again the racial stratification of Black students occupying the lowest level of academic achievement in EB while their
White and Asian counterparts absorb the highest (College Board, 2019, as cited in National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

If the socially constructed identifier of race is not centered while examining other marginalized groups of students in our education systems then we will miss out on focusing the students who need us to show up for them most. At Riverview, the historical data on students' sense of belonging pinpoints the students who need us most, which are our Black and Latinx students. If we dig even deeper, there are layered components with the foundation of centering race that add to the complicated reality of students' intersectionality when moving through the world. The term intersectionality was first developed by scholar Kimberle Williams Crenshaw to understand discrimination and exclusion in our society based on multiple social identities such as race, gender, sexual orientation gender identity etc. that we all hold (Crenshaw, 2017).

Based on the aforementioned data examples and the stark racial disproportionalities showing Black and Latinx students severely underperforming in comparison to their White and Asian student peers, direct building-level action must be taken. I ask myself, don’t my students of color deserve better social emotional (sense of belonging) and academic experiences at Riverview? Specifically, students who identify as Black and Latinx? The answers to these questions are a definitive, yes! The literature and research to follow is a guide to getting us to where we want to be.

**Sense of Belonging**

Strayhorn (2012) defines sense of belonging as “students’ perceived social support on campus (at the school), a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience
of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by and important to the group.” The research also shows that there are different dimensions that are specifically connected to a students’ sense of belonging. Osterman’s (2000) review of belonging highlights three dimensions of student-teacher relations, peer relations, and involvement in school activities as vital social experiences that connect adolescents to their high school in ways that boost motivation and achievement. Research specific to students of color raises the likelihood that students’ perceptions of respect for their ethnic group membership and sense of belonging may also be related to student attachment or alienation from school (Steele, 1997).

The idea that the moral work and worth of public schools as a whole can be measured by its social value is absolutely a familiar notion. However, it is frequently taken in to limited and rigid as most teachers are given limited training for what John Dewey calls “citizenship” (Dewey, 1909, as cited in Hickman & Alexander, 1998). What he means by citizenship is teaching students about how to vote intelligently, disposition to obey laws, etc. but it is short sighted and a waste to label the ethical responsibility of a public school in such a sterile way.

To pick out one of the many social relations which the child bears, and to define the work of the school by that alone, is like instituting a vast and complicated system of physical exercise which would have for its object simply the development of the lungs and the power of breathing, independent of other organs and functions. (Dewey, 1909, as cited in Hickman & Alexander, 1998)
We are all called to a greater purpose as educators as our parents send the best they have to our doors and each student should show up to our schools with their full selves. We embrace them as a member of society in the broadest sense, and demand for and from the school whatever is necessary to enable our students to recognize all their social relations and take their part in investing and sustaining them (Hickman & Alexander, 1998).

**Isolating Race**

Professor of Iowa State University and researcher Gabriel Rodriguez (2020) used an ethnographic approach and conducted a study on understanding Latinx youth’s sense of belonging in a suburban high school just outside of Chicago. He defines sense of belonging as the ways in which Latinx students feel comfortable, sage, and at home in a high school setting. He begs the questions to his readers by asking if it is important to consider whether schools are welcoming and inclusive places for Latinx youth, especially suburban schools where the majority of the teaching staff identify as White. We as educators must reflect that if we are working toward equitable and justice oriented outcomes, we need to strategize above the academic trajectory of students to consider the way other students, teachers, staff, and school practices work (possibly unconsciously) toward excluding and erasing Latinx students of color from the fabric of their schools. In 2021, most Latinx people will live in suburban communities in the US (Frey, 2018). While most, generally speaking, suburban communities and schools are often times classified as White, affluent, well-resourced, and high performing in terms of access, opportunity, and academically rigorous, this classification is part myth and part reality (Lewis & Diamond, 2015). Another qualitative research study by Aldana (2016) focused
on Latinx student experiences and how teacher deficit thinking disrupts students' sense of belonging. Aldana also found that values of “brotherhood” and social justice positively impacted the schooling experience for a largely low income Latinx male student population. Unfortunately, academic tracking, and teacher perception served to further alienate already struggling students with their sense of belonging and their performance academically.

An exploratory sequential mixed methods study by Matthews (2020) examined formative learning experiences of urban mathematics teachers and their role in classroom care practices and students' sense of belonging. Specifically, the study analyzed the experiences for Black and Latinx adolescents in the care of a predominately-White teaching staff. The findings of this study surfaced many aspects of what my problem of practice has shown me. Matthews found that teachers who discussed the role of people support in their formative reflections were more likely to possess critical consciousness on their interpersonal and systemic forces that work against Black and Latinx adolescents and thus enact empathetic care patterns, which support Black and Latinx students' sense of belonging. The role of racial identity must be explored by teachers in an authentic way as they search for how to best connect with their Black and Latinx students.

Identity is a complex and dynamic system of beliefs, perceptions, and emotions underlying role related action, behavior and its meaning to the actor occupying the role (Bruner, 1990). The concepts of identity is truly a layered one, shared by individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, and social and political contexts (Tatum, 1997). I believe, students/adolescent youth, ask a question to themselves as they
enter high school and navigate their own psychological and physiological changes they are experiencing. That question is, Who am I? I also believe that teachers/adults ask this same question in different times in their professional career. The answer for students and teachers depends, in large part, on who the world around them says they are. Who do their parents and loved ones say they are? Who do their peers say they are? For students, how are they being represented and affirmed racially and culturally in images, extracurricular activities, curriculum, teacher relationships, and peer relationships in the school. Triggered by the biological changes associated with puberty, and maturation of cognitive abilities, and changing societal expectations makes for a difficult journey at times as adolescent youth embark on the creation of one’s identity. Even though, as Tatum explains, the foundation of identity is laid in the experiences of childhood, younger children lack the physical and cognitive development needed to reflect on the self in an abstract way. The adolescent capacity for self-reflection, and resulting self-consciousness, allows one to ask, “Who am I now? Who was I before? Who do I want to become?” As educators it is our charge to nurture environments in our schools, hallways, fields, courts, pools, and classrooms where all students are offered the space and place, as Rodriguez (2020) stated, to not just survive but thrive in a school where they are challenged and affirmed, where they can dream and build, where they can be their own individual and feel a strong sense of belonging within the community that values and loves them showing up with their full selves.

An informative study that lays out dimensions of belonging in both direct and indirect ways, Faircloth and Hamm (2005) went a step further than Osterman (2000) in
their research to include not three but four dimensions that explained student belonging which accounted for the relationship between motivation and achievement for African American, Asian, Latinx, and European American adolescents in their study. The four dimensions of students’ sense of belonging they examined were (1) bonding with teachers, (2) having a place within the network of peer relationships, (3) extra-curricular involvement, and (4) perceived ethnic-based discrimination. The study’s four dimensions shine a light on Riverview’s urgent disproportionality for Black and Latinx students' low favorability rating from our Panorama Equity and Inclusion survey from 2019 and 2020 (see Figures 2 and 3).

**Four Dimensions of Belonging Defined**

Faircloth and Hamm (2005) defines (1) student-teacher relationships as students' perceptions of their teachers' involvement with them, including caring, liking, and dependability, predicting that these dimensions would contribute positively to students' overall sense of belonging. Students’ perceptions of teacher support, respect, and care have been found to be positively associated with school affect and academic self-efficacy, and to student motivation and engagement. Faircloth and Hamm defines (2) Relationships with Peers as a consistent positive interaction between having a place within the network of peer relationships, by receiving friendship nominations, and having a positive school effect, motivation, and achievement. Ladd (1990) found that students who experienced greater peer acceptance, defined by higher numbers of friendship nominations, reported more favorable perceptions of school and better school performance. Faircloth and Hamm (2005) defines (3) extracurricular involvement as
various levels of participation in school, time spent in social, athletic, or other non-compulsory activities. High school students being involved in extracurricular activities provides a primary source of school attachment, thereby supporting academic success. Several investigations of the associations between extracurricular involvement, school affect, engagement, and achievement for Black and Latinx students have suggested that these relationships vary across ethic groups in ways meaningful for a sense of belonging. Perceived discrimination (4) is a dimension that has not been traditionally considered but extremely important in research on belonging (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005). A number of studies of ethnically diverse high schools demonstrate alienation, rather than attachment that Black and Latinx adolescence experience when they perceive ethnic based discrimination, often resulting in behaviors that lead to lower sense of belonging, motivation and academic achievement (Ogbo, 1983).

**Addressing Belonging with Social Emotional Learning (SEL)**

In 2021, there is definitely a growing sense of urgency regarding the need to examine and implement SEL in relation to what students are experiencing in schools. Schools are a microcosm of what is happening in our nation from political divisiveness, to racial unrest, and ever present anti-immigrant rhetoric. As SEL is examined as a potential solution for my problem of practice, it is my goal to highlight research on SEL that adequately reflects, cultivates, and leverages cultural assets to promote the wellbeing of adolescent youth of color. According to the National Equity Project (n.d.), “educational equity means that each child receives what he/she/they need to develop to their full academic and social potential.” It is my goal that my students participate in a
research based SEL curriculum that is both centered on equity and social emotional well-being.

Research has informed us that there is a strong correlation to a social emotional component, sense of belonging, that has an effect on student academic outcomes. Meeting the social emotional needs of high school students who have become disconnected from school is the challenge of our time in education (Reschly & Christenson, 2012; Fredricks et al., 2004). In the past 20 years, a focused immersion from researchers have found the importance of fulfilling the need to belong (Maslow, 1962) in educational contexts. These researchers highlight the importance of a caring school environment that facilitates a sense of community and a feeling of belongingness among students (Osterman, 2000). Goodenow (1993) concluded that having a sense of school belonging is firmly correlated to student functioning such as students’ school motivation, their social-emotional functioning such as their self-esteem, their classroom behaviour and their academic achievement. According to Petrokubi et al. (2019), SEL is described as supporting educational equity in multiple ways by emphasizing whole child development, drawing attention to the social nature of learning, advancing the belief that all children can learn, developing young people’s skills to navigate social contexts, and relationships between students and teachers which is a key protective factor for students. There is robust research on the ways in which culture influences development, including how emotions are expressed, sources of motivation and engagement in learning, and norms for communication. For example, Brady et al. (2017) found that students from cultures with an interdependent model of self (including Native Americans, Latinx,
African, and Asian cultures, as well as working class culture in the United States) view education as a way to help their families and communities, and these students may be more likely to hold their opinions and defer to authority in the classroom than students from cultures with an independent model of self (including any European cultures). A White, middle class model of self that values independence dominates schools; students of color and students in low-income communities often experience “cultural mismatch” in education settings that expect forms of expression and participation not aligned with their culture (Petrokubi et al., 2019).

