Schooling With Racial Equity at the Center: A Case Study
Exploration of One Elementary School-Based Leadership Team

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SCHOOLING WITH RACIAL EQUITY AT THE CENTER: A CASE STUDY
EXPLORATION OF ONE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL-BASED LEADERSHIP TEAM

A Dissertation Presented
by
MICHAEL L. BAULIER

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies,
University of Massachusetts Boston,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2022

Urban Education, Leadership and Policy Studies Program
SCHOOLING WITH RACIAL EQUITY AT THE CENTER: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

SCHOOLING WITH RACIAL EQUITY AT THE CENTER: A CASE STUDY
EXPLORATION OF ONE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL-BASED LEADERSHIP TEAM

December 2022

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Directed by Professor Abiola Farinde-Wu

Pre-K–12 schooling in the United States has historically and systemically promoted ideas of Black inferiority while safeguarding the characteristics of white supremacy culture embedded in all aspects of the education system. The notion of white dominance is evident throughout studies, policies, and reports from district, state, and federal officials who have been tasked with closing the achievement gap but instead have assigned blame to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) students and families. An analysis of the history of U.S. public education reveals not a single achievement gap but multiple opportunity gaps that perpetuate the subjugation of Black students through educational injustice.

This study employed critical race theory to examine how a pre-K–5 elementary school community located in the northeastern United States prioritized antiracism and
applied a multilayered approach to racial equity. Case study methodology was utilized to unpack the nonlinear and continual racial equity efforts of a school-based leadership team while capturing the school’s journey toward a culture of achievement for Black students. The study’s findings revealed that a multilayered approach to racial equity is collaborative, complex, and context-specific. The study also found that though intentional antiracism efforts grounded in an understanding that racism is pervasive in U.S. education contributed to growth, a school culture of achievement for Black students was not yet realized in this case.

Recommendations from this study may inform collaborative practices and processes that school-based leadership teams can leverage to prioritize racial equity and confront white supremacy within pre-K–12 education.

*Keywords:* antiracism, white supremacy, race, racism, education, critical race theory, CRT, racial equity, school-based leadership, multilayered, collaboration
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not be possible without the many individuals who sustained me with guidance, support, and wisdom throughout my writing. While some contributed directly to this study during the research process, others provided essential knowledge and inspiration in other ways. I am extremely thankful for the opportunity to write this dissertation, and I have immense gratitude for the people who helped and trusted me to engage in this important work.

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Erin Borthwick, thank you for your continued mentorship, friendship, and example of what it means to be a white school leader who prioritizes racial equity and leads with intentionality. I also want to thank Karla Jenkins for your antiracist leadership at the school, district, and community levels—your impact is profound, friend. Thank you Garcie Champagne and Laura Watson, who helped launch the school’s multiyear commitment to racial equity and ensured the community’s antiracist work always moved forward as the Race
and Ethnicity Committee co-chairpersons. You both have been extraordinary thought partners, and I am forever grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with you. I want to thank the families, educators, and community members who participated in this study. You contributed your time and perspectives to tell a remarkable story about a special community that would not be possible without your voices and collective efforts in service of racial equity. Indeed, this dissertation represents the collaborative work of all Brown Elementary School members who prioritize equity and inclusion to ensure the school continues to work toward becoming an antiracist community where all children and families feel a sense of belongingness.

Finally, and most importantly, I am so grateful to my family who have stood by my side to celebrate successes, see me through challenges, and provide support in every way possible. To my grandmother, Anna Hardy, thank you for instilling in me the importance of education from a young age and wholeheartedly believing in my ability to lead positive change. Your example showed me the extraordinary impact that one person can have on the lives of so many. To my parents, Kathy and Scott Jenney, I cannot thank you enough for being my most enthusiastic cheerleaders and doing things, big and small, to help me achieve my goals. For as long as I can remember, you have nurtured my passions, taught me balance, modeled humility, and embraced my life decisions. Thank you to Aunt Dianne and Uncle John for always communicating, through words and actions, your confidence in my capacity to keep moving forward. I have great appreciation for my mother-in-law, Kathy Hale, and father-in-law, Jon Hale, who supported my doctoral work by providing childcare, proofreading drafts, and engaging in critical conversations about race, politics, and education. To my children, Bailey Elizabeth and Milo Clinton, thank you for loving me.
unconditionally and teaching me how to be a better father, learner, and human being. Kids, your flexibility, patience, and compassion while I completed this doctoral degree will never be forgotten. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my incredible wife, Katie Baulier. You have given me time, inspiration, perspective, and most importantly, love. I look forward to repaying this debt to you as you become Dr. Katie Baulier. I am eternally grateful to have you as my partner and share a love that is grounded in joy and a commitment to growing together and doing better.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................. vi

LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................... xiii

AUTHOR NOTES ........................................................................... xiv

TERMINOLOGY ............................................................................. xvi

CHAPTER

1. SCHOOLING WITH RACIAL EQUITY AT THE CENTER .......... 1
   Positionality Statement ............................................................... 1
   Impact of Whiteness .................................................................. 3
   Introduction .............................................................................. 5
   Statement of the Problem .......................................................... 11
   Significance of the Study ............................................................. 13
   Purpose and Rationale ................................................................. 16
   Research Questions .................................................................. 18
   Background and Context ............................................................. 19

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ............................................... 24
   Opportunity Gap ....................................................................... 26
   Historical Context of Achievement Gap Discourse .................... 26
   Achievement Gap Discourse ....................................................... 28
   Opportunity Gap Explanatory Framework .................................... 31
   Whiteness and U.S. Public Schools .............................................. 33
   Culturally Responsive Teaching ............................................... 38
   Critical Consciousness ............................................................... 40
   Race Talk .................................................................................. 43
   Racial Equity, Social Justice, and Culturally Responsive
   Leadership ................................................................................ 46
   Theoretical Framework ............................................................... 52
   Critical Race Theory ................................................................. 52
   Attack on Critical Race Theory ................................................... 57
   Case Study CRT Tenets ............................................................... 58
   Conclusion ................................................................................ 59

3. METHODOLOGY ....................................................................... 62
   Single-Case Study Rationale ....................................................... 63
   Research Questions ................................................................... 67
   Research Design ....................................................................... 67
   Research Site: Brown Elementary School .................................... 70
   Ethical Concerns ....................................................................... 74
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alison</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arewa Obas</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Sky</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol Atkins</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cece</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celia</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebony</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirabel</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molly</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priscilla</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shantel</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacey</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terry Jackson</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection Methods</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation: Data Collection</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation: Data Analysis and Interpretation</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document Review: Data Collection</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document Review: Data Analysis and Interpretation</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview: Data Collection</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview: Data Analysis and Interpretation</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity and Reliability</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID-19 Data Collection Contingency Plan</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. RESULTS</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism is Commonplace</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicitly Naming Racism</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Equity Collaborative Practices and Processes</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naming Race and Addressing Racism</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prioritizing Racial Equity</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedding Racial Equity</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embracing Boldness</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committing to Growth</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race Talk: Dialogues</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race Talk: Collaborative Learning</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race Talk: Students</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiracist and Culturally Responsive Teaching:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curricular ...........................................................................................................</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiracist and Culturally Responsive Teaching: Critical Consumption of Curriculum ................</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiracist and Culturally Responsive Teaching: Representation and Counternarratives .............</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiracist and Culturally Responsive Teaching: Social Justice ........................................</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affirming Identities and Belongingness ................................................................................</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Mindset ............................................................................................................</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Engagement: Family and Staff Collaboration ................................................................</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Engagement: Racial Equity Lens ..............................................................................</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Engagement: Support Systems and Structures ...........................................................</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Learning ............................................................................................................</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentional Hiring .......................................................................................................</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion and Intersectionality .......................................................................................</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion ..................................................................................................................</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. DISCUSSION ............................................................................................................</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examination ...............................................................................................................</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race and Racism ..........................................................................................................</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multilayered Approach to Racial Equity ............................................................................</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward a Culture of Achievement .....................................................................................</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity Gap ..........................................................................................................</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIPOC Family Engagement ...............................................................................................</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Partnerships .................................................................................................</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Reflection .......................................................................................................</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations .........................................................................................................</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for School Officials Engaging in Antiracist Work ..................................</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Collaborative Practices and Processes ............................................</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion ..................................................................................................................</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Study ...............................................................................................</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Research ............................................................................................................</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing Summary ..........................................................................................................</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| APPENDIX                                                                                   |      |
| A. SCHOOL-BASED LEADERSHIP COLLABORATORS .................................................................... | 203  |
| B. TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF A CULTURE OF ACHIEVEMENT ............................................... | 205  |
## APPENDIX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C. CHARACTERISTICS OF WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. 2021–2022 BROWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS AND PRIORITIES</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. BROWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EVOLUTION OF PRIORITIES FROM 2020–2021 TO 2021–2022</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. BROWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STATE STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENT DATA</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. CONTINUUM ON BECOMING AN ANTIRACIST MULTICULTURAL INSTITUTION</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. BROWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING TOOL</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. RECRUITMENT EMAIL</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. INFORMED CONSENT FORM</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. 10 BOYS AND 10 GIRLS INITIATIVES</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. 2019–2021 BROWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STATE STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENT DATA</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. GRADE 4 RENEWABLE ENERGY UNIT OVERVIEW</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O. GRADE 3 HUMANITIES UNIT: COVID-19’S IMPACT ON EDUCATION</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. KINDERGARTEN MUSEUM CONSTRUCTION PROCEDURE UNIT</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. 2019–2022 BROWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STATE STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENT DATA</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCE LIST</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table

