



July 6, 2016

Executive Summary

Assessment of the Racial Climate at the Boston Latin School

This Racial Climate Assessment is provided in response to a request by the Office of Equity of the Boston Public Schools (BPS) to evaluate the racial climate that currently exists at the Boston Latin School (BLS). The request itself was generated following a series of events that had taken place at BLS, including but not exclusively related to significant concerns raised by some African-American students attending BLS. Some students drew attention to these concerns via social media, alleging a number of inappropriate race-based incidents involving BLS students, as well as a reported lack of response or follow through by the BLS administration.

In addition to conducting its own inquiry into all recent race-based incidents reported by or about students, the Office of Equity decided to retain an independent firm to conduct an audit to assess the racial climate at BLS. BPS subsequently contracted with VISIONS, Inc., a women and minority owned diversity and inclusion training and consulting firm from Dorchester, MA, led by Richard Pinderhughes, Psy.D., in collaboration with civil rights attorney Richard W. Cole, *Cole Civil Rights and Safe Schools Consulting*, Boston, MA ('the consultants'), to complete this racial climate assessment.

For the assessment, the consultants facilitated focus groups discussions with 95 students, 22 members of the faculty, staff, and administration and 40 parents/caretakers about BLS climate and culture. In addition, the consultants obtained and analyzed information from the following:

- a) Observations of the School Wide Race Workshops for all BLS students, held on May 24-26, 2016, and a review of the written responses about what changes BLS should make from 40 student groupings at the workshops, involving over 480 students;
- b) Recommendations for change made by BLS student leaders concerning school climate at Student Social Justice Advisory Committee meetings with BLS administrators (on February 24 and March 16, 2016);
- c) Data from and data analysis of the responses to the Climate Surveys offered to all students, faculty, and parents in the BLS community;
- d) Information obtained through their interview of the BLS Headmaster;

- e) Four memos/updates from the Headmaster to the BLS community concerning BLS school climate issues and initiatives since January of this year;
- f) The Agenda for Professional Development, dated February 24, 2016;
- g) The BLS' Student Handbook;
- h) The recent NEASC Report of BLS;
- i) The Headmaster's memo to the Office of Equity, dated January 27, 2016, that includes sections on discipline protocols, "Ongoing Education for BLS Community;" and a list of reported BLS race-based incidents and BLS responses since November 2014; and
- j) Memo titled "Office of Equity Efforts at Boston Latin School and District-Wide, as of May 2, 2016."

The consultants designed a system of inquiry to promote participants' ability to speak freely about the successes and challenges that exist at BLS in general, and those that exist at BLS with respect to racial and cultural concerns. To achieve this, a series of focus groups were set up over a three day period. However, due to many intervening variables such as MCAS, PARCC, alumni visiting, AP testing, training planning for the upcoming school-wide Race Dialogue Workshops, planning for graduation, and the last week of senior attendance (a larger list is in the Report), the consultants were not able to meet with a random sample of school community members, or obtain significant focus group participation. As a result, the consultants reached out and met with several student groups on campus (ASIA, Filipino, BLS B.L.A.C.K., Gay Straight Alliance, Student Council, SAGE). Also, the consultants reviewed and took into account the data collected from the school-wide racial dialogues, along with the other data referenced above.

The assessment focused on the following areas: 1) What are BLS's strengths/what is working well; 2) What are strengths with respect to diversity, inclusion and cultural responsiveness; 3) What are some areas that need improving; and 4) What are some changes or next steps that participants would recommend BLS take on, moving forward.

Summary of Key BLS Strengths

Student, staff, and parent focus group participants consistently identified certain BLS's strengths, including: the high level of education and academic rigor; preparation for successful college admission and studies; academic ability of BLS students;-quality of students' work; strong faculty commitment to BLS's contemporary classical education; student exposure to other students from diverse socio-economic, racial and ethnic backgrounds and cultures and from different parts of the city; curriculum choices, including in the arts; the opportunities to connect through the broad range of student clubs and extra-curricular activities, which provide educational, social and cultural learning opportunities; strong alumni support; and the recent BLS efforts to address the racial/cultural climate challenges.

Summary of Key BLS Challenges

Challenges include faculty and administrators having varying degrees of ability to engage in or facilitate conversations informally, or in the classroom, regarding race, ethnic and cultural differences, issues and challenges; connecting these issues to content in the classroom; overall lack of school-wide, ongoing education and training on these issues; students not adequately involved in the planning and implementation of discussions on these topics; social separation of some students based on race, ethnicity and neighborhood; frequent incidence of demeaning comments, jokes and use of stereotypes based on race, ethnicity and other legally protected core identity characteristics through so called 'playful' banter between students, and, at times, to degrade others; low student reporting of bias-related incidents indicating a lack of trust regarding the school's anticipated response; belief by some students, across racial lines, that administrators and faculty do not effectively intervene when observing or made aware of inappropriate behaviors; curriculum viewed as not culturally responsive and relevant to the diverse student population in the school; some students, parents and faculty members resistant to or hesitant about supporting efforts related to BLS' equity-centered school climate needs; significant communication-related challenges, including, sharing information with the entire school community and a reported low level of transparency about the pace and process for responding to concerns and incidents; parents experiencing a lack of ability to connect with administration; and the low level of racial diversity (with respect to Latinx and African diaspora community) as compared to the overall Boston student community.

Generally, the nature and extent of student and staff experiences, attitudes, perceptions, and school climate conditions we identified are comparable to what research and our extensive professional experience in the field of school climate show exists in many racially diverse and demographically changing schools. This does not, of course, mean that these experiences and conditions are acceptable; rather, they are commonly found in schools prior to implementing fully and for the long-term comprehensive prevention and intervention strategies and programs.

Recommendations

There are many recommendations listed in the full Report. In making the recommendations, the consultants acknowledge that the BLS administration has taken a number of significant action steps over the past several months, after recognizing their initial response was inadequate. BLS actions since January 2016 include (many with the support of and assistance from BLS and its Office of Equity): convening a number of faculty and administration meetings

to discuss and develop responses to challenges and requests for information/interventions; a mandatory assembly to remind students how to report inappropriate, hateful or offensive speech or actions, as well as about consequences; professional development workshops and trainings, including training for the teachers involved in planning and facilitating discussions at the School Wide Race Workshops; holding three days of assemblies attended by all BLS students, with a guest speaker, followed by the School Wide Race Workshop dialogues for all students in classrooms throughout BLS; convening regular meetings of a Student Social Justice Advisory Committee with 38 student leaders and administration to raise and discuss concerns; investigating complaints and reports of discrimination, including harassment, in collaboration with the Office of Equity; adding an African-American history course for the 2016-17 school year; summer reading list review; and discussion of plans for next school year regarding continued community learning and dialogues.

Here are some of the Report's key recommendations for BLS, moving forward:

- 1) Trainings of administration and faculty to build the skills to effectively participate in and implement a long-term initiative to improve the racial climate and culture at BLS.
 - a) The consultants are aware of the professional development time limits set by the collective bargaining agreement for faculty (eighteen hours per school year, with a maximum of two hours per month). These time limits present significant obstacles for effectively implementing the proposed trainings. We highly recommend that BPS leaders, BLS administration and the faculty's union work together to modify the time limits and allow for more scheduling flexibility for the needed trainings.
- 2) Creation of a BLS Diversity or Equity Committee charged with identifying equity-centered school climate concerns, assessing and recommending the implementation of effective strategies, practices, policies, programs and curriculum changes to promote educational equity, inclusion, positive race relations, cultural responsiveness and for providing attractive leadership opportunities for its diverse workforce.
- 3) Building in equity and cultural responsiveness by:
 - a) Examination and changing, where relevant, curriculum to include time and content related to these issues, including a mandatory social justice course for all students.
 - b) Encouraging an increase in classroom discussions regarding these issues, particularly when it overlaps with content; also in-time discussions when these issues are highlighted in the larger community (city, state, country, etc.).
 - c) Maintaining the Student Social Justice Advisory Committee, with its diverse student leaders, focused on improving school climate and culture, while developing regular

scheduled workshops/trainings for students, after obtaining student perspectives on content and processes, to promote student education and leadership.