A meta-analysis of family-school SEL interventions found that involving a range of adults across children’s social environments enhanced their social behavior competence and mental health, with larger effects found for Black students (Sheridan et al., 2019). Positive school culture and climate are driven by the adults in the school building regardless of the position they hold. Relationship building is one of the primary purposes of SEL and each person (teachers, front office staff, bus drivers, food service personal, custodial/maintenance, security, administration, paraprofessionals, etc.) has a role to play at nurturing the relationships with students to increase their sense of belonging. Current thinking around structural implementation at the high school setting is that SEL should be a part of the larger institutional approach to promote a positive school culture and climate where all students are engaged in learning and supported by positive relationships and student centered instructional practices.

With the passing of the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015, states like Illinois now have more flexibility in how we measure student achievement. The law replaced
references to “core academic subjects” and instead called for a “well rounded education” for all students, thus raising the profile of SEL in education (Rosales, 2017). As Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2020) states,

SEL is the process by which children, adolescents, and adults can acquire and apply the necessary knowledge and skills to understand and manage their emotions, feel and express empathy for others, set and achieve positive goals, and make responsible decisions.

Research has clearly shown that SEL skills are fundamental for effectiveness in life and are especially valuable during the emotionally turbulent years of adolescence (Srinivasan, 2019). Although there is more implementation of SEL at scale in elementary and middle schools, there are a lack of options that present a clear, equitable, and socially conscious, justice oriented, SEL program for high schools with exception to CASEL’s framework.

CASEL (2020) states that their SEL framework fosters knowledge, skills, and attitudes across five areas of competence and multiple key settings to establish equitable learning environments that advance students’ learning and development. Explicitly stated, in August 2020, CASEL committed to elevating educational equity and excellence with the use of an updated SEL framework of five core competencies (CASEL 5), examples of those competencies in action and four rings of support (see Figure 1). The CASEL 5 which addresses five broad and interconnected areas of competence are:

1. Self-awareness: The abilities to understand one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts. This includes capacities to recognize one’s strengths and limitations with a well-grounded
sense of confidence and purpose. Examples of self-awareness are integrating personal and social identities, identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets, identifying one’s emotions, demonstrating honesty and integrity, linking feelings, values, and thoughts, examining prejudices and biases, experiencing self-efficacy, having a growth mindset, and developing interests and a sense of purpose. (CASEL, 2020)

2. Self-management: The abilities to manage one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations. This includes the capacities to delay gratification, manage stress, and feel motivation and agency to accomplish personal and collective goals. Examples of self-management are, managing one’s emotions, identifying and using stress management strategies, exhibiting self-discipline and self-motivation, setting personal and collective goals, using planning and organizational skills, showing the courage to take initiative, demonstrating personal and collective agency. (CASEL, 2020)

3. Social awareness: The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts. This includes the capacities to feel compassion for others, understand broader historical and social norms for behavior in different settings, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports. Examples of social awareness are taking others’ perspectives, recognizing strengths in others, demonstrating empathy and compassion, showing concern
for the feelings of others, understanding and expressing gratitude, identifying
diverse social norms, including unjust ones, and recognizing situational
demands and opportunities, understanding the influences of organizations and
systems on behavior, (CASEL, 2020)

4. Relationship skills: The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and
supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse
individuals and groups. This includes the capacities to communicate clearly,
listen actively, cooperate, work collaboratively to problem solve and negotiate
conflict constructively, navigate settings with differing social and cultural
demands and opportunities, provide leadership, and seek or offer help when
needed. Examples of relationship skills are, communicating effectively,
developing positive relationships, demonstrating cultural competency,
practicing teamwork and collaborative problem-solving, resolving conflicts
constructively, resisting negative social pressure, showing leadership in
groups, seeking or offering support and help when needed, and standing up for
the rights of others. (CASEL, 2020)

5. Responsible decision-making: The abilities to make caring and constructive
choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse
situations. This includes the capacities to consider ethical standards and safety
concerns, and to evaluate the benefits and consequences of various actions for
personal, social, and collective well-being. Examples of responsible decision
making are, demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness, learning how to
make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, and facts, identifying solutions for personal and social problems, anticipating and evaluating the consequences of one’s actions, recognizing how critical thinking skills are useful both inside and outside of school, reflecting on one’s role to promote personal, family, and community well-being, evaluating personal, interpersonal, community, and institutional impacts, (CASEL, 2020)

The four rings of support that circle the CASEL 5 competencies are communities, families and caregivers, schools, and classrooms (CASEL, 2020). The support of the community emphasizes the importance for schools to partner with community organizations (faith based institutions, local business, community centers etc.) in order to get a true sense of the area in which the students and families live. The high school builds an authentic relationship with a foundation of committing to serve, educate and care for students and families is a gateway to organizing resources that support all. The second ring of families and caregivers offers a reminder that parents and caregivers are the child's first teacher. The solidification of an authentic, two-way communication that seeks to understand and partner with the child's first teacher and gain deep insights on how to best support, inform, and sustain a rich SEL structure that is respectful of the families and caregivers culture, values, and norms. The third ring is schools, which supports the CASEL 5 by reminding the implementers that rolling out a school-wide practices, procedures and policy, and SEL program successfully involves continuous planning, implementation with fidelity, evaluation, and continuous improvement by all stakeholders in the school. CASEL (2020) also states that the strong culture of the school
is rooted in the student sense of belonging. The fourth and last and innermost ring names classrooms. CASEL cites that research has shown that SEL competence can be enhanced using a variety of classroom pedagogical approaches like explicit instruction, project based learning (PBL), cooperative learning, integration of SEL in the general academic curriculum within core content areas in order for the experiences universal for each student.

The CASEL 5 can be taught and applied at various developmental stages from childhood to adulthood and across diverse cultural contexts. Many school districts, states, and countries have used the CASEL 5 to establish preschool to high school learning standards and competencies that articulate what students should know and be able to do for academic success, school and civic engagement, health and wellness, and fulfilling careers. (CASEL, 2020)

Moving forward Riverview will use a systemic approach using the CASEL 5 competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making along with the support of the four rings of communities, families and caregivers, schools and classrooms. This is how SEL could live and breathe in our school to ensure all students, especially Black and Latinx students feel a greater sense of belonging.
In order to directly improve the sense of school belonging for our Black and Latinx students, our teachers must be supported with critical self-reflection guidance and applicable tools to unpack their own implicit bias because we all have it (Steele, 2011). “We all have been born in, been raised in and currently live in a racist society; the smog of racism is all around us, it is in the air we breathe each day” (DiAngelo, 2018). When teachers increase their social and self-awareness of individual, institutional and systemic
structures and outcomes of racism then they will be able to forge stronger relationships of bonding with students upon a foundation of truth, understanding, and high expectations. The CASEL SEL framework and racial equity PD complement one another, as they are both SEL driven learning. Teachers learning the CASEL 5 competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making have gaps and do not explicitly address racism but collectively they lay upon one another in an interdependent way which will positively impact students' sense of belonging. In my research, I have encountered an absence of research studies that examine the correlation of the implementation of racial equity PD and the effect on students’ sense of belonging and academic achievement for students of color. This capstone project will contribute to the field by proposing outcomes of implementing racial equity PD as one of two solutions to my problem of practice, to increase the sense of belonging for Black and Latinx students.

**Racial Equity PD in Schools: Courageous Conversations**

Many school districts in Illinois (Evanston Township-District 202, Oak Park River Forest-District-District 200, Niles High School Township-District 219, Township High School District-113, etc.) have invested in racial equity/anti-racist professional development by way of Courageous Conversations (Courageous Conversations, 2017). I will use racial equity from this point on when referring to racial equity/anti-racism professional development. Racial equity is defined as a belief, a habit of mind that does not correspond to the beginning or end of the school day. It is the work and pursuit of fairness in order for each student to access opportunities and resources that they need and
deserve to thrive in school (Singleton, 2013). Expanding on that definition by isolating the social construction of race is important in order to elevate and focus on internal and external supports, understanding, and targeted approaches for students of color. When Singleton refers to race he defines it as the “socially constructed meaning attached to a variety of physical attributes, including but not limited to skin and eye color, hair texture, and bone structures of people in the United States and elsewhere.” He continues to make the point that race is often defined as the amount of melanin one has in their skin. Another term that is important to have understanding on is racist and anti-racist. Kendi (2019) defines racist as, “One who is supporting a racist policy through their actions or inaction or expressing a racist idea.” Dr. Kendi continues to illuminate understanding by defining anti-racism as, “One who is supporting an antiracist policy through their actions or expressing an antiracist idea.”

As select school districts around the Chicagoland area invest in racial equity training to build a foundation of understanding around racism, which is defined as, “the combination of individual prejudice and individual discrimination, on the one hand, and institutional policies and practices, on the other, that result in the unjustified negative treatment of the subordination of member of a racial or ethnic group.” Another way to look at it is racism = racial prejudice + institutional power (Singleton, 2013). Using the framework of Courageous Conversations (CC) for professional development has been a popular approach from school districts across the country including school districts I have named in this section and their leadership in this area should be recognized for the leadership of racial equity is not for the faint of heart. The CC framework is provided by
founder and CEO Glen Singleton which is based on the 2012 book titled, *Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity In Schools*. His book and professional development provide schools with a framework for understanding racism, how to have productive inter and intra racial conversations about race in order to critically analyze, unpack, and self-reflect on the foundation of our beliefs which drive our behaviors, which inform our results (Singleton, 2013). Three questions that guides participants throughout Singleton’s two-day professional development training titled Beyond Diversity are; why do racial gaps exist? What is the origin of the racial gaps? What factors have allowed these gaps to persist for so many years? (Smith & Brazer, 2016).