1. Interview Participants: Race, Role, and Years of Service .................. 78
2. Interview Sections, Questions, and Probes .................................. 95
3. Data Analysis Memo Template .................................................... 100
4. Interview Analysis Themes and Codes ......................................... 101
5. Findings: Themes and Subthemes ................................................. 108
Pseudonyms are used for all individuals and place names to ensure confidentiality. The pseudonym “Brown Elementary School” is significant for the research site because it honors the school’s beloved teacher, leader, and staff matriarch, Mrs. Beatrice Brown. Beatrice Brown was a Black educator who taught first grade at the school for 33 years before retiring in 2018. She took to heart her self-proclaimed responsibility of getting every student to read by the end of first grade and often shared her love for dancing with her classes. Known to educators for her “winning attitude,” Mrs. Brown embodies the definition of a warm demander who holds high standards, offers emotional support, and links students’ histories and worlds to the content and skills presented in the classroom (Delpit, 1995; Hammond, 2015; Vasquez, 1988). Since her retirement, Mrs. Brown has remained an integral member of the school community as a substitute teacher, educator-mentor, tutor, and leader of the 10 Girls Initiative.

Current guidance from the American Psychological Association (APA; 2020) states that “racial and ethnic groups are designated by proper nouns and are capitalized. Therefore, use ‘Black’ and ‘White’ instead of ‘black’ and ‘white’” (p. 142). While adhering to APA format in all other areas, my choice to not capitalize “white” aligns intentionally with the antiracist commitment of this research study. Like several publications, including The New York Times, that have adopted this style, this study views the capitalization of “white” as a tacit acceptance of white supremacy culture. Indeed, hate groups and white supremacists have long favored the uppercase style (Baquet & Corbett, 2020). In addition to “Black,” the terms “Brown” and “People of Color” are capitalized in this study, aligning with W.E.B. Du
Bois and many other scholars, activists, and writers who for decades asked publications to capitalize racial and ethnic terms referring to Black people. In a mid-1920s letter-writing campaign, Du Bois wrote, “The use of a small letter for the name of twelve million Americans and two hundred million human beings is a personal insult” (Tharps, 2014). The style and this study aim to both honor the histories and identities of Black culture and reject the dominant white culture that has historically oppressed People of Color.
TERMINOLOGY

The following list of key terms has been assembled to help the reader navigate and understand the specific context of this research. For this study,

- **anti-Blackness** refers to behaviors, attitudes, and practices of people and institutional systems and structures that work to dehumanize Black people to maintain white supremacy. Anti-Blackness attempts to deny Black humanity, excludes Black people from the public sphere, and positions Blackness as a problem to be solved rather than a people suffering from historical and contemporary systemic racism (Dumas, 2016).

- **antiracism** refers to intentional action taken against racial hatred, bias, systemic racism, and the oppression of People of Color by white supremacy (Kendi, 2019).

- **antiracist education** refers to a theory of learning and action to dismantle racism in schools. Antiracist education places race at the center of its analysis to expose direct links to systems of oppression and privilege upheld by white supremacy (Banks & McGee Banks, 2004; Kailin, 2002).

- **BIPOC** refers to individuals who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. The term BIPOC acknowledges that not all People of Color face equal levels of injustice. Specifically, Black and Indigenous people are severely impacted by systemic racial injustices (Garcia, 2020).

- **Black/African American** refers to people across the African diaspora.

- **critical consciousness** refers to recognizing oppressive social forces that shape society and taking action against them (Freire, 1973).
- **educational leadership** refers to the process of enlisting the talents and energies of educators, students, and families (i.e., a school-based leadership team) to work collaboratively toward achieving common educational aims within a school community (Moore Johnson & Donaldson, 2007).

- **inclusive education** refers to a process of increasing participation and decreasing exclusion from the culture, community, and curricula of mainstream schools and classrooms (Booth et al., 2000).

- **inclusive practice** refers to the things people do to give meaning to the concept of inclusion, which accounts for including children with dis/abilities in mainstream classrooms as well as responding to diversity among learners without punitive differential treatment for categorical differences between groups of students (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

- **multilayered approach to racial equity** refers to high-leverage areas of focus within a school context that contribute toward a culture of achievement for Black students. The layers include but are not limited to culturally responsive teaching, race talk, and critical consciousness (Perry, 2017).

- **People of Color** refers to individuals belonging to a racially minoritized group. More specifically, **People of Color** refers to communities or groups racialized outside of whiteness, including but not limited to Black, Latinx Indigenous, Mixed Raced, and Asian and Pacific Islanders (Jackson, 2006).

- **racial equity** refers to the condition when racial identity can no longer be used to predict individual or group outcomes (Case & Greeley, 1990).
• *school-based leadership team* refers to staff members, families, and community members from Brown Elementary School who engaged in collaborative leadership in service of racial equity for the period between 2015 and 2022. The term *school-based leadership team* includes but is not limited to more formal structures at Brown Elementary (see Appendix A).

• *towards a definition of a culture of achievement (TACA)* refers to a theory of practice consisting of detailed and actionable indicators aligned with the understanding that Black students must be given the opportunity to engage fully as members of a relevant, rigorous, antiracist, and culturally responsive educational program (Perry, 2017; see Appendix B).

• *whiteness* refers to “a position of structural advantage,” a “standpoint or place from which to look at oneself, others, and society,” and “a set of cultural practices” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 54).
CHAPTER 1

SCHOOLING WITH RACIAL EQUITY AT THE CENTER

As a white school leader, you were constantly talking about your own identity as a way to both authentically and intentionally model that who we are is always playing out in our roles. And that we don’t get to turn that off or say like, ”Right now I’m just being the principal and you’re just being the teacher.” You know that as a white male, you’re also in a space with a Black woman, and that’s playing out. That helps others make sense of why you do the work you do, and that transparency also helps other people get on board.

—Alison, case study participant

Positionality Statement

I begin this dissertation with a discussion of my positionality as a white researcher and school leader of a community that is committed to school-based racial equity leadership. Given this study’s racial equity focus, I acknowledge the impact of my positionality on this research and how co-participants, readers, and I engage with it. Readers need to know my identity as a researcher, my investment in this topic, and my intentions in this study. As a researcher, I am aware that I am a co-participant in the field and must position myself in relation to the study’s participants according to my socially significant identity dimensions (Gergen & Gergen, 2003; Maher & Tetreault, 1994; Merton, 1972; St. Louis & Barton, 2002). Acknowledging my positionality and remaining aware of my unconscious biases ensures the validity of this work and allowed me to align more closely as a co-participant in this research (Creswell, 2007; Kohl & McCutcheon, 2015; Milner, 2007). As a white,
cisgender, heterosexual, male leader of a public elementary school in an urban school district, my identity and related experiences contribute to the lens through which I view and interpret daily interactions. The privilege connected to all dimensions of my identity means that I am susceptible to blind spots and less likely to be called out by community members when I demonstrate bias (McIntosh, 1988). Acknowledging that it is solely my responsibility to self-monitor and self-correct, I committed to critical self-awareness and reflexivity as evidenced by the methods I employed in this study, including journaling, memo writing, and member checking. Prior to becoming a school administrative leader and a father of two young children, I was an English language arts teacher at the secondary level in the same district. As different aspects of my identity change and develop over time, I remain cognizant of the ways my roles and responsibilities, past and present, personal and professional, influence my positionality.