- 4) Provide training to school leaders, faculty and staff on their responsibilities under BPS policies on discrimination, including harassment and retaliation, including how to identify signs or indicators of harassment, and skills for intervening and addressing situations, and to ensure a common approach and vocabulary to use with students.
- 5) Promote reporting, including by providing greater clarity to students on the process and importance of reporting incidents of discrimination, including harassment or retaliation.
- 6) Provide a trained adult advisor and/or student mentor for African-American and Latinx students who indicate they are experiencing racial isolation in BLS or in their classes (for e.g., in AP classes), who make a request for such support, or when the school identifies a student in need of such assistance.
- 7) Design and provide extensive student programming for the incoming seventh graders, including at orientation, on issues of diversity, inclusion, equity, and race relations, where a number of incoming seventh grade students attended more racially homogeneous elementary schools.
- 8) Provide education and training on how to make BLS a more caring and supportive academic and personal environment for students. Administrators should work with any staff member to address concerns about their treatment of students.
- 9) Adopt strategies for involving parents and improving administrator-parent relationships, with particular emphasis on relations with parents of color and parents from lower socio-economic status.
- 10) Regularly and effectively communicate to the school community the progress and plans regarding BLS' ongoing efforts related to the issues raised by the school community
- 11) Take effective steps to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of students in the school. This involves a careful review of and possible shift in the admission process, and an examination of the support that BPS and BLS itself provides for prospective students.
- 12) In appropriate time intervals, potentially beginning in March/April 2017, perform follow-up racial climate audits, and survey students, staff, and parents to assess progress in addressing the core issues addressed by this needs assessment.

It is our experience that in order to create and sustain the desired shift in the climate and culture of an institution like Boston Latin School, members of the BLS community must regularly and effectively practice changes at all levels – over the long term - the interpersonal (behaviors) and the institutional (examination of and relevant revision of policies/curricula/practices).

It is anticipated that our Report provides the information necessary for BLS to develop an effective, comprehensive action plan, consistent with our findings and recommendations.

Implemented with consistency, solid planning, and on a sustained basis, with school, District-level, parent, alumni, and community support, BLS is likely to produce very significant improvements within a period of two to three school years.



Racial Climate Assessment Report for Boston Latin High School

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On or about April 11, 2016, the Boston Public Schools contracted with VISIONS Inc.¹ to conduct an independent racial climate audit of the Boston Latin School, in collaboration with civil rights attorney Richard W. Cole² (the “consultants”). In May and early June 2016, the consultants conducted their racial climate assessment of the Boston Latin School. The Boston Public Schools requested the racial climate audit in response to racial climate and culture concerns at the school raised by certain students at BLS, particularly African-American students, who are members of BLS B.L.A.C.K.

This assessment report contains a summary of the information and data obtained and includes a series of recommendations. The Report is based on our examination and analysis of relevant qualitative information and data obtained from focus group participants, the School Wide Race Workshops, recommendations made by BLS student leaders concerning school climate at Social Justice Advisory Committee meetings with BLS administrators (on February 24 and March 16, 2016), and data from the Climate Surveys offered to all students, faculty and parents in the BLS community.³ The consultants also took into account information obtained through their

¹ VISIONS, Inc. is a women and minority led nonprofit that has provided training and consultancy in Diversity, Inclusion and Multiculturalism in the U.S. and internationally for over 32 years. VISIONS facilitates and supports organizations, individuals and communities as they create collaborative working environments that promote creativity, innovation, productivity and social justice. VISIONS helps to create mindsets, practices and systems for navigating similarities and differences, and supports people and organizations seeking to make culturally responsive effective, sustainable change. VISIONS is headquartered in Dorchester, MA. Six racially and ethnically diverse consultants from VISIONS participated in the BLS Audit, led by Rick Pinderhughes, Psy.D., its Director of Programs, and Jovonna Jones, BA.

² Richard W. Cole is a nationally known civil rights attorney, former Assistant Attorney General and Civil Rights Division Chief at the Massachusetts Office of Attorney General. As principal of *Cole Civil Rights and Safe Schools Consulting*, Boston, MA, www.colecivilrights.com, he offers a broad range of technical assistance and training to schools on civil rights, race relations, equity, transforming school climate and culture, and in successfully addressing discriminatory harassment and bullying in schools and cyberspace. He co-chaired the national initiative that resulted in the acclaimed U.S. Department of Education publication in 1999, “*Protecting Students from Harassment and Hate Crime-A Guide for Schools.*” He conducts school climate assessments of schools, including based on requirements of Voluntary Resolution Agreements with the Office for Civil Rights, U.S Department of Education. He was lead trial and appellate counsel in the nationally celebrated school integration case, *Comfort v. Lynn School Committee*, successfully defending in the federal courts the constitutionality of the plan used by the City of Lynn, Massachusetts to racially integrate its schools. He has led hundreds of workshops sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Justice, and leading state and national educational and law enforcement associations and organizations.

³ Because the survey response rates were relatively low, the survey data results do not constitute a representative sample of the views and experiences of BLS students, parents, and faculty. Nevertheless, the survey data provides another relevant and credible source of qualitative data about BLS’ climate and culture.

interview of the BLS Headmaster. Additional relevant material reviewed included four memos/updates from the Headmaster to the BLS community concerning BLS school climate issues and initiatives this year;⁴ the Agenda for Professional Development, dated February 24, 2016; the BLS' Student Handbook; the recent NEASC Report of BLS⁵ and the Headmaster's memo to the Office of Equity, dated January 27, 2016, that includes sections on discipline protocols, "Ongoing Education for BLS Community;" and a list of reported BLS race-based incidents and BLS responses since November 2014.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

VISIONS' assessment process initially included the scheduling and facilitating of three days of focus groups of students, faculty, staff and parents. Regrettably, however, because of BLS' scheduling constraints, described more fully below, VISIONS was unable to obtain a representative sample of Boston Latin students, staff and parents through the random selection of focus group participants.⁶ Additionally, due to many factors affecting the sign-up and participation level in these focus groups, attendance in the focus groups at times was very low, and for several groups there were no participants. As a result, one of VISIONS Inc.'s lead consultants facilitated seven additional student focus groups over several days to obtain more student input. Through these focus groups, the consultants gathered qualitative data about student, faculty, staff, administrator and parent perspectives, observations, experiences and recommendations about BLS' school climate and culture. The consultants also took into account the responses from and data analysis of student, faculty and parent responses to the Climate Survey, even though also not a representative sample of members of the BLS community. Within the limited time constraints of their focus group schedule, the consultants

⁴ "Reflections on the Past Week," dated January 25, 2016; "Further reflections," dated February 24, 2016; "Ongoing Action Steps," dated March 29, 2016; and open letter to "Dear BLS Community," dated May 19, 2016.

⁵ In the NEASC Report (based on an October 2015 assessment), the reviewing Committee concludes, in part, that "Boston Latin has built a safe, highly positive, respectful, and supportive culture that fosters student responsibility for learning." It further states, in part, "Drawing from the Endicott survey, a full 90% of the students report feeling safe in the school . . . Parents are equally supportive of the school with over 85% reporting a safe, positive, respectful and supportive school culture...." (NEASC Report, at p. 60) The cover letter from the NEASC Committee Chair to the BLS Headmaster further states, in part, "As well, the Committee was pleased to note the following: - the Boston Latin leadership, staff, and students who offer impressive examples of the overall positive, respectful, and supportive culture in the school" (at p.2). While taking into account the NEASC Committee's conclusions, our findings and recommendations in this Audit Report are based on a significant amount of relevant and credible qualitative information and data on BLS school climate, apparently not revealed to or obtained by the NEASC Committee in October 2015. It is also noted that by using an alternate lens in analyzing the Endicott survey data referenced in the NEASC Report, 10% of all BLS students (or about 240 students) do not feel safe in the school.

⁶ Please see the section on 'Challenges to the Assessment Process' for a description of the many challenges to focus group participation.

also made limited observations of behaviors and interactions in the hallways during class transitions and when students entered into and were leaving the school.

In addition to the data gathered from the focus groups, other active participant data came from the three days of the 'School Wide Race Workshop' presentation and training workshops that took place on May 24, 25 and 26. This three day process (one day for each 2-grade group -- 7/8, 9/10, 11/12) consisted of an interactive presentation in an assembly with an outside speaker, an interactive discussion in smaller grade groups (approximately 20-25 in each group), facilitated by a BLS teacher and student, and a reconvening by grade, where students were asked to reflect on and discuss what had transpired and write down ideas and recommendations for next steps. For this process, each student was asked to claim and suggest personal and institutional commitments that could support enhancement of the racial/cultural climate at BLS. The consultants observed two of the three assemblies, attended three class discussions and reviewed and catalogued the written responses from forty of the groups of students, consisting of about 12-15 students each, or a total of about 480-600 BLS students- (see APPENDIX B for the design for the 'School Wide Race Workshops').

Consultant Facilitated Focus Groups

The consultants planned focus groups for participants to share in small circles (organized to allow for up to 12 per group) answers to questions designed to elicit open responses. Guidelines were set up to allow for participants: to speak freely about one's experiences, to accept that each one's experience may be different, to not argue or shame another for their experiences and to honor the confidentiality of the group. The facilitators listened and took notes during the group, sometimes asking for clarifications of particular statements. The groups ranged from 45 minutes to 90 minutes, depending upon the size of the group.