A critical social phenomenon that has been studied since the dawn of the 20th century and is essential to racial equity training of educators is Whiteness (DuBois, 1903/1996). White people being perceived as White, carries more than a noticing of skin color, it is a social and institutional status of one's identity. The unearned advantage that comes with that is legal, political, economic, and social that are denied to others (DiAngelo, 2018). Critical race scholar Cheryle Harris coined a phrase “Whiteness as property” and as she traced the emerging concept of witness through legal history she explains:

By according whiteness an actual legal status, an aspect of identity was converted into an external object of property, moving whiteness from privileged identity to a vested interest. The law’s construction of whiteness defined and affirmed critical
aspects of identity (who is white); of privilege (what beliefs accrue to that status);
and, of property, sometimes singularly, sometimes in tandem. (Harris, 1993)

In his findings, researcher Rodriguez (2020) isolated Whiteness as a major barrier
to Latinx student sense of belonging. He names that Latinx students, where his study
originates, are “interlopers”. They are visitors in their own school given the context they
are in, which is a school building that is deeply embedded in Whiteness. He continues by
adding that all too often Latinx students are asked why they are not involved in more
extra curricular activities and why they are not enrolled in more advanced placement
(AP) or honors courses like their White and Asian peers. The question schools must start
to ask, as they shine a light on Whiteness, is how can White students be more
introspective and welcoming with their actions (Rodriguez, 2020). The effect of
Whiteness is constantly active at a majority White school and Latinx bodies and spaces
are continually inspected and associated with a negative ascription. While not a part of
his research, Rodriguez did explicitly state that their were teachers in the building
committed to challenging Whiteness and racist practices the inculcate the culture of their
building but they lack the needed partners, resources, and training (professional
development) to build up their tool box to make the changes needed to increase their
students sense of belonging through the lens of racial equity.

Based on the research, I believe professional development that is centered on
racial equity can yield tremendous benefits and act as an interconnected foundational
fabric to the quilt of SEL implementation and positively impact students’ sense of
belonging. Tatum (2005) speaks on the importance of interrupting the cycle of racism and
oppression for young people in school but most educators don’t have a foundation of agreed upon definitions or a working knowledge based on limited opportunity in their own education to properly address racism and prejudice that surface in their classroom, practices, and relationships with students and parents/caregivers. One remedy to this deficiency is to offer educators programing, courses, and professional development to construct and/or examine their own racial identity, beliefs, and attitudes toward other groups, develop anti-racist curriculum and pedagogical practices that support and affirm the racial and cultural identities of students of color (Tatum, 2005).

**The Research on Sustainable Implementation**

Having a clear understanding on building wide expectations, roles that fit the strengths of people, responsibilities, data/measurements, evaluation and improvement are vital to honoring the difficult and critical work of SEL and racial equity implementation in a way that is carefully planned for to make a positive impact that is supported and sustainable to the organization. In this section, I will name research based core implementation components that assist in guiding a grounded plan for successful organizational outcomes.

**Implementation Drivers**

The meaning of “driver” in the series of descriptions are operators or leaders. This section will canvass the competency, leadership and organizational practices that make up the implementation drivers that operate a pivotal role in establishing the capacity to create changes that are imperative to the success of improving student sense of belonging outcomes (Bertram et al., 2015).
**Competency Drivers**

Bertram et al. (2015) challenge that competency drivers are the adults who are trusted in the organization/building with the will, skill, and capacity to promote confidence and competence of those needed for full implementation of the program with fidelity for sustained improvement of student population outcomes. There will be many stakeholders invested and involved in order for both systemic solutions to take hold for sustained improvement of student outcomes using SEL implementation and racial equity professional development at Riverview.

**Staff Selection**

A critical aspect of selection is to focus on the individual's ability to fulfill the functions of the essential role, not just the person’s current position or title (Bertram et. al., 2015). Staff selection for CASEL (2020) SEL implementation include, department chairs, instructional coaches, teacher leaders, social worker, psychologist, counselors, and building administration. The staff selection for racial equity training (Beyond Diversity) will be the Director of Adult Learning, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, building Principal and the Associate Principal.

**Training and Professional Development**

Based on the dual implementation of solutions there will be a robust professional development plan for both SEL and Beyond Diversity. CASEL (2020) advises to implement a coordinated professional development (PD) program that is sensitive to the academic, social and emotional learning capacity for all staff. Our SEL PD will be scaffolded to build competence, over a span of one school year, for our teachers,
paraprofessionals, certified staff, and administrators. These will be the stakeholders who will deliver and support SEL curricula directly or embed SEL practices in instruction and building the culture and climate of the school. The PD facilitated with staff will cement embedded uses for effective practices and include ongoing support for staff. In order to maintain a continuous cycle of improvement, assessment will be a foundation for recalibration if data suggests. What has been learned from researching several high school districts (District 202, 200, and 113) who have made Beyond Diversity a foundation of their racial equity PD is to map out a five-year PD plan for all staff in the building. Based on Beyond Diversity being a two full day (14 total hours) PD experience, there will be a coordinated registration sequence in order to secure proper substitute teacher coverage in classrooms and learning spaces. When planning for such a time bound PD, it is important that the least amount of disruption to our students' learning experience is maintained.

**Performance Assessment – Fidelity**

As previously mentioned, the SEL PD that will be facilitated with staff will cement embedded uses for effective practices and include ongoing support for staff and in order to maintain a continuous cycle of improvement, assessment will be a foundation for recalibration if data suggests. The primary assessment the school will be employing is the Panorama Equity and Inclusion Survey in order to assess improvement outcomes on our Black and Latinx student sense of belonging (Panorama Education, n.d.). In addition, a self-assessment will be filled out by staff, three times a year, called the Educator Self-Assessment (OST). The OST evaluates three markers of SEL implementation and
fidelity: (1) explicit instruction, (2) integration of SEL into academic instruction and programs, (3) supportive climate (CASEL, 2020). The racial equity PD delivered by Courageous Conversations titled Beyond Diversity (BD), Singleton (2013) will be assessed in two parts (qualitative and anecdotal). Following each two-day PD of BD there will be an additional three-hour session scheduled the following week. This thoughtfully crafted and semi-structured session will be offered for participants in order to process and unpack what was learned the week before in a safe and supportive environment. As DiAngelo (2018) highlights, based on her research, is White people, generally speaking, do not have the racial stamina to have sustained cross racial dialogue and discourse. When we try to talk to them openly about their unformed and often unaware racial patterns and tendencies, White Fragility quickly erupts. DiAngelo, who coined the term, defines White Fragility:

We consider a challenge to our racial world views as a challenge to our very identities as good, moral people. Thus, we perceive any attempt to connect us to the system of racism as an unsettling and unfair moral offense. The smallest amount of racial stress is intolerable, the mere suggestion that being white has meaning often triggers a range of defensive responses. These include emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and withdrawal from the stress-induced situation. These responses work to reinstate white equilibrium as they repel the challenge, return our racial comfort, and maintain our dominance within the racial hierarchy. I conceptualized this process as white fragility. (p. 2)
As a professor, researcher, and facilitator of racial equity training of over 20 years, DiAngelo (2018) reminds us that when talking openly and honestly about race to White participants feelings quickly emerge which are frequently silence, defensiveness, certainty, and pushback. For that reason, the caring for participants of color and White participants in the form of offering space to process and unpack what was learned, felt, left wondering, and the work ahead is necessary. This three hour continuation session will operate as a support and anecdotal assessment of participants’ internalization of the learning. The qualitative assessment teachers and staff will be given at three points during the school year will be The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2006) Race Matters Organizational Self-Assessment. What the assessment will do to support us by being intentional on what we are assessing centering racial equity, raise organizational and teacher/staff awareness, continues focused conversations about race, gives a score and recommendations, and will allow us to gauge, as an organization, how the learning of racial equity has been maintained and acted upon.

**Leadership Drivers**

The purpose and intent to name leadership drivers is to establish technical and adaptive approaches to the full implementation of the solution to my problem of practice and purpose of my capstone project. In thinking through and strategizing both technical and adaptive designs, I will be able to address any barriers that may prevent students from receiving the appropriate impact from SEL and racial equity PD implementation from teachers and staff.
Technical Leadership

Technical leadership applies a fixed procedure or process when the problem at hand has a clear definition and potential solutions are relatively straightforward, easy to put in place and require minimal training. Technical leadership deploying technical solutions may require new procedures, training, or data collection but they need very little cultural or attitude change to be successful (pre-packaged curriculum, student needing a pen, alternative bell schedules, updated attendance list etc.) (Heifetz et al., 2009). Outside of my administrative role to implement both solutions of the CASEL 5 SEL framework (CASEL, 2020) and Beyond Diversity (Singleton, 2013) I will need the support of the Director of Adult Learning, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, building Principal, and Associate Principals. The partnership with all aforementioned stakeholders will give the technical leadership and support needed for full implementation of the dual complementary solutions.

Adaptive

“Adaptive leadership is the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive” (Heifetz et al., 2009). New initiatives in an environment in which the change is new demands leaders to dream of new strategies, communication styles, abilities, and empathy to mobilize the group to action. Adaptive leadership is the only way to properly meet an adaptive challenge (racism, sense of belonging, racial disparities in education etc.). When meeting an adaptive challenge, in a public high school setting, you can’t take the problem of the shoulders of teachers, support staff, certified staff, and administration and offer them a solution. They have to do their part. In an adaptive
challenge people are part of the solution and their ownership and responsibility taking of the problem becomes part of the solution itself. As Heifetz et al. says so powerfully, “It’s much easier to fix the heart than to change it.” To engage in the difficult, necessary and energizing work of adaptive leadership the key stakeholders who will be involved in the process of the CASEL 5 SEL and racial equity PD will be family and community engagement starting with students’ parents and caregivers. Traditionally Riverview has asked students, parents, and caregivers to come to the school for collaboration and partnership, this time we will go to them and meet at local community centers, parks, faith based organizations, etc. The foundation of adaptive leadership is for all stakeholders to be involved however the team responsible for establishing communication, messaging, pacing, and expectations will be the administration, social worker, psychologist, department chairs, and a member from each department to maximize collaboration, listening, and adapting to both solutions.

