

Time For Change:

The Impact of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Practitioners on Independent School Campuses

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National Association of Independent Schools
2021

Acknowledgements

As we set out on this journey into a world that we had not experienced as professionals, there was a weighty sense that we needed an experienced guide. We found these guides in Amada Torres (Vice President for Studies, Insights, and Research) and Caroline Blackwell (Vice Presidents for Equity and Justice) and they opened up to us the world of NAIS in a way that allowed us to do our work unimpeded. They and their colleagues at NAIS were crucial to our progress and created a working relationship that fostered and encouraged us. In addition, we must thank the independent school colleagues in our cohort who answered our persistent questions and shed light on the world they inhabit. Finally, we'd like to thank the Peabody professors who encouraged us to produce a product we could be proud of and those whose work heavily influenced us: Marisa Cannata, Laura Booker, Claire Smrekar, Mark Cannon, Chris Candelaria, and Joe Murphy.

Mike Brown

I am forever grateful to my beautiful wife who supported me and our family throughout this meaningful journey. Every night spent researching and writing for me this past year was a night for her spent ensuring an amazing quality of life for our children. Camile Melton Brown, I am forever indebted to you. Secondly, I thank my wonderful children who would routinely sneak into my office simply to offer a hug and word of encouragement when I needed it most. To Mike Brown Sr. and Diane Brown (my parents), I thank you for your daily prayers and morning phone calls of support. If I ever stand tall, it is only because I am standing on your shoulders. Finally, I want to thank my mentor, Dr. Lynda Bryd Poller, for looking past my inexperience at 21 years old and seeing my potential as a future educator. I hope to make you proud. My village is strong, and I love you all, dearly.

Seth Swihart

I must start with a thank you that can never be said enough to my wife and three children who supported me as I spent many hours away from home or locked in my office over the past three years. Their support was ever present and has sustained me through the times that seemed that there was no more I could give. I also must thank those at Metro Nashville Public Schools who supported this journey, even when it meant time away from my work -- Dr. Gary Hughes and Dr. Craig Hammond cannot be thanked enough. Finally, I'd like to thank the faculty and staff at Bellevue Middle School who, even without knowing it sometimes, supported my attempts to try to ideas from this program as I waded into my work as principal.

Executive Summary

In an increasingly diverse nation, establishing representative, equitable, and inclusive work environments has become a prominent discussion for many organizations. However, this journey for NAIS (National Association of Independent Schools) towards a more diverse and inclusive institution began over 40 years ago with strategies to integrate independent schools and expand DEI practices across its vast partnership of 1600 schools nationwide (*NAIS - 2009-2019 Developments in the State of the Diversity Practice, 2020*).

The educator experience has been a key driver of NAIS's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work in independent schools. NAIS speaks of an institutional commitment to the principles of equity and highlights "embracing diversity" and "championing inclusivity" as core values. Acting upon research that reveals organizations with racially diverse teams are more likely to outperform their homogenous counterparts by 33% (*Digest of Education Statistics, 2019*), NAIS seeks to move beyond an overwhelmingly White faculty. During the current 2019-2020 academic year, 83% of the teachers in NAIS member schools and 86% of administrators classified themselves as White (*Digest of Education Statistics, 2019*). This remains relatively equal to their public school counterparts where eighty-one percent of teachers registered as "White" during the 2015-2016 school year. Organization-wide, diversity practices and their methods of implementation are admittedly still in the process of growth and formalization at many schools (*Digest of Education Statistics, 2019*). NAIS does, however, present a general DEI framework regarding the educator experience and focuses on a) the deliberate increase of diverse faculty who represent a broader racial spectrum, b) the creation of more equitable retention/promotion practices for faculty of color, and c) the implementation of more inclusive adult programming. NAIS is making progress in the creation of more diverse, equitable, and inclusive campuses for independent school staff with DEI practitioners as the key lever for improvement.

This study seeks to fill a gap in the literature and support the work of NAIS on issues of DEI by examining the following questions:

1. How are staff culture and teacher professional development impacted by the presence of a DEI practitioner on an independent school campus?
2. What is the current context in which DEI practitioners operate and what is encompassed in their scope of work?
3. To what extent are Teachers of Color and White teachers impacted differently by the presence of a DEI practitioner on their campus?

This study analyzes the impact of DEI practitioners on independent school campuses and the implications of their work on adult culture and professional development. Rapidly changing demographics and civil unrest throughout the country over the past 10 years have contributed to increasingly complex challenges on school campuses, expanding both the need for diversity practitioners at member schools and the scope of their work (*Digest of Education Statistics, 2019*). Amidst shifting concerns and role expectations, NAIS's report *2009-2019 Developments in the State of Diversity Practice (2020)*, shows the organization's keen awareness of the context in which DEI practitioners are working and operating. Some key findings of this report show that more schools now employ full-time DEI practitioners and many of them are included as part of the senior administrative team. In addition, NAIS found that DEI practitioners are conducting more workshops on diversity and are spending more time with their faculty in diversity-related activities. The 2020 report also noted concerns regarding the success of these DEI practices on independent school campuses. For example, the satisfaction of DEI practitioners in the degree of diversity and inclusion at their schools decreased from 2009 levels. Similarly, the inclusion of DEI language in school mission statements and marketing has decreased over the past decade. NAIS provides each of its member schools with guidance, however, it recommends as its primary intervention the presence of a full time DEI practitioner on each campus.

Our study uses an impact evaluation model to provide a holistic view of how DEI practitioners, as a school-based intervention, may impact DEI execution on campus. This analysis particularly measures the practitioner's impact on staff culture as culture is pervasive and experienced by every staff member, regardless of position or status (Adamy & Heinecke, 2005). As a second dependent variable, we measure a practitioner's influence on the number of high-quality, DEI-driven professional development offerings for independent school teachers and the potential outcome of a more knowledgeable and inclusive staff.

This study views the practitioner role as an intervention to DEI implementation and seeks to evaluate the impact of the role on independent school campuses. Researchers focused on identifying potential differences in the daily teacher experience of those with a DEI practitioner and those without, whether they be positive or negative, intended or unintended, direct or indirect (OECD-DAC, 2010). The findings of this study suggest that the combination of the presence of a DEI practitioner and increased DEI-driven PD offerings annually correlated with a significant increase in positive adult culture. Findings also indicate that independent school campuses with a DEI practitioner reported higher rates of positive staff culture and more DEI PD offerings than campuses without. Last,

the benefits of improved staff culture were experienced by White independent school teachers as well as independent school teachers of color.

Recommendations

This study confirms the literature on staff culture and firmly supports the idea that school environments that are more open and welcoming result in more satisfied teachers and staff (Davenport, 2018). Additionally, with quality professional development as a key lever for organizations to effectively grapple with the complexities of inequality and human difference, the number of DEI learning opportunities indeed matter. Therefore we recommend:

- 1) All NAIS campuses establish a .5 or full-time FTE position for a DEI practitioner to assist schools in their goals of becoming more diverse, equitable, and inclusive work environments. The strongest results seemingly correlate with DEI practitioners serving as an official member of the Senior Leadership Team (78% of respondents currently are). Though the additional administrative role is a costly intervention, researchers identify the impact on PD and adult culture as significant and worth the financial investment.
- 2) All NAIS schools embed at least 3-6 high quality PD sessions annually featuring issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The combination of a DEI practitioner on campus (Recommendation 1) and 3-6 DEI sessions (Recommendation 2) positively correlate with improved staff culture.
- 3) All NAIS campuses fully fund the People of Color Conference (POCC) for all interested teachers of color as the annual event is commonly internalized as a “retreat” and “safe haven” for participants.

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I. A Pivotal Moment in our Nation's History

This timely analysis of diversity, equity, and inclusion practices at independent schools under NAIS finds itself situated at a pivotal moment in our nation's enduring fight for racial equality. On many NAIS campuses across the country, administrators and staff are now embarking on new efforts to increase diversity and create more equitable experiences for racially diverse groups. Gillispie (2018) stated that NAIS must prioritize creating environments where all individuals and groups feel welcomed, respected, and valued enough to experience full participation in the independent school experience.

Outside of school walls, there are spirited protests around the country lamenting the unlawful deaths of Mr. George Floyd at the hands of the Minneapolis Police Department, Ms. Breonna Taylor and Louisville police, and Ahmaud Arbery at the hands of White residents of a southern Georgia suburb, all within a month of one another. The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) and the Bridging Divides Initiative (BDI) at Princeton University using real-time data on demonstrations and political violence stated "the United States is in crisis" and is becoming increasingly polarized amidst issues of police abuse and racial injustice (2020, p. 3). They cited north of 10,600 demonstrations from May to August of 2020 with over 7,750 spurred by the movement for Black lives. These protests birthed in 2,440 unique US locations and brought all 50 states into the fight for racial justice.

The nation's heightened sense of anti-black, anti-immigrant sentiment sat center-stage during a highly

contested and controversial presidential race where many, irrespective of political affiliation, believed the soul of America's democracy was on the ballot. Now, more than ever, issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion are at the forefront of national conversations and policy.

NAIS understands America's schools to be a microcosm of the broader society and desires for partnering schools to advance the work of social justice and equity. A concerted effort for DEI implementation across the vast network of independent schools places NAIS as a potential leader among the educational organizations in the "creation of a more equitable world" (NAIS Vision, 2019) .

Of equal importance, NAIS also recognizes that partner schools are in no way immune to the societal challenges of diversity. The organization retains a healthy concern about the potential of schools to replicate exclusive and inequitable practices if they are not

reflective and believes the presence of a DEI practitioner on campus as a key mitigating factor.

The Critical First Year: What New Chief Diversity Officers Need to Succeed (2017) promotes the idea that the presence of a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) or a full time DEI practitioner can be instrumental in confronting such complex external challenges that often permeate school walls with internal implications, potentially threatening employee culture (WittKieffer, 2017).

The approach that American institutions such as NAIS must take to remedy racial disparities and unite cross-cultural groups in equitable and welcoming work environments demands a higher level of sophistication than previously employed (Borrego & Johnson, 2012). NAIS looks to fulfill its moral obligation of providing an increasingly equitable and inclusive experience for its faculty across member schools, especially its teachers of color. Caroline Blackwell, (NAIS Vice President of Equity and Justice) and Amada Torres (NAIS Vice President for Studies, Insights, and Research) are humbled to see the consistent DEI efforts of member

schools and acknowledge that the schools that have made the most progress are those that have dedicated the resources to address those issues, mainly through the employment and support of a DEI practitioner. The present racial reckoning and potential reconciliation provides a unique opportunity for NAIS and organizations nationally to contextualize the historic moment we find ourselves in. The increased urgency to remedy racial turmoil perpetuated through inequity is experienced both inside and outside of NAIS campuses. The permeable boundaries of work and life prevent organizations from easily separating themselves from the world in which they operate (Liu & Pompper, 2012), and NAIS is making an institutional effort to establish a model of equitable and inclusive work environments. The organization's hope is that a dedicated practitioner on campus can provide each unique school with the concrete steps to move the needle on racial diversity, equity, and inclusion.

II. Organizational Context

Though the nation finds itself at a moment of reckoning, NAIS's journey towards a more diverse and inclusive body began over 40 years ago.

During NAIS's formative years of uniting the work of independent schools, the organization coalesced around President Kennedy's 1963 call for school administrators to commit themselves to the educational improvement of Black students. Many (Brosnan, 2001; Ford, 2016; French, 2017; Griffin & Tackie, 2017), including the NAIS itself (Bartels, 2012; *NAIS - 2009-2019 Developments in the State of the Diversity Practice*, 2020) have documented the initial and ongoing attempts to integrate independent schools and expand DEI practices – and the uneven progress along the way.

The NAIS has no authority over their partner institutions, but seeks to support and encourage their members by “uniting and empowering our community. We do this through thought leadership, research, creation and curation of resources, and direct collaboration with education leaders” (*NAIS - NAIS Vision, Mission, and Values*, n.d.).

In the arena of DEI work, the NAIS has significant challenges ahead which are rooted in both the history of independent schools and their current social, political, and economic dynamics in which they operate. During and shortly after the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, independent school enrollment dramatically increased (Clotfelter, 2001; Ford, 2016). This rise was especially rapid in the early 1970s when busing was allowed by the Supreme Court as a solution to desegregate public schools. In fact, in Mecklenburg County, N.C. -- the

epicenter of the busing controversy -- 13 new private schools had formed by 1974 (Clotfelter, 1976). This was almost a doubling of private schools in just five years from the original, 1969 order to use busing to desegregate. A similar pattern rapidly emerged across the United States in every region and city. Ever since this moment, independent schools have had to wrestle with whether or not they were going to address questions of diversity, equity, and inclusion on their campuses or become a part of an educational system built on structural racism.

Despite significant gains in the percentage of students of color (SOCs) in independent schools, the percentage of teachers of color (TOCs) is still very low, with some TOCs finding themselves as the only non-White members of the school staff (French, 2017). The data on TOCs and SOCs numbers are

important if independent schools are serious about issues of DEI.

The vision of NAIS includes a commitment to diversity and equity for all learners. The stated values of NAIS include “embracing diversity” and “championing inclusivity”. These foundational principles also drive a great deal of action on the part of NAIS in the realm of DEI. Their annual People of Color Conference (PoCC) is well attended and vital to the support of TOC in the NAIS network. In addition, the NAIS funds and conducts research on DEI to discover how progress is being made and where more growth can occur. NAIS publishes dozens of DEI-focused articles each year and highlights the work of DEI practitioners who are operating successfully in their partner schools.

As a national umbrella organization, NAIS is “committed to addressing disparate experiences and outcomes based on race and racism in independent schools” (*NAIS - NAIS Statement on Addressing Anti-Blackness and Systemic Racism*, 2020). The organization has been honest with the uneven pace of progress on DEI issues and the organization’s leadership seeks to share its DEI strategies across its portfolio of 1600 schools. However, the lack of a dedicated DEI practitioner on each campus impedes the full implementation of inclusive and equitable practices.

The Birth of Diversity Officers. Popular, but Are They Productive?

At the network level, NAIS has been unabashed in their national push towards diversity and have taken a multifaceted approach to adequately communicating these values to partner schools across the nation. NAIS has made available to their partners a deep well of resources on DEI topics. NAIS first recommends that schools assess themselves and their understanding of DEI issues through their Assessment of Inclusivity and Multiculturalism (AIM). The AIM can also be coupled with other NAIS resources such as their Data for Analysis of School Leadership (DASL), Diversity Dashboard, and DASL Databook in order to give schools a deep understanding of how they may be advancing, or not, on DEI issues. NAIS also makes available to their partners publications, webinars, and blogs which are directly focused on issues of DEI and the impact on students, teachers, and their school culture (*NAIS - Equity and Justice*, n.d.; *NAIS - How to Talk About Racial Inequality and Support Faculty and Staff of Color During a Period of Civil*, n.d.; *NAIS - Strengthening the Role of the DEI Practitioner*, n.d.).

Despite this investment from NAIS, the work of diversity management is challenging with only a few achieving their diversity goals in

educational settings (A. Evans et al., 2007; Milem et al., 2005).