Each group had an opportunity to share their definitions of what diversity, inclusion, equity and fairness, so that they and the facilitators could share a common language with respect to those terms. After this process, the following questions were asked:

- 1) What is going well at Boston Latin School (in general)?
 - a. What is going well at BLS in terms of diversity, inclusion and equity or fairness?
 - b. What are some areas for growth?

- 2) In what ways do you feel valued and included as a member of your group?

- 3) In what ways do you feel devalued and/or excluded as a member of your group?

4) What are some changes and/or next steps you recommend?

- Prompts for the interpersonal, institutional and cultural areas of focus: if not referenced, ask the question in terms of attitudes and behaviors, interpersonal relationships you experience? In terms of rules, policies, practices/procedures? In terms of overall climate of inclusion, exclusion?

The consultants used additional prompts in several of the focus groups; these prompts were designed for the specific groups if the participants had not yet addressed these topics (APPENDIX A). For example, for the student groups: How does the school or school personnel respond when there is an incident/challenge that negatively impacts you or your group?

Focus Group participation took place with the following numbers:

Students (95)

7th/8th grades – black – 1 (girl); white – 5, (girls); Asian – 0; Latinx – 1 (girl)

9th/10th grades – black – 4 (girls); white – 5 (4 boys, 1 girl); Asian -- 0

11th/12th grades – black – 7 (girls); white – 3 (boys); Asian – 1 (girl)

Additional student groups: ASIA -- 11; BLS B.L.A.C.K. -- 17; Filipino club -- 8; members of the GSA (Gay Straight Alliance) -- 4; SAGE (Students Advocating for gender Equity) -- 13; Student Council – 6.

Faculty (18)

Faculty of color – 4; white -- 14

Administration (3)

White -- 3

Staff/Student Support

White – 1

Parents/Caretakers (40)

Parents of Color – 6; white – 19

Parents – women – 11; men -- 4

The following are themes identified from the focus group responses, grouped by four main participant groups – students, parents, faculty, and administration.

1) What is going well at Boston Latin School (in general)?

Students

- Students reported they are always challenged to learn; there are opportunities to find out what one might be interested in; there are high academic standards.
- Many BLS teachers seem to be motivated and dedicated; there are some who will capably discuss and address with students current events and racial and cultural issues in the context of the class curricula.
- They frequently mentioned the opportunities connected to being at BLS -- to be able to go to college, likely a very good one; leading to excellent opportunities for successful employment in the future.
- In addition, they reported there are support services for upper school students to succeed in preparing for college.
- The arts (particularly the music program) were mentioned in several of the groups.
- In addition, several students across several groups talked about additional learning opportunities – internships, trips.
- Students in all groups consistently identified the ability to join and participate in a broad range of social justice, cultural affinity and substantive interest clubs and extra-curricular activities seen as positive aspects of the school. Participation resulted in a better sense of connection, through exposure to others from similar and different backgrounds, and seen as part of the way that BLS has intended to create a sense of community.

Parents

- Parents consistently reported that there are great teachers at BLS; many enthusiastic and some innovative.
- For some parents, there was an expressed confidence in leadership as well.
- Students' relationships with many of the teachers was also seen as positive by a number of the parents.
- The students are extraordinary; they work hard, are smart, and they push each other.

Parents reported the following additional strengths at BLS:

- There are many learning opportunities for students.
- The challenging work the students are responsible for completing.
- The AP courses offered.
- The Facing History course.
- The emphasis on project work – working with others in groups.
- The opportunities for travel.
- The extra-curricular activities.
- The music program.
- The various clubs.
- The reputation of the school.
- The way that the youth become connected to other youth from all across the city.
- The nursing staff.

Faculty/Administration

- Caring, committed faculty; great students; well-designed structures for administration's communication with faculty on academics; the resources the school has; the academic rigor.
- Faculty, students and alumni all strive to achieve BLS mission.
- The students are smart, motivated, devoted and accepting.
- There is a culture of, 'if you are here you must be smart.'
- The headmaster of the school has a lot of support from faculty and is seen as a good overall leader.
- The congeniality/welcoming nature of most of the staff.
- While aware that the Headmaster has publically admitted BLS' inadequate initial response to complaints first raised by BLS B.L.A.C.K about the racial climate and culture in the schools, BLS administration and faculty have taken significant initial steps to begin to address the concerns raised about issues of diversity, inclusion, equity and racism, with the perception that administration is now pushing to make this happen.

2) What is going well at BLS in terms of diversity, inclusion and equity and fairness?

Students

- Many students report positive interracial student relationships, with friendships across racial lines, expressing that this is something they liked about the school; more diverse than in some of their previous schools.

- With the different clubs, each student has an opportunity to connect with a group that relates to their racial or cultural background or interests; this allows/encourages expression and provides support. They also reported a positive experience in clubs when there are opportunities to share aspects of their cultural backgrounds – arts, expression, food, etc. – with the rest of the school community.
- At times the administration has responded to concerns expressed by the students and this been received well; one change, for example, was that the school changed the name of prom king/queen to ‘sovereigns’ to support gender equity.
- The trainings and ‘Courageous Conversations’ discussions that are happening this year relating to diversity and inclusion are seen as a positive, moving in the direction towards being more inclusive as a school.
- Some teachers are seen as very supportive and responsive to issues that come up, either individually, or with the entire class, by generating and facilitating discussions.

Parents

- The current conversations on cultural responsiveness (‘Courageous Conversations’) – lots happening in the classes and the clubs; great there is so much attention to this – hope it continues.
- The diversity/opportunity for students to mix with others from across the city; the sports teams are mostly diverse and the coaches have opportunities to support them; learning to work together – that kind of collaboration is built in there.
- The music program is diverse.
- Some individual teachers were reported to be extremely helpful for their children.
- A number of white parents said, in effect, they didn’t see anything to raise alarms.

Faculty/Administration

- The new conversations and training are gaining traction; good there is a focus on it; lots of effort being put in now.
- Feels like the school is ready to have more of these conversations in the classroom.
- Summer readings are more diverse.
- The different cultural groups have their events and invite the community to participate.
- Although some are not recognizing these as challenging events/experiences there is a belief that the challenges do exist – awareness has increased.

- The school is very diverse, although the percentage of African-American and Latino students is not high.
- Student to teacher and teacher to teacher interactions are good.
- Extra-curricular activities provide opportunities for the youth to socialize and collaborate.
- The guidance department and their way of supporting students were seen as positive.
- Many teachers are wishing for more training to do be able to better support the students.

3) What are some areas for growth?

Students

- While activities regarding cultural inclusiveness have taken place recently, many of the students mentioned the need to bring these issues into the curriculum more, including race and other issues (religion esp.; ethnicity; gender; LGBT issues). Also, how these issues are brought up/taught/discussed was seen as important – i.e., with some of the books seen as ‘classics’ (Tess of the d’Urbervilles, Othello) there are still racial and gender issues/concerns that were seen as opportunities for discussion but that the many of the teachers were seen as not taking the opportunity to do so.
- There was consistency in the suggestion that an area of growth would be greater awareness from the teachers and students; and a hope for teachers to be able to manage/facilitate conversations in the classroom regarding issues related to culture, race, and responsiveness both with regard to students sharing with each other and connected to discussing historical and current events. Training for the teachers was identified as an area of growth connected to being able to accomplish this.⁷
- There were requests for more opportunities (in addition to the classroom) to discuss these issues/for students to express themselves.
- There was an expressed desire for more focus on the experience of students, including current/recent challenges impacting the larger community that also impact them – and more support for those dealing with health concerns that impact attendance.
- Students called for more responsiveness from the administration as well as transparency and communication about what is being done.
- A number of students (and parents) report that students make jokes, tease and use negative words about other students based on their racial or ethnic background,

7. Response to the student survey question, “Teachers explore and discuss racial issues”: 75 students, across racial lines, agree or strongly agree, while 37 students, across racial lines, disagree or strongly disagree.

gender, actual or perceived sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics. Many students say there's a lot of name calling, often between friends, or within friends groups.⁸

- A few students reported racial or ethnic-based jokes made by some substitute teachers.
- Students requested more frequent and consistent adult response to the jokes and comments that discount or degrade other groups; this is related to both inside and outside the classroom.
- Increase the diversity of the faculty and administration while also working to enhance the diversity of the student population to reflect the population in the overall BPS system; several expressed a desire to see a modification of the admissions process so as to enhance the likelihood that more people of color, particularly African Diaspora and Latinx apply and get in.
- Some African-American students describe experiencing racial isolation when they are the only one or few in number in a class, such as in AP classes.
- Breaking down cliques of students who group together with others from their City neighborhood, and identify themselves, for example, as 'Westies,' 'Southies,' 'Rozzies,' etc.
- Faculty with a more caring, supportive attitude.
- Administrators who promote a culture of caring, rather than the perception that they either sanction or fail to address the callous and insensitive treatment of students by some faculty.
- While fostering independence is good, several participants expressed a desire for more active support be put in place for those who are struggling.