In this study and in my daily practice as a school leader, I collaborated with community members who possessed racial, ethnic, ability, sexual orientation, and gender backgrounds that were different from my own. I acknowledge that my position as a white male educator impacted the way I collected and analyzed data through my interactions with community members. I am also aware that my role as a school leader and member of the researched school community shaped my view of this work and may have affected how participants responded to my insider/outsider positionality (Banks, 1998; Merton, 1972). While studying a group to which I belonged may have enabled me to authentically engage members of the community, I also considered how my school administrator role might have made me an outsider in the eyes of research participants (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Kerstetter, 2012; Merriam et al., 2001; Merton, 1972). I acknowledged the fluidity of positionality
throughout the research process, especially given the nuances of culture and power across contexts (Chavez, 2008; Merriam et al., 2001; Naples, 1996). Knowing that absolute objectivity was not possible, I employed thoughtful and rigorous methods in the research design to achieve validity. I also committed to self-reflection and examination of ways that my positionality influenced this research. This nuanced sense of positionality helped to illuminate and unpack inherent power dynamics embedded in the research process (Bourke, 2014; Maher & Tetreault, 1994; Malterud, 2001; St. Louis & Barton, 2002).

**Impact of Whiteness**

In naming my positionality as a white male researcher and school leader, I acknowledge the impact of my whiteness. Whiteness permeates every structure of education, and its overwhelming presence is well-documented in the literature (Allen, 2004; Leonardo, 2009; Matias, 2016; Picower, 2009). The spread of whiteness overwhelms educational fields from teacher education (Sleeter, 2001) to educational policy (Gillborn, 2005). The location of whiteness as normative ideology and institution underscores why I needed to embrace criticality and constantly revisit my positionality throughout this study (Castagno, 2014). As a school leader in an inequitable education system laden with white supremacy culture (Jones & Okun, 2021), I am responsible for the ways I enacted racial dominance in my daily role. Whiteness weaves itself into the fabric of educational policies, which ultimately “alter[s] how schools operate” (Gillborn, 2005, p. 494), resulting in devastating effects on Students of Color. As such, I am implicated in the dominant oppressive systems that have been intentionally designed to benefit individuals who look like me (Castagno, 2014). In addition to unpacking my unearned white privilege (McIntosh, 1988), I must grapple with my
whiteness to understand the innumerable ways it functions as hegemonic domination (Tatum, 1997).

Race scholar Ruth Frankenberg (1993) defined whiteness as “a position of structural advantage,” a “standpoint or place from which to look at oneself, others, and society,” and “a set of cultural practices” (p. 54). To contribute to the developing research base examining the practice of school leadership and its intersections with race and racism, I needed to examine the ways that whiteness informs the dominant racist framing and how my whiteness influenced my leadership and research (Feagin, 2010, p. 16). Feagin’s (2010) conceptual paradigm, the white racial frame (WRF), highlights the historical context of white power, privilege, and superiority cemented in the origin of the United States. The WRF comprises five intersecting and overlapping dimensions, including (1) “racial stereotypes (a beliefs aspect); (2) racial narratives and interpretations (integrating cognitive aspects); (3) racial images (a visual aspect) and language accents (an auditory aspect); (4) racialized emotions (a ‘feelings’ aspect); and (5) inclinations to discriminatory action” (pp. 10–11). In practice, the WRF is exhibited by white individuals maintaining racial identity, privilege, and dominance at the expense of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC; Feagin, 2010). Many white people “routinely engage in racial performances and discriminatory behaviors motivated by racist stereotypes, images, narratives, and emotions” (Feagin, 2010, p. 123). Even with countless examples of anti-Black racism in daily news stories, “contemporary racial framing ... views U.S. society as truly ‘colorblind’ or ‘post-racial’ and considers racism to be dead” (pp. 8–9). Consequently, most white individuals, including educators, view themselves as always acting for the common good and as not seeing color (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Pollock, 2001; Schofield, 1989). When white educators do see color, a harmful
narrative often emerges in which white martyr-messiahs are in a position to save Students of Color (Vera & Gordon, 2003). Matias (2013) defined white martyr-messiahs as “white teachers who are willing to sacrifice themselves” and accept the “risk of contaminating their inherent purity in the battle to humanize savage students” (p. 53). This white saviorism results in trauma inflicted upon People of Color in school settings (hooks, 1995; Leonardo & Hunter, 2007; Matias, 2013; Vera & Gordon, 2003).

I began this dissertation with a discussion of my positionality because I must first and foremost acknowledge how whiteness oppresses Black lives in education. Practitioners and researchers who share my identity categories have committed grave injustices in schools under the guise of educational progress and good intentions. This research does not perpetuate Black subjugation or white saviorism. As the researcher, I constantly reflected on how I have been conditioned in a country that is rooted in anti-Black racism and acknowledged the overwhelming influence of whiteness (Kendi, 2019). I also engaged in critical reflection and reflexivity while leveraging diversity of voice and perspective from the school-based leadership team throughout this study to decenter whiteness.

Introduction

The opportunity gap is an ongoing research and discussion topic within the discourse community of education as the difference in academic performance between white students and Black students remains an issue of racial equity (Irvine, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Milner, 2012). Nearly 50 years after Boston was under court order to desegregate its schools, racial inequity is still the defining problem that Boston Public Schools (BPS) struggles to
solve. Acknowledging Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS)\(^1\) results, attendance rates, and discipline referral data, BPS’s current problem of practice reads, “BPS does not consistently provide authentic learning opportunities for our students who are most marginalized to develop into self-determined, independent learners, able to pursue their aspirations. Our failures lead to disengaged students and significant achievement gaps” (Estrada & Shannon, 2016, p. 5).

However, the opportunity gap dilemma is not unique to Boston. In a 2013 report to the Secretary of Education entitled *For Each and Every Child: A Strategy for Education Equity and Excellence*, the Equity and Excellence Commission cited that the average Black eighth-grader performed at the 19th percentile of white students in math (U.S. Department of Education, 2013, p. 13). The report addressed the opportunity gap early in the introduction:

> While some young Americans—most of them white and affluent—are getting a truly world-class education, those who attend schools in high poverty neighborhoods are getting an education that more closely approximates school in developing nations.... With the highest poverty rate in the developed world, amplified by the inadequate education received by many children in low-income schools, the United States is threatening its own future. (p. 12)

Both BPS and the U.S. Department of Education use powerful rhetoric, such as “most marginalized,” “amplified,” and “threatening,” in their problem statements, assigning urgency and importance to what Ladson-Billings (2006) referred to as the education debt. The education debt describes the cumulative impact of fewer resources and other harm.

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\(^1\) The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is the statewide standards-based assessment program for public education.
directed as Students of Color, which Ladson-Billings (2006) ascribed to the “historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral decisions and policies that characterize U.S. society” (p. 5). Behind the facade of strong words from institutions stating clear intentions is the insidious reality that the marginalization of Blacks by whites through the education system is intentional and discernable in the history of public schooling in the United States (Bell, 1995; Kozol, 1991).

In “A Talk to Teachers,” Baldwin (1963/2008) argued that schools are systematically organized to promote Black inferiority, proving that “this structure is operated for someone else’s benefit—not for his” (p. 2). In their investigation of the charter school authorization and application process in New Orleans, Henry and Dixson (2016) found that “majoritarian narratives formalize power relations and help to maintain the ‘common sense,’ everydayness of accumulative white privilege and dominance” (p. 226). To Baldwin’s and Henry and Dixson’s points about white dominance, studies have been commissioned, policies enacted, and reports written by districts, states, and the federal government, but there has been little to no progress in closing gaps, even in the 7 years since the U.S. Department of Education published the 2013 Equity and Excellence Commission report. Decades before, the Office of Policy Planning and Research within the U.S. Department of Labor released The Negro Family: The Case for National Action, also called the Moynihan Report, which blamed the Black family structure for an inability and unwillingness to assimilate into white culture (Moynihan, 1965). In addition, the 1967 Coleman Report viewed families’ racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity as deficits contributing to students’ low academic performance (Coleman, 1967). These reports reveal a longstanding history of policymakers attributing the opportunity gap to variables that reside in Black families, students, and communities
Furthermore, the cognitive dissonance between educational leaders’ intent to act and their real action illustrates the willful subjugation of Black students, families, and educators, suggesting a nefarious design to maintain white dominance (Baldwin, 1963/2008; Sojoyner, 2013).