The independent school network's most explicit diversity management recommendation, suggested to overcome such hurdles, is the daily service of a DEI practitioner at the individual campus level. However, there is often an uncertainty about the specific effectiveness of diversity leaders and their implementation of diversity initiatives in educational settings (Leon, 2014).

Thus, this study seeks empirical evidence of their impact and explores the theory of action of NAIS member schools participating in more equity-based professional development and becoming places of acceptance with the hiring, resourcing, and supporting of a DEI practitioner on campus.

The concept of Diversity or Equity Officers (now more common than not throughout the business and educational sector) was cemented as organizations were advised to increase programmatic efforts to create more racially diverse work environments after the 1978 Civil Service Reform Act (Grim et al., 2019). A more representative and inclusive work space is the environmental outcome of a cumulative all-hands-on-deck approach to effective DEI practices. However, having a high-skilled advocate and communicator to coordinate all DEI efforts and

spearhead the work is invaluable (McDonald, 2017). This legislation repurposed affirmative action quotas heavily reliant on representation and equity to include the more expansive work of diversity management which also accounts for employee experience, quality of work life, and job satisfaction for diverse teammates (Kellough & Naff, 2004).

Since then, diversity officers have become a popular solution for organizations, such as colleges and educational institutions, to lead diversity implementation. By 2012, roughly 60% of Fortune 500 companies understood the critical role such individuals played in the growth, success, and sustainability of their companies and officially introduced the role of Chief Diversity Officer into their org charts (Farmer, 2014)

The diversity officer role has become a staple in established organizations to keep up with the pace of a nation growing increasingly more diverse by the year. While future research will join this present study in measuring the impact of diversity officers, the rising number alone of newly created DEI roles in higher education and in the business sector signals an increased interest in the role and will definitely transition DEI work from reactionary to sustaining.

The role's purpose has been predominantly to create, execute, and coordinate diversity initiatives to

create more inclusive work environments though each organization presents complexities and context that differ based on institutional model, mission, or function.

Current literature uniformly describes the role of diversity officer as one that thinks strategically about DEI implementation collaboratively with leadership in hopes of moving the organization forward (Leon, 2014). With institutional context presenting unique concerns and plans of execution from organization to organization, experts are hesitant to identify many practices as successful strategies. However, literature is consistent in its prioritization of the diversity officer role being a director or chief leadership role. Williams (2008) contends that the proper placement of a diversity officer is within the higher sections of the organizational chart. Both researchers and site-based practitioners suggest that such individuals best serve their organizations as members of the chief leadership team or presidential cabinet. At minimum a director-level diversity officer has the capacity to adequately influence the organization (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007).

The Diversity Officer Role in the Independent School Context

Though the language in mission and vision statements have developed within the past few years to reflect

NAIS's desire to meet the increasing needs of a multicultural landscape, forward thinking regarding the need for DEI Practitioner roles at the school level positioned NAIS slightly ahead of the national trend. 34% of NAIS practitioner respondents in 2019 and 21% of 2009 respondents reported that the diversity officer role has been in existence on their campus for 10 years (*NAIS - 2009-2019 Developments in the State of the Diversity Practice, 2020*). This highlights NAIS's longstanding commitment to diversity management before DEI practitioners became a national fixture.

The vast majority of NAIS diversity leads (72%) assume the title of Director/Dean of Diversity, Director/Dean of Multicultural Affairs, and Diversity Coordinator (*NAIS - 2009-2019 Developments in the State of the Diversity Practice, 2020*) rather than Chief Diversity Officer commonly referred to in the literature. Though many school diversity officers in NAIS do not hold the "Chief" title, the "Director/Dean" delineation affords DEI practitioners the capacity to spearhead and manage diversity initiatives while seemingly maintaining alignment with current school-based leadership structures.

Prior research shows that 57% of NAIS Diversity Officers are currently considered members of their executive or administrative team on campus (Jones, 2019) compared to

78% of Chief Diversity Officers at higher ed institutions. Though not yet on par with their higher ed counterparts, indicators reveal the expanding role and institutional importance of NAIS DEI practitioners showing an increase from 2009 to 2019 in their spearheading of training sessions (56% to 70%) affinity group socials (43% to 64%) and staff events (41% to 50%) (*NAIS - 2009-2019 Developments in the State of the Diversity Practice, 2020*). NAIS research shows that the scope of the diversity practitioner role grew, and DEI leaders were met with new complexities and opportunities to expand their diversity push. The expanded roles and responsibilities associated with managing diversity all but necessitate the demand for NAIS to continue transitioning from part time to more full time DEI roles which have substantially grown from 34% in 2009 to 54% in 2019 (*NAIS - 2009-2019 Developments in the State of the Diversity Practice, 2020*).

In this context, this evaluation seeks to understand the impact of DEI practitioners on independent school campuses. The stakeholders most impacted by this evaluation will be DEI practitioners and the teachers that they support. With a heightened awareness of the work that practitioners do -- and the positive impact they have on staff culture and DEI professional development -- this study hopes to encourage DEI practitioners to continue their work with the

knowledge that they are having an impact. In addition, teachers on independent school campuses who are guided by DEI practitioners in this challenging and necessary work will be made more aware of DEI initiatives and how it makes their campuses healthier, more encouraging places to work.

Beyond practitioners and teachers, school administrators will also find this study of value to their work. Perhaps most compelling are the financial considerations for school leaders when considering the role of DEI practitioners on their campus. These financial implications are especially true for smaller schools with more limited budgets and intense pressure to make every personnel decision result in the highest possible return on investment. Data provided through this study may help independent schools justify their decision to hire a full time practitioner, forgo the position, or alter the daily work stream required by the role. The cost of recruiting and retaining staff, especially TOCs, is a significant consideration for all independent schools and this study hopes to make it clear that an investment in a full-time DEI practitioner reduces these costs over time due to the positive impact DEI practitioners have on school culture.

“Calling In” rather than “Calling Out”: Misconceptions of the Diversity Officer Role

Among the major presumptions of the current diversity officer role is that the diversity role exists as the go-to, the sole authority for building an equitable and inclusive culture (Leon, 2014). This misnomer remains one of the key day one conversations between staff and diversity officers as the incorporation of Karin Bains (Chief Equity Officer for the City of San Antonio hired in 2016) explains that DEI as a collaborative effort will ultimately predict success or stagnation. DEI practitioners may provide language that helps organizations better understand how to do the work, but the actual work of equitable and inclusive

“My job is not to call people out; it's to call people in”
-DEI Practitioner

environments must be the work of the community (Kimbrough, 2017).

Crystal Rodriguez, hired as the City of Buffalo's first Chief Diversity Officer in 2016, helped clarify another misconception about the diversity officer role as a racial watchdog. She stated, “My job is not to call people out; it's to call people in”. She, like others serving in similar positions, emphasize their

role as advocates of equity and high quality relationship builders who effectively communicate the organization’s

values.

III. Area of Inquiry

The focus of this evaluation is to better understand the impact that a DEI practitioner has on adult culture and effective professional development offerings on independent school campuses. Many of the nation’s schools -- both public and private -- are realizing the need for a more effective way to address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion on their campuses and the presence of a DEI practitioner as an intervention is being taken more seriously as an investment worth making. This inquiry is grounded in the work already done by NAIS in the realm of DEI and their awareness that more must be accomplished.

Since making a clear commitment to diversity and educational equality, NAIS has maintained a leadership position wholly dedicated to equity. While NAIS desires its members to employ a DEI position at the school

level, each independent school, varying in model and resources, has the autonomy to decide. In an interview with Caroline Blackwell, the Vice President of Equity and Justice for NAIS, she explained that

NAIS has goals for DEI implementation. However, she recognized a disconnect between organizational goals and school level execution. She further asserted that schools with a dedicated practitioner and resources have made more progress with DEI practices than those without a full-time equivalent (FTE). This study hopes to address this gap in the present research. Ms. Blackwell supports the idea of each campus employing a dedicated DEI practitioner to lead and manage the work the same way each campus prioritizes the employment of an athletic director. We have partnered with Ms. Blackwell and the NAIS community to provide empirical data on whether or not a committed DEI lead has the perceived positive impact on staff culture and teacher development.

In their report *2009-2019 Developments in the State of Diversity Practice (2020)*, NAIS reported on the context in which DEI practitioners are working and operating. Currently, there are just over 600 DEI practitioners within the NAIS network. 54% of them are full time, which is a 20% increase over the past 10 years. Though there are more DEI practitioners who are full-time, only 23% of them report that they have no other role or title at their school. A robust 45% of DEI practitioners serve as teachers or faculty members, while other practitioners serve as coaches, deans, or other staff members.

Some key findings of this report show that more schools now employ full-time DEI practitioners and many of them are included as part of the senior administrative team. In addition, the NAIS found that DEI practitioners are conducting more workshops on diversity and are spending more time with their faculty in diversity-related activities.

In this report, the NAIS also noted some concerning trends for those interested in the success of DEI on independent school campuses. For example, the satisfaction of DEI practitioners in the degree of diversity and inclusion at their schools decreased from 2009 levels. Similarly, the inclusion of DEI language in school mission statements and marketing has decreased over the past decade.

In terms of this study's focus on staff culture, the most concerning results from this NAIS survey show that only 37% of DEI practitioners rate their school culture as an 8 out of 10, which is down 12% from 2009. In addition, Only 17% of practitioners reported their schools are actively anti-racist, down from 31% from the last survey.

These findings by NAIS add weight to this evaluation, and this research hopes to provide NAIS an adequate response to these questions regarding the DEI strategies being implemented at the school level.

Many schools are showing a willingness to address DEI issues by hiring practitioners (who conduct more PD and diversity events etc.), yet school and staff culture may not be improving as a result of having the practitioner on staff. This leads us to ask about the direct connection between the presence of a DEI practitioner and their impact on staff culture and professional development offerings.

The year 2020 saw an intense focus on inequality in communities of color -- from issues of policing to healthcare disparities during the COVID-19 pandemic to access to voting. In this moment, the NAIS has responded with an intense focus on DEI practices and has presented this to their member schools. While their concern with DEI practices is not new, they have found more interest in their message from their colleagues. Many independent schools are now wrestling with how

their campuses deal with issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion and how they can respond in an authentic and meaningful way. For many, to not respond to these weighty issues would be an abdication of responsibility and an active rejection of their own mission and vision statements.

Given the historical context in which so many independent schools came into existence -- an active, concerted effort by White families to avoid desegregated public schools -- the consequence of not responding in this moment will be damaging to the long-term success of independent schools. If they are to remain relevant in an increasingly diverse America then they must respond to the challenges of implementing DEI initiatives on their campuses.

IV. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

There is a rich and steadily-growing collection of scholarly work focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion in the realm of K-12 education. In addition, trusted and respected sources on professional development and staff culture are abundant. What is more slowly emerging is literature which investigates DEI and PD work within the realm of independent schools. Facing this reality means that the themes of our evaluation center on the fundamental (and widely agreed upon) concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and how they affect school environments. The following literature informs our study by defining the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion, while identifying the critical impact of staff culture and high-quality DEI professional development provided through a dedicated DEI practitioner on independent school campuses.

***Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:
Interlinked but not
Interchangeable.***

The United States of America is rapidly becoming a more racially and ethnically diverse nation as formerly underrepresented groups have shown double-digit growth since 2010 (Census Bureau, 2020). Accordingly, topics regarding the growing diversity and multiculturalism are prevalent in organizational dialogue across all American sectors, including business and education (Prasad, Pringle, & Konrad 2006).

Furthermore, research highlights that the cultural styles and perspectives of minoritized groups, although often ignored or devalued, are “valuable assets to work groups” (Ely & Thomas, 2001). Thus, organizations are making unprecedented investments in DEI research and practice to manage the ever increasing demand for more racially representative employees, equitable human resource practices, and inclusive working environments. The literature is clear that merely balancing numbers as an anti-discrimination strategy alone is insufficient (Alderfer, 1992; Zimmer, 1988). However, employing practices that collaboratively increase access, racial representation, and marginalized voices provide a more adequate remedy of systemic inequity. This coupling of a multicultural workforce

with equal access to advancement and psychological safety contributes to the concept of DEI as a theoretical framework.

Though most often spoken about interchangeably, researchers understand diversity, equity, and inclusion as concepts interrelated in subject matter but different in practice (What Is DEI?, 2020). Their traditional dictionary definitions are stagnant and no longer accurately represent their nuanced and sometimes conflicting application when applied in today’s workplace (Hays-Thomas, 2004; Konrad et al., 2013). The terms are connected in concept, however each is defined differently, implores its own unique strategies of implementation, and produces a separate outcome from its counterparts. Each requires specific attention.

Diversity

Diversity is identified as the presence of differences that may include race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, etc. (*Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*, 2020). Our diversity concept, for the purpose of this study, is narrow and simply answers the question “What racially different groups are represented in the room?”. The targeted treatment of race in this study acknowledges that not all differences merit equal attention and that the delineation of race is among the most

consequential forms of difference in the workplace (Konrad et al., 2013). Hays-Thomas (2004), too, proposes organizations use the more meaningful understanding of diversity which specifically focuses on historically marginalized and oppressed ethnic racial groups. In the American context, diversity consistently references the presence of Asian American and Pacific Islander, Latinx-Americans, African Americans, and First Nations peoples (*What Is DEI?*, 2018, p. 5).

The eXtension Foundation (*Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*, 2020) agrees and reserves the term “diversity” to account for populations that have been and remain underrepresented among practitioners in the field and marginalized in the broader society.

Staffing that increases the representation of racially diverse groups and more accurately mirrors the broader population or the population predominantly served provides its own benefits. (Grissom & Keiser, 2011; Selden, 2015). Familiarity, cultural connection, and interpersonal learning experiences are authentically curated on the job through daily interaction rather than a top-down manufactured lesson provided at a given moment in time. However, increasing staff diversity seemingly correlates with other organizational successes in regards to work production, finances, and decision-making.

A 2015 McKinsey & Company study reported that companies in the top quartile for gender or racial and ethnic diversity are “more likely to have financial returns above their national industry medians” (Hunt et al., 2015, p.1). A causal relationship cannot be inferred between increased racial diversity and improved business practice, but empirical data indicates a positive correlation between companies committed to the concept of diversity and organizational success. Their study concluded that more diverse companies have demonstrated a greater capacity to win top talent and improve their customer orientation, employee satisfaction, and decision making (Hunt et al., 2015).

The financial and organizational benefits of a team’s commitment to diversity experienced by successful organizations have introduced into the business landscape the concept of “managing diversity”. Managing diversity has become a common label for an organization’s strategic planning and implementation of diversity-related work (Foldy, 2004). Diversity management is a human resource management intervention at its core (Agócs & Burr, 1996) and is supported by strong empirical data confirming its positive correlation to organizational performance (Ozbilgin and Tatli, 2008).

Successfully managing diversity can lead to more committed, better satisfied, better performing employees (Patrick & Kumar, 2012). The incorporation of diverse voices in the workplace is critical to organizational success as a lack of diversity management limits skill building, competencies, and employee engagement (Patrick & Kumar, 2012).

Equity

To accompany the American story of democracy and perseverance is unfortunately the repeated story of inequity. For racially marginalized groups, the American experience is replete with historic oppression, discrimination, and exclusion (Dill & Zambrana, 2009).