**Organizational Drivers**

Organization drivers establish facilitative administration, system implementation, decision-making data systems strategies to support implementation, focus on funding, policy and procedures. This driver traditionally places emphasis on the principal or building administration to support the implementation process.

**Facilitative Administration**

Bertram et al. (2015) offers that facilitative administration are individuals within the organization that must be proactive in their approach with implementation of the solutions. They should work backwards by design or beginning with the end in mind to
facilitate school wide change in each stage of solution implementation. The facilitative administration will be layered in two levels per solution. For full implementation of the CASEL 5 SEL framework the first layer of facilitative administration will be the administration, social worker, psychologist, department chairs, and a member from each department. They will be changed with the design, messaging, communication, staff support, procedures and rollout of the CASEL 5 SEL framework. The second layer will be the implementation team which consists of the classroom teachers and support staff who will be responsible for the explicit SEL instruction, SEL integrated with academic instruction, student voice and engagement, and supportive school and classroom climates. Regardless of the stage of implementation, influential persons from relevant systems must be engaged to create, facilitate, and sustain necessary policies, practices, or funding mechanisms so that solutions can be implemented with fidelity and achieve desired population outcomes.

For full implementation of racial equity PD through the way of Beyond Diversity the first layer of facilitative administration are the Director of Adult Learning, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, building Principal, and Associate Principal. They work with the teachers union to broker a timeline, registration, expectations, pre-learning support, post-learning support, messaging/communication that emphasizes solidarity of the commitment and importance of this PD to best support all students especially those who are the most marginalized based on race. The second layer will be the facilitation team, which will be delivered by a consultant from Courageous Conversations, who will deliver the content and facilitate learning with compassion,
loving accountability and urgency. As a reminder, influential stakeholders from within the school and community must be engaged to create, facilitate, and sustain necessary policies, practices, and funding in order for the schools solutions to the problem of practice before it can be implemented with fidelity and achieve desired population outcomes which for us is increasing Black and Latinx students sense of belonging (Bertram et. al., 2015).

**Systems Interventions**

System Interventions speak to the implementation of solutions in the conditions of the time (socioeconomic, political and cultural) they unfold in stages under the federal, state and organizational, and community landscape. System interventions are supported from all of the aforementioned levels. The system interventions supported in a school district are those of the community, board of education, superintendent, policy, and procedures that guide the organization (Bertram et. al., 2015). Another system level support at the federal level for racial equity PD is Exec. Order No. 13583 (2011) implemented by President Obama that requires all federal agencies to create and implement a plan to improve diversity and inclusion within their workplace. The implementation of Executive Order 13583 then led to the Government-Wide Inclusive Diversity Strategic Plan created by the Office of Personnel Management (2016) which outlines three goals: leadership, community and culture, and data driven approaches. Goal two details that “federal agencies shall intensify efforts to foster cultures that encourage employees to feel valued for their unique qualities and experience a sense of belonging, engagement, and connection to the mission of the agency” (United States
Office of Personnel Management, 2016, p. 8). This goal also prioritizes “providing training and education on cultural competency, implicit bias awareness, and inclusion learning for all employees (United States Office of Personnel Management, 2016, p. 8).

**Decision Making Data Systems**

Similar to facilitative administration, the first layer of each solution team (SEL and racial equity PD) will use data to collect in forms of the The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2006) Race Matters Organizational Self-Assessment and Panorama Education (n.d.) Equity and Inclusion Survey (to measure students’ sense of belonging). Student attendance, discipline, academic achievement, course placement, and involvement in extracurricular activities data will also be evaluated. Lastly, anecdotal data will be collected during the three-hour Beyond Diversity follow-up for processing and unpacking what was learning. Student affinity groups will also be implemented and allow for another anecdotal access point to hear directly from students. Affinity groups are defined as a group formed around a shared interest, social identity or common goal. In this case they are formed to dialogue around racial identity within group identity (Magnus, 2019). “A vigilant facilitative administration analyzes constraining or supporting systems-level factors influencing model fidelity and the outcomes for the program’s target population” (Bertram et al., 2015, p. 485).
CHAPTER III
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Following a thorough review of the literature on increasing Black and Latinx students’ sense of belonging in High School, the four dimensions of sense of belonging, CASEL 5 SEL framework and professional development focused on racial equity are the framework for the problem of practice, as Figure 2 illustrates. As CASEL (2020) states, SEL is the process by which children, adolescents, and adults can acquire and apply the necessary knowledge and skills to understand and manage their emotions, feel and express empathy for others, set and achieve positive goals, and make responsible decisions.

Research has clearly shown that SEL skills are fundamental for effectiveness in life and are especially valuable during the emotionally turbulent years of adolescence (Srinivasan, 2019). Although there is more implementation of SEL at scale in elementary and middle schools, there are a lack of options that present a clear, equitable, and socially conscious, justice oriented, SEL program for high schools with exception to CASEL’s framework.

Racial equity professional development will be implemented to increase teachers’ social consciousness and understanding of individual, institutional, and systemic racism in order to dismantle barriers and obstruction so that all students are loved and affirmed to thrive and achieve at their highest potential. The specific racial equity professional development to be used is a two day (in person or virtual) experience titled Beyond
Diversity from Courageous Conversations (Singleton, 2013). Now in its twenty-first year, Beyond Diversity is designed to support educators, administrators, and parents to understand the impact of race on student learning and sense of belonging. This two-day workshop investigates the role that racism plays in institutionalizing academic achievement and sense of belonging disparities for students of color (Courageous Conversations, 2017). Participants will learn the three tools for the (1) compass, (2) four agreements, and (3) six conditions. The compass is a social emotional monitoring tool if you will. It acts as a personal navigational tool to guide participants through inter and intra racial conversations about race. The compass is a tool to assist participants of Beyond Diversity to locate where they are personally as well as to recognize the direction from where other participants are entering the conversation. “Collectively, it leads participants to a mutual understanding of varied beliefs and opinions and helps everyone locate the sources of their emotions and actions or lack thereof” (Singleton, 2016). The four agreements (stay engaged, speak your truth, experience discomfort, and expect and accept non-closure) are commitments or “guideposts” that hold the conversation within a healthy boundary and bridge to the commitment of engaging, sustaining, and deepening the conversation about race. The six conditions are: (1) focus on personal, local, and immediate, (2) isolate race, (3) normalize social construction and multiple perspectives, (4) monitor agreements and conditions and establish parameters, (5) use a “working definition” for race, and (6) examine the presence and role of “whiteness” (Singleton, 2016). Unlike the four agreements, the six conditions are specifically ordered sequentially. The first and second conditions are meant to engage participants in the
conversation about race. The third and fourth conditions sustain the conversation about race and the fifth and six conditions deepen the inter and intra racial dialogue about race by guiding participants into the most difficult subject matter related to how we all live and understand race (Singleton, 2016). Hundreds of school districts around the country, including Illinois, have implemented Beyond Diversity as a foundational professional development for educators. As Carole Smith, former Superintendent of Portland Public Schools states, “Courageous Conversations has been an invaluable partner… in providing support to make transformational change that is felt in our classrooms, in our policy making and in our instructional and business practices” (Courageous Conversations, 2017). If our teachers increase their social and self-awareness of individual, institutional and systemic structures and outcomes of racism then they will be able to forge stronger relationships of bonding with students upon a foundation of truth, understanding, and high expectations. The CASEL SEL framework and racial equity PD complement one another as they are both SEL driven learning. Teachers learning the CASEL 5 of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making have gaps and do not explicitly address racism but collectively they lay upon one another in an interdependent way which will positively impact the sense of belonging for Black and Latinx students.
In order to advance the implementation of the CASEL 5 SEL framework and racial equity PD for all staff the use of a logic model will be used to display how the change unfolds with both solutions. The logic model includes two main components: process theory and impact theory (Stegemann & Jaciw, 2018). Process theory will have structured inputs and outputs for both solutions to organize the expectations, investment,
and outcomes desired for change. Impact theory contains short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes of the two solutions implementation process. The theory of change will be based on the two solution programs to increase student sense of belonging for Black and Latinx students at Riverview. This step is important to galvanize support and energy for the implementation drivers to proceed into actionable steps.

**Process Theory – Inputs**

The inputs are the resources, people, facilities, supplies, time, and equipment that will be needed to implement both solutions. The following inputs are essential for success of the implementation for the CASEL 5 SEL framework and racial equity training. As visually described in Figure 2, I am combining the Faircloth and Hamm (2005) framework of the four dimensions of belonging that must be supported by both solutions to increase students' sense of belonging. This is supported by the CASEL 5 framework and the racial equity PD through way of Beyond Diversity. The professional development on the CASEL 5 SEL framework and beyond diversity will be delivered to give teachers the learning necessary to properly implement the curriculum that the SEL team will create meeting all five CASEL competencies. The lesson implementation by teachers will be completed in a series of yearlong lessons from to students during a 30 minute weekly advisory period.

Expanding in detail on how one supports the other (see Figure 2) each dimension has at least one of the five CASEL competencies and three of the dimensions have Beyond Diversity as a foundational solution. The first dimension, friendship nominations (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005), is strengthened by student’s social awareness
(i.e., taking others’ perspectives, recognizing strengths in others, demonstrating empathy and compassion, identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones [CASEL, 2020]) and relationships skills (i.e., developing positive relationships, communicating effectively, resolving conflicts constructively, resisting negative social pressure [CASEL, 2020]) as a support to clear pathway for students to build healthy relationships with peers, which will increase student sense of belonging. The second dimension, time on extra curricular activities (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005), would enhance responsible decision making (i.e., learning how to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, and facts, identifying solutions for personal and social problems, reflecting on one’s role to promote personal, family, and community well-being [CASEL, 2020]) and self-awareness (i.e., experiencing self-efficacy, having a growth mindset, developing interests and a sense of purpose, examining prejudices and biases, integrating personal and social identities, identifying personal, cultural and linguistic assets [CASEL, 2020]) which are then supported with racial equity training by way of Beyond Diversity. These supports will allow students to make informed decisions for themselves and become involved in extracurricular activities and for teachers to embrace, welcome, and affirm students regardless of racial identity, which will increase students' sense of belonging. The third dimension, bonding with teacher (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005), would bolster relationship skills (i.e., communicating effectively, developing positive relationships, demonstrating cultural competency, standing up for the right of others [CASEL, 2020]) which is also supported with Beyond Diversity to ensure that the student teacher relationship thrives on a foundation of truth and reconciliation in the classroom, which will increase student
The fourth dimension, perceived discrimination (Faircloth & Hamm, 2005), would enhance self awareness (i.e., examining prejudices and biases, identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets, integrating personal and social identities [CASEL, 2020]), social awareness (i.e., taking others perspectives, identifying diverse social norms including unjust ones, demonstrating empathy and compassion, understanding the influences of organizations and systems on behavior [CASEL, 2020]) and self-management (i.e., managing one’s emotions, identifying and using stress management strategies, showing courage to take initiative, demonstration personal and collective agency, examining prejudices and biases [CASEL, 2020]) which are all supported with Beyond Diversity in order to give multi-layers of support for student agency and anti-bias tools for teachers to examine, interrupt, and set conditions for all students of color to feel safe and affirmed in their spaces of influence, which will increase student of sense of belonging.