Parents

- It is reportedly difficult to get responses from the administration; sometimes not getting responses to basic requests for information; a challenge of not feeling able to ask

⁸ Response to the student survey question, "Students tolerate harassment as part of the school culture": 5 students reply "always," 35 "most times," 34 "sometimes," and 33 "never." Response to the parent survey question, "My child has been the target of racial or ethnic-based harassment this school year": 8 parents "strongly agree," 18 "agree," 50 "disagree," and 148 "strongly disagree."

challenging or difficult questions of the head of school because they believe there are some parents who have been ostracized by her for raising such questions.

- Some feel that it has been hard to stay in contact with the teachers; there is a feeling that if their child is perceived as being a good student, then they get support; and when a child is struggling, parents do not always find out about this; also, there is a perception for some of the parents that the teachers often are not aware of the skill sets that some of the students bring and therefore are not fully equipped to support them in the ways they need.
- Some parents reported that when they attempted contact with the teachers to discuss a concern about their child, they felt the teachers were bothered by the contact; they were not seen as responsive as the parents felt they should be. Also, concern was expressed that when parents contact the teacher some students worry about fear of reprisals from the teacher later. Some parents expressed a feeling that there was no accountability for the teachers in their interactions with parents and the administration are not seeing it; some parents of color expressed a feeling that there is an engrained system of lack of responsiveness to parents, particularly around issues related to cultural responsiveness.
- There has been a greater and greater divide between some of the students that feel very differently on the issues – some white students discounting the black students' experiences, feeling that the black students are 'crying wolf;' and that some students are learning from each other how to use disparaging language about other groups (i.e., use of slang re LGBT students).⁹
- The conversations about race need to explicitly encompass the words (actually using words like race, ethnicity, African-American, white, etc.) so that people get used to using them; to date, in the classroom as well with the Courageous Conversations many were seen as avoiding the words. There was an expressed need for ongoing training to be able to do this; training is currently lacking. Cultural responsiveness – for several of the parents, when the girls (from BLS B.L.A.C.K.) spoke out, they perceived that there was no immediate support for them. They also reported that the students who spoke out have felt the backlash of other students, faculty and alumni.
- The 'minority' students have a hard time feeling welcomed; need to do additional things to make that different.

⁹ Responses to the teacher survey question, "In my school community I know students who have been treated unfairly or judged based on race": 2 teachers reply, "a great deal," 8 reply "quite a bit," 31 reply "very little," and 10 reply "none."

- Concern that degrading-type joking is allowed in the classroom without reprisal or response; some reported race or ethnic-based jokes that substitute teachers have uttered; also, a lack of responsiveness to inflammatory questions and comments with racial undertones.
- The 'sign up genius' for the focus groups was public; that meant that if one looked at the sign-up sheets online they would know who attended (or intended to attend) what groups; some parents reported they felt uneasy about speaking to challenges at BLS as a result of this.
- A feeling of lack of (psychological) safety at the school; there is a culture of fear here (related to both academics and behavior).
- There is a perception of the students not feeling able to express themselves.
- The setting of the school is one that does not seem to promote open dialogue.
- From several parent groups: the number of teachers and administrators who are alumni of BLS may present challenges in that some things (that may require changing) will remain entrenched.
- Need more outreach to the other schools to increase diversity.
- Some parents hold the office for equity accountable for the challenges at and focus on BLS; frustrated with the energy applied to BLS and not the other schools.
- There is reported to be some ostracizing (of the students) based on where one comes from – teachers seen as not intervening or looking for learning opportunities – this may be connected to another phenomenon that the parents reported – a tendency of the students to hang out primarily with other youth from their section of the city/neighborhood. Perception by the parents (and parents reported hearing this from their children) about a perceived pecking order based on which section of the city or neighborhood students live in.
- There is a feeling that the teachers can behave however they want without accountability or reprisals, that they need training around cultural issues and around demonstrating more caring attitudes towards the students.
- Because of the challenge of being watched by the outside world and the media, no one wants to say anything – not having honest conversations.
- Instruction is seen as inflexible, rigid, which means there is a perception of no room for the shifts needed to manage conversations and challenges like this (related to cultural responsiveness).
- Right now it feels like a culture of high academic standards and not a culture of caring.
- More support for the students would be helpful.

Faculty/Administration

- Lack of communication/organization.
- Not much training on cultural competency; people want and need that; the administration as well.
- A point person or equity team; more centrality and organization; should be a part of our regular jobs; needs to be mandated to include everyone.
- Lost a lot of black students after the quota system was shut down due to lawsuits; resulting in a significant decrease in racial diversity.
- Some faculty stated their belief that white privilege exists at this school in a way that blinds administration to the challenges of people of color.
- There is a need for more outreach to increase diversity.
- Enhance the curriculum from an inclusive perspective.
- Student voice overall is frustrated; it cannot get access to the administration.
- Better communication between teachers and administration; the numbers get in the way – 5 administrators for 2,400 students.
- Greater awareness/knowledge of the challenges and need for more information.
- More opportunities for conversations; maybe we can learn with/from the students.
- Disproportionate number of teachers of color rated as ‘needing improvement’; need more diversity at the administrative level to perform the evaluations.
- A few faculty members reported that they don’t have (sufficient) information/data on the achievement gap.
- Some students don’t even live in the city and are still getting in and coming here – only one investigator for this for the City of Boston – that’s a problem.

4) What are some changes and/or next steps you recommend?

Students

- Our teachers need to learn how to have the conversations; teach more multiculturalism history in the classrooms; race; gender, sexual orientation; religion; class; include the older students in setting the agenda for these discussions.
- Train the teachers so they know how to talk about race and are not afraid of having the conversations/feel skilled at having them/facilitating them; more workshops like the

dialogues; maybe also have the student leaders trained as they have a lot of experience supporting their peers and other groups.¹⁰

- The young people can have these discussions – they demonstrated that they were serious and able to talk about these issues during the ‘race dialogues;’ so it is an erroneous perception that they are too young to deal with these issues or talk about them. Have more students be involved in leading of these discussions to help model for the rest of the student body; helps build the skills of the students.
- Build in more opportunities for these conversations during the school day; also so that it can feel easier for students to speak up; interactive conversations, not ones that are lecture based.
- We need more mandatory faculty and student workshops.
- Keep in mind that race is not just black and white; and to have discussions about the other challenges as well.
- Programs/workshops that are designed to talk about race so that the issue is directly discussed. When having these discussions explicitly name and discuss the challenging issues instead of expending so much energy trying not to say the wrong thing.
- Bring in more good outside speakers on this and other related topics.
- Have a focus on solution generation and not blaming or punishment; these challenges are always opportunities for growth; if an intervention is needed, it may be an opportunity to teach and discuss/learn, not just punish; this can facilitate/enhance conversations and communication between students and faculty/administration
- Understand that these conversations can feel uncomfortable. There is a desire not to have people feel uncomfortable but that is what this work is; that is how it feels; have to go through it.
- Teachers should be learning to be more sensitive around factors that influence a students’ performance (what is happening in their personal life).
- Improved communication/transparency from the school.
- Books by more authors from African Diaspora, Latinx, LGBT groups; more accurate teaching of history; include more diverse representations of groups with different struggles and privileges in the curriculum (i.e., in selected readings for English classes, not just relegated to ‘supplemental’ readings).
- Make Facing History course a requirement.

¹⁰ Response to the student survey question, “Teachers explore and discuss racial issues”: 75 students, across racial lines, agree or strongly agree, while 37 students, across racial lines, disagree or strongly disagree. Responses to the student survey question, “Teachers encourage talk about inequality,” 63 students, across racial lines, agree or strongly agree, while 48 students, across racial lines, disagree or strongly disagree.

- Institute a social justice course or program. A mandatory social justice class, even for the earlier grades.
- Be more engaged in social issues in our classrooms/curriculum.
- Also have more of an incorporation of current events in the classroom.
- Differential interventions based on the ‘act’ – perception of people getting away with racial slurs but easily given consequences for being late.¹¹
- Have more of a diverse representation of BLS alumni who are famous on the walls.
- Where to go for support: greater knowledge for students on how to address something that has negatively impacted them; several groups talked about wanting more information on what the next steps will be and about an anonymous reporting process.
- Have more things done to bring the school together; more events.
- Have more outreach to other communities to enhance the diversity; more outreach programs (ISEE) prep.
- Create more spaces to be heard; strengthen the student-teacher relationships.
- Change terms of faculty and administration (head master and master) – the choice of keeping the names ‘headmaster’ and ‘master’ for many of the faculty has a reported negative impact on the students, particularly across race.
- Be committed to staying with working towards being more culturally responsive as a school; do not give up trying, even if it does not feel successful at first.