Equity can be defined as the “promotion of justice, impartiality, and fairness within the procedures, processes, and the distribution of resources by institutions or systems” (*What Is DEI?*, 2016). Equity is fixated on the concept of just and fair participation. All groups and individuals are granted access as equal partners according to individual skills without partiality. Equity promotes a sort of meritocracy as such a system would cease to benefit or disempower any particular racial classification. It provides all with an equal chance to succeed—access to opportunity, networks, resources, and support (Putnam-Walkerly & Russell, 2016).

A lack of diversity may impede individuals growth through exposure, but the consequences due to a lack of equity have far reaching consequences for those obligated to compete while denied resources freely given to others.

Among the starkest divides in equity can be found in the calculation of household wealth. The median White family has 41 times more wealth than the median Black family and 22 times more wealth than the median Latino family (Collins et al., 2019). Race-based inequity centers itself in business as well where less than 3 percent of the total Fortune 500 CEOs are leaders of color though these groups make up 44% of the U.S. workforce fighting for a livable wage (Cooper, 2017)

Diverse groups bear both the collective and individual brunt when equity is not present. People of color fare worse than their White counterparts in areas such as wealth, income, education, housing, and health (Lee & Navarro, 2018). Studies show that people, even when not directly involved, feel discomfort when they perceive that someone is being advantaged as well as when someone is being disadvantaged (Lee & Navarro, 2018). Both the inequitable practices and the resulting discomfort is experienced in the American education system. Practices contributing to unfair and

non merit-based outcomes are persistent in the fabric of school as an institution. Black and Brown students have less access to college-ready courses than their white counterparts (U.S. Department of Education, 2014), often suffer from lowered expectations from white teachers (Gershenson et al., 2016), and attend schools with less qualified, lower paid instructors (U.S. Department of Education, 2014b). Those teachers of color fighting to make a difference in the lives of students through education are also attempting to navigate inequitable employment conditions.

“Fundamental to advancing equity is defining it (Lee & Navarro, 2018, p. 27S). Because equity is an impact-based measure most accurately quantified by the narrowing of disparate outcomes within an organization, equity-seeking companies must assess current staffing and processes and collect pertinent data for impending changes in company policy (Lee & Navarro, 2018). As inequitable practices surface, organizations must be willing to pivot towards more equitable and transparent promotional pathways and professional development opportunities. Equitable moves made with transparency are critical to staff retention (*Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*, 2019). The work of equity seeks to create conditions that allow all to participate, prosper, and reach their full potential (Lee &

Navarro, 2018). The united push towards equity will be actualized when one's racial identity no longer serves as a predictor of life outcomes (*Racial Equity and White Privilege*).

Inclusion

As the third push, inclusion refers to the outcome of diverse groups feeling welcomed, valued, and heard. Organizations desiring a more inclusive environment for racially diverse teammates are stretched to avoid the Canadian “mosaic” or American “melting pot” models which unknowingly present a nationalistic framework for welcoming racial differences into “White supremacist racial hierarchies” (Ramjewan & El-Sherif, 2020). Impulsive, non-reflective programming in the name of inclusion often “imply” an openness to racial difference while solidifying White dominant culture as a norm to be joined (Ahmed, 2010).

An inclusive environment resembles a heightened sense of diversity where there are not only an array of peoples of color but also an authentic respect and value for the cultural differences present in the participant, be it lifestyles, appearance, linguistic proficiency, communication or decision-making styles (Prasad, Pringle & Konrad, 2006).

In its most advanced stage, it is the

result of the full participation of diverse voices in an organization's life and decision-making processes. However inclusion is most often identified by the non-examples currently practiced in companies. In place of authentic racial inclusion, some offer "cultural assimilation which broadly favors homogenization followed by inclusion under the rubric of integration" (Glazer, 1997; Suarez-Orozco, 2002). Assimilationist thinking in lieu of inclusion all but requires diverse guests to voluntarily surrender their cultural differences (language, rituals, communication styles, etc.) in favor of the dominant culture. Misguided inclusion becomes a cultural sacrifice for people of color for in exchange for true inclusion and acceptance (Konrad et al., 2013)

Literature stresses the value of strong, unifying leadership and the role it plays in the success of building diverse alliances through a shared organizational interest or identity (McCammon & Van Dyke, 2010; Meier & Stewart, 1991; Staggenborg, 1988). In the work of inclusion, leaders have the capacity to effectively serve as "bridge builders" to bring racially different groups together (Rose, 2000).

Though used as a trio, diversity, equity, and inclusion in organizational spaces are neither interchangeable nor inputs towards the same result. As identified in

literature, a school's staff may be racially diverse but not inclusive if diverse teachers experience an absence of their values in the school's cultural fabric. Likewise, a diverse and inclusive staff culture does not guarantee equitable hiring or evaluation processes. As we study the impact of DEI practitioners in NAIS schools, findings will be carefully categorized as impacts on diversity, impacts on equity, or impacts on inclusion. Identifying the work strands of diversity, equity, and inclusion and establishing lofty goals to elevate are important, however DEI evolution does not happen without institutional effort and commitment (Kezar, 2007).

Staff Culture

In measuring the impact of DEI practitioners in the independent school setting, we selected staff culture as one of two dependent variables and a piece of the conceptual framework. This study looks to the literature on staff culture and firmly supports the idea that school environments that are more open and welcoming result in more satisfied teachers and staff (Davenport, 2018). Akin (1994) expresses staff culture as "the beliefs, perceptions, celebrations, and traditions teachers hold in common; the lens through which they interpret events at their school". In a broader organizational context, it is classified as "the assumptions, beliefs, values, and habits that

constitute the norms for that organization” (DuFour & Eaker, 2009).

There also exists a body of research that reframes the adult culture narrative and contends that organizations don't necessarily have cultures but believe organizations, themselves, are cultures (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Regardless of stance, research coalesces around its pervasiveness as every employee on a school campus experiences staff culture, regardless of position or status (Adamy & Heinecke, 2005). Serving as a non-verbal synthesis of organizational norms, values, and habits, it is more often felt than discussed.

Schein (1990) discusses the expanded role of adult culture and explains “culture perpetuates and reproduces itself through the socialization of new members entering the group” thus amplifying the need for strong staff culture on campus. The organizational culture established throughout the halls of the workplace have the capacity to negatively or positively impact the interactions and work habits of present and incoming employees (Adamy & Heinecke, 2005, p. 250). “It is ubiquitous” and cannot be avoided by staff operating in it daily (Schein, 1990).

DEI as a "Baked In" Component of Positive Adult Culture

NAIS's journey in assessing organizational culture through the DEI framework provides them a unique opportunity to check the “directional temperature” (Shepstone & Currie, 2008) of member schools across the country. The organization is decisive in its effort to expand beyond the more traditional frameworks of staff culture, usually focused on administrator to teacher trust and collegiality, to one more tightly aligned to their goal of creating and sustaining “diverse, inclusive, equitable, and just communities that are safe and welcoming for all” (NAIS, *Principles*, 2020). This study contends that a positive adult climate in an increasingly diverse organization is made possible when new behaviors and organizational practices reflective of cultural difference, access, and connectedness become “baked-in to everyday operations” of independent school environments (Hernandez, 2019). Such institutional efforts around DEI are experienced through campus climate and are critical because they directly impact all participants (Kiyama et al., 2015). Organizations' adult culture is shaped by historical, institutional, and compositional aspects (Hurtado et al., 2012) which are all shifted by organizational initiatives around equity, diversity, and inclusion (Kiyama et al., 2015; Museus & Smith, 2016). This study

provides inquiry into the adult culture on NAIS campuses through the expanded lens of DEI and further measures the impact of a diversity officer on implementation.

Professional Development: Consensus on Meaning; Uneven Implementation

For this evaluation, the concept of effective professional development will be defined as “structured professional learning that results in changes in teacher practices and improvements in student learning outcomes” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Over the past two decades there has been a great deal of attention paid to teacher professional development and the role that it plays in the ability of teachers to deliver high quality instruction to their students. The literature is both wide and deep and there has emerged a clear consensus about what quality professional development looks like in schools. This consensus is best captured in the work of Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) in which they indicate the seven most effective aspects of teacher professional development. Effective PD is content focused, incorporates active learning, supports collaboration, uses models of effective practice, provides coaching and expert support, offers feedback and reflection, and is of sustained duration. What is less clear is the

extent to which this learning is being implemented frequently or with fidelity within independent schools. Inherent to the independence of NAIS school is the degree to which their PD offerings are chosen and tailored to their specific campus. As a result, the literature on PD at independent schools is sparse and is not well understood. This evaluation sheds light on this gap in the literature and is an area ripe for further study.

For the sake of this evaluation and its focus on DEI, the aspects of effective professional development which were captured were the presence of collaboration, modeling, coaching, and PD of sustained duration. These measures aligned with previous scales of professional development in independent schools (Murray, 2010) and are likely to be under the direct control of the DEI practitioner.

The presence of a collaborative environment is essential to teacher professional learning. Hirsch (2009), Saunders et al. (2009), Murphy (2016), and Borko (2004) among others make it clear that professional learning must occur within a community of learners committed to the same goals. Educators “on teams are involved in...teamwork which affects student achievement” (Hirsh, 2009, p. 10). In addition, collaborative professional communities “deepen the capacity for learning” (Murphy, 2016, p. 72)

which prove to be crucial to wrestling with issues of DEI given the vulnerability and trust needed to engage fully in those conversations.

Modeling effective practices are powerful because it allows educators to see the standard that is set for them and it “provides teachers with a clear vision of what best practices look like” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). When considering the homogeneity of many independent schools -- in teaching staff and students -- the benefits of having DEI work modeled are crucial to the success of any initiative. Modeling also allows for a steady process of discovering challenges and working through them while being guided by an expert in the field (Bashan & Holsblat, 2012).

Closely tied to modeling is the role that coaching and expert support play in effective PD. The focus of good coaching is the individual needs of teachers based on evidenced-based practices (Borko, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Hirsh, 2009; Wei et al., 2011). This is an aspect of effective PD where DEI practitioners may find their most effective work being done. When practitioners have the opportunity to coach -- over time -- their colleagues in their school context then DEI initiatives begin to gain traction within a school. Connected to the domain of coaching is the opportunity to have

professional development offered over a sustained duration of time within the school. The most commonly reported professional development opportunities at independent schools -- especially those focused on DEI -- are one-day trainings led by an outside expert or weekend conferences attended off campus (French, 2017; Murray, 2010). This type of learning is not conducive to seeing authentic implementation within the school context and is most often conducted for the sake of compliance. Professional development of sustained duration is challenging for a practitioner to deliver if school leadership does not create the time for multiple interactions to occur. When there is support, though, multiple opportunities over time to engage with ideas allows for learning to turn into practice. The slow and steady build offered over the school year reinforces the work that has been done and builds a baseline of competency and understanding on campus. In short, PD of sustained duration begins to be ingrained into the adult culture of the school. Of course, the most effective PD does not have these aspects present in isolation, but layered and intertwined with each other into an effective *program* of professional development. All seven aspects do not need to be present for PD to be effective (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017), but effective PD will have many -- if not most -- factors as part

of the PD offerings to teachers and staff.

V. Evaluation Purpose and Questions

NAIS is a non-profit membership association that actively supports more than 1600 private and independent schools. The NAIS network includes an incredibly diverse set of schools in terms of geographic location, ages of students served, and school size. Furthermore, each school is independent in philosophy, mission, management, leadership, and accountability. Under the NAIS umbrella, 1600+ independent schools are able to “co-create the future of education” through uniting and empowering the communities they serve (NAIS Mission).

In 2019, The NAIS Board of Directors voted to approve a new organizational vision centering diversity and equity as the guiding forces of their work. The new vision aspires that “All learners find pathways to success through the independence, innovation, and diversity of our schools, creating a more equitable world.” Further, it is the goal of NAIS that this vision encompasses the entire NAIS community extending beyond its students and impacting the staff and administrators on each campus as well. The full complement of new social norms is made tangible through the implementation of practices regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion on each campus.

NAIS has goals to guide their DEI work along with the established expectation for all member schools to “create and sustain diverse, inclusive, equitable, and just communities that are safe and welcoming for all” (*NAIS - Principles of Good Practice (PGPs)*). However,

the autonomous nature of independent schools being unique in mission, vision, and model presents, first, the potential for misalignment between organizational expectations and school-based implementation and, second, campus inaction. The network envisions a DEI practitioner as an effective school-based intervention to align the equity work across all schools and translate the broader organizational DEI framework into school-based practices.

For this study, Vanderbilt researchers have partnered with the NAIS community to provide empirical data on whether or not a committed DEI practitioner, as an intervention, has the perceived positive impact. This partnership is well established and the researchers leaned on the work already done on topics of DEI on independent school campuses.

In light of this context, this impact evaluation seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How are staff culture and teacher professional development impacted by the presence of a DEI practitioner on an independent school campus?
2. What is the current context in which DEI practitioners operate and what is encompassed in their scope of work?
3. To what extent are Teachers of Color and White teachers impacted differently by the presence of a DEI practitioner on their campus?

The purpose of this study is two-fold. We hope to, first, uncover and accurately communicate to NAIS and the Independent school

community the value of a full time employee dedicated to DEI implementation. Secondly, we look to gather data on specific practices and resources employed by DEI practitioners that impact school culture and professional development.

Creating a full time position for DEI work has financial implications, especially for smaller schools. Data provided through this study may help independent schools justify their decision to hire a full time practitioner, forgo the position, or alter the daily work steam required by the role. All findings showing significant impact, no impact, or anything in between will be shared with NAIS to inform future decisions on DEI hiring and programming.

VI. Methods

The query of the DEI practitioner’s impact on staff culture and PD extends beyond a cause and effect analysis. Using a mixed-methods approach with a sample size of 888 respondents, we expanded the scope of their data collection to include both qualitative and quantitative measures for a more encompassing perspective.

Research Design

This study utilizes an impact evaluation model to provide a holistic view of how DEI practitioners, as a school-based intervention, may impact DEI execution on independent school campuses. The researchers believe

the study’s findings have the potential to support the position’s schoolwide impact and guide decision-makers in how they organize their organizational culture and support teachers in their professional learning. Furthermore, a mixed-methods data collection strategy (Greene et al., 1989) was

employed to collect both quantitative data to measure practitioner impact and qualitative data to account for difference across campuses.

Quantitative Measures

To collect critical data on the internal perceptions of independent school educators regarding DEI implementation, PD offerings, and staff culture, we selected survey research in hopes of yielding the

culture through a DEI lens, respondents were asked to self report directly on their own thoughts and behaviors as well as practices implemented on individual campuses. The *PD-SC Survey* is an adaptation of four established survey scales selected from prior research specific to the topics of diversity, teacher training, and organizational culture and were each rated high in reliability.