**CASEL 5 SEL Framework Inputs**

- Acquire funding approval to schedule SEL PD from CASEL for the SEL team.
- Form an SEL team of administrators, department chairs, front office staff, teachers (1 from each department), social worker and psychologist, with assigned roles and responsibilities, meet at least monthly to reflect on data, plan for improvements and lead schoolwide SEL initiatives. The team will be representative of the school community and will include students and families in the decision making.
● PD for leading for schoolwide SEL by CASEL will be provided for the implementation team.

● Foundational SEL learning PD is provided for all school staff in the first year of implementation and at least one annually for new hires as part of the onboarding process.

● The SEL team will create a schoolwide Tier 1 SEL curriculum that will meet the CASEL 5 competencies.

● The SEL team and school administration will engage in consistent two-way communications with all stakeholders including staff, other schoolwide teams, students, community partners, and families.

● The SEL team collaborates with a group of stakeholders who are, as stated, representative of the school community to develop a shared vision for schoolwide SEL.

● The SEL team has assessed needs and resources and developed a one year SEL implementation plan with goals, action steps, and assigned ownership. This plan is fully integrated with other schoolwide priorities and plans.

● There is a stable long-term budget for SEL resources, including professional learning, materials, and staffing. Maine East has allocated staff time for engaging in SEL related activities/PD.

**Racial Equity Training – Beyond Diversity Inputs**

● Acquire funding approval for Beyond Diversity training from Chief Financial Officer and Director of Adult Learning.
• Acquire agreed upon conditions and support from the teachers union to be shared to all staff. The sharing of the administration and union partnership in this endeavor is imperative.

• Form an equity professional development team in collaboration with the Director of Adult Learning with assigned roles and responsibilities, meet at least monthly to reflect on data, plan for improvements, and support staff following Beyond Diversity.

• Beyond Diversity is provided for all school staff in a five-year plan, at least one annually for new hires as part of the onboarding/orientation process and a professional learning plan is constructed.

• Provide one - three hour follow up sessions for each Beyond Diversity in order for participants to process and unpack what was learned and create a personal equity action plan (see Appendices A and B).

**Process Theory – Outputs**

The process theory outputs are tangible results of a major process in an organization. It also is a way to obtain data of how a program implementation is progressing (see Appendices A and B).

**CASEL 5 SEL Framework Outputs**

• Ensure and track over time that the SEL team is representative of the school community and includes students and families in the decision-making.
Almost all members of the school community can discuss SEL’s importance and its impact on student outcomes and understand their own role in helping students develop social emotional competencies.

The SEL team regularly reviews whether communications are effective at engaging stakeholders in school wide SEL. Communication to families are also translated for the top three languages spoken at Riverview.

The shared vision has been communicated to the entire school community, informs planning and implementation, and is revisited regularly.

The team reviews their goals and the plan regularly to monitor implementation and make necessary adjustments.

A self-assessment will be filled out by staff, three times a year, called the Educator Self-Assessment (OST). The OST evaluates three markers of SEL implementation and fidelity: (1) explicit instruction, (2) integration of SEL into academic instruction and programs, and (3) supportive climate (CASEL, 2020).

Teacher attendance to SEL PD.

Students will take the Panorama Education (n.d.) Equity and Inclusion Survey (to measure students’ sense of belonging) twice a year (fall and spring). Data will be analyzed by the SEL team.

Student attendance, discipline, academic achievement, course placement, and involvement in extracurricular activities data will also be evaluated three times a year (see Appendices A and B).
Racial Equity Training – Beyond Diversity Outputs

● The qualitative assessment teachers and staff will be given once during the school year (fall), this will be The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2006) Race Matters Organizational Self-Assessment. The assessment will support us by being intentional on what we are assessing by centering racial equity, raise organizational and teacher/staff awareness, continue focused conversations about race, gives a score and recommendations, and will allow us to gauge, as an organization, how the learning of racial equity has been maintained and acted upon.

● Teacher attendance, including arrival time and exit time, to Beyond Diversity PD and follow up session.

● Students will take the Panorama Education (n.d.) Equity and Inclusion Survey (to measure students' sense of belonging) twice a year (Fall and Spring). Data will be analyzed by the SEL team.

● Student attendance, discipline, academic achievement, course placement, and involvement in extracurricular activities data will also be evaluated three times a year.

Impact Theory

The impact theory includes short term, intermediate and long-term outcomes of the solution implementation process. The outcomes should yield positive results for student sense of belonging for Black and Latinx students, if planned and executed with fidelity, in 3-5 years (see Appendices A and B).
Short Term Outcomes/Objectives (6-12 Months)

Short-term goals are those where we will be able to see, as a building, immediate impact/affect in weeks or months (see Appendix A and B).

CASEL SEL Short Term Outcomes

- Awareness of social emotional learning and CASEL 5 competencies and framework.
- Knowledge of constraints affecting school engagement and student sense of belonging.
- Improve social cognitive skills.
- Increased positive social interactions with peers.
- Improved interpersonal problem solving and coping strategies.
- Increased empathy and assertiveness skills.
- Awareness of social emotional and educational resources available for Black and Latinx students (see Appendix A).

Racial Equity Training – Beyond Diversity Short Term Outcomes

- Build community upon a foundation of truth. There can be no reconciliation without truth.
- Internalize the Courageous Conversations protocol (the compass, 4 agreements, and 6 conditions) in order to engage in inter and intra racial discourse (Singleton, 2013).
- Help participants navigate the predictable pitfalls in interracial, multi-cultural conversations about race.
• Participants engage in thoughtful, compassionate, exploration of race while beginning to understand the impact of racism on student learning, sense of belonging, and investigating its role in institutional academic achievement disparities and its influence on the culture and climate of our schools.

• Take what is learned and apply it to the classroom, school spaces. This will normalize courageous conversations about race, build community, and strengthen student-staff relationships (see Appendix B).

**Intermediate Outcomes/Objectives (1-2 Years)**

Intermediate outcomes are intended effects that we want to see occur over a span of months and years.

**CASEL SEL Intermediate Outcomes**

• Increase Black students’ sense of belonging.

• Elevate student voice.

• Increased high quality SEL educational opportunities for all students with exceptional focus on Black and Latinx students.

• Improvement in students’ social and emotional skills, sense of belonging, relationships, academic performance, and perceptions of classroom and school climate.

• Students recognize and appreciate their brilliance and who they are.

• Students feel and show empathy for others.

• Students establish and maintain positive relationships.

• Increased access to social services for students and families.
● Increased collaboration with families, the school, advocacy and community groups.

● Leadership and staff are knowledgeable about students’ lived experiences, social and racial identities, cultural background (see Appendix A).

Racial Equity Training – Beyond Diversity Intermediate Outcomes

● Attracting and retaining a workforce that is diverse in skills and experience and reflects the demographic diversity of our students.

● Involving community members including parents and families, civic and faith-based leadership, and the community at large, as active collaborators and problem-solvers on acknowledging and addressing racial and educational inequities including students’ sense of belonging.

● Welcoming and engaging families as essential partners in their students’ education, school planning, and building decision-making.

● Ensuring that all staff receive Beyond Diversity training as they build their working knowledge of racial identity and cultural competencies, and identifies and addresses implicit and explicit biases.

● Honoring and building upon the strengths and assets of every student (see Appendix B).
Long Term Outcomes/Objectives (3-5 Years)

Long-term outcomes intended effects we want to see over the course of years or decades.

CASEL SEL Long Term Outcomes

- Develop long-term skills to lead with empathy and increase the sense of belonging for others.
- Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.
- Students will demonstrate skills related to achieving personal and academic goals.
- Decline in students’ low sense of belonging, anxiety, unhealthy decision-making, and substance use.
- Long-term improvements in students’ skills, cultural and social awareness, racial consciousness, attitudes, positive social behavior, and academic performance.
- Family, school, and community collaboration.
- Empower, support, and motivate students to succeed in global society.
- SEL competencies are critically important for the long-term success of all students to succeed in a global society.
- Instructional materials are solidified and offer diverse representations of culture, race, gender, and other identities.
● SEL practices provide opportunities for students to learn about cultural differences, explore and celebrate their own social and cultural identities, and collaborate to develop inclusive and equitable learning environments (see Appendix A).

Racial Equity Training – Beyond Diversity Long Term Outcomes

● Raising the achievement of all students while eliminating the racial predictability of achievement for students of color.

● Ensuring that all staff examine and change educational practices, policies, and processes that contribute to and perpetuate racial disparities, and the disparities of those who have been marginalized in society by their identity, cultural, or economic status.

● Providing all students with resources, opportunities and supports needed to ensure preparation for success in high school and beyond.