Parents

- Stories need to be told – builds community.
- Responsiveness needs to take place in terms of conversation, learning discussions; not just reactive punishment or hushing up.

¹¹ Responses to the student survey question, “Administrators, teachers and staff actively try to prevent and reduce discriminatory language and behavior”: 71 students, across racial lines, agree or strongly agree, while 39 students, across racial lines, disagree or strongly disagree. Responses to the student survey question, “Administrators, teachers and staff actively try to prevent and reduce racial discrimination”: 28 students, across racial lines, reply “always,” 29 students “most times,” 41 students “sometimes,” and 10 students “never.” Responses to the teacher survey question, “Administrators, teachers and staff actively try to prevent and reduce racial discrimination”: 21 teachers reply “a great deal,” 23 “quite a bit,” 6 “very little,” and 1 “none.” Responses to the teacher survey question, “I ask persons who are using discriminatory language and behavior to refrain, and I am comfortable stating my reasons”: 71 teachers reply, “a great deal,” 12 reply “quite a bit,” 2 reply “very little,” and 0 reply “none.” Responses to the parent survey question, “When students report race or ethnic-based harassment or bullying to the school principal or teachers, something is done to stop it”: 75 parents “strongly agree,” 76 “agree,” 30 “disagree,” and 16 “strongly disagree.”

- Faculty needs to have training on having/managing difficult conversations.
- Students need conversations about women as a part of the conversations in the classroom when discussing the classic books.
- BLS needs new administrators who are not alumni.
- Starting at the top, we need a clear vision of caring; and to take on the issue of racism; not just one thing or event; we need attitude change; some parents reported that administration has told parents there is no problem.
- We need to change the diversity of the school; need to reflect the diversity of the city.
- Enhance communication.
- Invite and utilize more parent participation.
- BLS needs to do more to acknowledge and support students who are not doing well.
- Develop a clear system for the students ~~for~~ when teachers are not being responsive to them (where to go, who else can they go to for support).

Faculty/Administration

- More intense outreach to increase the diversity; teachers getting involved with outreach.
- Need a body or committee to be on top of these concerns and keep things moving but focused.
- Change curriculum for more inclusiveness of authors, conversations; an advisory period where this is built in.
- We need more (cultural inclusion) conversations; identification and discussion of the issues.
- Require faculty/administration training on these issues and how to manage them.
- We need to look at data on achievement gap.
- Student leaders should be members of the student council – student council currently is seen as self-select and not necessarily representative of the students.
- BPS leaders should also engage themselves in these issues.
- We need to deal with student-to-student racism.
- We need to devote money and time to these recommendations; faculty only have 18 hours of professional development for the year; there was an expressed need for more.
- Improved communication.
- Focus on supporting our students with special educational needs.

Data from the School Wide Race Workshops (11th and 12th graders; 40 student groupings, approximately 12-15 students per group)

Below are selected responses from the student groups to the question: what is one commitment, or change, that BLS should make to contribute to a more equitable and respectful school community?¹²

- Have more frequent and more effective conversations – for students and faculty, regularly; offer more engaging discussion; Make discussions more regular so it's not this occasional thing and people don't dread it
- BE RACE EXPLICIT! (emphasis in original)
- Say the problem by its NAME!!!!!! (emphasis in original)
- Have more discussion on integration of social justice topics
- Make more programs (Social Justice)
- Teach more than just white culture
- Have more public speakers that raise awareness
- Educate more on cultures
- Educate students on issues (other than academics) (e.g., teach-in should be mandatory)
- Have more discussions on the impact of the isms on other groups too (including Asian, Latino, Muslim, etc.)
- Be more inclusive/transparent
- Respect student's sophistication of thought--don't avoid the tough conversations
- Take action to address instances of bullying within the school
- Take immediate action when incidents occur
- Include some anonymous means for reporting faculty and staff for discrimination
- Be an Upstander, not a bystander
- Retrain faculty to be more socially aware and sensitive; make sure they are not afraid to talk about issues related to racism
- Educate the staff on how to be positive forces-- like monthly and not 'Once a year'
- Strive towards a more diverse/inclusive curriculum; Include more diverse representations of groups with different struggles and privileges in curriculum
- Make Facing History a requirement
- Have a mandatory social justice and culture class for either sixies or 8th graders so that they are educated in the early years
- More Asian-American history

¹² Note: Much of this data corresponded with the data from the focus groups.

- Introduce racism into the APUSH curriculum
- Be more engaged in social issues in our class rooms/curriculum
- Facilitate communication between students and faculty
- Strengthen Student-Teacher relationships
- Present a more positive and supportive school environment
- Care about students' needs more
- More supportive and inclusive
- Hire more supportive staff, and train their staff in support
- Reevaluate teachers and policies
- Penalize teachers no matter their experience/seniority
- Should there be some outside group that assesses teachers' actions and classroom environment
- Allow for new teachers (of a more open minded generation) to lead and contribute to a positive community
- Have more students lead discussions that are mandatory so that everyone participates and is heard
- Acknowledge racism of all races (including curriculum)
- Not punish people for ignorance- actions done with ignorance, rather teach the person in question the intrapersonal consequences, and teach them to recognize the experiences of others
- Give more student voice; have older students introduce topics at student forums
- Build trust between students and administrators by having them work together and connect more
- More support for those who are struggling
- Equity should be valued over equality
- Provide more opportunities for those students with fewer resources to succeed
- No more Masters
- Fix admission policy
- Aspire to be a role model for other schools

BLS Student Handbook and Non-Discrimination Policy

“Boston Latin School Student Handbook 2015-2016” does not comply with certain requirements of federal and state civil rights laws. The BLS Student Handbook mistakenly conflates the definitions of bullying under Massachusetts state law with discriminatory harassment protected under federal and state civil rights laws. As a result, the Handbook section covering “Bullying and Harassment” (at p. 32-33) incorrectly requires repeated conduct

before constituting harassment, and erroneously defines a violation only where such conduct is directed against a student victim. It's not clear what impact this legally incorrect Handbook language has played, if any, in the apparent low level of reporting of alleged incidents of harassment at BLS (when comparing reported incidents to the reported pervasiveness of bias-related language used in the school, as described by a number of students and parents). An additional issue is that the Student Handbook's "Non-Discrimination Statement" (at p. 28) does not include gender identity as a protected category, even though it is required by M.G.L. Chapter 76, section 5.

Challenges to the Assessment Process

A number of events and engagements presented challenges in our attempts to provide notification of the assessment, deliver the cultural climate survey, and schedule and effectively facilitate the focus groups.

Intervening variables and challenges included:

- a. The end of the school year;
- b. PARCC;
- c. MCAS;
- d. Alumni visiting;
- e. The scheduling of the focus groups after the end of the school day – many students and teachers had left before the groups were scheduled to start;
- f. The fact that seniors' last week was approaching;
- g. The scheduling and planning for the School Wide Race Workshops;
- h. Examination and interventions by the DOJ, the BPS Office of Equity;
- i. Current active investigation of BLS by the Department of Justice/ U.S. Attorney's Office;
- j. Presence of Assistant U.S. Attorneys from the DOJ/U.S. Attorney's Office in most focus groups, even after the consultants communicated their concern that it risked chilling honest and open discussions (note: a leading teacher reported to the consultants that s/he was informed by some colleagues that DOJ's presence did cause some faculty participants to screen what they said and led others to decide not to participate; we did not receive any information about the impact of DOJ's presence, if any, on students or parents);
- k. Planning for trainings with YW Boston;
- l. The challenge of the email blasts not reaching all of the parents – not all of them knew the groups were taking place; some found out through word of mouth;
- m. AP Testing.

With all of these challenges, it was difficult to maintain consistent contact with Headmaster Dr. Lynne Mooney Teta for BLS leadership to communicate to the BLS community with sufficient enough turnaround time to employ a focus groups process based on a random sampling of the students, parents and faculty/administration. With the end of school year approaching and given the brief time frame for planning the audit, BLS' Headmaster concluded that BLS did not have the practical ability to schedule focus groups during the school day due to the challenges of student schedules and classroom coverage. As a result, the consultants were not able to facilitate focus group with randomly selected participants, contrary to the consultants' request and expectation that focus groups would provide a representative sample of student and faculty views and perspectives.