Among the selected scales were:

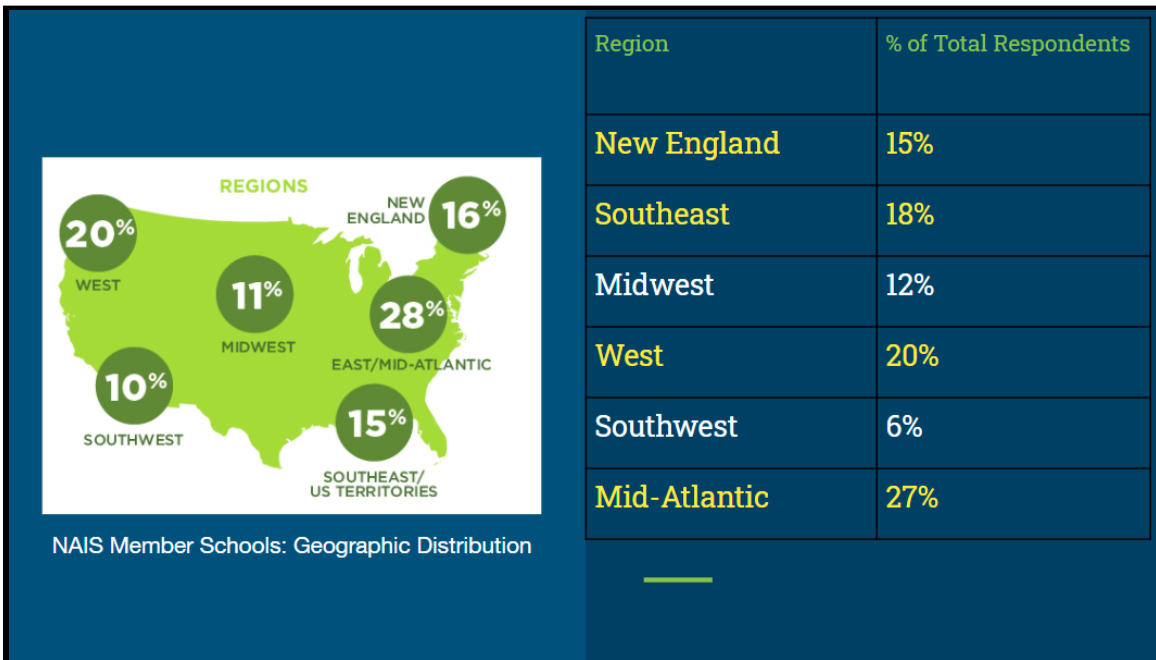


Figure 1: Geographic distribution of NAIS schools and respondent sample

richest data set. The survey as a quantitative measure provided us with the comparative means needed for a direct analysis of the effect of DEI strategies as a building-level intervention. Using the Professional Development and Staff Culture Survey (*PD-SC*), a 67-question survey inquiring about PD and adult

1. *School Culture Survey-Teacher Form (SCS-TF)* assessing for collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, and collegial support. (Brinton, 2007)

2. Staff Racial Equity & Inclusion Competency conducted by Living Cities (*Survey*, 2018)
3. D5's Self-Assessment for Foundation Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (*DEI Self-Assessment | D5*, 2014)
4. Independent School Teacher Development Inventory (ISTDI) (Murray, 2010)

These selected survey scales provided the following targeted inquiry into issues of equity and staff culture in alignment with the study's key themes.

- At my school, teachers take time to praise their colleagues when they perform well.
- My school creates an environment where all school staff have equal opportunities to advance.
- I know how to identify examples of interpersonal/individual racism (i.e. using coded language, questioning someone's competence based on their race or ethnicity).

Remaining *PD-SC* Survey questions were created by the research team to gather demographic data on respondents and to hold in close consideration the overarching NAIS goals for DEI implementation and professional development in the independent school context.

The *PD-SC* Survey in totality has 67 questions, however each individual respondent was confronted with no more than 40 questions. Based on their response to the question, "What is your primary position at your school?" respondents were directed to more role-specific inquiry on the featured topics.

Among the *PD-SC* Survey questions curated by researchers for this specific study were:

- How many DEI PD offerings does your school offer/support during the course of the school year?
- My school has an active commitment to Equity and works to ensure fairness in process, support, and access for all staff regardless of race.
- My school provides teachers and staff a safe space and time to have important conversations about race.

The survey yielded data critical to analyzing the potential impact of DEI practitioners on campus as findings will be discussed in a later section. The singular question "Does your school currently have a DEI practitioner?" allowed researchers to categorize subsequent responses and make direct comparisons between the daily working experiences of staff members with a practitioner on campus and those without.

All respondents holding similar job titles had access to identical surveys which helped avoid inconsistent questioning and strengthened its reliability as a measure. Researchers also believe the *PD-SC* Survey to meet the standards of face validity but identify potential threats in content validity as survey questions may leave some DEI-related topics unaddressed (most notably the daily shifts in racial dialogue post 2020 presidential election and the national COVID response).

Sampling

A considerable amount of attention was paid to sample size as researchers had a strong preference for larger sampling groups. NAIS granted the research team access to the email addresses of all independent school teachers, administrative staff, and leadership team members across the 1600 partner schools. The study used a nonprobability volunteer sample to engage higher numbers of respondents with the email invitation sent to 7,553 teachers, 606 DEI practitioners, and 3,587 administrators within the NAIS

network. These lists were provided by NAIS and represented the most up-to-date list of personnel at that time. The survey was emailed to all partner school staff members directly with a brief explanation of the study accompanied by a 2-minute video of the researchers introducing themselves, the study topic, and the NAIS-Vanderbilt partnership. This sampling approach directly targeting all grade bands and geographic regions in the network potentially increased participation and variation in

Race	% of DEI Respondents
Asian	3%
Black/Afr-American	60%
White	13%
2+ Races	11%
Hispanic/Latinx	7%

Figure 2: Distribution of DEI practitioner respondents by race

respondents, in turn, minimizing population homogeneity. The total sample size of 888 respondents includes 118 DEI practitioners, 142 Administrators, and 628 teachers whose positions range from core teachers, teacher assistants, specialists, and instructors with split roles (see Figure 1). While Administrators participated in the survey, this study will focus primarily on the experiences of school staff and the voices of the hired practitioners responsible for DEI implementation.

The study's nonprobability volunteer sampling method presents limitations. Namely, volunteers chose to complete the PD-SC Survey, and the personal and controversial nature of race dialogue may skew in favor of more equity-leaning respondents. The non-random selection process may yield an educator sample that is neither typical nor representative of the larger NAIS community.

The decision to cast a wide sampling net to speak to the trends and generalities of the independent school community contributed to a fairly geographically and racially representative sample set at minimum. For example, each of the 7 NAIS school regions are represented in the sample with the largest 3 regions being the most heavily represented in the study (detailed in Figure 1). The sample also yields a balance of small, midsize, and large campuses with 12% of respondents from serving students populations < 200, 14% serving 201-300 students, 28% serving 301-500, 16% serving 501-700, and 29% serving > 700. The largest respondent groups support K-12 (26%) and 9-12 campuses (22%) with 6-8 (4%) and K-5 campuses (6%) representing the smallest respondent samples.

We believe this quantitative data collected via the PD-SC Survey allows us to measure the impact of DEI programming and that the

robust data set is trending towards increased generalizability of the broader experiences of NAIS staff nationwide.

Key quantitative data was also collected from the Data and Analysis for School Leadership report (DASL) provided by NAIS. Referenced as an "independent school community's repository of clean, comprehensive, usable data" (NAIS website), the DASL report is a comprehensive report that provides NAIS school leaders resources to make data-driven decisions regarding school academic programming, operations, admissions, enrollment, and salaries. The DASL provided demographic information regarding school size, type, and region pertinent to the study.

Qualitative Measures

The study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of a DEI practitioner's impact on PD and staff culture and collected qualitative data through a series of 9 semi-structured empathy interviews. The qualitative data complemented survey results and provided contextual information on critical differences between school settings. We conducted empathy interviews with 9 DEI practitioners, who were able to provide context about the day to day implementation of DEI practices, organizational structures that support its implementation, and

current school-based practices that may currently be at odds with progress on DEI initiatives. All NAIS DEI practitioners received an email with the PD-SC Survey, the brief video, and a short message requesting the assistance of any volunteers willing to meet with researchers through Zoom for a 45 minute interview. Among the 9 diversity officers volunteering to interview, 33% have over 15 years of experience in DEI leadership with those remaining ranging from 6-9 years. 8 of the 9 have been serving in their current role and campus for 2-5 years. 88% of interviewees actively serve on the school's senior leadership team and are full time DEI practitioners.

The Interviews focused on targeted questions regarding the first-hand accounts of their daily roles, activities, and experiences as the tested intervention. The following are examples of questions asked during the empathy interviews with DEI practitioners:

- ❑ If it was up to you, how many professional development offerings would you provide for your staff on the DEI throughout the course of one year? How many do you currently provide?
- ❑ Of diversity, equity, and inclusion, which do you prioritize in your mind when all cannot be done? Why?
- ❑ What would Equity look like when it is done well on your campus?

Empathy interviews were conducted after that quantitative survey data was calculated to allow for more targeted questioning of campus to campus context. These interviews took place with practitioners who represented the geographic and school format variety found in the NAIS network. Researchers also believe the survey first/interview second ordering in this mixed methods approach helps in minimizing any oversimplification or misinterpretation of interview data. The study uses surveys and interviews, in tandem, to triangulate research and identify evidence that is and is not corroborated by the supplemental dataset (Greene, 2008).

Conversations offered DEI practitioners the opportunity to share their DEI goals and implementation strategy and contributed to a richer understanding of daily DEI efforts at the school level. More similarities than differences in work stream and experience surfaced by school model, grade, or part time/full time status. Greater detail of empathy interviews is discussed in the findings. This qualitative approach helped fill contextual gaps that explain the differences in DEI implementation and impact across NAIS campuses.

Threats

The two researchers divided the interviews for one on one conversations through Zoom. Distancing protocols required we conduct interviews virtually presenting limitations in setting and personal interaction. The one on one interview format was used to provide subjects increased comfort and the opportunity for vulnerability. However, it posed a threat to instrumentation and research worker reliability as different interviews were conducted by different researchers

allowing variations in inquiry methods. Both researchers recorded all interviews for an audit trail and independently reviewed each conversation to minimize researcher bias and avoid imposing our own meaning on interviewee's viewpoints. Lastly, the voluntary nature of the qualitative sample produced a more experienced, better resourced, and more senior-level sampling group than represented across NAIS campuses.

VII. Findings

Findings show NAIS schools with DEI Practitioners on campus had a more positive adult culture and provided more DEI PD opportunities than campuses without dedicated DEI Practitioners. In short, a practitioner's presence on campus matters greatly to DEI implementation and there is no substitute for this presence on campus. The largest finding of the study, however, indicates that the combination of the presence of a DEI practitioner and increased DEI PD offerings per year correlated with a significant increase in positive adult culture. Furthermore the improved staff culture experience of White independent school teachers showed a positive correlation with a campus-based DEI practitioner.

Finding 1: A Practitioner's Presence Matters to DEI Implementation

The captured data supports the reality that NAIS's shift towards the embracing of diversity and the championing of inclusivity is becoming part of their national fabric and is being experienced at some level across their portfolio of schools. While non-practitioner campuses are aware of the

network's push towards more diverse, more equitable, and more inclusive working environments, it is the campuses with a part time or full time DEI lead that rate their campuses' commitment level highest. 72% of independent school educators at non-DEI practitioner campuses feel an active commitment to staff diversity throughout the school. This is in comparison to 87% of educators on practitioner campuses who see

evidence of a commitment to diversity and believe their schools are making efforts to honor racial differences and expand racial representation on staff. A DEI practitioner explained, “We have done diversity well, but it is relative. We moved from 3% to 9% of teachers of color on my campus”. Eight of nine DEI practitioner interviews revealed a similar sentiment sharing that diversity was visibly quantifiable and easier to achieve than equity and inclusion.

While one DEI practitioner celebrated the increase in diverse hires from 3-9%, another interviewee expressed gratitude for the school leader of color who supported DEI efforts towards a diverse team where 40% of a 300+ person staff are TOC. As a common diversity push, 67% of diversity officer respondents actively participate in their school’s hiring practices to employ a more diverse workforce with 71% immediately introducing DEI practices during the onboarding process for new faculty members. Another practitioner detailed the implementation of a new initiative on campus where hiring managers committed to 1 of 3 finalists for teaching and leadership positions being a person of color. The presence of diversity officers

“Teachers of color feel like it is painful to attend staff events but do just so they wont be called antisocial or not inclusive. Even though we are invited and included, we still are doing things on their terms”

- DEI Practitioner

and the implementation of these DEI practices as interventions have signaled to White educators more than any other group NAIS’s steadfast commitment to diversity with 90% of White teachers at practitioner schools reporting a campus wide commitment to

diversity, a 17-point difference than White teachers without practitioner (73%).

The same is true for equity efforts. Only 58% of educators without a DEI practitioner experience a

school wide commitment to equity where leadership works to ensure fairness in process, support, and access for all staff regardless of race compared to 72% of educators with DEI practitioners.

Diversity management on practitioner campuses, according to the data, have greater impact in providing opportunity for all employees to maximize their potential and enhance their contribution to their school communities. As with diversity, the network’s equity focus has found a home at practitioner schools according to 75% of their White teachers. Only 52% of White educators at non-practitioner schools report the same. That difference, still favoring practitioner

schools, is much less pronounced among TOC at 59%. 52% of TOC without practitioners reported seeing inequity reduction practices on campus. However, when specifically asked about the “opportunity to advance”, practitioner school staff slightly lagged behind their non-practitioner campuses (53% and 56% respectively). This leads us to assume that evidence of equity commitment on practitioner campuses may be prevalent in teacher support and fairness of HR processes, but not in equitable promotion practices. NAIS diversity officers are overwhelmingly working to implement variations of a strategic plan for equity in their building (79%) focused on fairness in process, support, and access. NAIS DEI practitioners revealed, themselves, that the push for equity has been met with resistance. An experienced K-12 DEI practitioner summarized that diversity, unlike equity, was “easy to conquer because no one has to give up anything.” The concept of equity as an organizational sacrifice presents a potential strand for future research.

NAIS commitments to inclusion are also experienced at higher rates on DEI practitioner campuses according to the PD-SC survey. 68% of respondents with DEI leads

reported a school wide commitment to racially diverse staff experiencing true membership by feeling welcomed, valued, and heard in comparison to 61% of their teammates. More significant is the commitment to inclusion at practitioner campuses for TOC who report a 19 point difference above TOC at non-practitioner campuses (59% compared to 38%). The TOC experience will be explored more in Finding 5.

Inclusive leaders are consistently reflecting on how to make work routines or processes of inclusion an integral part of the school’s daily work (Hernandez, 2019). However, NAIS DEI practitioners are

“We now have a strong representation of people of color, but we still need to work on inclusion.”
-DEI Practitioner

honest about the tedious work needed to make NAIS campuses more inclusive for educators of color. A practitioner expressed “inclusion is new for schools that have managed to stay predominantly white and wealthy, so this is difficult.” Simply, when exclusivity was once the goal of independent schools, inclusivity is difficult to achieve. Practitioners shared reports that TOC on their campus experienced “feelings of isolation” and that Covid-19 the past year has been a contributing factor and removed the ability for TOC to congregate for a meal. Another DEI

practitioner reported “teachers of color feel like it is painful to attend staff events but do just so they won’t be called antisocial or not inclusive. Even though we are invited and included, we still are doing things on their terms”.