● Implementing culturally relevant teaching practices that reflect the contributions and perspectives of all people. (Illinois State Board of Education, 2021)

Summary

The success of the two solutions in order to address the problem of practice, increase students’ sense of belonging for Black and Latinx students, requires a clear, concise structured and highly collaborative development, planning, implementation, progress monitoring, and ability to adjust when data suggests to do so. The impact theory for solution 1 is if we implement the CASEL 5 SEL framework (five competencies) then
we will yield positive results by increasing student sense of belonging for Black and Latinx students. The commitment to SEL will also provide meaningful opportunities for staff to reflect on and develop social, emotional, and cultural competencies. The impact theory for solution 2 is if we implement racial equity PD via Beyond Diversity then we will not only increase student sense of belonging for our Black students, staff will also examine and change educational practices, procedures, and processes that contribute to and perpetuate racial disparities for all students based on their identity, cultural, or economic status. The exploration and implementation of the Illinois culturally relevant teaching practices that reflect the contributions and perspectives of all people will also be a beneficial outcome. As Bertram et al. (2015) makes very clear that implementation is not an exclusive event or celebration but a process of carefully considered organizational adjustments that unfold over a course of 1-4 years. Heifetz et al. (2009) also gives insight advises not to leap into action when centering adaptive leadership to address an adaptive problem (like sense of belonging and racial bias). He elevates the examples of Mohandas K. Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Mother Teresa as people of action under great pressure to get it right. As they understood when moving people toward change and disrupting the status quo of organizations, a system or even humanity, deserves careful deliberate planning and time in the face of urgency to be effective and sustainable. As the solution implementation moves forward, students and staff must be active participants in the solution based interventions and have an open heart and mind to learn, critically self-reflect, and take ownership of being a partner for giving all students what they need and I would say deserve as we prepare them for the world.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

Constructing my capstone research project with a foundation of a problem of practice that is directly connected to social injustice that is taking place in my school has solidified my sense of urgency to carefully plan, structure, organize and mobilize the construction of two researched based solutions and a logic model of implementation and progress monitoring. I will work with my team in order to ensure all students receive the full benefits from the thoughtful implementation of both SEL and racial equity PD solutions.

Improving Systems

Sense of Belonging

The learning outcomes I anticipate coming to fruition are the intentional construction of the conditions in a high school setting for Black and Latinx students to increase their sense of belonging in a school that prioritizes their right to be seen, heard, and belong. The implementation plan and logic models (see Appendices A and B) created with a theory of change, process and impact theory, outputs, inputs short term, intermediate, and long term objectives will garner the expected results from a strong SEL curriculum and racial equity PD integration. The initial indicators of success, in the short term, will be a 25% increase in response favorability for Black and Latinx students on the question that had the lowest favorability rating (19% & 30%) on the Panorama Equity
and Inclusion survey, under sense of belonging, “How connected do you feel to adults at your school?” The indicators of success, in the intermediate timeframe, will be a 35% increase on the Panorama Equity and Inclusion survey, under sense of belonging, for Black and Latinx students in the first two years of full implementation of SEL and racial equity PD. The success indicators, for long term objectives, will be a 30% increase overall on the Panorama Equity and Inclusion survey under sense of belonging (overall favorability rating in 2020 = 50%) and teacher student relationships (overall favorability rating in 2020 = 65%).

The journey I have taken to dive into the current and past research has supported me in constructing a dual implementation plan for two solutions for my problem of practice. The careful and deliberate construction of these two research based plans will set up my organization with two interconnected complementary frameworks. In order to rid us, in public education, of such stark realities of the racial hierarchy of academic and social emotional stratification we must all take action by being a part of the solution. This solution is not met with a technical fix for which we already have an answer as Heifetz et al. (2009) reminds us of academic and social emotional disparities based on race and racism are adaptive problems that require adaptive leadership and courageous conversations to spark and initiate change. As I demonstrated, my approach to increase students’ sense of belonging for Black and Latinx students by incorporating the work of a scientifically research based SEL framework and curriculum to support the social emotional development of students and staff (CASEL, 2020). I have also incorporated complementary support by integrating, in tandem, a time tested (since 1990) racial equity
professional development model, of Beyond Diversity (Singleton, 2013), that hundreds of schools from across the country, including Illinois, have used in order equip staff and to accelerate the urgency and action to eliminate racial disparities in education (Smith & Brazer, 2016).

**Principal Leadership**

A success indicator that kept surfacing in my research but was not discussed in my capstone research thus far and one I wish to highlight at this time is the role of the principal as change agent. The principal is the leader in each public education building in the United States and in today’s public education system. We need them more than ever. Disproportionate outcomes of academic achievement in our public schools are currently and have been a national dilemma for quite some time and even though it is a known problem, schools across the country, by and large, have not remediated the problem despite federal legislation to support those changes throughout United States history. A leader determined to make an impact on student achievement and sense of belonging for all students must research the past in order to avoid replicating infringements, embody a conceptual knowledge of history that impacts the people in which one serves, and implement effective strategies to mobilize change for the future.

Our second United States president, John Adams, was a strong advocate for public education as he believed the value of education is that it can be the foundation to freedom and nothing is more effective in countering political oppression than the general diffusion of knowledge. Adams knew the importance of public education to a republic. There is substantial evidence that he felt widespread education for all Americans was
integral to the very existence of a new founded government. It is described in an early essay by Adams that there are strong alliances between ignorance and oppression, and between knowledge and liberty. Nothing counters political oppression more than “knowledge diffused generally through the whole body of the people” (Adams, 1776, as cited in Alexander & Alexander, 2009, p. 32). In the late 1700’s, there were objections to a public education similar to what we see today in the fight for equity in the face of disproportionate educational outcomes forged in the misconception of equality. When Adams was fighting for the rights of Americans to be afforded to a public education there were, he claimed, some persons in Massachusetts “who affect to censure this provision for the education of our youth as a needless expense, and an imposition upon the rich in favor of the poor.” This attitude, Adams continued, was calculated to foster ignorance and with it, servility (p. 32).

Our nation's principals are on the front lines to lead their staffed buildings of certified educators, student services team, paraprofessionals, administrative assistants, custodial and maintenance personnel, and security team members to fulfill our nation’s promise that all students shall receive a free appropriate public education to prepare them for the world as critical consumers of information who are informed to make the best decisions for themselves and others while contributing their brilliance and innovation to a larger U.S. society. Since the original department of education was created in 1867 under President Andrew Johnson, this has been the primary avenue by which to attain the “American dream.” It is the principal's role to organize, mobilize and inspire their staff to
ensure all students, especially those who are the most marginalized, have access to this same dream.

**Improvement of Education**

I believe that one of the success indicators that will come to fruition as a long-term goal for Black and Latinx students is an increase in academic achievement based on the intentional focus of SEL and racial equity PD. As most of us serving in education are keenly aware of, disproportionate outcomes of academic achievement and unequal access to opportunities in our United States public schools for students of color have been a national perplexity for quite some time (ESSA, 2015). Even though this is a nationally known, publicized, and a much researched quandary, schools across the country, including Riverview, have not reconciled this painful reality despite federal legislation to support changes throughout U.S. history. There is a term frequently used in the U.S., the “American dream” as mentioned above, which is a sort of ethos or set of beliefs that are instilled in U.S. citizens as they work toward creating life for themselves. As a person living in the U.S. who has completed a Pre-K to 12th grade education it is explained, early in the U.S. K-12 educational journey, that education is the key mechanism to building your version of that “American dream.” What we know to be true based on how students are performing on standardized tests overtime and recent data that show students’ sense of belonging is that education, as the mechanism to access the “American dream” seems to be more distant for students of color in comparison to their White peers, especially for Black, Latinx and Indigenous students.
As listed in the National Center for Education Statistics (2021), Black, Latinx and Indigenous high school students are experiencing the greatest disproportionate outcomes based on a racial hierarchy of academic achievement in the U.S. They are also experiencing racial disproportionality in the following categories, over identification for special education, behavioral discipline such as suspension and expulsions, limited access to higher level academic rigorous coursework like honors and advanced placement classes (AP), chronic absenteeism, grade distribution, and semester failures. The academic achievement gap based on race persists at multiple levels within the same system, which include national, state, county, school districts, schools, grade levels, courses, and classrooms. There is an urgent charge for change in our nation's high schools as there is much to undo in a system that was built on a foundation of individualism and equality, which directly produces such stark disproportionate outcomes. What may be needed as a foundation of collective change is the work of this capstone project, which has the potential to lay a new foundation, one that is built on a moral imperative, a cultural tapestry of collectivism, and a true sense of belonging for all students that centered on SEL and racial equity.

Conclusion

In closing, based on the aforementioned academic and social emotional (sense of belonging) disproportionalities based on race in education for Black and Latinx students schools must require the implementation of targeted culture changing adaptive supports with clear goals, a plan of action, and moral leadership (Sergiovanni, 1992). The full integration of both the CASEL 5 SEL framework and curriculum and racial equity PD by
way of Beyond Diversity as solutions. Said solutions will deliver the benefits of increasing the students’ sense of belonging on a foundation of truth, reconciliation, empathy, high expectations, and community. The work of moving against a system of status quo, in education, for the liberation and humanity of our Black and Latinx students is not for the faint of heart. It takes a solidification and alignment of one’s beliefs, values, and behaviors to lead with moral leadership. Sergiovanni (1992) defines moral leadership, one of his sources of authority, as a leadership that must engage the hand, heart, and head. The hand of leadership is the doing. The heart of leadership is what a person believes, values, and dreams about. The head of leadership has to do with theories of practice; leaders develop overtime with a keen ability to critically reflect as they implement change. Using the hand, heart, and head to underscore moral leadership, a leader cannot operate with one without the other. When doing what is best for students as a leader, especially for those who have been the most historically marginalized, the heart is what you value and believe, the head helps you see how things work, and the hand are the decisions and actions that drive your behaviors, which inform your results.

My experience at Loyola University Chicago has been so memorable. I absolutely love the Jesuit stance on social justice and how that theme of social justice was a part of my learning experience at Loyola from day one. The incredible professors like Dr. Janis Fine, Dr. Marla Israel, Dr. Chris Manning, Dr. Susan Sostak, Dr. Eilene Edejer, Dr. Siobhan Cafferty, and Dr. Felicia Stewart made learning come alive in all aspects by how we, as leaders in education, must forge ahead with courage and compassion in serving and empowering communities who deserve equitable access to the best education and
resources available. This is needed in schools and classrooms where our students feel a strong sense of belonging and see themselves in the curriculum that is being taught.

