



**South Burlington School District, Vermont**

**Racial Equity, DEI Assessment and Recommendations Presented to the South Burlington School Board**

By Executive Director of Equity and Antiracism:

South Burlington School District

Executive Director of Equity and Anti-Racism

De-Dee Loftin-Davis

9/7/2022

**I Assessment**

**II. Method**

**III. Presenting Key Equity and Racial Issues within South Burlington School District**

**V. Findings**

**VII. Road To Recovery Action Plan**

**VIII. Recommendations**

**X. Note**

## Assessment

I am new to Vermont. Within the two months I have been working in this newly created position here at South Burlington School District I present to the board and to the public my Equity assessment.

## Method

One-on-one conversations with South Burlington parents, students, school-based leadership, support staff and executive district leadership.

Within the South Burlington school district, a systemic and deeply embedded White supremacy culture exists.

## Presenting Key Equity Issues within South Burlington School District:

- Longstanding and deeply embedded White supremacy culture
- Staff and student mistrust of school-based leadership around Equity and Anti-Racism work
- Incohesion and excessive school-based autonomy around Equity and Anti-Racism work
- Performative and predictable Equity and Anti-Racism actions instead of proactive and creative Equity and Anti-Racism actions

## Definition

**White Supremacy Culture** is a form of racism centered upon the belief that white people are superior to people of other racial backgrounds and that whites should politically, economically, and socially dominate non-whites. While often associated with violence perpetrated by the kkk and other white supremacist groups, it also describes a political ideology and systemic oppression that perpetuates and maintains the social, political, historical and/or industrial white domination.

[National Education Association](#)

## Findings

Racial gaps between intellectual understanding of the issues and actions that align with those intellectual understandings are presently within the culture of South Burlington school district, at the support, teaching and school-based leadership levels.

At the school-based level, there are clear racial and multi-diverse inequities in experiences between historically marginalized groups: Black and Brown staff/ students, LGBTQ staff/ students, Women staff/students and staff/ students with Disabilities, as well as historical power base dynamics between district and school-base leadership, including a large amount of autonomy within South Burlington schools, specifically at the principal level.

Now, I conceded that on varied projects there ought to be school-based leadership autonomy, however not when implementing a cohesive Equity action plan.

Moreover, in Equity leadership, research, data and experience has shown there needs to be a standard, districtwide and cohesive action plan in place. Patchwork siloed and reactionary initiatives here and there are oftentimes hit and miss and ultimately not sustainable or successful. Subsequently some of these inequities have previously been documented through existing reports.

Notably, I acknowledge varied training via Courageous Conversations, Multi-tiered Equity initiatives regarding Neurodiversity, infinity groups, consultants and school-based reading resources have been implemented.

However, via one-on-one conversations, revealed, these Equity initiatives, while seemingly intentional and sincere, oftentimes have been viewed as problems to solve, boxes to check and reactionary knee jerk responses, versus having a proactive, cohesive and well communicated district wide action plan in place.

In addition, the racial inequities between those in positions of power within schools-based leadership and those with less power, i.e. support positions are clear concerns that were communicated, during one-on-one conversations with Black and Brown staff, as well as, with female, LGBTQIA, and staff with disabilities.

Among these extremely intimate and confidential one-on-one conversations with historically excluded and marginalized identities, participants shared examples of observing or experiencing bias and/or discrimination while working as staff and parents with students who currently attend South Burlington schools.

Participants described a general lack of diversity awareness and Racial ignorance across all South Burlington schools. These inequities present as a barrier to progress with organizational-wide DEI and Antiracism efforts.

Furthermore among one-on-one conversations associated with historically excluded or marginalized identities, participants shared examples of observing or experiencing bias or discrimination while working and attending school as students, i.e. behavior practices, school suspensions and for staff, years of being overlooked for staff awards and school district recognition.

Lastly Participants shared a desire for increased training, accountability and uniformity across all of South Burlington district and schools.

Participants therefore shared a desire for increased training and accountability to antiracism and DEI awareness, knowledge, skills and implementation.

### **Religious Minorities**

Participants noted observing/experiencing religious microaggressions related to their religious identities or religious identities of others in their workspaces and classrooms.

Overall, participants desired opportunities for South Burlington schools to improve their Antiracism and DEI awareness, knowledge, skills and attitudes around diverse religious groups, religious holidays, customs and celebrations. I.e. Muslim, Jewish, Islam, Buddhism, Christianity etc.

### **Road To Recovery Action Plan For South Burlington School District**

This Road to Recovery action plan is not an overnight quick fix. This action plan is a long- term action plan eta (3-5 years)

### **Recommendations**

1. Establish a robust Equity and Antiracism budget to hire an Administrative assistant, Grant writers, Racial equity and Diversity data analysts, Diversity Software Designer, Consultants, Researchers, Communications Specialist

specifically for Anti Racism and Diversity, and one Equity Coach for each school

2. Establish a staff Antiracism & Diversity Task Force for accountability
3. Commit to frequent internal and public communications related to employee training and resources to establish a pathway to staff and student trust for district and school-based leadership
4. One stop shop access to Antiracism and Diversity resources on the South Burlington website
5. District and school-based acknowledgement of Religious holidays and celebrations
6. Leadership and staff professional development specifically around Anti-Racism and Equity
7. Semi-annual progress reports for accountability

### **Note**

The Office of Equity and Anti-Racism is in fact an Office. So, despite best efforts and well intentions, one person can not do all of the vast, diverse and detailed work needed to create structures of support, while simultaneously uprooting decades of deeply embedded structures of Systemic Racism, White supremacy, Racial harm, Racial Inequities around Behavior Referrals, White supremacy Culture, Inter-Minority Racism, Discrimination, Homophobia, Religious bias and Gender bias within the South Burlington School District.