71% of DEI practitioners across the network report efforts to combat the exclusionary history of their campuses through the creation and implementation of a strategic plan towards a more inclusive work environment. Data from NAIS DEI practitioners show that 88% DEI practitioners in their 3rd, 4th, and 5th years in the role have implemented an inclusion plan compared to 68% of those in their first 2 years in the role.

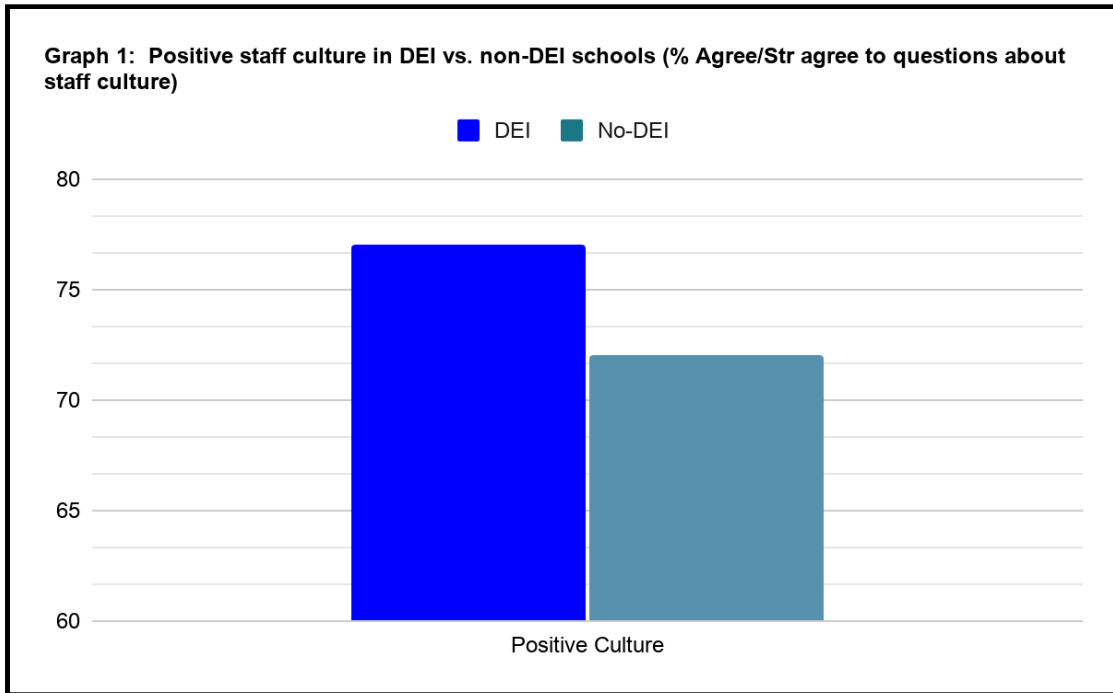
Perceived commitment levels to DEI efforts from campus to campus are among the most significant differences in ratings when comparing schools with and without DEI practitioners. The 12-point average difference in perceived commitment level between the two types of campuses leads us to believe the school’s employment of a part time or full time DEI practitioner may itself be the greatest evidence to staff of the school’s commitment to DEI. It has yet to be studied whether not schools with DEI practitioners are experiencing higher levels of staff diversity, however staff on their campuses enjoy a significantly higher commitment level of the

diversity initiative. The presence of a DEI practitioner as a treatment correlates with an overall improvement of a school’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In addition, The overall ranking of Diversity as the highest rating across both practitioner and nonpractitioner campuses, equity as the second tier impact of DEI efforts, and inclusive environments as the lowest ratings is supported through PD-SC Survey data from DEI practitioners, responses from NAIS staff members, and the qualitative data collected from empathy interviews. 92% of NAIS DEI practitioners, according to the PD-SC survey, implement a strategic plan to systematically improve diversity compared to 79% for equity and 70% for inclusion. 7 of 9 DEI practitioners interviewed named the improvement in their school’s willingness to dedicate increased time and resources to the recruitment and hiring of diverse candidates. They also explained that diversifying the staff was the “easy part”. One practitioner specifically stated, “Diversity is what we do best. Equity is next through improving our practices”. This trend is also well documented showing growth in independent school staff diversity from 7% of TOC in 1997 (Kane, 2003) to 16% by 2016 (NAIS DASL, 2016). Interviewees expressed that TOC desired voice and agency and still didn’t feel necessarily included.

Finding 2: Schools with DEI Practitioners had a more positive adult culture than those without practitioners.

practitioners have higher staff culture ratings than non-practitioner campuses. The NAIS network of schools overall report high staff culture ratings highlighting



A DEI practitioner serving at a NAIS campus in the Northeast region eloquently summed up his commitment to a positive staff culture by expressing the following sentiment in an empathy interview:

“Institutions should strive to demographically represent the communities they serve. But serving well the people we have is the most important work. We need to create a sense of belonging while they are here.”

DEI practitioners throughout the NAIS network are seemingly working towards that end as PD-SC Survey data showed that teams with DEI

collegiality, trust, and openness as a hallmark across regions. However, educator responses indicated moderate to significant differences between practitioner and non-practitioner campuses on most measures. This is especially true when accounting for race.

Without A DEI practitioner on campus, 59% of independent school teachers report that their school provides staff a safe space for discussions around race and issues of diversity. When practitioners are on campus, that number improves to 74%. This measure is key to staff culture and issues of DEI because achieving

equity requires dialogue amongst a trusted group, and lasting change can only happen with time and space to work together.

Practitioners report that 75% of their campuses are open to discussing racial implications when issues regarding diversity, equity, or inclusion surface. 89% of these leaders document regular 1 on 1 conversations with staff members regarding issues of race, at times responsively and other times to move the needle on DEI efforts.

For Teachers of Color, a DEI practitioner's presence on their campus resulted in a 16 point difference in experiencing a safe space for discussions regarding race and diversity. 70% of Teachers of Color reported that their schools provide a safe space for these critical conversations where 54% of TOCs at non-practitioner campuses reported having safe spaces.

Measured alongside the more nuanced concepts of equitable and inclusive environments, the aspects of collaboration, collegiality, and time together remain key indicators for how employees experience their organization's culture. A number of these more traditional indicators show a moderate to slight difference favoring practitioner campuses as having stronger staff cultures.

84% of independent school teachers with DEI practitioners on campus

self-reported that their adult culture was one of "teamwork and collaboration" compared to 79% of their NAIS teammates without one. Positive work environments that thrive on teamwork understand that planning, problem-solving and producing are better when done cooperatively (Heathfield, 2020). Practitioner campuses expressed their ongoing willingness to spend time planning with one another (86%) showing a moderate difference of 3 percentage points higher than their counterparts (83%).

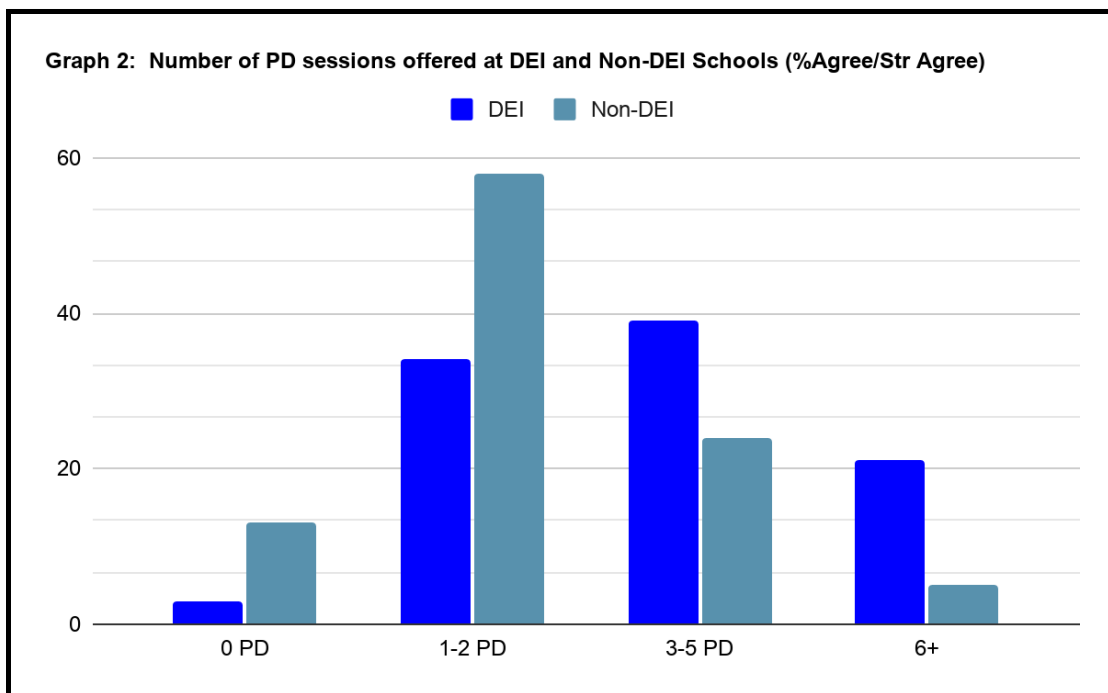
The concept of trust has also been a cornerstone for organizational culture. As an important aspect of building and sustaining a positive organizational culture (Wahda et al., 2020), practitioner campuses shared that teachers at their schools tend to trust the professional judgment of their teammates at a rate of 91%, just slightly higher than non-practitioner campuses at 88%. They also feel slightly more comfortable when sharing ideas during planning and development opportunities (81%) than their peers (78%). Accordingly, 82% of Teachers on Practitioner campuses feel as though their "opinions and expertise are valued among our staff", while 79% of their non-practitioner campus teammates reported the same. Though most staff culture queries show slight improvement on practitioner campuses, those differences become non-existent when asked if

they feel if their ideas are taken into consideration during the decision-making process. Contrary to staff data moderately favorable towards practitioner campuses, non-practitioner campuses rated their schools five percentage points higher (63% compared to 58%) when asked if they felt more like family than coworkers and felt comfortable making mistakes. Those results, however, skew in the other direction when accounting for race. As shown in a later finding, Teachers of

success are not policies and practices that they implemented but the employee experiences that result” (Shook & Sweet, 2018 p. 2)

Finding 3: Schools with DEI Practitioners had both more DEI PD offerings and more high quality offerings than those without DEI Practitioners.

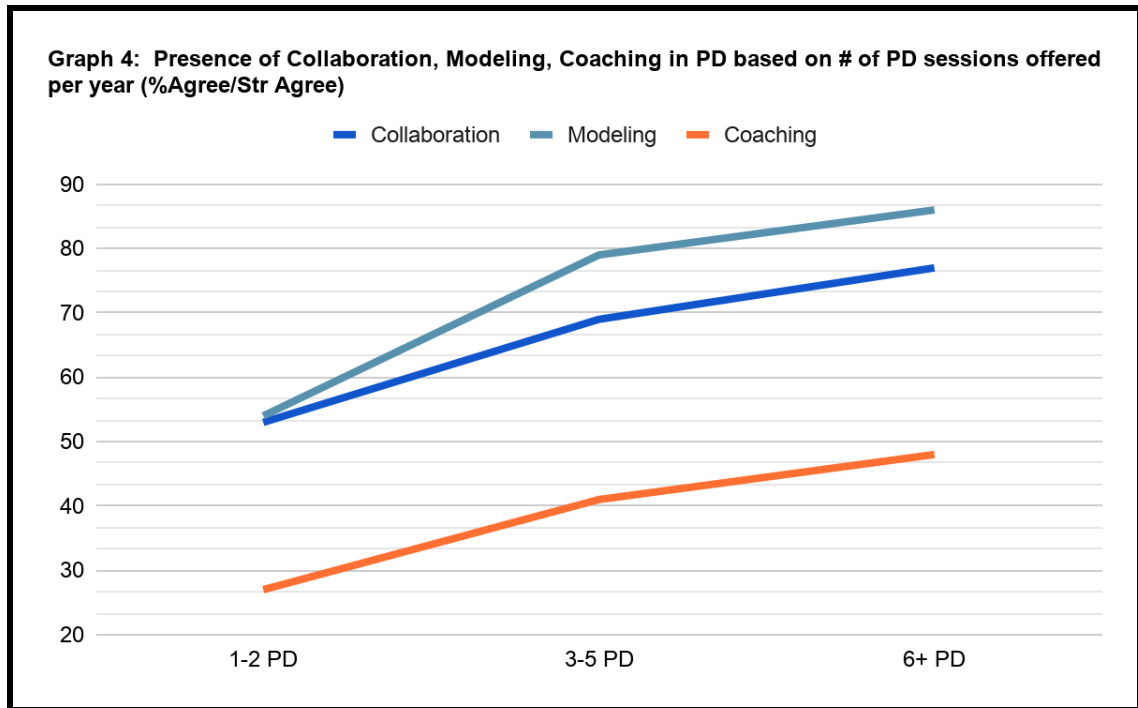
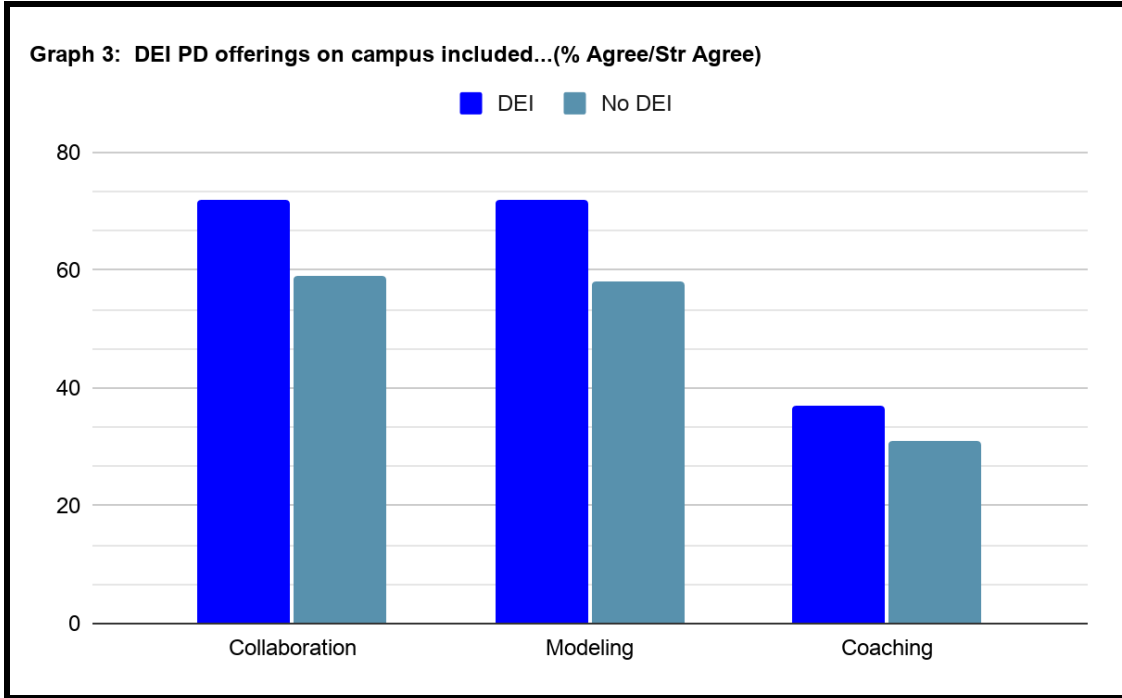
As was expected at the outset of the evaluation, the presence of a DEI practitioner on an independent school campus had a clear impact on both the number PD sessions



Color have a very different experience than their White colleagues on both practitioner and non-practitioner campuses when considering how they experience staff culture. Regardless of steps taken to build conducive working environments, “the key indicators of

offered and the quality of the DEI PD. (Graphs 1-3)

In the frequency of PD sessions offered, it is noteworthy that schools without a DEI practitioner are, in fact, offering DEI PD at their schools. This falls in line with the research



that says DEI topics are of increasing importance within the NAIS network of schools. A practitioner in the West NAIS region explained “New this year, the

teacher evaluation now has a DEI PD requirement” and that it “creates a deeper dive where the community has to engage in DEI”.