Similar to what Dr. Chris Manning provided for me at Loyola. As a Black male professor at Loyola in my Ed.D. coursework, he was the first person in my 21 years of education to allow me to see myself, culturally as a Mexican American person, in the curriculum. For that, I am eternally grateful as he filled my cup, which would have been left empty in my lifelong educational experience otherwise, thank you. Also, the impact of Dr. Janis Fine while at Loyola’s Rome campus as she taught us corporal punishment and how that exists in school with zero tolerance and punitive discipline. We did all of this while sitting in an outdoor classroom in the Roman Colosseum, it was such a powerful learning experience.

I want to thank Loyola and the college of education for allowing me such a practical and direct learning experience in the field of education leadership. While I conducted my capstone research project, I was directly focused on a current problem that is negatively impacting my students and was able to implement a researched based solution that will yield the positive results my students deserve without delay. It will have an immediate impact and for that I am grateful.
APPENDIX A

CASEL SEL LOGIC MODEL
Project Title: CASEL 5 SEL Implementation for Riverview High School

Program Theory of Change:
If we implement the CASEL 5 SEL framework into our academic curriculum, activities, and building culture for staff and students then we will have an increase of student sense of belonging for Black and Latinx students.

Process Theory:
We will provide professional development (PD) on leading SEL for our SEL team and foundational SEL learning PD will be provided for all school staff in the first year of implementation and at least one annually for new hires as part of the onboarding process.

Impact Theory:
If we implement the CASEL 5 SEL framework then that will yield positive results by increasing student sense of belonging for Black and Latinx students. The commitment to SEL will also provide meaningful opportunities for staff to reflect on and develop social, emotional, and cultural competencies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Short-term Objectives (1-2 years)</th>
<th>Intermediate Objectives (2-3 years)</th>
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<tr>
<td>-Acquire funding approval to schedule SEL PD from CASEL for the SEL team. -Form an SEL team. The team will be representative of the school community and will include students and families in the decision making. -Leading for schoolwide SEL by CASEL will be provided for the implementation team. -Foundational SEL learning PD is provided for all school staff and at least one annually for new hires as part of the onboarding process. -The SEL team will create a schoolwide SEL curriculum that will meet the CASEL 5 competencies. -The SEL team and school administration will engage in consistent two-way communications with all stakeholders. -The SEL team collaborates with the school community to develop a shared vision for schoolwide SEL. -The SEL team has assessed needs and resources and developed a one year SEL implementation plan with goals, action steps, and assigned ownership. -There is a stable long term budget for SEL resources, including professional learning, materials, and staffing.</td>
<td>-Ensure and track over time that the SEL team is representative of the school community and includes students and families in the decision making. -Almost all members of the school community can discuss SEL’s importance and its impact on student outcomes and understand their own role in helping students develop social emotional competencies. -The SEL team regularly reviews whether communications are effective at engaging stakeholders in schoolwide SEL. -Communication to families are also translated for the top three languages spoken at Riverview. -The shared vision has been communicated to the entire school community, informs planning. -The team reviews their goals and the plan regularly to monitor implementation and make necessary adjustments. -Teacher attendance to SEL PD</td>
<td>-Awareness of social emotional learning and CASEL 5 competencies and framework -Knowledge of constraints affecting school engagement and student sense of belonging -Improve social cognitive skills -Increased positive social interactions with peers -Improved interpersonal problem solving and coping strategies -Increased empathy and assertiveness skills -Awareness of social emotional and educational resources available Black and Latinx students.</td>
<td>-Increase Black and Latinx students’ sense of belonging -Elevate student voice -Increased high quality SEL educational opportunities for all students with exceptional focus on Black and Latinx -Improvement in students’ social and emotional skills, sense of belonging, relationships, academic performance, and perceptions of classroom and school climate -Students recognize and appreciate their brilliance -Students feel and show empathy for others -Students establish and maintain positive relationships -Increased access to social services for students and families -Leadership and staff are knowledgeable about students’ lived experiences, social and racial identities, cultural background and CASEL 5 SEL implementation for Riverview High School</td>
<td>-Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success -Students will demonstrate skills related to achieving personal and academic goals -Decline in anxiety, unhealthy decision making, and substance use -Long-term improvements in students’ skills, cultural and social awareness, racial consciousness, attitudes, positive social behavior, and academic performance -Family, school, and community collaboration -Empower, support, and motivate students to succeed in global society -SEL practices and imbedded curriculum provide opportunities for students to learn about cultural difference, explore and celebrate their own social and cultural identities, and collaborate develop inclusive and equitable learning environments</td>
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Progress Monitoring

- Students will take the Panorama Education (n.d.) Equity and Inclusion Survey (to measure students' sense of belonging) twice a year (Fall & Spring). Data will be analyzed by the SEL team.
- Student attendance, discipline, academic achievement, course placement, and involvement in extracurricular activities data.
- A self-assessment will be filled out by staff, three times a year, called the Educator Self Assessment (OST). The OST evaluates three markers of SEL implementation and fidelity, (1) explicit instruction, (2) integration of SEL into academic instruction and programs, (3) supportive climate (CASEL, 2020).
APPENDIX B

RACIAL EQUITY PD LOGIC MODEL
Project Title: Racial Equity Professional Development (PD) by way of Beyond Diversity, Singleton (2013), implementation for Riverview High School

Program Theory of Change:
If we implement racial equity PD via Beyond Diversity, then we will increase teachers' social consciousness and understanding of individual, institutional, and systemic racism in order to dismantle barriers and obstruction so that all students are loved and affirmed to thrive, achieve at their highest potential and experience a strong sense of school belonging.

Process Theory:
We will provide staff the two day Beyond Diversity training to internalize the Courageous Conversations protocol (the compass, 4 agreements, and 6 conditions). Staff will also be offered resources, materials, and a three hour processing session to unpack what was learned and action plan.

Impact Theory:
If we implement racial equity PD via Beyond Diversity then we will not only increase student sense of belonging for our Black and Latinx students, staff will also examine and change educational practices, procedures, and processes that contribute to and perpetuate racial disparities for all students based on their identity, cultural, or economic status. The exploration and implementation of the Illinois culturally relevant teaching practices that reflect the contributions and perspectives of all people will also be a beneficial outcome.

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<td>- Acquire funding approval for Beyond Diversity training from Chief Financial Officer and Director of Adult Learning.</td>
<td>-The qualitative assessment teachers and staff will be given at 3 points during the school year will be The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2006) Race Matters Organizational Self Assessment. What the assessment will do to support us by being intentional on what we are assessing centering racial equity, raise organizational and teacher/staff awareness, continue focused conversations about race, gives a score and recommendations, and will allow us to gauge, as an organization, how the learning of racial equity has been maintained and acted upon.</td>
<td>-Build community upon a foundation of truth. There can be no reconciliation without truth. -Internalize the Courageous Conversations protocol (the compass, 4 agreements, and 6 conditions) in order to engage in inter and intra racial discourse (Singleton, 2013) -Help participants navigate the predictable pitfalls in interacial, multi-cultural conversations about race -Participants engage in thoughtful, compassionate, exploration of race while beginning to understand the impact of racism on student learning, sense of belonging, and investigating its role in institutional academic achievement disparities and its influence on the culture and climate of our schools -Take what is learned and apply it to the classroom, school spaces. This will normalize courageous conversations about race, build community, and strengthen student-staff relationships.</td>
<td>-Attracting and retaining a workforce that is diverse in skills and experience and reflects the demographic diversity of our students. -Involving community members including parents and families, civic and faith-based leadership, and the community at large, as active collaborators and problem-solvers on acknowledging and addressing racial and educational inequities including students’ sense of belonging. -Welcoming and engaging families as essential partners in their students’ education, school planning, and building decision making.</td>
<td>-Raising the achievement of all students while eliminating the racial predictability of achievement. -Ensuring that all staff examine and change educational practices, policies, and processes that contribute to and perpetuate racial disparities, and the disparities of those who have been marginalized in society by their identity, cultural, or economic status. -Providing all students with resources, opportunities and support needed to ensure preparation for success in high school and beyond. -Implementing culturally relevant teaching practices that reflect the contributions and perspectives of all people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Provide one - three hour follow up sessions for each Beyond Diversity in order for participants to process and unpack what was learned and create a personal equity action plan.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
curricular activities data will also be evaluated.

-Honoring and building upon the strengths and assets of every student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Progress Monitoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Students will take the Panorama Education (n.d.) Equity and Inclusion Survey (to measure students' sense of belonging) twice a year (Fall and Spring). Data will be analyzed by the SEL team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Student attendance, discipline, academic achievement, course placement, and involvement in extra curricular activities data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-The qualitative assessment teachers and staff will be given once during the school year (Fall) will be The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2006) Race Matters Organizational Self Assessment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STUDENT SURVEY TOPICS

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION P. 10
How diverse, integrated, and fair school is for students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures.
Example Question: How often do you spend time at school with students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?

CULTURAL AWARENESS AND ACTION P. 10
How often students learn about, discuss, and confront issues of race, ethnicity, and culture in school.
Example Question: How often do teachers encourage you to learn about people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?

SENSE OF BELONGING P. 11
How much students feel that they are valued members of the school community.
Example Question: How well do people in your class understand you as a person?

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS P. 11
Demographic questions about survey takers that could be included in the survey and may be of interest to many schools.
Example Question: What language do you mostly speak at home?

FREE RESPONSES P. 11
Open-ended questions about a variety of topics that may be of interest to many schools.
Example Question: What do you wish your teachers knew about your experiences of race, ethnicity, or culture at school?
# Student: Survey Topics and Questions

## Diversity and Inclusion
How diverse, integrated, and fair school is for students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures.

**Grades 6-12**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often do you spend time at school with students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?</td>
<td>Almost never  Once in a while  Sometimes  Frequently  Almost always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you have classes with students from different racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds?</td>
<td>Almost never  Once in a while  Sometimes  Frequently  Almost always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At your school, how often do students from different races, ethnicities, or cultures hang out with each other?</td>
<td>Almost never  Once in a while  Sometimes  Frequently  Almost always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At your school, how common is it for students to have close friends from different racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds?</td>
<td>Not at all common  Slightly common  Somewhat common  Quite common  Extremely common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How fairly do students at your school treat people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?</td>
<td>Not at all fairly  Slightly fairly  Somewhat fairly  Quite fairly  Extremely fairly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How fairly do adults at your school treat people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?</td>
<td>Not at all fairly  Slightly fairly  Somewhat fairly  Quite fairly  Extremely fairly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Cultural Awareness and Action
How often students learn about, discuss, and confront issues of race, ethnicity, and culture in school.