White dominance has always relied on the acceptance of Black inferiority (Woodson, 2005). As Baldwin (1963/2008) stated, “In order to justify the fact that men were treated as though they were animals, the white republic had to brainwash itself into believing that they were, indeed, animals and deserved to be treated like animals” (p. 3). This brainwashing is still evident as white education leaders leverage achievement gap discourse to frame Black students as “less than.” An examination of the history of Black education in the United States reveals not a single achievement gap but multiple equity gaps, underscoring the capacity of generations of Black students to overcome racist barriers in education. An understanding of the literacy gap, the elementary school attendance gap, the high school completion gap, and test score gap shifts the focus to Black educational progress over time instead of merely comparing the academic achievement of Black students to that of white students from the dominant group based on standardized data (Anderson, 2007). Indeed, “achievement gap” language is still prevalent in many education spaces, including the U.S. Department of Education’s National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), authors of the “Nation’s Report Card” (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). According to Young, Gifted, and Black (Perry et al., 2003), the conversation about the achievement gap is problematic because it fails to begin with a thorough examination of all aspects of the school, with an eye toward understanding how the school’s day-to-day practices contribute to the underachievement of Black students (p. 9). Instead, the achievement gap discussion has historically been about the
underachievement of Black students “in a society where the dominant ideology is about Black intellectual inferiority” (p. 8). Not only does the achievement gap validate policymakers’ and educational institutions’ passive role in ensuring educational opportunity, but it also fails to confront the nuanced school-based path to racial equity that is needed to interrupt the existing opportunity gap in education.

This study explored racial equity at the school level. A multilayered approach was used throughout this study, under the premise that limiting change to one area of focus discounts the complex and holistic nature of equity. This argument also maintains that top-down leadership at the district, state, or federal levels has safeguarded the racist status-quo by oppressing Black students and privileging white students.

There is an abundance of research (Gay, 2010; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Tatum, 1992) detailing high-leverage shifts for closing opportunity gaps, including culturally responsive teaching, or “the use of cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (Gay, 2010, p. 92). Historically responsive literacy (Muhammad, 2020) leverages the tenets of 19th-century Black literary societies to draw upon and respond to students’ histories, identities, literacies, and language practices. Muhammad (2020) proposed a historically responsive literacy framework for teaching and learning, including (1) identity development, (2) skills development, (3) intellectual development, and (4) criticality to cultivate genius for all students. A report from the National Study Group for the Affirmative Development of Academic Ability (2004) found that building brain power is the missing link to closing the opportunity gap for culturally and linguistically diverse students who have been marginalized. This case study (Stake, 1995) calls on Perry’s (2017) work in “Towards a
Definition of a Culture of Achievement,” which attributes building brain power to excellence in teaching for Black students. Perry et al. (2003) described excellence in teaching as a teacher’s commitment to expand her knowledge of her subjects, African history and culture, and the study of racism and its manifestations; her close family relationship with her students and their families and community; her uncompromising commitment to get her students to achieve at the excellence level, by any means necessary; her linkage to a network of teachers who share her sense of commitment and mission; her willingness, her keen sense of social justice, and her sense of duty to save the children and to save African people, and others, from the negative fate that awaits many of them. (pp. 154–155)

While schools and districts often adopt one method or initiative to close the opportunity gap, Perry et al.’s conceptualization of a culture of achievement for Black students is not fully realized. Attempts to foster a culture of achievement have been fragmented, resulting in silos of equity that perpetuate the same opportunity gaps that schools attempt to eliminate.

This study contributes to the extant research focused on antiracist work in elementary schools by analyzing a K–5 community that has prioritized racial equity work at the school level for multiple years. As a co-construction of perception and consciousness, this research sought to uncover what was happening in the Brown Elementary School community and capture the school’s journey toward becoming an antiracist multicultural institution. Recognizing that there is no one right way to engage in this work, the nonlinear, continual, and multidimensional aspects of collaborative racial equity efforts were the focus of this case study. While this work looks different across various contexts, one consistency is the intentionality with which schools must prioritize racial equity.
A multilayered approach that confronts issues of race and racism head-on is described in order to capture the nuances of working toward schools that truly function for all children, families, and members of the school community. This study employed critical race theory (CRT) to analyze specific actions Brown Elementary School has taken to close opportunity gaps and work toward becoming an antiracist community that affirms the identities of all students. Solórzano (1998) defined CRT in education as a “framework or set of basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural, cultural, and interpersonal aspects of education that maintain the subordination of scholars of color” (p. 123). The specific CRT tenets utilized for this study are delineated in the theoretical framework section of this dissertation.

**Statement of the Problem**

Many schools and school districts apply a one-dimensional approach to cultivating a school culture of achievement for Black students. Given the multiple pandemics that Black students are facing in U.S. public schools and beyond, I argue that a multilayered approach to racial equity offers greater targeted support and leads to better outcomes for the most vulnerable populations.

Educators are often asked to focus on one aspect of instruction at a time; however, whether it is assessment, lesson planning, classroom management, or family engagement, these areas can become siloed. The Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework, for example, requires teachers to craft one Student Learning Goal and one Professional Practice Goal based on analysis of strengths and high-priority concerns (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [DESE], 2018). In practice, however, equity-minded educators simultaneously employ all elements of effective teaching and learning with an in-
depth understanding of how they are all inextricably linked (Hammond, 2015, Ladson-Billings, 2006, Muhammad, 2020, Perry, 1993).

The same can be said for school communities that are expected to select one instructional focus and adopt top-down initiatives from the district. In these systems, schools must prioritize specific areas for change, as directed by state mandates or district leaders. These selected priorities often address technical issues without tackling the adaptive changes required of racial equity work. Adaptive change demands experimentation and significant adjustments in numerous areas (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). Since institutionalized racism and white supremacy culture are embedded in existing structures, the technical challenges receive more attention. The characteristics of white supremacy (see Appendix C) can be so ingrained in a school’s culture that they are difficult to identify. However, communities that consciously or unconsciously rely on these characteristics as norms and standards make it difficult, if not impossible, to work toward adaptive racial equity (Jones & Okun, 2021).

Even when a singular top-down approach yields tangible results, these silos of equity are insufficient for closing opportunity gaps.

To arrive at equitable outcomes for all students, school-based leadership teams must engage in change leadership that addresses equity from multiple angles, as Perry (2017) outlined in “Towards a Definition of a Culture of Achievement,” with implications for equitable decision making, culturally responsive teaching, race talk, and critical consciousness (p. 13). As Perry indicated in her definition of excellence in teaching for Black students, educators at the school level are responsible for preparing students to become informed, critically conscious citizens who are equipped to combat racism.
Despite a growing recognition of the Black Lives Matter movement,² racism is still viewed by many as an individual and irrational act in a society that is otherwise rational and just (Crenshaw et al., 1995). The view that people should be “colorblind,” for example, neglects to acknowledge the systemic issues of racism that contribute to opportunity gaps for Black students in the education system (Crichlow & McCarthy, 1993; Farley, 2002; Gotanda, 1996; Tatum, 1997). Furthermore, the emphasis on explicit acts ignores the subtle, more insidious forms of structural racism that are omnipresent yet rarely viewed as such in schools and in daily life (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Tate, 1997). When racism is invisible in schools, its intentional design to preserve white supremacy is carried out because educators fail to interrogate how issues of race intersect and impact all aspects of education.

This inquiry illuminates the importance of raising questions about race and racism in schools with students, educators, families, and community members to challenge systems and organizational structures that privilege dominant groups and perspectives (Capper, 1993; Donmoyer et al., 1995). By embracing a critical antiracist lens, school communities have an opportunity to combat oppression in all forms and reckon with the ways that education systems dismiss students whose identities are different from the majoritarian (Valenzuela, 1999). Schools must also acknowledge and effectively respond to the ways race intersects with other identity categories, including gender, sexual orientation, and dis/ability.