Consequently, in agreement with BPS, BLS populated the focus groups by a self-select sign-up process. Unfortunately, the notification for that process was sent out with only a few days' notice to get participants to sign up. Once it was clear that several of the groups would have little or no attendance, VISIONS engaged in the following:

- a. Rick Pinderhughes reached out to several of the student led groups/clubs – ASIA, BLS B.L.A.C.K., Filipino club, SAGE, GSA, Student Council;
- b. Rick Pinderhughes and Richard Cole witnessed and obtained data from students at the School Wide Race Workshops.

What has been done thus far?

VISIONS recognizes that the BLS administration has taken a number of significant action steps over the past several months, after recognizing that the initial response to the issues and concerns raised was inadequate. Some of these actions include the following: many faculty and administration meetings to discuss and develop responses to challenges, and requests for information/interventions; workshops and trainings, including training for the teachers involved in planning and facilitating discussions for the School Wide Race Workshops; holding student assemblies with a guest speaker, along with the School Wide Race Workshops, over three school days; convening regular meetings of a Student Advisory Committee that included many student and administration leaders; receiving assistance from the BPS Office of Equity in investigating complaints and reports of discrimination, including harassment; curriculum review; summer reading list review; and discussion of plans for next year regarding continued community learning and dialogues.

Recommendations

Our experience that if an organization or institution wants to learn a few concepts or become aware of some things that it had previously been unaware of, then a training or two may suffice. However, BLS has stated in several of the communications and updates that it is looking to improve the racial/cultural climate at the school. Such a goal requires a consistent effort, over a period of time, to impact the school at the individual level as well as the institutional (policies, practices) and cultural (environment, building of community) levels. This effort would include building in regular times for the students and faculty/administration to have conversations around related topics and experiences to increase individual practice with the issues as well as provide significant opportunity for students and adults to learn more from each other and themselves. This kind of process – building in regular programs, assemblies, workshops, conversations -- was also very clearly emphasized in almost all of the groups.

- I. Trainings of faculty and administration would set a foundation for some of the skill development for the adults to be able to more confidently hold and manage such conversations. Such skill development can provide additional opportunities for the faculty and administration to enhance working relationships with each other and the parents. Being able to use a multicultural lens as one engages with a student, parent, school employee, or as one facilitates a conversation in class, would not only enhance working relationships, it would provide additional support for the students to learn and practice their skills. All three groups – students, faculty and parents repeatedly recommended that training be provided (often stated as mandatory) for all faculty and administration. Many of the needs and next steps could be addressed with such an ongoing initiative: community building, improvement of teacher to student and student to student relationships, knowing how to and practice having challenging conversations while being able to specifically talk about race and other particularly challenging topics and experiences, having these conversations in the classroom, etc.

Note: challenges to this recommendation come in the form of the maximum professional development hours that are currently allowed pursuant to the collective bargaining agreement for faculty – 18 hours per year, with a maximum of two hours per month. A question that arises here is: is there a way for BPS, BLS and the union to work together to enhance the likelihood of this working?

1. One way to ensure that this ‘intervention’ remains an initiative and not a one-time event is the development of a multi-disciplinary committee, called a Diversity or Equity Committee, broadly representative and diverse, and chaired by the Headmaster.

Committee members would be charged with helping lead and maintain BLS' focus on these issues and in evaluating progress. Its mandate would include identifying and discussing equity-centered school climate concerns, making recommendations and assessing the implementation of effective strategies, practices, policies, programs and curricula changes to promote educational equity, inclusion, positive race relations, and cultural responsiveness and for providing attractive leadership opportunities for its diverse workforce. For a school this size, it is very difficult to have one person charged with such a task. Having institutional support from BPS and the school (i.e., understood, as part of each Committee member's job responsibilities and not extra, through voluntary participation, or if possible, by providing extra pay or offering other forms of recognition) would send a strong message to the school community.

2. Another way that 'building in' an initiative designed to enhance the cultural responsiveness of the school would be to continue the examination and changing, where relevant, curriculum to include time and content related to these issues. This clearly requires lots of care and thought on how to make these changes, given the existing curriculum. This process would include thoroughly reviewing the current curricula and recommending materials, topics, and approaches relevant to current events, student experiences and students' cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and their gender, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity.
 - A. In addition to the above, we recommend that BLS add a mandatory social justice course for all students, with evaluation of the practicality and benefit of designing this course for earlier vs. later grades; while considering including the Facing History and Ourselves curriculum into the course.
3. Regarding communication to the BLS community, it appears that memos and updates had been sent out during the course of the year, yet several groups talked about the lack of transparency and not knowing what the school was doing regarding these issues or with regard to responding to specific requests or groups at BLS. We did hear from parents that for each of the email blasts that go out, none reach everyone. Indeed, for the email carrying the link to the cultural climate survey and the invitation to the focus groups that went out, several parents reported they did not receive it the first time, or heard about the focus groups from others. A review of the system of communication to the BLS community may be needed to understand how effective it is and provided improvements.

4. Incorporating the students in the work will be useful for the entire community. The students have demonstrated they are able to handle having these conversations and several have provided some leadership in their own groups as well as worked with faculty to team up and be a part of some of the workshops and 'teach-ins.' Engaging the youth in a couple of ways could also further enhance community building: 1) some students may wish to be leaders regarding co-facilitating these conversations , such as the recent workshops that took place; 2) many of the students requested to be a part of the conversation to share their ideas on what would improve the climate at BLS. This kind of engagement and leadership can provide role modelling for other students.

Additional Recommendations

5. Designate and train appropriate administrators, guidance counselors and/or faculty members as building-based Equity Coordinators who, under the supervision and guidance of the Headmaster and the District's Office of Equity, would assist the Headmaster in helping oversee and implement the efforts at improving BLS' climate and culture.
6. Build on the success of the Student Advisory Committee, by maintaining a diverse and representative Student Advisory Committee focused on improving school climate and culture, promoting inclusion and building positive race relations, reducing discriminatory harassment, promoting student 'upstanders,' increasing student reporting, and improving communication with adults. Effectively communicate at regular intervals the work of the Student Advisory Committee to the school community.
7. Increase student and staff reporting of racial and ethnic-based incidents of discrimination, including harassment, through staff and student education and training and improvement in the overall school climate to increase the trust level of students to report to adults.
8. Effectively communicate to BLS students and other members of the school community that students may report concerns, or complaints or reports about discrimination, including harassment or retaliation, to any responsible adult, including faculty members, who are then responsible for promptly reporting such information to administration.
9. Provide training to school leaders, faculty and staff on their responsibilities under BPS policies on discrimination, including harassment and retaliation, including how to

identify signs or indicators of harassment, and skills for intervening and addressing situations, and to ensure a common approach and vocabulary to use with students.

10. Reinforce at meetings with faculty and staff, and through other communications and professional development opportunities, that all staff members are strictly accountable for promptly reporting in writing (via email) when they witness, receive a complaint or report of, or have knowledge or belief that a student, employee or volunteer has been the subject of discrimination, including harassment or retaliation, under BPS policy. BLS administrators, in consult with the BPS Office of Equity, should work with any staff member to address and remedy non-compliance with their policy responsibilities.
11. Provide education and training to administrators and faculty and staff on how to make BLS a more caring and supportive academic and personal environment for students. BLS administrators should work with any staff member to address concerns about their treatment of students.
12. If confirmed, identify the reasons for the reported disproportionately lower rate of African-American and Latinx student participation in the school's AP classes; then establishing a plan to effectively increase the participation and success of African-American and Latinx students in AP classes and programs.
13. Provide a trained adult advisor and/or student mentor for African-American and Latinx students who indicate they are experiencing racial isolation in BLS or in their classes (for e.g., in AP classes), who make a request for such support, or when the school identifies a student in need of such assistance.
14. Design and provide extensive student programming for the incoming seventh graders, including at orientation, on issues of diversity, inclusion, equity, and race relations, where a number of incoming seventh grade students attended more racially heterogeneous elementary schools.
15. Revise BLS' Student Handbook as it relates to how discrimination, including harassment, is defined.
16. Adopt strategies for involving parents and improving administrator-parent relationships, with particular emphasis on relations with parents of color and parents from lower socio-economic status.

17. Consider, similar to recent actions by Harvard University, to no longer use the term 'Master' in titles.
18. Take effective steps to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of students in the school. An examination and possible shift in the process of sharing information with the other BPS schools about BLS and how to apply/be admitted into the school. This includes examination of the support that BLS itself provides for prospective students.
19. In appropriate time intervals, potentially beginning in March/April 2017, perform follow-up racial climate audits, and survey students and staff, to assess progress in addressing the core issues addressed by this needs assessment. The results should help inform further planning and decision-making.
20. Regularly and effectively communicate to the school community the progress and plans regarding BLS' ongoing efforts related to the issues raised by the school community that is summarized in this Report.