For schools without a practitioner, DEI PD offerings occurred only 0-2 times per year for 71% of respondents. Schools with DEI practitioners, though, were more likely to offer 3+ PD sessions (61% compared to 29%), which aligns with the idea that effective PD is of sustained duration. 63% of the DEI Practitioner respondents, according to the PD-SC survey results, deliver 3+ PDs for their campuses with 28% among them reaching 6 or more sessions annually. These PD offerings implemented over time are far more likely to have an impact on teacher practices and school culture.

The presence of high quality PD offerings correlates strongly with the number of PD sessions offered on campus year. Since schools with DEI practitioners offered DEI PD more frequently (Graph 4) there is a strong indication that schools with a practitioner not only offer more PD sessions, but also more high-quality PD sessions on DEI topics.

For schools with a DEI practitioner on campus, they were more likely to offer high quality PD in areas such as collaboration, modeling, and coaching. Respondents from DEI answered that their DEI PD included aspects of collaboration (72% agree/str agree), modeling (72%) and coaching (37%). When looking at these same aspects of PD at non-DEI schools the responses were notably lower with only 59% indicating (agree/str agree) that

collaboration was present, 58% that modeling was present, and 31% that coaching was present in their DEI PD.

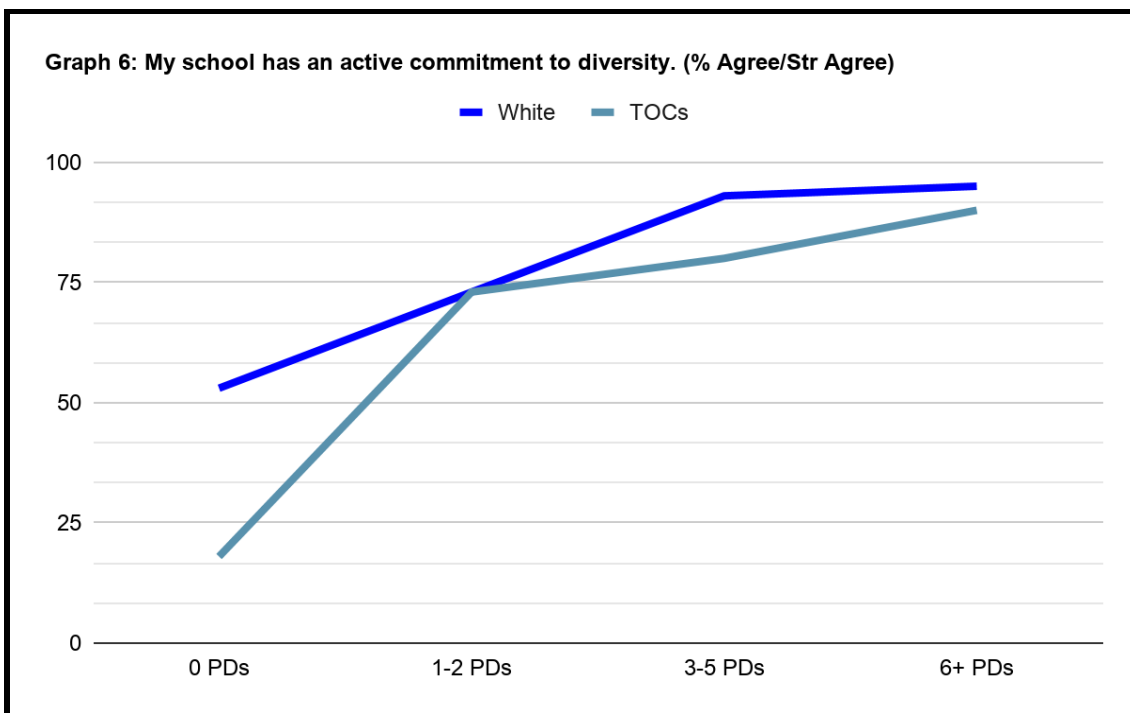
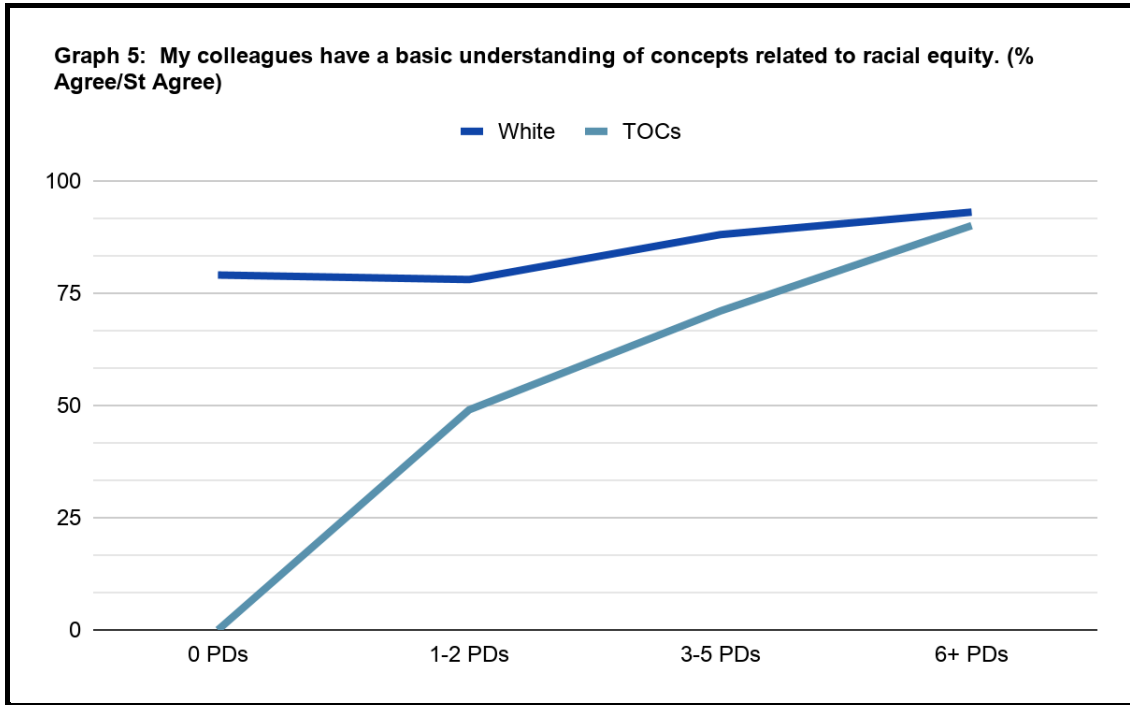
Finally, in schools that offered 6+ DEI PD sessions per year, these sessions were more likely to include aspects of collaboration, modeling, and coaching than PD sessions which were offered less frequently. (Graph 4). Schools that offered 6+ sessions included aspects of coaching 46% of the time, modeling 86% of the time, and collaboration 77% of the time. In schools with only 1-2 DEI PD sessions coaching was present only 27% of the time, modeling only 54% of the time, and collaboration only 53% of the time.

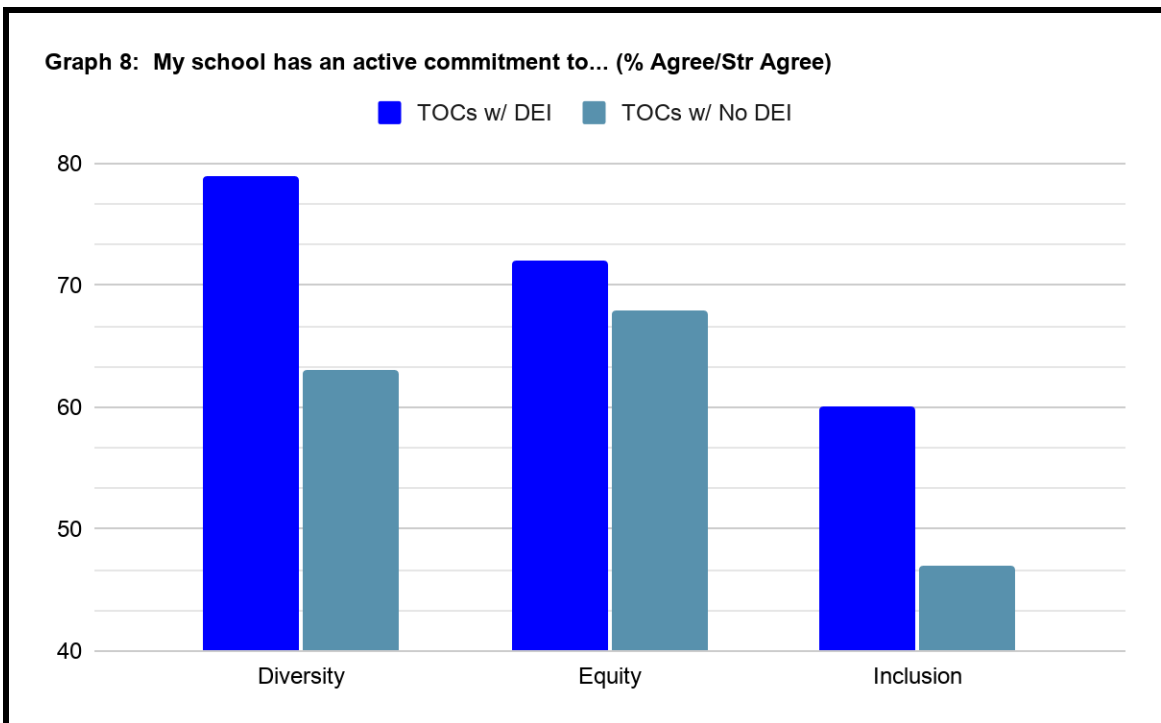
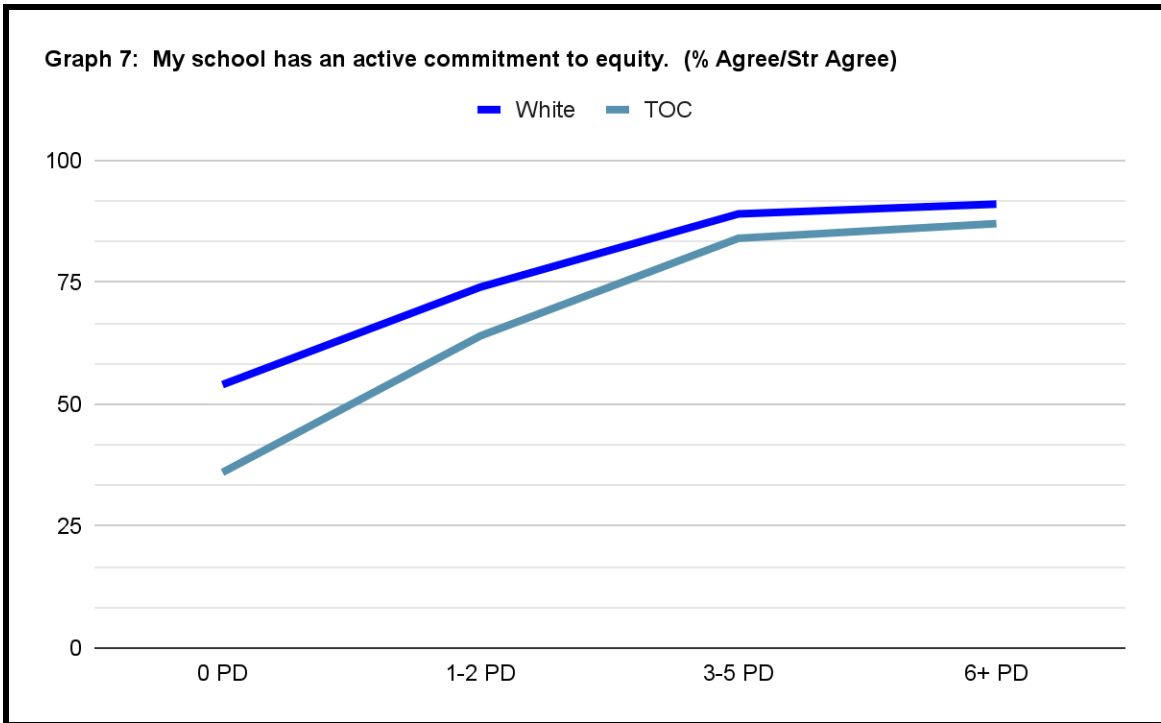
Finding 4: The presence of a DEI practitioner and increased DEI PD correlated with a significant increase in positive adult culture for Teachers of Color.

The most important finding from this evaluation was not anticipated from the outset of the project. The positive impact of DEI practitioners on staff culture and PD offerings was expected and was found to be true based on the survey data. As survey data was unpacked, however, it became clear that when professional development was operating more as a mediating variable -- and not as an independent variable -- its impact on adult culture for Teachers of Color was significant.

When considering traditional staff culture as a single measure (respondents who answered that they agreed and strongly agreed to questions 38-47) the impact of a DEI

practitioner and increased PD offerings was not noticeable. In fact, non-DEI schools had a slightly higher overall positive culture.





When survey results were filtered to measure culture in a way that included DEI topics (questions

24-37), significant differences began to emerge. The correlation was almost linear in its effect from 0 PD

offerings to 6+ PD offerings (see Graphs 5-6).

Perhaps most striking were the results of this combination when TOCs were surveyed. When asked if they believed their colleagues had a basic understanding of concepts of racial equity, 0% of TOCs at schools with no PD and no DEI practitioners said they agreed while 90% of TOCs at schools with 6+ PD sessions and DEI practitioners said they agreed with this statement (Graph 5). Likewise, 18% of TOCs at non-DEI schools and no PD said they agreed that their school has a commitment to diversity, whereas 90% of TOCs at DEI schools with 6+ PD sessions agreed with this statement. (Graph 6)

Conversely, 67% of TOCs at non-DEI schools with 0 PD sessions said that they had risked their reputation and/or position to talk about race while 0% of TOCs at DEI schools with 6+ PD sessions agreed with this statement. This strongly suggests that TOCs at schools who have no active commitment to DEI operate in a very lonely and isolated world where both leaders and colleagues do not understand the place of TOCs at their school. These findings suggest that independent schools serious about DEI work must provide time and space for the practitioner to offer DEI training to the staff if the school is to get the most value out of this staff member.