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² #BlackLivesMatter was founded in 2013 in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin’s murderer. Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, Inc., located in the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada, has a mission of eradicating white supremacy and building local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes.
(Crenshaw, 1989). The increasing diversity represented in the racial composition of the United States is another significant factor underscoring the importance of a racial equity focus in schools. According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s (2004) projections for the year 2050, the non-Hispanic white population is slated to increase by 7%. This is a modest increase compared with the Hispanic, Asian, and Black subgroups, which are projected to increase by 188%, 213%, and 71%, respectively (Young & Brooks, 2008). By 2050, the non-Hispanic white population will comprise only 50.1% of the country’s total population, a sharp decline from the 77.1% of the population who reported their race as white in the 2000 census (Pew Research Center, 2008). As the racial, ethnic, and linguistic demographics of schools become increasingly diverse, schools must be in a better position to serve all students and foster learning environments that promote both acceptance and a sense of belongingness.

Applying an antiracist lens to all aspects of the educational community not only eliminates opportunity gaps, but also creates space for envisioning different possibilities for schooling, including the creation of a more egalitarian system (Crenshaw, 1989; Lopez, 2003).

This single-case study details Brown Elementary School’s story of engaging in school-based racial equity leadership. While every school context is unique, this study has implications that other school communities, especially elementary settings, might consider as they prioritize racial equity. Because of the multilayered approach utilized by Brown, there are several interrelated components that schools might find especially pertinent given where they are in their racial equity work. In addition to implications for other school contexts, this study has significance for the broader community surrounding Brown. Community organizations that partner with schools to engage community members in antiracist action and/or provide direct services to students and families might find connections to the work
happening at Brown. In addition, the district where Brown could analyze and apply implications from this study. Consisting of 127 schools with students with intersectional identities (i.e., diverse and interrelated racial, ethnic, linguistic, dis/ability, gender, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds), the urban school district’s commitment to antiracism is stated in its instructional vision statement: “Anti-racist practice is when every student gets access to grade-level, standards aligned, culturally relevant instruction in every class every day” (Cronin et al., 2021, p. 8). This study gives district leaders an opportunity to closely examine the antiracist practices happening in one of their school communities. This analysis could inform future thinking about how to best support all schools in prioritizing and engaging in this racial equity work.

The impact of a multilayered approach to racial equity on student outcomes is also important to the significance of this study. The extant research (Gay, 2010; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Muhammad, 2020; Tatum, 1992) has established a positive correlation between antiracist instruction and intellectual development for all students. Another layer of equity that influences students’ success is the racial makeup of educators leading instruction in classrooms. According to a 2017 study conducted at Johns Hopkins University, having at least one Black teacher in third through fifth grades reduces a Black student’s probability of dropping out of school by 29%. For Black boys who receive free or reduced lunches through primary school, the results are even greater, with their chance of dropping out reduced by 39%. Black boys with a similar socioeconomic status who had at least one Black teacher in third, fourth, or fifth grade were 29% more likely to indicate they were considering college (Gershenson & Papageorge, 2018). With implications for educator
recruitment, hiring practices, and curriculum development, this study acknowledges that who is teaching and what is being taught matter in terms of impact on student outcomes.

**Purpose and Rationale**

The purpose of this case study was to explore how one community has worked toward becoming an antiracist K–5 school. More specifically, the study, featuring one public school in a New England urban district, sought to unpack what it “looks like” when a school community prioritizes racial equity. By applying a CRT lens throughout this research, I offer considerations for moving beyond opportunity gap discourse (Milner, 2012) and embracing a holistic approach to racial equity work at the school level.

The rationale for this study lies in the ubiquity of whiteness and its harmful impacts on Black lives. The opportunity gap is a substantive issue but one that schools must tackle because schools are where students are educated; expecting top-down change initiatives from district leaders and policymakers at the state and national levels only protects the racist status quo. Regardless of relative prioritization at the district, state, or national level, the motivation and commitment of educators and school leaders must focus on creating the conditions for racial equity in school communities. This antiracist social-justice action hinges on the dynamic relationship between reflection and action such that “reflection—true reflection—leads to action” (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 66). Freire (1970/2000) theorized that as oppressed people analyze their social conditions, they will feel able and compelled to change them:

> It so happens that to every understanding, sooner or later an action corresponds. Once man perceives a challenge, understands it, and recognizes the possibilities of response, he acts. The nature of that action corresponds to the nature of his understanding. (Friere, 1973, p. 83)
This notion that greater reflection leads to greater action—and vice versa—requires an understanding by all community members, including white community members, that collective humanity is rooted in racial justice (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002; Freire, 1973; Love, 2019; Watts et al., 2011).

True liberation from racist, dehumanizing structures necessitates a shift from excusing, or even embracing, white fragility and resistance to acting upon the sociopolitical environment for justice (Diemer et al., 2006; Freire, 1970/2000). White people’s aversion to discussing race and racism is a phenomenon linked closely to the conditions set by society’s deeply entrenched white supremacist roots (Anzaldúa, 1987; Tatum, 1997; West, 1993). White people raised in the United States do not see themselves in racial terms and rely on the fact that racism and its effects are rarely discussed or acknowledged in society (Diangelo, 2018; Omi & Winant, 1986; Tatum, 1997; West, 1993). Most white people elect not to discuss race or racism because the topic itself triggers discomfort (Anzaldúa, 1990; Tatum, 1997; West, 1993). As a result of this problematic silence, individuals fail to identify the tremendous impact of racism and reduce its scope to superficial manifestations like intolerance and blatant discrimination (Delgado & Stefancic, 1995, 2001; Matsuda, 1993; Tatum, 1997). This limited perspective serves to justify individuals’ white fragility and resistance because the topic is too unpleasant, because they consider racism an issue of the past, because they do not view themselves racially, or because they do not identify race as their problem to solve (Bell, 1995; Diangelo, 2018; Fine et al., 1997; Frankenberg, 1993; Haney López, 1994; Tatum, 1997). These ill-informed beliefs preserve white privilege and minimize the role of white supremacy in schools. This case study challenges white privilege and fragility by upholding a commitment from white educators, leaders, and community
members to sit with the discomfort of being seen racially, acknowledge the existence and impact of racism, and actively work against white supremacy culture in the school.

This case study models a multilayered approach that places “equity at the center” to explore how school communities can move beyond a single focus and work toward racial equity through a critical examination of multiple aspects of the school. I discuss how a K–5 school in a New England urban district where I served as the school leader alongside a school-based leadership team of community members approached equity through excellence in teaching, culturally responsive teaching, race talk, and critical consciousness, with the goal of creating a culture of achievement for Black students. Furthermore, I explain how these focal areas of equity are closely intertwined and carry unequal weight as they relate to this research.

**Research Questions**

This case study employed critical race theory as a framework for exploring how Brown Elementary School leads racial equity work, what implications there might be for school communities that are committed to closing opportunity gaps, and what collaboration among students, educators, families, and community members to develop a critical consciousness looks like at the elementary school level. The following research questions guided my study:

- How does an urban public elementary school enact a multilayered approach to racial equity?
- How do educators, families, and community members describe their experiences collaborating to develop a school culture of achievement for Black students in an urban elementary school setting?
• What collaborative practices and processes were instrumental for educators, families, and community members in fostering a school culture of achievement for Black students in an urban elementary school?

**Background and Context**

Brown Elementary School is a K–5 public school of 174 students situated in a residential neighborhood of a large urban district in the northeastern United States. Brown is a diverse school community composed of 6% Asian, 29% African American/Black, 27% Hispanic/Latinx, 32% White, and 6% multi-race/non-Hispanic/Latinx. The school includes 18% students with dis/abilities and 23% students who are English learners (Els). At the time of this study, the school was transitioning to a full-inclusion model for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Of the 28 students with a diagnosis of ASD assigned to Brown Elementary School, 27 were Black or Latinx. The school’s teaching staff is also racially diverse, with 8% Asian, 28% African American/Black, 20% Hispanic/Latinx, and 44% white. Since 2014, Brown’s leadership has prioritized inclusion and equity, with attention to the intersectionality of race and dis/ability as evidenced by the school’s 2021–2022 instructional focus and priorities (see Appendix D) and its 2020–2021 to 2021–2022 evolution of priorities (see Appendix E). The instructional focus and priorities framed the school’s yearlong work and continuity of vision across multiple years.

