Overview

Recent events—such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the social unrest of 2020—have renewed focus on the schools' role in addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). To support districts in understanding and addressing issues of DEI in schools, Hanover Research (Hanover) conducted a national survey of 876 K-12 parents and 742 K-12 staff members in November and December 2020.[1] The responding parents and staff shared their perceptions of their public schools' and districts' performance as it relates to DEI topics. In this info-brief, Hanover summarizes key findings from the survey and offers recommendations based on parents' and staff members' perceptions.

> Hanover members can view the full results and data from the **2020-2021 Equity and Inclusion Diagnostic** via the hyperlinked icon below.

Recommendations

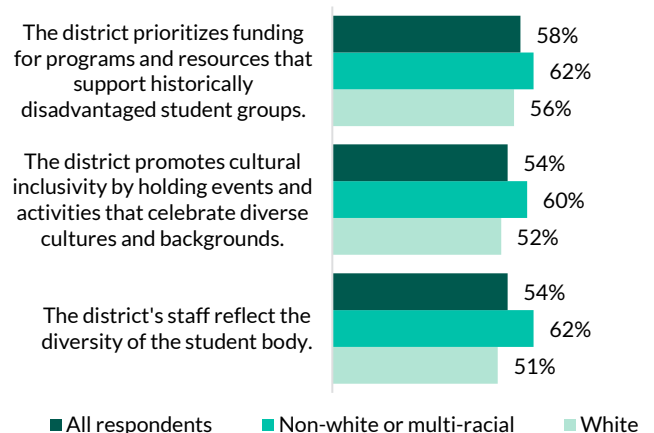During the 2020-2021 school year and beyond, Hanover's key findings suggest that districts should:

- **Administer the same (or a similar) survey locally** to gather input from their own parents and staff regarding the unique challenges and opportunities their stakeholders face;
- **Convene a dedicated DEI team composed of diverse stakeholders to support ongoing and future strategic planning cycles** and ensure that DEI-related priorities are addressed in district and school strategic actions and resource allocations;
- **Provide training and technical assistance resources (e.g., toolkits, rubrics) to teachers and instructional staff on strategies to address the needs of diverse students**, particularly in the areas of collaborative learning and asset-based pedagogies; and
- **Evaluate existing policies, programs, and data related to school climate and disciplinary actions** to determine if any disparities exist in outcomes or opportunities among students from different demographic sub-groups.

Key Findings

PRIORITIES FOR SUPPORTING DIVERSITY AND EQUITY IN EDUCATION

The lowest priority DEI action items for respondents are those that target support to historically disadvantaged communities. Just 54% of all respondents assign "high priority" or "essential" status to district staff reflecting the diversity of the student body and holding events that celebrate diversity. Furthermore, 58% view "prioritiz[ation of] funding for programs and resources that support historically disadvantaged student subgroups" as a "high" or "essential" priority. However, non-white or multi-racial respondents are more likely to view these three actions as "high" or "essential priorities." For example, 62% of non-white or multi-racial respondents view district staff "reflect[ing] the diversity of the student body" as a "high" or "essential" priority versus 51% of white respondents.
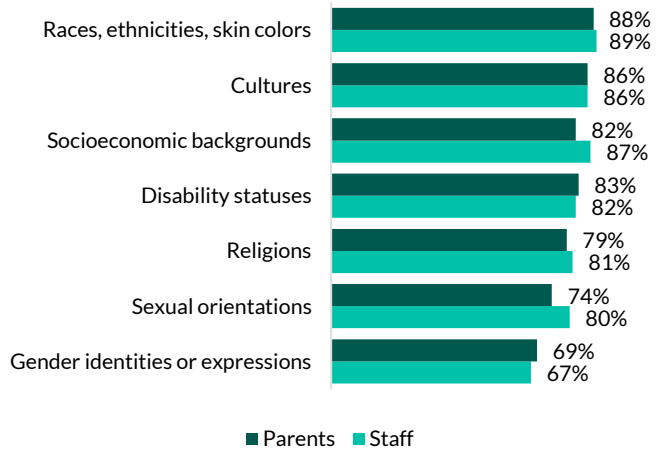
To what extent do you feel each of the following should be a district priority for supporting diversity and equity in education for students of diverse backgrounds: (% High Priority or Essential):

The district prioritizes funding for programs and resources that support historically disadvantaged student groups.
- 58%
- 62%
- 56%

The district promotes cultural inclusivity by holding events and activities that celebrate diverse cultures and backgrounds.
- 54%
- 60%
- 52%