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APPENDIX A: Focus Groups Questions

Opening Comments by Facilitator:

Hi – my name is _____ and I am a consultant with VISIONS, an organization that provides training and consultation on diversity and inclusion to many different organizations and institutions.

Welcome to this, the _____ focus group. This is part of an assessment that VISIONS is conducting to understand the racial/cultural climate at Boston Latin High School. We are running many focus groups this week to get as much information as possible on Students, Faculty, staff, administration and parents' perceptions regarding diversity and inclusion at BLS, and your reflections about the school's strengths, challenges, and possible next steps.

I will be taking notes during this time and want to be clear that the information we gather will be analyzed and organized into themes that point to how people see and feel about the climate here at BLS.

(If relevant, with me is (additional consultant), who will be taking notes on responses to our questions.)

There are some guidelines that we want to be sure are part of this process as we go forward. We have these to encourage an increased sense of comfort in hopes of you speaking as freely as you want about your experience. Briefly, these guidelines are:

- Try on – be open to hearing different perspectives, including those that maybe very different from yours, even about the same issue or event.
- It's okay to Disagree/not okay to blame or shame someone for their experience or point of view.
- Confidentiality

Themes will be reported in manner not to identify individuals;

Please identify any specific concerns about any specific disclosures – especially as related to your group;

Please do not disclose the specifics of others' input or bring it up in other settings;

(where relevant -- mention not to use sharing/differences against each other across and within level)

Brief participant introductions – first name; role or grade; how long at the school? (Facilitators note total number of participants in each group)

Standard Questions:

Question 1:

What does “Diversity”, “Inclusion”, “Equity” or “Fairness” mean to you? (ask each word separately; differences between them if any)

Question 2:

a. What is going well at Boston Latin School (in general)?

What is going well at BLS in terms of diversity, inclusion and equity or fairness?

- Prompts: for example, what is going well in terms of attitudes and behaviors, interpersonal relationships you experience? In terms of rules, policies, practices/procedures? In terms of overall climate of inclusion, exclusion?

b. What are some areas for growth?

Question 3:

In what ways do you feel valued and included as ----- (fill in group e.g., women; men; person of color; g/l/b/t etc.)?

Question 4:

In what ways do you feel devalued and/or excluded as a ----- (fill in group)?

Question 5:

What are some changes and/or next steps you recommend?

- Prompts: for example, what are changes and/or next steps you recommend terms of attitudes and behaviors, interpersonal relationships you experience? In terms of rules, policies, practices/procedures? In terms of overall climate of inclusion, exclusion?

Additional prompts:

Students Probe questions -

- How does the school or school personnel respond when there is an incident/challenge that negatively impacts you or your group?

- How does the school invite and support conversations around racism impacting the larger community?

- Based on your group membership, do you feel like you can be yourself at this school? Do you have to hide a portion of yourself to get through the day?

Staff/Faculty/Administration Probe questions -

-When a situation where students are treated unfairly across race, gender, sexual orientation comes up: How confident do you feel to respond? Do you feel supported by the school to act/intervene? What do you do/have you done?

Parents Probe questions

-How does the school value you as a parent?

-How does the school value you as white parent/parent of color?

-How responsive is the school to requests for information? Dealing with situations you've brought to their attention?

-How does the school value/devalue your child based on their race? Based on their gender or gender expression/identity?

Student Leaders Probe questions

-How impactful is your voice as a student leader? How does the school respond to your expressed concerns/advocacy?

-Does the school support you in your leadership?

APPENDIX B: School Wide Race Workshops Agenda

AGENDA: SCHOOLWIDE RACE WORKSHOPS

May 24 Classes VI & V (R1R4)

May 25 Classes III & IV (R1R4)

May 26 Classes I & II (R1R4)

Faculty & students facilitate R2 & R3 in assigned classrooms

Title: BLS Talks About Race Objectives:

- Keynote Speaker: “One Better World”
 - Students will explore concepts of identity, privilege and social justice, and their interrelatedness.
 - Students will learn how their identities influence all that they do, and how they can use this knowledge to become agents of change in their school community.
 - Students will learn six key concepts for creating and supporting an inclusive and equitable community.
- Facilitated Workshops
 - Students will experience and understand the concepts of privilege and unearned privilege and how they relate to racism
 - Students will identify ways in which various individuals/groups are affected by power, privilege and disadvantage.
 - Students will identify ways in which they as individuals and BLS as a school can take action to eradicate racism and bias in our school and to develop and maintain a respectful and equitable environment for all members of the school community

Schedule:

- 7:55 – 8:55am (Auditorium)
 - Speaker: Vernon Wall (vernonwall.org)
- 8:59 – 9:29am (Classrooms)
 - Debrief of speaker
- 9:30 – 10:30am (Classrooms)

- o Power/Privilege Simulation ▪ Reflection and discussion
- 10:30 – 11:22am (Dining Hall)
 - o Reflection and Commitment
- 11:22 – Lunches and classes resume

Materials: Facilitator notes (this sheet), 6 envelopes of letters, chart paper, markers, handout: “The Word Game”

Detailed Outline:

- Speaker: Vernon Wall, 7:55 – 8:55am (Auditorium)
- Workshop 1: Debrief of Speaker, 8:59 – 9:29am (Classrooms)
 - o Circle Debrief
 - You may opt to set norms your choice. Sample norms are included.
 - Facilitator explains each person has the opportunity to share one thought or insight in each round. The facilitator poses a question and answers first, then passes the conversation to his/her left or right. Each member of the circle answer the questions unless he/she chooses to “pass”.
 - Questions:
 - What is your name and what is one word that describes your reaction to the presentation?
 - What is one thing Vernon Wall said that you agree/disagree with?
 - What is one thing that you aspire to do because of it?
- Workshop 2: Exploring Privilege, 9:30 – 10:30am (Classrooms)
 - o The Word Game
 - Activity: Assign students into 6 small groups (count off by 6’s, put all same numbered students together) . Give each group an envelope, a piece of chart paper, and a marker. Ask students to write their letters at the top of the chart paper. Give the groups 15 minutes to make as many words as possible with the letters inside their envelopes. Participants should list their words on the chart paper. (Note: make a big ordeal over the group that made the most words the “winners!”)

- Small group discussion: After 15 minutes, give each group the handout “The Word Game”. Allow each group 15 minutes to discuss and write their answers.
- Class discussion: Bring the class back together for a larger discussion.
 - Review the answers to the questions on “The Word Game” handout.
 - o How many words did your group come up with?
 - o During the game did you observe what any of the other groups were doing?
 - o What did you observe about other groups? How did that make you feel?
 - o Do you think “The Word Game” is fair? Why or why not?
 - What is the definition of “privilege”? “Unearned privilege”?
 - o Privilege: a special right, advantage, or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group of people.
 - How does this relate to the experiences of students at BLS?
 - o Who has privilege? Who doesn’t? (i.e. Who gets “the good letters?”)
 - o What are those privileges (i.e. What do “the good letters” represent at BLS?)
 - o How does this affect individuals at BLS? BLS as a community?
 - o What can we as individuals do to eradicate racism and bias and contribute to a more equitable and respectful school community?
 - o What can we do as a school to eradicate racism and bias? To ensure equity for all?
- Reflection & Commitment, 10:30 – 11:22am (Dining Hall)
 - o Directions: Students will arrive from classes and sit at one of the tables; there are two pieces of chart paper and markers at each table. First, students will be welcomed to our concluding session, and asked to take a seat. Admin, faculty

and students will oversee a group of tables, to support them in meeting the goals of the session.

Thank you for your participation this morning.

Now comes the important work: reflection and commitment. Thinking about what we have learned today and how it will help us to develop and maintain a respectful and equitable environment for all members of the school community. We are taking an important step today, but this work will continue.

First, it has been a busy morning. Let's first take a few minutes in silent reflection and thinking about what we have heard, discussed and debated today. You can feel free to take out a piece of scrap paper to jot down some notes, sketch some images, or you may simply sit quietly and reflect. Be prepared to share with your table group one key idea you are taking away from today.

“Commitment is what transforms a promise into reality.” Abraham Lincoln

- Silent reflection, journaling, sketching Students will focus on one key point that they are taking away from today. (5 minutes silent reflection, 10 minutes sharing)

Given all that you have heard and learned today, what is one commitment, that you as an individual, are prepared to make to contribute to a more equitable and respectful school community? (Share with group and write on chart paper)

Given all that you have heard and learned today, what is one commitment, or change, that BLS should make to contribute to a more equitable and respectful school community? (share with group and write on chart paper; potentially have one group member add to online blog?)