The schoolwide priority of racial equity and the vision for an antiracist and inclusive community began with a Black mom and son in the spring of 2015. This mom of a kindergarten boy approached the white female school leader of Brown to share her concerns after her Black son had refused to wear clothes to school that would show his bare arms or legs. After much prodding, the reluctant son finally revealed to his mom that white
classmates had made repeated comments about his skin color. During science class, for example, the Black kindergarten student was told by a white peer that the insects did not want to go near his dark skin. During recess, a group of white students said the Black kindergartener’s skin was dirty. Upon receiving this information at the end of the 2014–2015 school year, the school leader felt that other members of the Brown community should hear this important perspective, so she asked the mom to share her son’s story at the first family council meeting of the 2015–2016 school year. The following September, the Black mom stood up in a room full of mostly white moms at family council and told the story of her son’s racial trauma. The response she received was mostly deafening silence, with the exception of one white mom who said, “Well that hasn’t been my [white] son’s experience, so I don’t think racism is a problem at our school.” At this moment, the school leader realized white supremacy was an urgent problem at Brown, and she immediately strategized ways to work toward racial equity with the community.

In the 6 years since this pivotal moment at Brown, racial equity and inclusion have been the priority underscored by the school’s belief that “race matters.” The school’s Race and Ethnicity Committee (REC) drafted a belief statement anchored by these two words: “race matters.” Specifically, Brown Elementary School is a community where it is safe to acknowledge, discuss, and unpack people’s lived experiences based on their race, color, and ethnicity.” “Race matters” has become integral to Brown’s overall identity and is routinely referenced to critically examine school structures and practices through an antiracist lens. Teams, including the REC, School Site Council (SSC), Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), REC Family Liaisons, Equity Roundtable, and Family Council comprise staff members and families and lead various components of the work aligned with Brown’s schoolwide
priorities. As the school leader, I served on all teams and identified ways to build leadership capacity, monitor progress, and move the work forward in service of Brown’s priorities.

In addition to schoolwide leadership teams, tools, and priorities grounded in racial equity research, Brown employed progress-monitoring systems that intentionally measured the impact and effectiveness of these efforts. The in-house annual belongingness survey, for example, was a data collection tool that helped the school-based leadership team identify how families experienced Brown based on their racial identity. Families responded to statements about their experiences at Brown during that school year on a 1–4 rating scale, with 1 = very negative and 4 = very positive. In 2019, when asked, “How much support do the adults at Brown give your child or children?,” the average response rate for Families of Color was 3.56, and the average response rate for white families was 3.65. Despite a clear commitment to racial equity for the past 6 years, Brown Elementary School is still working toward antiracism as evidenced by data indicating that there is still much progress to be made in closing opportunity gaps. On the 2019 state standardized assessment (see Appendix F), for example, Black students in Grades 3–5 scored an average of 488.1 for ELA and 478.7 for math compared with white students who scored 513 and 508.7 for ELA and math, respectively. Nevertheless, some data-informed progress has been made, as is detailed later in this study.

The notion that an institution can be both racist and consistently working toward becoming antiracist is a grounding belief that intentionally opposes the fixed binary of racist or not racist. By situating the school’s progression toward antiracism, Brown aligns with historian Ibram Kendi (2019), who explained that identifying as not racist “signifies neutrality. ‘I am not a racist, but neither am I aggressively against racism’” (p. 9). Rather
than allow racial inequities to persist, Brown aspires to confront racial inequities as an antiracist community. The growth mindset of educators and families as it relates to racial equity work within the community was crucial to the selection of Brown Elementary School as the research site. The ability to be reflexive and responsive in service of a collective commitment to racial equity requires a nuanced understanding of the ways white supremacy is embedded throughout the racist structure of the school, education system, and country. White supremacy does not refer to individual people and their individual intentions or actions but to the systemic pervasiveness of white racial domination in all aspects of flawed American society (Leonardo, 2004; West, 1993; Wildman, 2005). This foundational awareness contributes to a collective understanding that in the absence of intentional antiracism, the system will always default to racism and white supremacy (West, 1993). This knowledge of white supremacy as a structure, not an event, also supported members of the Brown community in engaging in critical reflection and demonstrating openness when instances of racism inevitably occurred. Because antiracism is a continuum, not a fixed identity, there was an expectation for individuals and the collective Brown community to reflect critically on progress toward antiracism.

Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature pertaining to the core concepts that contribute to this study’s concentration on schooling with racial equity at the center. The chapter also provides a rationale for applying critical race theory as the theoretical framework for this study as well as the specific tenets employed as a lens during data analysis. Chapter 3 details the study’s methodology, including a rationale for employing the single-case study research design. Chapter 3 also contains information about data collection, data analysis, and other essential elements of this empirical inquiry. Chapter 4 presents data
organized into themes and subthemes related to a school-based leadership team’s
multilayered approach to racial equity at Brown Elementary School. Lastly, chapter 5
discusses the study’s findings, reflections, recommendations, limitations, and future research
in service of a school culture of achievement for Black students.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Often public schools, particularly in the last 100 years, have centered white integration practices. We’ve created, like, a brilliant—I say that in a sort of negative way—a brilliant way of saying whose lives matter, what opportunities there are out there for kids, and what our world should look like by centering a very white culture. And the only way that we get to shift what’s possible is by dismantling curriculum that doesn’t center Folks of Color, partially because white kids also deserve to have narratives that challenge whiteness and white supremacy…. In order for us to disrupt the way that whiteness plays out in schools, we have to give them [students] other models.

—Alison, case study participant

In this chapter, I review the literature on core concepts that comprise this study’s focus on education with racial equity at the center. This discussion of key topics includes the opportunity gap, whiteness, culturally responsive teaching, critical consciousness, race talk, and culturally responsive school leadership. I begin with an overview of the opportunity gap. As an ongoing research and discussion topic, the opportunity gap assigns data-informed credence to racial injustices that disproportionately impact Black students in the public education system. While there are differing explanations for the existence of the opportunity gap, policymakers, educators, and leaders agree that the opportunity gap deserves national attention, as evidenced by current educational policy and literature (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Irvine, 2010; Milner, 2012).
Following an examination of the opportunity gap, I provide an overview of whiteness and U.S. public schools that reflects my researcher positionality and the need for white educators and community members to critically explore whiteness and develop their white racial identity. The discussion begins with observations of what it means to be white in the United States and how the construction of whiteness connects to white racial identity development. This discussion details related terminology: white privilege, white fragility, white fatigue, and white emotionality. Also included in this section is an explanation of how individual white people are situated within a larger oppressive system of white supremacy. This portion of the review concludes with a description of literature pertaining to whiteness in schools.

The literature review also focuses on topics contributing to educational experiences that prioritize racial equity, including culturally responsive teaching, critical consciousness, and race talk. These clarifying strands are interrelated, and all operate with race at the center. While some have argued for the inclusion of other instructionally focused elements, I have selected these based on the racial equity work at Brown Elementary School and their connections to the TACA framework (Perry, 2017). The review ends with a discussion of culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL), a related framework designed to “respon[d] to the schooling needs of minoritized students” (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1272). This explanation of educational leadership is relevant to Brown’s school-based leadership team since CRSL views social justice through a racial lens and acknowledges the collaborative leadership efforts of educators, families, and community partners from Brown Elementary School. Because this case study is situated in one school setting, it is important for the racial equity education model to fit the unique context of Brown. Later in the research findings and
discussion, I explore how this work informed future categories as ideas met the lived experiences of community members during collaboration and data collection.

**Opportunity Gap**

While the *achievement gap* is one of the most common phrases in education, many scholars view the term as problematic on several points, including its standardized metrics, biased assumptions about Students of Color, and lack of responsibility placed on schools and districts (Anderson, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Perry et al., 2003). This section provides a historical overview of achievement gap discourse and a rationale for using the term *opportunity gap* in this dissertation to refer to disparate student outcomes based on race (Milner, 2012, p. 695).