The district's staff reflect the diversity of the student body.
- 54%
- 62%
- 51%

■ All respondents   ■ Non-white or multi-racial   ■ White

The most commonly communicated "high-priority" or "essential" DEI-related action items among all respondents relate to broader strategies targeting all students from diverse backgrounds such as "ensur[ing] a welcoming and safe school environment for students of diverse backgrounds" (77%), "ensur[ing] high-quality resources are available across schools for students of diverse backgrounds," (73%) and "promot[ing] access to all courses (including advanced courses) to students of diverse backgrounds" (73%). These priorities are assigned similar levels of priority by white and non-white or multi-racial respondents.
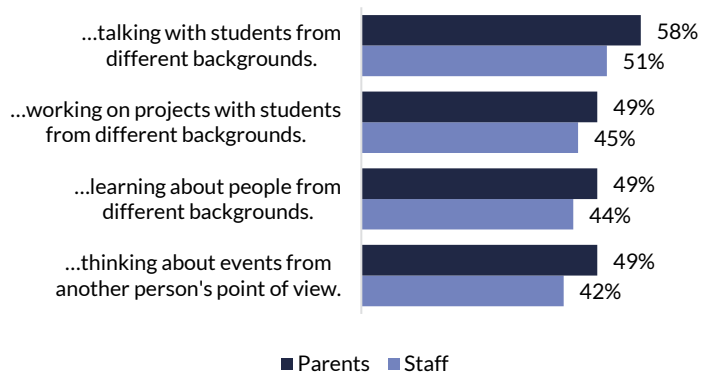
Parents and staff generally agree that their school/district supports families and staff from diverse backgrounds. Specifically, more than 80% of both respondent groups communicate that their school/district supports stakeholders from different racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds and with varying disability statuses. Notably, the lowest levels of agreement by both parents and staff relate to supports for stakeholders based on gender identity or expression (69% of parents, 67% of staff) and sexual orientation (74% of parents, 80% of staff).

Overall, [my school/my child's school/district schools] support(s) [families/staff] from all different: (% Agree or Strongly Agree):

	Parents	Staff
Races, ethnicities, skin colors	88%	89%
Cultures	86%	86%
Socioeconomic backgrounds	82%	87%
Disability statuses	83%	82%
Religions	79%	81%
Sexual orientations	74%	80%
Gender identities or expressions	69%	67%

■ Parents ■ Staff

TEACHING, LEARNING PRACTICES, AND THE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

In the past week, how often did your [child/students] spend time during lessons... (% Often or Very Often)

	Parents	Staff
...talking with students from different backgrounds.	58%	51%
...working on projects with students from different backgrounds.	49%	45%
...learning about people from different backgrounds.	49%	44%
...thinking about events from another person's point of view.	49%	42%