Finding 5: The TOC experience, though different than that of White teachers, is improved with the presence of a DEI practitioner.

Findings show that improved staff culture for TOC is positively correlated to the presence of a DEI practitioner at school. TOC at practitioner schools report feeling a school wide commitment to staff diversity more so than TOC at non-practitioner schools. The commitment was salient for TOC with practitioners at a rate of 75%, a 12-point jump from their teammates' 63% rating. Such results are fairly consistent throughout the analysis.

Findings also show that, with or without the DEI practitioner intervention, there is a significant disparity in the staff culture experienced by teachers of color and their White teammates across NAIS schools. 67% of White NAIS educators perceive their schools as providing equal opportunities at advancement while only 49% of TOC perceive equitable opportunities. This aligns with the national perception as TOC worry that their race presents as an impediment to their opportunities for advancement, and often feel a need to "prove their worth as educators" (Carter Andrews & Richmond, 2019). NAIS practitioners harbor similar experiences sharing the following sentiments:

Thus the network's desire for

improved equity practices discussed in the prior section is welcomed by TOC as they have primarily bared the brunt of such inequitable

ethical, and humanistic outcomes. Members of marginalized communities commit daily to the inevitable fight for life, liberty, and

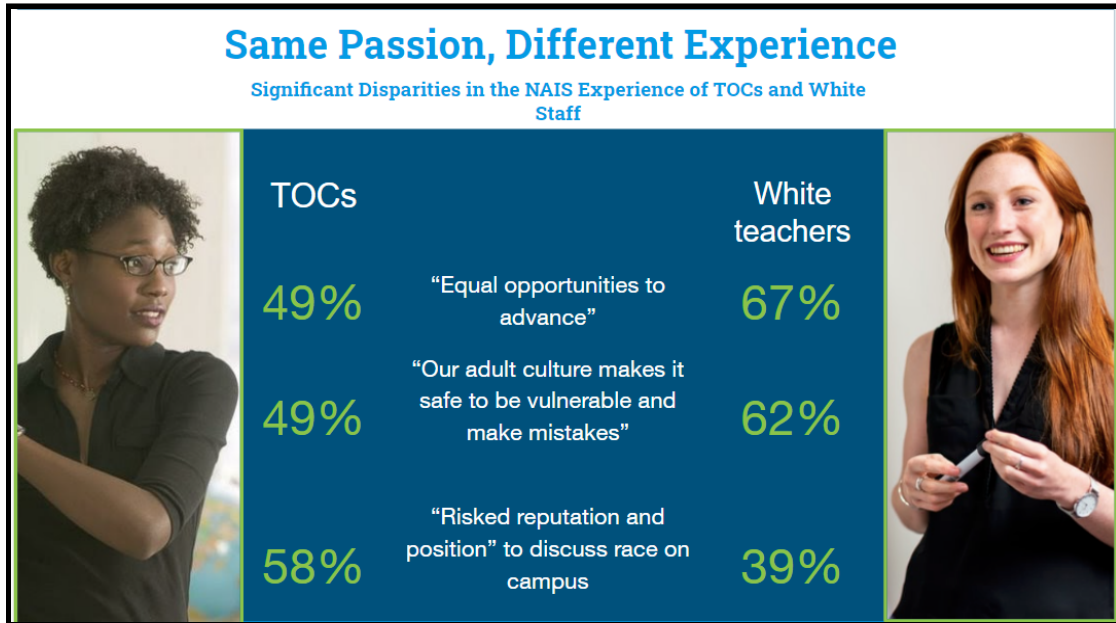


Figure 3: Disparities between % of TOCs and Whites who Agree/St Agree with statements about staff culture.

promotion practices.

When TOC were asked about their schools culture being safe enough to be vulnerable and make mistakes, 49% reported a sense of safety while 62% of White teachers experienced work environments where mistakes were accepted without judgement. (Figure 3)

In the more critical moments of addressing race in the work environment, 58% of TOC have admitted feeling they risked their jobs to discuss diversity issues compared to 38% of White teachers. First, it is commendable for educators of any race to participate as agents for more equitable,

access waged by the dominant society over skin complexion. However critical race pedagogy deems it necessary that White people shoulder their portion of the fight as privilege commands them to speak up, though uncomfortable and inherently risky (Leonardo & Porter, 2010).

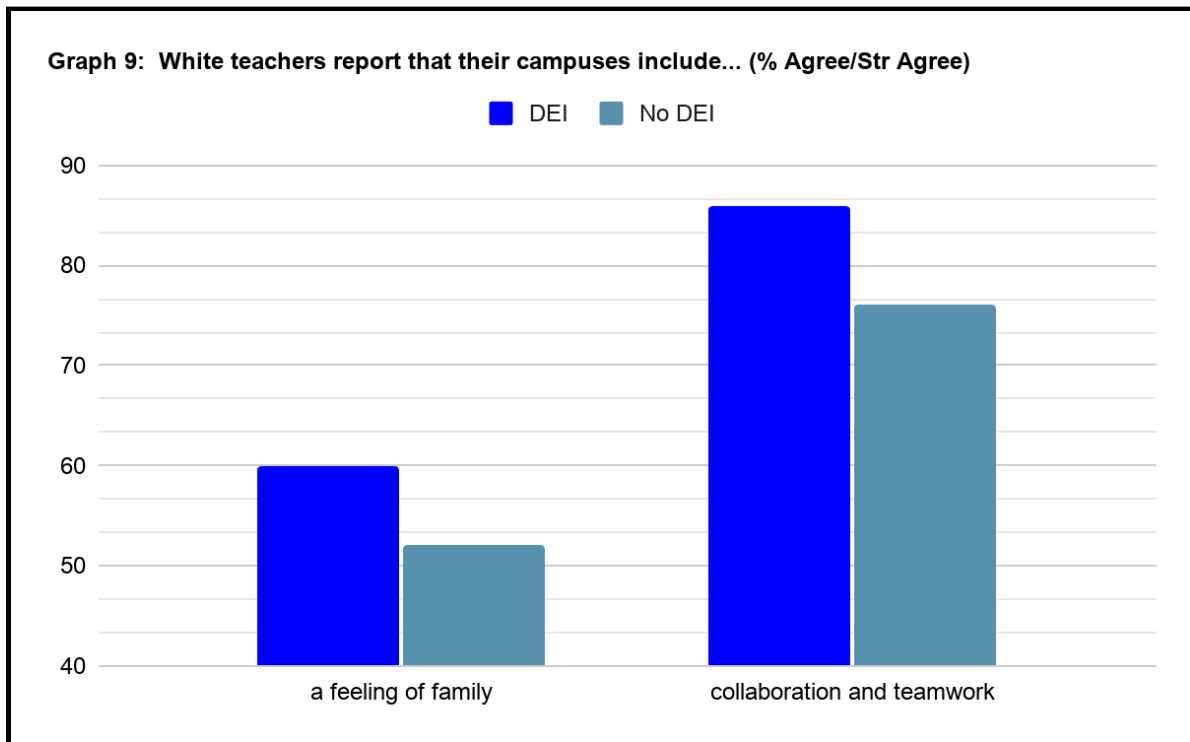
Furthermore, justice-oriented organizations project a reality where conversations towards pluralism have minimal risks and ultimately pose no threat to employment or career positioning. For DEI work to become an embedded framework for which school culture is experienced, “employees at all levels need to be committed and engaged

in doing the work” too often carried by racial minorities amidst the threat of penalty (Johnson & Hekman, 2016). An NAIS DEI practitioner enthusiastically expressed “the biggest improvement has been the new Head of School saying ‘This is everybody’s work’” paving a new path forward for DEI responsibility and implementation.

As NAIS investigates and improves network wide openness to racial difference, some of the larger gaps

Finding 6: A Positive correlation exists between the presence of a DEI Practitioner and positive adult culture amongst White independent school teachers

Strong empirical evidence confirms that organizations that openly address and successfully manage diversity show positive correlations with improvements in organizational culture and performance (Özbilgin et al., 2015).



to close are the feelings of emotional safety and perceived lack of equitable advancement opportunities experienced by TOC and their White NAIS teammates.

Those organizational impacts are not only experienced by managers or employees of color deserving more racially representative and welcoming spaces but by White employees as well. In fact, White employees at times reported higher ratings in correlation to having an

on-campus DEI practitioner. This study finds that there is a positive correlation between DEI practitioners and improved adult culture amongst White independent school teachers that is unequivocal and pronounced.

Though non-practitioner campuses rated 5 percentage points higher than their practitioner campus colleagues on their staff feeling more like family than co-workers, the White teachers at those campuses significantly reversed that result. 69% of White teachers with DEI practitioners reported feeling like family compared to 53% of their White counterparts. Those on practitioner campuses also superseded their teammates by 10 percentage points in expressing their sense of collaboration and teamwork as a staff (86% compared to 76%). (Graph 9)

Increased collaboration and teamwork are themselves a benefit to staff culture, and studies have shown the added benefits of teamwork as a predictor job satisfaction (Lemieux-Charles & McGuire, 2006) high staff retention (Xyrichis & Ream, 2008) and reduced turnover (Grumbach & Bodenheimer, 2004).

While TOCs on practitioner campuses reported a 19-point increase in having a safe space to discuss race, so did White educators

at practitioner campuses at 77% compared to 58% of their teammates. In turn, they have expressed feeling more comfortable discussing race when they have a practitioner at school at a rate of 87% to 79%.

It was also the White independent school educators at practitioner campuses who reported the most dramatic differences in knowledge regarding issues of diversity and equity.

TOC showed increased confidence in their White teammates's basic understanding of concepts related to race and equity when practitioners were on campuses. The 49% of TOC who believed their White teammates to be somewhat versed in racial understanding and dynamics increased 12 percentage points to 61% with a practitioner present. White colleagues, themselves, also showed increased confidence in their teammates' understanding of DEI with a practitioner showing a difference of 8 percentage points (from 80% to 88%) Though the vast majority of White educators across the network self reported their ability to identify examples of systemic racism at play in societal institutions, 96% of White teachers at practitioner campuses named their ability to do so over the 89% at non-practitioner campuses.

VIII. Recommendations for Schools and Future Research

This study has started to fill a large gap in the literature surrounding staff culture, PD, and DEI implementation on independent school campuses. There is still a great deal left to explore to begin to shed light on this topic. The major takeaway discovered through this study is that practitioner campuses experience a higher commitment level to the concept of staff diversity, however there is still much to be explored as to what, how, and why of DEI implementation.

Recommendation #1: All NAIS campuses establish a .5 or full-time FTE position for a DEI practitioner to assist schools in their goals of becoming more diverse, equitable, and inclusive work environments.

The presence of a DEI practitioner has a clear and positive impact on the adult culture of independent schools, especially for teachers of color. If independent schools are committed to issues of DEI, then the hiring and support of a practitioner will not only assist in supporting their teachers of color, but will create a more welcoming and healthy staff for all employees. This position is an investment, but is one worth making if a positive adult culture increases diversity and also reduces teacher turnover.

With this key hire we also recommend that schools include the practitioner on their senior leadership team, involve them in the hiring of new staff, and fund their program so that the practitioner has confidence that their work will

extend beyond the current school year. Offering the practitioner this type of support will give them confidence to take the necessary risks that come with this work. The practitioner job can be a lonely one, but institutional support -- financially, politically, and organizationally -- make that less likely because it will show a full commitment to the work of DEI.

Recommendation #2: All NAIS schools embed at least 3-6 high quality PD sessions annually featuring issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

This evaluation revealed the power of quality PD offered frequently during the school year. Too often, schools only lightly engaged with DEI topics and offered PD only 2 times, or less, per year. PD offered at least 3 times per year under the direction of a DEI practitioner (Recommendation #1) showed valuable impacts to staff culture, but an even greater impact for TOCs. If an investment in a practitioner is going to be made, then that practitioner must also be free to develop and deliver high-quality,

in-house professional development for the teachers on campus. One- or two-day workshops led by an outside trainer have almost no impact on any academic or culture goals a school may have and this holds true for topics of DEI as well.

Recommendation #3: All NAIS campuses fully fund the People of Color Conference (POCC) for all interested teachers of color.

Every practitioner interviewed for this evaluation mentioned the importance of PoCC to their work and to the work of their TOCs. When so many TOCs feel isolated on their campus the PoCC offers a “safe haven” and a “retreat” and an opportunity to connect with educators in similar positions all around the country. School support for the PoCC is a relatively small financial sacrifice when considering the enormous benefits it offers to TOCs.

It is also important that schools not just *allow* TOCs to attend, but *encourage* them to do so. This difference in approach by school leadership is vital because it signals to the educator that they understand that being a TOC on an independent school campus can be challenging in ways that White teachers will never experience.

Questions for Future Research

What specific DEI topics lead to the largest impact on staff culture?

While high quality PD offerings on DEI topics have a positive correlation with staff culture, this study did not explore in any depth the content of those PD offerings and which ones may have a higher value in terms of staff culture. Our research leads us to believe that some combination of the seven factors outlined by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) will be part of the answer, but the exact mix of these components is ripe for exploration.

How can administrators and boards of directors impact DEI implementation?

There is a very strong correlation between the presence of a DEI practitioner and adult culture, but what is left unexplored is the role that school administrators and/or boards of directors play in creating a positive space for DEI work. Can a DEI practitioner be successful

without the full support of their Head of School? Can the practitioner be successful if he or she is not in an administrative role or on the school leadership team? We know that leaders set the tone for their campus and have a very large impact on culture and staff retention so an exploration of this topic in terms of

DEI implementation would be a fruitful exercise.

What are the key characteristics of an effective DEI practitioner?

Our research led us to a broad view of DEI practitioners and the work they do each day on their campuses. We surveyed over one hundred practitioners and had in-depth interviews with nine of them. Their experiences had similar themes in terms of their challenges and successes, but there was no further exploration as to what makes one practitioner more successful than another. Factors such as time served in their position, the size of their budget, and the members on their team (if they have one) deserve further study.

IX. Discussion

Using a mixed-methods approach the researchers set out to measure the impact of a DEI practitioner on adult culture and professional development offerings on an independent school campus. This evaluation attempted to address a need expressed by NAIS to further their decades-long pursuit of progress in the arena of DEI. This pursuit now has more momentum than ever given the racial reckoning the nation experienced in 2020.

The findings of this impact evaluation clearly showed that the presence of a DEI practitioner on an independent school campus correlates very strongly with a more positive adult culture and more high-quality DEI PD offerings. The positive effects on adult culture were even more pronounced when the number of PD offerings increased,

Why do practitioners do what they do (and how long do they keep at it)?

The role of DEI practitioner can be a very lonely venture highlighted by many difficult conversations that do not always end up moving in a positive direction. What makes practitioners stay at this work and what makes them move on to sometime else? Almost all of the practitioners we interviewed had no full-time supporting staff and/or assistance in their work from other faculty members was limited. Does this impact the longevity of these practitioners or do they stay committed to the work despite the challenges?

especially when that number reached at least 3 per year.