**Historical Context of Achievement Gap Discourse**

Decades before the term *achievement gap* became a headline in the education discourse community, social scientist Kenneth B. Clark was cognizant of the disparities that negatively affect the academic outcomes of Black students. A frequently referenced research project conducted by Clark and his wife and colleague Mamie Clark is the Dolls Test, an experiment conducted in the 1940s to investigate the development of racial identification and preferences of Black children (Hartley & Newcomb, 1947). The Clarks’ findings illustrated the pejorative impact of segregation and racism on the racial identity development of Black children. Their work was cited by the Supreme Court in its *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision:

> To separate [African American children] from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the
Kenneth Clark was disappointed that the court failed to cite two of his other conclusions: that racism was an American institution and that school segregation was also detrimental to the development of white children (“Brown at 60: The Doll Test”, 1947). The study’s recommendations for culturally proficient educators, small class sizes, and cognitively demanding curriculum, while vital steps toward racial equity and educational access for all students, were not achieved by the *Brown v. Board* ruling (“Brown at 60: The Doll Test”, 1947). In his book *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power*, Clark (1965) addressed the shortcomings of the *Brown v. Board* decision by holding social scientists and educators responsible for their failure to effectively engage marginalized communities. Clark wrote,

> Nothing anywhere in the training of social scientists, teachers, or social workers now prepares them to understand, to cope with, or to change the normal chaos of ghetto communities. These are grave lacks which must be remedied soon if these disciplines are to become relevant to the stability and survival of our society. (p. xxix)

Research scholar James S. Coleman heeded Clark’s warning in “The Concept of Equality of Educational Opportunity,” a document prepared for a conference on the U.S. Office of Education’s report on Equality of Educational Opportunity (Coleman, 1967). The Coleman Report illuminated the difference in academic achievement between white students and Black students to introduce what is now known as the achievement gap. Coleman found that social and economic composition of peers had a significant impact on student achievement, a finding that set the stage for furthering desegregation efforts in the United States. Coleman’s work also indicated that students’ sense of control of the environment and
their futures, teachers’ verbal skills, and students’ family background all contribute to student achievement. Unfortunately, family background became the primary focus, holding schools and policymakers harmless for racist practices and policies. Similarly, The Negro Family: The Case for National Action, or the Moynihan Report, blamed racial gaps in educational outcomes on the Black family structure, citing an inability and unwillingness to assimilate into white culture (Moynihan 1965). While education systems have leveraged the findings of Clark, Coleman, Moynihan, and other researchers to analyze racial subgroup data and explore factors that impact academic outcomes, emphasis on achievement gaps has not resulted in social equality.

Achievement Gap Discourse

Since the Coleman Report (1967), standardized measures of student, school, and district performance have been leveraged to support claims about gaps in achievement based on students’ racial identity. The achievement gap refers to the disparities in standardized test scores between Black and white, Latinx and white, and recent immigrant and white students (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 3). Current MCAS data (see Appendix F), for example, show that white students are still outperforming their Black peers, with higher average scaled scores 12 points or more in English language arts and math (DESE, 2019). Acknowledging MCAS results, attendance rates, and discipline referral data, Boston Public Schools identifies “achievement gaps” in its current problem of practice (Estrada & Shannon, 2016). Achievement gap rhetoric supported by standardized measurements of racial subgroup achievement is a driver of education initiatives at the district and state levels.

According to the National Governors Association (2005), “a gap in academic achievement persists between minority and disadvantaged students and their white
counterparts. This is one of the most pressing education-policy challenges that states currently face” (p. 9). Data from the 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) supports this claim. The gap between Black fourth graders and their white counterparts in reading scaled scores was 26 points. In 12th grade reading, the gap was 29 points, and in eighth grade mathematics the gap was 32 points. The gap was 30 points for 12th grade mathematics. Analysis of NAEP achievement gap data across multiple years reveals how these gaps persist over time (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019). While NAEP provides national data about the achievement gap status and trends over time, the data do not explain why gaps exist or why they do or do not change. According to the NAEP (2019) website, “The NAEP assessments are designed to measure student performance, not to identify or explain the causes of differences in student performance.”

Many scholars have offered explanations for the existence of the gap, including Anderson (2007), who delineated the history of Black education in the United States to highlight multiple equity gaps: the literacy gap, the elementary school attendance gap, the high school completion gap, and the test score gap. This detailed account of intentional educational suppression reframes the dialogue from a Black versus white comparison of academic achievement to a deeper analysis of systematic white supremacy in education (Anderson, 2007). Educational researcher and teacher educator Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) argued that “this all-out focus on the ‘Achievement Gap’ moves us towards short-term solutions that are unlikely to address the long-term underlying problem” (p. 4). Instead, Ladson-Billings examined the “education debt” that has accumulated over time with historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral implications. Referencing the work of economists Robert Haveman and Barbara Wolfe, Ladson-Billings highlighted the “non-
market effects of schooling” that are not captured by national achievement gap data, including the following:

- A positive link between one’s own schooling and the schooling received by one’s children
- A positive association between the schooling and health status of one’s family members
- A positive relationship between one’s own education and one’s own health status
- A positive relationship between one’s own education and the efficiency of choices made, such as consumer choices (which efficiency has positive effects on well-being similar to those of money income)
- A relationship between one’s own schooling and fertility choices (in particular, decisions of one’s female teenage children regarding nonmarital childbearing)
- A relationship between the schooling/social capital of one’s neighborhood and decisions by young people regarding their level of schooling, nonmarital childbearing, and participation in criminal activities. (pp. 2–3)

These high-stakes, non-market effects of schooling determine individuals’ quality of life and impact multiple generations. The existence of the education debt means that while white students benefit from the relationship between education and life outcomes, Black students are marginalized by the effects of “foregone schooling resources that we could have (should have) been investing in (primarily) low-income kids” (p. 3). Ladson-Billings (2006) detailed a number of historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral decisions and policies that have contributed to the education debt, “which deficit leads to a variety of social problems (e.g.,
crime, low productivity, low wages, low labor force participation)” (p. 5) that disproportionately impact Black students.

While achievement gap discourse fails to capture how racial inequity accrues over time, the education debt framework offers a more nuanced analysis of the systemic issues that lead up to and result from the failures of the education system. Ladson-Billings (2006) wrote, “The cumulative effect of poor education, poor housing, poor health care, and poor government services create a bifurcated society that leaves more than its children behind” (p. 10). Ladson-Billings’ education debt framework illuminates unaddressed societal factors while explaining how expansive and impactful these injustices in schooling are for students and society. However, the education debt paradigm does not examine current practice and does not offer recommendations to researchers and practitioners. Acknowledging how education systems function as microcosms of society, there is an opportunity to challenge deeply inequitable systems, processes, structures, policies, and practices in education that prevent students from reaching their full capacity.

**Opportunity Gap Explanatory Framework**

Educational researcher and teacher educator Jacqueline Jordan Irvine (2010) also challenged the achievement gap paradigm and offered alternative opportunity gap discourse. Irvine asserted that a perceived achievement gap is the result of other gaps that influence people to believe in the existence of an achievement gap. Education officials at the school, district, state, and federal levels tend to streamline efforts to address the achievement gap but end up assigning blame to the “underachieving” students without confronting the high-leverage gaps at the core of this inequity. This standardization suggests that all students live and operate in homogeneous environments with equality and equity of opportunity afforded
to them. Yet, the reality is that “the playing field for many Students of Color and other marginalized groups is anything but even or level” (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Irvine (2010) advocated a shift in attention and urgency for researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and school leaders to address these other gaps, including

the teacher quality gap; the teacher training gap; the challenging curriculum gap; the school funding gap; the digital divide gap; the wealth and income gap; the employment opportunity gap; the affordable housing gap; the health care gap; the nutrition gap; the school integration gap; and the quality childcare gap. (p. xii)

Irvine’s (2010) assertion that attention should be given to closing other gaps in education was cited by Milner (2012), who proposed the opportunity gap framework in his seminal work, “Beyond a Test Score: Explaining Opportunity Gaps in Educational Practice.” According to Milner, focusing on the practices and processes that contribute to disparate student outcomes based on race enables educators to better understand and address issues of educational equity (p. 697). Milner further explained, “Issues related to opportunity are complicatedly multifaceted, process oriented, and much more nuanced than what an achievement gap explanation can provide” (p. 696). Milner’s acknowledgment of opportunity gaps as “multifaceted” and “nuanced” is akin to this study’s multilayered approach to racial equity. Since the focus is on educational practices related to opportunity, this study applied the opportunity gap explanatory framework as a lens for analyzing the approach to racial equity at Brown Elementary School. This emphasis on the linkage between educational practice and opportunity is also supported by The Opportunity Myth, a 2018 TNTP study that found that students—especially Students of Color, those from low-income families, those with mild to moderate dis/abilities, and English language learners—across multiple
educational settings in the United States are not provided with adequate opportunities to master challenging material. The TNTP report detailed four crucial resources that were found to be missing from students’ school days: grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction, deep engagement, and teachers with high expectations. At the core of this opportunity myth are adult choices at every level of the education system (TNTP, 2018). Rather than contribute to achievement gap discourse, this study aims to critically examine the intentional decisions, processes, and actions that are designed to close opportunity gaps and increase access and achievement for Black students.