■ Parents ■ Staff

Parents and staff report low frequencies of time spent by students engaging with peers from different backgrounds. Less than half of parents (49%) respond that their children work on projects with students from different backgrounds, learn about people from different backgrounds, or think about events from alternative viewpoints "often" or "very often" during lessons. No more than 45% of staff respond similarly for any of these three items. Comparatively, 58% of parents and just over half of staff (51%) state that students talk with peers from different backgrounds "often" or "very often" during lessons.
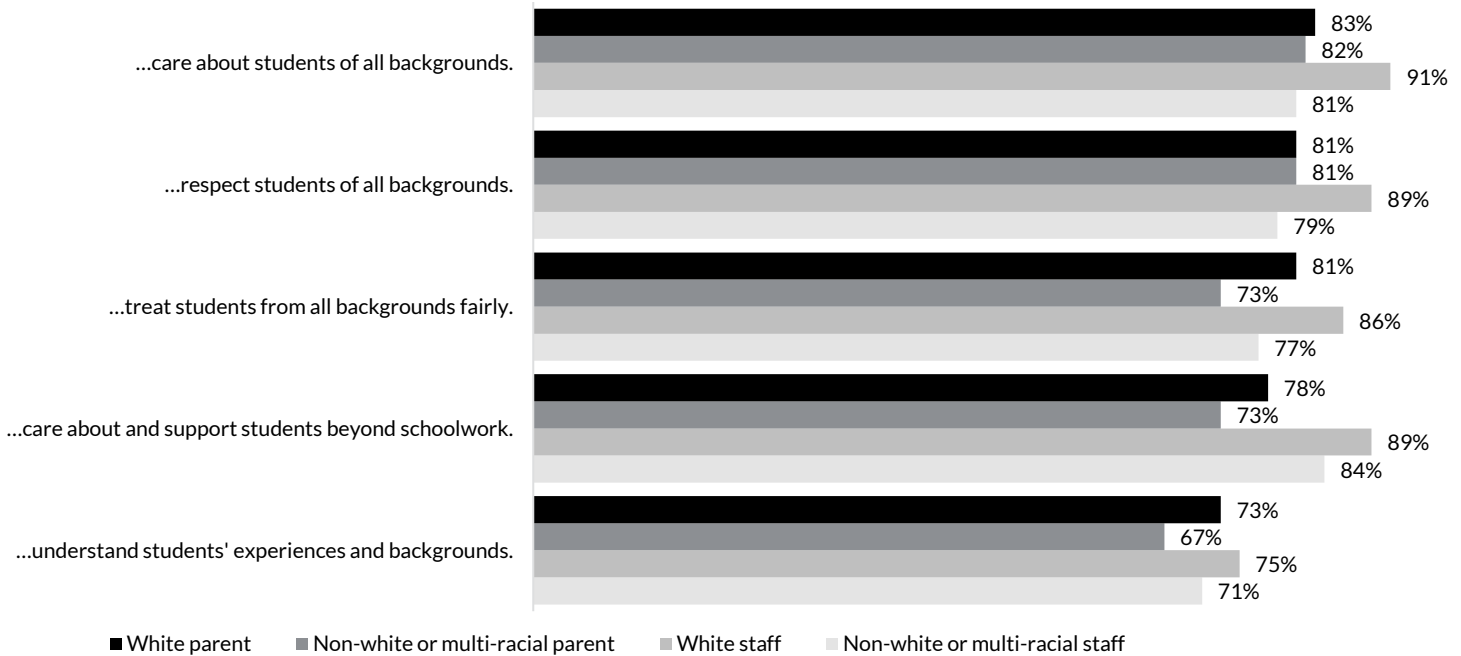
Regarding classroom-level supports, **staff are more likely to agree that teachers help all students succeed and adjust lessons for diverse learning styles.** Specifically, 90% of staff respondents agree that teachers in their school or district "can help all students succeed," and 88% of staff agree that teachers "adjust lessons to fit students' different learning styles." In contrast, 82% of parents agree that teachers in their school or district "can help all students succeed," and 72% agree that teachers "adjust lessons to fit students' different learning styles."

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT, BEHAVIOR, AND SAFETY

Notably, **non-white or multi-racial respondents tend to have lower levels of agreement regarding school-based adults' fair treatment and caring for students of all backgrounds than white respondents**, with such disparities being greater in magnitude among staff. For example, while 81% of white parents and 86% of white staff "agree" or "strongly agree" that school-based adults "treat students from all backgrounds fairly," 73% of non-white or multi-racial parents and 77% of non-

white or multi-racial staff express similar levels of agreement. Relatedly, 89% of white staff agree that school-based adults "respect students of all backgrounds" compared to 79% of non-white or multi-racial staff. Agreement regarding school-based adults "car[ing] about students of all backgrounds" also differs between white staff (91%) and non-white or multi-racial staff (81%).

Adults at [my school/my child's school/district schools]... (% Agree or Strongly Agree)

...care about students of all backgrounds.
- 83%
- 82%
- 91%
- 81%

...respect students of all backgrounds.
- 81%
- 81%
- 89%
- 79%

...treat students from all backgrounds fairly.
- 81%
- 73%
- 86%
- 77%

...care about and support students beyond schoolwork.
- 78%
- 73%
- 89%
- 84%

...understand students' experiences and backgrounds.
- 73%
- 67%
- 75%
- 71%

■ White parent ■ Non-white or multi-racial parent ■ White staff ■ Non-white or multi-racial staff

Relatedly, **non-white or multi-racial respondents generally believe that students from different backgrounds do not experience similar disciplinary consequences for comparable infractions.** Just 68% of non-white or multi-racial staff express agreement that school-based adults "make sure students have the same consequences when they break the rules, no matter what their background is," whereas 80% of white staff agree with this statement. Comparatively, 73% of non-white or multi-racial parents and 78% of white parents agree with this statement.

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[1] Responding parents and staff members are not necessarily affiliated with the same districts or schools (i.e., the staff members who provided responses are not necessarily working in districts or schools attended by the children of the parents who also completed the survey).