**Grades 6-12**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often do teachers encourage you to learn about people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?</td>
<td>Almost never  Once in a while  Sometimes  Frequently  Almost always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you think about what someone of a different race, ethnicity, or culture experiences?</td>
<td>Almost never  Once in a while  Sometimes  Frequently  Almost always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How confident are you that students at your school can have honest conversations with each other about race?</td>
<td>Not at all confident  Slightly confident  Somewhat confident  Quite confident  Extremely confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At your school, how often are you encouraged to think more deeply about race-related topics with other students?</td>
<td>Almost never  Once in a while  Sometimes  Frequently  Almost always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How comfortable are you sharing your thoughts about race-related topics with other students at your school?</td>
<td>Not at all comfortable  Slightly comfortable  Somewhat comfortable  Quite comfortable  Almost always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do students at your school have important conversations about race, even when they might be uncomfortable?</td>
<td>Almost never  Once in a while  Sometimes  Frequently  Almost always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When there are major news events related to race, how often do adults at your school talk about them with students?</td>
<td>Almost never  Once in a while  Sometimes  Frequently  Almost always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well does your school help students speak out against racism?</td>
<td>Not at all well  Slightly well  Somewhat well  Quite well  Extremely well</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**TOOL: Educator Self-Assessment**

Use this self-assessment three to four times over the course of the year to assess your strengths and areas to develop as you promote SEL through explicit instruction, integration into academic instruction or programming, and a supportive learning environment. Place a check in the column that indicates the frequency of each indicator. For indicators that you rate as “sometimes” or “infrequently,” consider what strategies, resources, or support you may want to use to deepen your SEL practice. For indicators you rate as “unsure,” consider what additional information or feedback you want to gather.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Markers of SEL</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Infrequently</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explicit Instruction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use/reinforce an evidence-based approach to teach social and emotional skills in a sequenced, active, focused, and explicit way and on a regular schedule.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I teach SEL in a way that is developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive for the young people I support.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people lead routines, share their perspectives, and reflect on their experiences during SEL instruction.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integration of SEL into Academic Instruction and Programs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEL standards/goals are embedded into academic activities (see <em>[SEL Integrated Lesson or Activity Planning Checklist]</em>).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth make connections between SEL and what we’re learning and initiate reflection and discussion.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I foster academic mindsets by helping youth set goals, commending academic risk-taking and incremental progress, showing them how to correct mistakes, and framing struggle as a key part of the process of learning.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I select content and plan activities that link to young people’s lived experiences and frames of reference and by anticipating support that individuals may need to access content and participate fully.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I design learning activities that allow young people to explore issues that are important to them and co-create solutions to improve our program, site, or the community.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time is balanced with periods of educator-led instruction, talk and interaction, and time to work/reflect alone.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prepare young people to engage in group discussions by actively listening to their peers, affirming and respectfully challenging each other’s ideas, and formulating questions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ask open-ended questions to surface thinking and probe young people to elaborate on their response.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use collaborative structures that require young people to communicate, cooperate, share responsibility, monitor that all ideas are heard, and problem-solve.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### TOOL: Educator Self-Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Supportive Climate</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young people reflect on what made their collective work successful and/or challenging and plan for improvement.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My class or group has co-developed shared agreements for how we will treat one another, and we check in regularly about how we are living by our shared agreements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people know, follow, initiate, and provide input and feedback on our regular routines and procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I communicate that I appreciate each young person as an individual and am interested in knowing them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I check in and follow up with young people about their perspectives and concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I facilitate group meetings, circles, or other intentional community-building activities to cultivate a culture of personal connection, mutual support, and belonging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I vary grouping so that each young person gets to know and interact with everyone else.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My learning environment, activities, and interactions affirm diverse identities and cultures. We share and learn about each other’s lives and backgrounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I teach, model, and reinforce language and strategies that help young people express empathy, resolve conflicts, repair harm, self-reflect, and self-regulate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When group agreements are not upheld, I respond in a way that is discreet, developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and restorative (such as using empathetic listening, “I” statements, and open-ended questions).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**ORGANIZATIONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT**

**STAFF COMPETENCIES**

1. Staff are trained in and are knowledgeable at the Tier level about the range of barriers to equal opportunity and the depth of embedded racial inequities whenever they are produced and how they can be reduced.
   - 0 = None
   - 1 = Some
   - 2 = Almost All
   - 3 = All

2. Staff have a deep level of understanding about barriers to opportunity and embedded racial inequities in their specific area of focus—tracking critical data and information about how inequities are produced and how they can be reduced.
   - 0 = None
   - 1 = Some
   - 2 = Almost Always
   - 3 = Always

3. Staff are comfortable and competent about discussing issues of barriers to opportunity and embedded racial inequities with relevant individuals and groups.
   - 0 = Rarely
   - 1 = Sometimes
   - 2 = Almost Always
   - 3 = Always

4. Staff exhibit cultural competency in interactions with diverse individuals and groups.
   - 0 = None
   - 1 = Some
   - 2 = Almost All
   - 3 = All

5. Staff disaggregate data by race in all analyses.
   - 0 = Rarely
   - 1 = Sometimes
   - 2 = Almost Always
   - 3 = Always

6. A racial equity analysis is applied to policy issues.
   - 0 = Rarely
   - 1 = Sometimes
   - 2 = Almost Always
   - 3 = Always

7. A racial equity analysis is applied to practice issues.
   - 0 = Rarely
   - 1 = Sometimes
   - 2 = Almost Always
   - 3 = Always

8. Written materials reflect a knowledge and understanding of barriers to opportunity and embedded racial inequities.
   - 0 = None
   - 1 = Some
   - 2 = Almost All
   - 3 = All

9. Staff can articulate the costs of failing to address barriers to opportunity and embedded racial inequities.
   - 0 = None
   - 1 = Some
   - 2 = Almost All
   - 3 = All

**ORGANIZATIONAL OPERATIONS**

1. Removing barriers to opportunity and disparities in representation and reduction are explicit goals of the work and articulated in a mission statement.
   - 0 = No
   - 1 = Moving in That Direction
   - 2 = Yes

2. The unit has an internal team that guides the ongoing work of removing barriers to opportunity and reducing racial disparities/comparitively.
   - 0 = No
   - 1 = Moving in That Direction
   - 2 = Yes

3. The organization’s goals of reducing barriers to opportunity and racial disparities/comparitively are reflected in resource allocations.
   - 0 = No
   - 1 = Moving in That Direction
   - 2 = Yes

4. Investments promote capacity building and asset building for people and communities of color.
   - 0 = No
   - 1 = Moving in That Direction
   - 2 = Yes

5. Results of investments show opportunity and a reduction in racial disparities/comparitively.
   - 0 = No
   - 1 = Moving in That Direction
   - 2 = Yes

6. The organization has a deliberate plan to develop and promote the leadership of staff of color.
   - 0 = No
   - 1 = Moving in That Direction
   - 2 = Yes

7. The organization has regular training and discussions at the staff and board levels about removing barriers to opportunity and reducing racial disparities/comparitively, both informally and formally.
   - 0 = No
   - 1 = Moving in That Direction
   - 2 = Yes

8. The organization regularly assesses workforce composition by race/ethnicity and develops/implements strategies for increasing diversity at all levels.
   - 0 = No
   - 1 = Moving in That Direction
   - 2 = Yes

9. The environment of the organization (food, art, holiday activities, etc.) is multicultural.
   - 0 = No
   - 1 = Moving in That Direction
   - 2 = Yes

10. The organization has a mechanism in place to address complaints about barriers to opportunity and racial inequities in the workplace.
    - 0 = No
    - 1 = Moving in That Direction
    - 2 = Yes

---

**Racial Equity Score**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Next Steps</th>
<th>Tools That Can Help</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 20</td>
<td>Become intentional. Value an emphasis on racially equitable results. Support and maintain: Mission statement.</td>
<td>Every tool in this Toolkit can help your organization become more intentional in its commitment to opportunity for all. You may want to start with @how_to_talk about racial disparities and numerical examples tool. Sometimes organizations do not have intentional efforts to produce equity because they get stuck on debates related to language instead of action. You should also review the Race Matters PowerPoint to understand how becoming intentional changes the work you do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>Build staff/organizational capacity. If power points are in the areas of Staff Competencies, identify opportunities for staff to better understand embedded racial inequities. If not, they are produced and maintained, and thus they can be eliminated. If power points are in the area of organizational operations, identify policies and procedures that should be improved to promote racially equitable results.</td>
<td>Select relevant tools from the Toolkit based on the questions that you’ll face. To help you select the right tools, the Racial Justice User Guide lists every tool and what it will accomplish.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-79</td>
<td>Fine-tune staff/organizational capacity. See which tools sound best, and work on them.</td>
<td>We are in a good position to go deeper on the issues by creating your own tools specific to your content area. The second plan is to start a deep developing a fact sheet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>Mentor others!</td>
<td>Every tool in this Toolkit has the steps that need some tuning. To help you select the right tools, the Racial Justice User Guide lists every tool and what it will accomplish.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

1. Thanks to Heather Fayong and Dave Auker for their input.

2. Embedded racial inequities are accumulated advantages for whites and accumulated disadvantages for people of color. These result from the long-term effects of public policies and institutional practices, the differential perceptions and images of people of color and whites, and the structural barriers and values that privilege one racial group over others.
REFERENCE LIST


VITA

Joaquin Stephenson was born in Indianapolis, Indiana and moved to Chicago, Illinois at the age of 10. Before attending Loyola University Chicago, he attended Northeastern Illinois University where he earned a Bachelor of the Arts in Physical Education, in 2005. From 2005-2006, he also attended Concordia University Chicago where he received a Master of Arts in Administration and Supervision.

While at Loyola, Joaquin traveled Italy and engaged in coursework at Loyola’s Rome campus over the summer of 2013. Currently, Joaquin is the Associate Principal for Student Experiences at Maine East High School District 207 in Park Ridge, Illinois. He currently lives in Chicago, Illinois.
CAPSTONE PROJECT COMMITTEE

The capstone project submitted by Joaquin Stephenson has been read and approved by the following committee:

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