These findings held true even when accounting for teacher race. Both White teachers and Teachers of Color experienced more quality PD and a more positive culture when a DEI practitioner was present on campus. TOC satisfaction with

school culture, though, still lags behind that of their white colleagues, suggesting that there is more work to do in order to make independent school campuses a truly welcoming place for all teachers and staff.

The very nature of the NAIS member schools -- as independent, autonomous organizations -- make it difficult to generalize findings across the wide variety of schools. With regional, grade band, residential, gender, and purpose differences independent schools are truly unique institutions. Instead of fighting against this reality one strength of this study is the wide net we cast so that we could speak of trends and generalities, especially when comparing schools with and without a DEI practitioner.

Another limitation of this study is that, even though we evaluated the presence of PD which is focused on DEI, this evaluation did not intend to measure the effectiveness of this PD. As mentioned in the recommendations, the actual content of the PD training was not

considered. Rather, what was measured was the existence of characteristics of high-quality PD on school campuses. This leaves a great deal of space for new research to explore since the mere presence of the practitioner doing PD may be all that is needed for staff culture to improve. It is quite possible that the content of the training is less important than the fact that it is simply being done in the first place.

Moving forward, we hope that NAIS will use these findings to further their push for all member campuses to employ at least a .5 FTE DEI practitioner. If at all possible, member schools are encouraged to hire a full-time practitioner who is given no other roles on campus and is included on the senior administrative team, most likely with the title of Chief Diversity Officer. The most effective practitioners are those that have the time and space to implement a true DEI program and not just one-off workshops and presentations.

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Appendix A: Survey Codebook

Start of Block: Introduction

Q71 Dear Colleague, In partnership with NAIS, researchers at Vanderbilt's Peabody College of Education are conducting a study on adult culture and professional development offerings and their potential connection to topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) on independent school campuses.

As an organization, NAIS has been committed to issues of DEI for decades and this work is more critical now than ever before. Given the recent national conversation around race in American culture -- and the focus this issue has received in an election year -- it is vitally important that educators are prepared to discuss DEI topics with their colleagues, students, and parents. This study hopes to empower schools to make decisions about DEI practices at their schools.

Participation in this survey is voluntary and you may exit the survey at any time. The survey should not take more than 10 minutes of your time.

Please contact us if you have any questions about this study.

Thank you,

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End of Block: Introduction

Start of Block: COVID Guidance

Q73 As you answer the following questions, please consider your school or campus context prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

End of Block: COVID Guidance

Start of Block: Role and DEI Practitioner

Q76 What is your primary position at your school?

- Teacher (1)
 - DEI Practitioner (2)
 - Educational Assistant (3)
 - Administrator (4)
 - Librarian/Media Specialist (5)
 - Support Staff (6)
 - Other, please specify: (7)
-

Skip To: Q24 If What is your primary position at your school? = Teacher

Skip To: Q2 If What is your primary position at your school? = DEI Practitioner

Skip To: Q24 If What is your primary position at your school? = Educational Assistant

Skip To: Q24 If What is your primary position at your school? = Administrator

Skip To: Q24 If What is your primary position at your school? = Librarian/Media Specialist

Skip To: Q24 If What is your primary position at your school? = Support Staff

Skip To: Q24 If What is your primary position at your school? = Other, please specify:

Skip To: Q24 If Condition: Other, please specify: Is Empty. Skip To: My school has an active commitment to....

Skip To: Q24 If Condition: Other, please specify: Is Not Empty. Skip To: My school has an active commitment to....

Q2 I implement a strategic plan for Diversity for my school which includes honoring racial difference among staff and actively seeking to expand racial representation among faculty.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q3 I regularly meet with administrators on diversity-related topics.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q4 I implement a strategic plan for Equity at my school which works to ensure fairness in process, support, and access for all staff regardless of race.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q5 When issues regarding Diversity, Equity, or Inclusion surface, staff at my school:

- quickly identify threats to diversity, equity, inclusion, and seek to remedy it. (1)
- feel comfortable exploring potential connections to race, but take no action (2)
- will usually not discuss it as a race issue but as something else (3)
- will likely not discuss the problem at all (4)

Q6 I regularly have 1 on 1 conversations with staff members on topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q7 The faculty at my school openly discusses the state of race relations in our country.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q8 I implement a strategic plan for Inclusion at my school where racially diverse staff experience the full participation of membership by feeling welcomed, valued and heard on campus.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q9 I actively participate in the school's hiring practices to ensure a diverse workforce.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q10 In my role I facilitate/provide ____ PD offerings per year (in-house) for staff on DEI related topics.

- 0 (1)
- 1-2 (2)
- 3-5 (3)
- 6 or more (4)

Q11 Which of the following statements best describes how often DEI PD is conducted by outside experts at your school?

- All DEI PD is conducted by school staff, never by outside experts (1)
- DEI PD is sometimes conducted by outside experts (2)

- DEI PD is conducted by outside experts about half the time (3)
- DEI PD is conducted by outside experts most of the time (4)
- DEI PD is always conducted by outside experts (5)

Q12 I have included DEI practices in the onboarding process for new faculty members.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q13 Teachers and staff at my school regularly engage in conversations regarding race.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q14 I have standing check-ins with my Head of School.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q15 My school has a protocol in place for adult conflict intervention when issues arise regarding race, equity, and inclusion

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q16 Is your role as your school's DEI practitioner...

- Full Time (1)
- Part Time (2)
- Other (3)

Q17 In addition to your work as your school's DEI practitioner, what other title(s) or role(s) do you hold in your school? (Check all that apply)

- No other title or role (1)
- Faculty/teacher (2)
- Coach (3)
- Dean (4)
- Staff (5)
- Assistant/Associate Head (6)
- Director of Global Education/Affairs (7)
- Director of Admissions (8)
- Division Head (9)
- Librarian/Media Specialist (10)
- Director of Development (11)
- Other (12) _____

Q18 Which of the following activities for teachers take place at your school?
(check all that apply):

- Social Justice Activities which include staff (1)
 - Schoolwide Days/Moments of Remembrance (2)
 - Schoolwide Cultural Assemblies (3)
 - Schoolwide Celebrations of Heritage (4)
 - Race and Equity Dialogues/Forums for teachers (5)
 - Faculty diversity/heritage event (6)
 - DEI (in-house) professional development (7)
 - Arrange/Fund outside DEI professional development opportunities (8)
 - Affinity groups for staff (9)
 - Other (please specify) (10)
-

Q19 In my role, I have the authority to make or heavily influence school decisions regarding staff culture.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q74 In my role, I have the authority to make or heavily influence school decisions regarding professional development.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q20 Teachers of color from my school attend the People of Color Conference (POCC):

- Every year (1)
- Every other year (2)
- Once every 3-5 years (3)
- Never attend (4)
- Does not apply (5)

Q21 Which best describes your school's DEI budget last year (2019-20 school year):

- \$10,000 or less (1)
- \$10,000-\$20,000 (2)
- \$20,000-\$30,000 (3)
- Over \$30,000 (4)
- I do not know the DEI budget (5)

Q22 I am a member of my school's senior administrative team.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q23 I receive adequate support from my Head of school regarding DEI implementation.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Skip To: End of Block If I receive adequate support from my Head of school regarding DEI implementation. = Strongly agree

Skip To: End of Block If I receive adequate support from my Head of school regarding DEI implementation. = Agree

Skip To: End of Block If I receive adequate support from my Head of school regarding DEI implementation. = Disagree

Skip To: End of Block If I receive adequate support from my Head of school regarding DEI implementation. = Strongly disagree

Q24 My school has an active commitment to Diversity -- honoring racial difference among staff and actively seeking to expand racial representation among faculty.

- Strongly Agree (1)

- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q25 I have a basic understanding of concepts related to racial equity.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q26 I believe my colleagues have a basic understanding of concepts related to racial equity.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q27 I know how to identify examples of institutional racism.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q28 I feel comfortable talking about race at my school.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Skip To: Q29 If I feel comfortable talking about race at my school. = Disagree

Skip To: Q29 If I feel comfortable talking about race at my school. = Strongly Disagree

Skip To: Q30 If I feel comfortable talking about race at my school. = Strongly Agree

Skip To: Q30 If I feel comfortable talking about race at my school. = Agree

Q29 I feel like I have risked my reputation and my position in order to talk about race at my school.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q30 Structural racism exists in the United States.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Skip To: Q33 If Structural racism exists in the United States. = Disagree

Skip To: Q33 If Structural racism exists in the United States. = Strongly Disagree

Q31 I know how to identify examples of interpersonal/individual racism (i.e. using coded language, questioning someone's competence based on their race or ethnicity).

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q32 I know how to identify examples of structural racism (i.e. people of color have been left out of wealth creation; home ownership as a result of centuries of structured racialized practices; police are likely to focus on certain areas of a city where there are predominantly black and Latino people etc.).

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q33 My school has an active commitment to Equity and works to ensure fairness in process, support, and access for all staff regardless of race.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q34 My school provides teachers and staff a safe space and time to have important conversations about race.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q35 My school creates an environment where all school staff have equal opportunities to advance.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q36 My school has an active commitment to inclusion where racially diverse staff experience true membership by feeling welcomed, valued, and heard.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q37 My school has taken steps to reduce racial inequities for staff.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)
- Does not apply (7)

Q38 Among our school staff (Instructional and non-instructional) adults tend to have trusting relationships.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q39 Teachers at my school tend to trust the professional judgment of their fellow teachers.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)

- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q40 Teachers willingly spend time planning together.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q41 At my school, teachers take time to praise their colleagues when they perform well.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q42 As a teacher/staff member, I feel like my ideas are taken into consideration when school decisions are being made.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q43 As a teacher/staff member, I feel encouraged to share ideas

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q44 As a teacher/staff member, I feel as though my opinions and expertise are valued among our staff.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q45 As a staff we at times feel more like family than coworkers

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)

- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q46 I feel like our adult culture makes it safe to be vulnerable or make mistakes

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q47 There is a culture of teamwork and collaboration amongst our staff.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q48 Our school's professional development offerings include topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q49 Teachers have opportunities to apply and practice new diversity, equity, and inclusion skills and knowledge during professional development activities.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q50 How many DEI PD offerings does your school offer/support during the course of the school year?

- 0 (1)
- 1-2 (2)
- 3-5 (3)
- 6 or more (4)

Skip To: End of Block If How many DEI PD offerings does your school offer/support during the course of the school year? = 0

Q51 My school supports teachers/staff attending DEI conferences/off-site

training as part of their professional development.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Skip To: Q53 If My school supports teachers/staff attending DEI conferences/off-site training as part of their pr... = Disagree

Skip To: Q53 If My school supports teachers/staff attending DEI conferences/off-site training as part of their pr... = Strongly disagree

Q52 Soon after returning from off-site DEI professional development experiences, teachers formally share their learning with their colleagues

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly disagree (4)

Q53 DEI professional development activities include peer coaching.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q54 Teachers have opportunities to implement DEI skills gained during professional development with colleagues

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

Q55 DEI PD at our school includes modeling of best practices.

- Strongly Agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Disagree (3)
- Strongly Disagree (4)

End of Block: Role and DEI Practitioner

Start of Block: Participant demographics

Q57 How long have you been working at your current school?

- 0-2 years (1)
- 3-5 (2)
- 6 or more years (3)

Q58 Which best describes your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Non-binary (3)
- Choose not to respond (4)
- Other (5) _____

Q59 Which of the following best describes your race?

- Asian (1)
 - Black/African-American (2)
 - Hispanic or Latinx (11)
 - Middle Eastern (3)
 - Native American (4)
 - Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (5)
 - White (6)
 - Two or more races (7)
 - Other (please specify) (8)
-
- Choose not to respond (9)

Skip To: Q60 If Which of the following best describes your race? = Other (please specify)

Skip To: Q60 If Which of the following best describes your race? = Two or more races

Skip To: Q60 If Which of the following best describes your race? = Asian

Skip To: Q61 If Which of the following best describes your race? = Black/African-American

Skip To: Q60 If Which of the following best describes your race? = Middle Eastern

Skip To: Q60 If Which of the following best describes your race? = Native American

Skip To: Q60 If Which of the following best describes your race? = Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

Skip To: Q61 If Which of the following best describes your race? = White

Skip To: Q60 If Which of the following best describes your race? = Hispanic or Latinx

Q60 Do you identify as a Teacher of Color?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q61 Which of the following best describes the grades served on your campus?

- K-5 (1)
- K-12 (2)
- K-8 (3)
- 6-8 (8)
- 5-12 (4)
- 6-12 (5)
- 9-12 (6)
- Other (7) _____

Q62 In which region of the country is your school located?

- New England (1)
- East (2)
- Mid-Atlantic (7)
- Southeast (3)
- Midwest (4)
- West (5)
- Southwest (6)

Q63 Does your school currently have a DEI Practitioner?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- I don't know (3)

Q64 How many students does your school serve?

- Under 201 (1)
- 201-300 (2)
- 301-500 (3)
- 501-700 (4)

- More than 700 (5)

Q77 If you would be willing to take part in a follow up conversation based on your responses, please share your email with us.

Appendix B: Empathy Interview Script

Vanderbilt Capstone Qualitative Interview Questions for DEI Practitioners

1. DEI work is difficult, what led you to get involved in this aspect of your campus?
2. How long have you been in your role? Are you the first of your role on your campus?
3. When it comes to professional development, do you prefer to do it in-house or to send them out to conferences or bring speakers into the building? Why?
4. If it was up to you, how many professional development offerings would you provide for your staff on the DEI throughout the course of one year? How many do you currently provide?
5. What are the barriers that prevent you from doing more PD?
6. What would you add to your PD or do differently if you had more time, resources, or support?
7. Of diversity, equity, and inclusion, which do you prioritize in your mind when all cannot be done? Why?
8. What would Equity look like when it is done well on your campus?
9. What does diversity look like when done well on your campus?

10. What does inclusion look like when it is done well on your campus?
11. What are your overarching goals (numerical or non) for adult culture? What do you want the adults to experience as members of the team?
12. Do you participate in establishing that adult culture? How do you feel like you have been able to contribute to it?
13. Have teachers or leaders expressed any positive or negative changes to adult culture or the campus environment since you assumed the role?

Appendix C: Email Invitation to Participate

Hello Colleagues,

The work you do for independent school students across the nation is invaluable. Thank You! We would love just 10 minutes of your time before you head into Thanksgiving break. Please view the brief video to understand the scope of our study.



[TAKE SURVEY HERE](#)

Dear Colleague,

In partnership with NAIS, researchers at Vanderbilt's Peabody College of Education are conducting a study on adult culture and professional development offerings and their potential connection to topics of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) on independent school campuses.

As an organization, NAIS has been committed to issues of DEI for decades and this work is more critical now than ever before. Given the recent national conversation around race in American culture -- and the focus this issue has received in an election year -- it is vitally important that educators are prepared to discuss DEI topics with their colleagues, students, and parents. This study hopes to empower schools to make decisions about DEI practices at their schools.

Participation in this survey is voluntary and you may exit the survey at any time. The survey should not take more than 10 minutes of your time.

Please contact us if you have any questions about this study.

[TAKE SURVEY HERE](#)

Thank you,

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