If time, call for sharing out of one commitment from volunteer tables?

Let students know that this is just the beginning of conversations that will continue next year. We hope that they will honor their commitments over the summer as well. We will be collating the suggestions and will be returning to them in September.

The Word Game (used for Discussion during the workshop)

- How many words did your group come up with?
- During the game did you observe what any of the other groups were doing?
- What did you observe about other groups? How did that make you feel?
- Do you think “The Word Game” is fair? Why or why not? Further Discussion Questions:

- Who has privilege? Who doesn't? (i.e. Who gets "the good letters?")
- What are those privileges (i.e. What do "the good letters" represent at BLS?)
- How do these inequities impact individuals at BLS? Impact BLS as a community?
- What can we do as a school to ensure equity for all?
- What can we do as individuals to contribute to a more equitable and respectful school community?

APPENDIX C: Social Justice Advisory Committee meeting notes

I. Social Justice Advisory Committee February 24, 2016

- Create lasting collaborative efforts between various social justice clubs to address intersectional issues
- Recognize/address systemic issues at BLS within the exam school system
- Foster/create a better, more respectful dynamic not only between students, but also from administration to students
- Create a connection between the students and faculty to create a dialogue and place where students can voice what's going on
- Make changes in what goes on by holding people responsible for their actions
- Improve communication between students and administration
- Plan forums/events (teach-in, etc.)
- Establish effective ways to handle surveys
- Create a stronger community throughout the school
- Allow students to have a place to come to if they want to report an incident
- Create a way to communicate between everyone
- Create open dialogues and room for discussion among peers
- Discuss ways to address social/racial problems at BLS
- Discuss solutions/ways to encourage respectful behavior
- Have a consequence system for words, actions that hurt other students – bullying – enforce this
- Come up with ideas to connect different school groups – events/organizations, etc.
- Have assemblies/talks to encourage open communication within students – better, long-lasting relationships
- Create a safe environment for everyone in the school
- Body shaming/dress code, esp. relating to girls
- Support systems that are easily accessible
- Create ways to make it easier/more comfortable for students to talk to students, and students to talk to adults at BLS about issues
- Create a more inclusive environment through workshops
- Create a better /stronger school community in all aspects – more support
- Deal with issues of injustice and discrimination
- Create a more welcoming atmosphere for students to be themselves
- Eliminate/lessen stereotypes
- I think it is important to allow student leaders to lead timely assemblies to update/address members of our community
- Allow student leaders to act as proxies on behalf of both their peers and the faculty
- Acknowledgement of problems is a start. Open dialogue is the next step and seeing unity in action
- We need to create a way for more student feedback throughout the entire student body
- Student surveys that are actually listened to
- Ways to be part of any type of incidents, even if they have to be anonymous
- More culture appreciation, multi-cultures day
- Create a standard procedure, ban students who say offensive things
- Create an environment , make a space for students to go to in order to report incidents

- Have a solid follow-up with students and parents about incidents
- Climate surveys for students
- Ensure everyone is equipped to have conversations – admit if you don't think you are – it's okay to bring in outside organizations
- Scholarships for social justice work
- Student voices at all discussions involving recommendations at school
- Educate the ignorant students and faculty professionally
- Involve outside organizations that are professionals
- Create a comforting place for future clubs to all come together
- Advertising outside organizations and opportunities
- The voices of the student body
- Figure out ways to tackle issues relating to social justice
- Develop the BLS community
- Address the problem – BLS Student town hall
- Elevate the leadership and voices of students – student led workshops
- Provide an environment
- Race – free vs. hateful speech, changes to conduct code – include social media
- Unity – how our clubs can work together as well as student/faculty unity
- BLS culture, what it is and how to change it
- Structurally: work with teachers/classes/admissions process
- Interpersonal: student-student dialogue, student-teacher, feel comfortable having these conversations. Welcome different opinions
- Community
- Cover some of these topics in history classes (do not strictly adhere to AP curricula for AP courses) or English classes
- Recognize all of the issues, communication between faculty and students
- Create an environment with less hate and more understanding
- Achieve a structure that will “provide opportunity for open dialogue” student council has done this in the past and I hope it will be continued
- Make sure students who feel this way make their voices heard by coming to student council because they did not in November
- Communicate Issues – improvements needed within the school community
- Create a [platform where progress can be tracked
- Encourage other BLS kids to speak up
- Show that their needs will be heard
- Be able to better understand peoples thoughts and opinions if different from your own
- Collaborate to reach a solution that can be agreed upon by all parties
- Make steps to move forward
- Create opportunities (maybe by grade) for everyone to be able to speak their minds on issues concerning things going on at the school
- Address social media – what is private and what is not
- Clear consequences and effective consequences
- Open forums with both sides
- Create a space for teaching like in sixie classrooms
- Find ways to create a stronger community

- More opportunities for students from all backgrounds/cultures to talk to each other
- To spread awareness of “isms” and what we can do to stop them
- To provide a safe sense of community
- Re-think/shape how our history courses are being taught
- Encourage a stronger sense of community at BLS
- Instruct teachers on how to be better sources of support for students
- To facilitate open dialogue
- Educate others on the issue/facilitate understanding
- Get a sense of the student climate/sharing concerns
- If students feel uncomfortable and don't want to talk to a teacher, they can come to us to relay the message
- Ask for student input on how to handle situations
- More transparency
- Make sure voices are heard
- Discussions rather than assemblies
- Externalize awareness and education
- Community building
- Transforming our school climate
- A place for us to discuss openly what we see and feel
- Create: event/piece of writing....something to signify and commemorate the group
- Create concrete ideas for how to make BLS safer/more community solutions
- Create ways where all groups can work together on certain tasks/goals
- Everyone's ideas should be heard and respected
- Create ways to expose our work to greater student body
- Cross-disciplinary work – as leaders of these clubs we should be involved in each other's work at least a little bit
- Have these groups get direct access to administration
- Get people to care/want to get involved
- Get people to willingly be open to re-evaluating their previously held beliefs and not be defensive or viciously attack beliefs different from their own
- Create spaces that allow us to talk about these things but not just talk – ACTION
- Address diversity issues and representation of student body at BLS
- Create a healthy, open space at BLS to discuss these issues (not just racism, but also other problems students face – e.g.: mental health
- More inclusive discussion (e.g.: if the discussion is around racism, make sure it is not B & W)
- Larger influence on a larger scale/area – more than create awareness – influence
- Effectively address the controversy and everyone's concerns
- Motivate/inspire others to speak up and take a stand for this or any other causes they are passionate about
- Lessen social issues among the students
- Get rid of barriers between students – cliques that separate us
- Spread knowledge, erase ignorance
- Make the school community more open to addressing social issues
- Find a way to distinguish between ignorant comments and racist comments

- Find a way to properly handle racist comments from students/teachers
- Increase communication between student body and faculty
- Formulate a safe haven for students to discuss with faculty, feelings, fears, etc.

II. Student Social Justice Advisory Committee March 16, 2016

“A day of dialogue, reflection and commitment.”

- Making a change - more than action
- A first step toward...culture of respect....adult -student and student-student
- A culture of “we”
- Workshops - racism, homophobia, classism/privilege
- Smaller group conversations, it’s personal
- A day to unite academics with the real world - influence our own lives
- Structured small groups 7-10 for real dialogue
- Differentiated way to demonstrate the commitment - kids like art, spoken word, reading, writing
- The actual understanding - would any who have been victimized be willing to step up?
- Someone you know being the victim
- Empathy
- Video - color of fear
- Consistency - not just one time thing, start and then build in the fall
- Race, gender, sexuality - most prevalent
- Learning outside the classroom - real life subjects
- Focus on empathy, how other people are feeling - film, storytelling, first hand experiences
- What teachers are going to be involved?
- Use partners, organizations Seevak works with
- Safe space for people to talk about their own experiences
- Use older students as role models
- How students are disciplined - scare kids off we lose the learning opportunity - some don’t have malicious intent
- Relevant topics, put themselves in the situation
- Write out honor code for this type of stuff - clear guideline - school wide commitment
- Idea - after school meeting, African Meeting House -
- Pledge against racism - students making commitment
- Leadershape - focus on character
- Beginning of year to start off on positive note
- GLSEN making schools safer - may help with workshops
- Stand against racism - Impact - facilitated discussion, first separated by race but then come together, ok to ask questions

- Caucus within your community, then get together and dialogue as full community
- RESPECT summit in Spring for ideas
- Day of Healing
- Topics - dialogue, come together, leave open space for discussion and break down
- “Getting hip” understanding the language around race
- Activity - words and definitions to illustrate the points
- Perception - Oscars so white, media
- Teachers and admin team as well, faculty on board and participating
- Professional development for faculty