Milner (2012) organized the opportunity gap explanatory framework according to five interconnected tenets: color blindness, cultural conflicts, meritocracy, deficit mindsets and low expectations, and context-neutral mindsets and practices (p. 693). These constructs were designed to help researchers and practitioners name and make meaning of situations that arise in an educational context. As an analytic tool, the central tenets can explain “both positive and negative aspects and realities of people, places, and policies in educational practice” (p. 699). Both the paradigm shift and practical application of the opportunity gap explanatory framework made it an asset for this qualitative research study and the racial equity work it set out to accomplish. Throughout this study, I as the researcher applied the interrelated tenets to explain and systematically name what I observed in the elementary school setting and came to question and know inductively.

**Whiteness and U.S. Public Schools**

This section reviews the literature focused on whiteness and its manifestations of privilege and power in U.S. education and society. It also emphasizes the critical role that white racial identity development plays for white community members, including myself,
who are committed to racial equity work. White individuals have a responsibility to recognize how whiteness and white racial identity development operate in order to do the individual work and advocate for systemic change in schools (Matias, 2016).

The study of whiteness and white racial identity development emerged in response to criticism that studies of racial identity exclusively focused on people who had been historically marginalized as opposed to the oppressors (Back & Solomos, 2001). Frankenberg (1993) defined whiteness according to a set of “linked dimensions”: a location of structural advantage; a "standpoint" from which white people look at themselves, at others, and at society; and a set of cultural practices that are often unnamed and unexamined (p. 54). According to Frankenberg, cultural practices that uphold whiteness are so embedded in the sociohistorical context that white people often do not perceive whiteness. The related phenomenon known as colorblindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2006), color evasion (Frankenberg, 1993), or the myth of nonrecognition (Gotanda, 1991) is the dominant ideology of whiteness premised on the belief that race is not important and should not be publicly acknowledged. White people are color evasive, often declining to identify the race of someone who is not white in an effort to avoid appearing racist (Frankenberg, 1993; Katz & Ivey, 1977). This colorblind approach inevitably preserves white supremacy, imbuing the worldviews and lived experiences of white people with racism and privilege (Frankenberg, 1993; McIntosh, 1988).

McIntosh (1988) conceptualized white privilege as “an invisible weightless knapsack” of provisions, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, compasses, and blank checks enjoyed by white people but not accessible to People of Color (pp. 1–2). McIntosh highlighted that despite the ability of these unearned advantages and opportunities to deliver
mobility and comfort in everyday life, they typically go unnoticed by white people. White privilege therefore includes the ability to not see whiteness and its privileges. When these benefits are named or questioned, white people have a tendency to react defensively and attribute these advantages to their own efforts in the spirit of meritocracy as opposed to centuries of systematic racial oppression inflicted upon People of Color by white people (Lipsitz, 1995; McIntosh, 1988).

Matias (2016) referred to defensiveness from white individuals as a product of emotionality where emotions are political. White emotions reflect an intentional process of attaching affective reactions to social situations which protect white racial advantage (Leonardo, 2002; Matias 2016). The emotional strategies of whites often impede progress in racial understanding, contributing to the infrastructure of white supremacy (Matias 2016). DiAngelo (2018) addressed the emotions of white individuals in her discussion of white fragility, which refers to “a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves,” including displays of anger, guilt, argumentation, silence, and fleeing the racialized situation (p. 103). DiAngelo further noted that white fragility safeguards the notion that white people do not exhibit racist patterns, thereby evading responsibility and forfeiting potential pathways for accountability. Flynn (2018) spoke to resistance in his conceptualization of white fatigue, the phenomenon whereby white individuals who recognize the moral imperative of antiracism, primarily viewed as individual racism, are not yet able to fully understand the complexity of how racism functions on institutional and systemic levels. Centering specifically on white educators, Flynn recommended avoiding binary discourses on racism that can lead to disengagement with antiracist aims and alienate potential allies, accomplices, and leaders in
racial equity efforts in education. Despite the distinct nuances of how they construct white fragility and white fatigue, DiAngelo and Flynn view defensiveness from white individuals as an opportunity to enhance understanding of white racial identity development (DiAngelo, 2018; Flynn, 2018; Helms, 1984).

The frameworks for various identities, including white racial identity, stem from Cross (1971), whose seminal work proposed a Black racial identity development model. Cross catalogued the multifarious responses of Black individuals to the civil rights movement of the 1960s, inspiring similar models of identity development. A number of white racial identity development models have been proposed (Carney & Khan, 1984; Hardiman, 1982; Helms, 1984, 1990; Ponterotto, 1988; Sabnani et al., 1991; Sue & Sue, 1990), with Helms’s (1984) conceptualization being frequently cited. The Helms model of white racial identity development includes six stages: (1) contact, (2) disintegration, (3) reintegration, (4) pseudo-independence, (5) immersion/emersion, and (6) autonomy. The contact stage is defined by a lack of awareness of self as a racial being and overall naivete regarding the impact of race and racism on oneself and others. The disintegration stage follows when white individuals are forced to acknowledge their whiteness and grapple with the tension, guilt, and depression associated with this realization. During this stage of development, white individuals demonstrate an increasing awareness of the realities of racism and the role they might play in perpetuating white supremacy. In the reintegration stage, a more conscious belief in white superiority emerges and any enjoyed privileges are justified because of that perceived superiority. Pseudo-independence is the first stage of positive racial identification in which individuals internalize whiteness and demonstrate acceptance of white privilege and the related issues of bias, prejudice, and discrimination on an intellectual level. During
immersion/emersion, individuals attempt to connect to their own white identity and to be antiracist. The final stage of autonomy is reached when white individuals have a clear understanding and positive connection to their white racial identity while also pursuing antiracist social justice. While this model of white racial identity development depicts movement from one stage to the next, individuals may loop back to previous stages, regress, or progress in a nonlinear fashion (Helms, 1984).

Beyond white racial identity development and related impacts of fragility and privilege at the individual level, the influence of whiteness in U.S. public schools at the systems level is well-documented. Indeed, low educator expectations for Students of Color have a negative effect on students’ academic growth and achievement in U.S. public schools (Donaldson, 1996; Ford & Harris, 1996; Gay, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Murray & Clark, 1990; Nieto, 1996; Spencer, 1986; Winfield, 1986). Low expectations are marked by deficit-driven stereotypes and/or invisibility of Black students by white educators and administrators (Spencer, 1986). According to Massey et al. (1975), who examined institutional racism in urban schools, “paternalism and a lack of challenging standards are creating a distorted system of evaluation in the schools” (p. 7). The deficit mindset stemming from whiteness that educators bring to their work with Students of Color and Black students in particular has detrimental and far-reaching impacts. Black students are disproportionately placed in low-ability and non-college-bound education tracks, resulting in restricted access to qualified educators, standards-aligned rigorous instruction, and overall effective teaching and learning (Oakes & Guiton, 1995; Wheelock, 1992).

The impact of whiteness in U.S. public schools is also evident in the curriculum presented to students. The curriculum that most schools implement is racially and culturally
biased in the ways that instructional materials and pedagogies omit the history, culture, contributions, and lived experiences of People of Color. Additionally, when Black culture is included in the curriculum, the narratives reflect pejorative white biases that promote negative stereotypes and oppression while ignoring journeys of achievement and outstanding contributions from Black individuals (Donaldson, 1996; Gay, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1996). Deyhle’s (1995) research on the education of Navajo children in southeastern Utah, for example, revealed that Navajo students were subjected to a racist curriculum upheld by whiteness—college preparatory classes for Anglo schools and vocational education for Navajo schools—for 10 years. Untrained and uncertified teachers taught at the Navajo schools, resulting in the lowest reading scores in the state and a dropout rate for Navajo students five times higher than that of Anglo students (Deyhle, 1995). Similarly, Murray and Clark’s (1990) research illustrates the pervasive and insidious nature of whiteness in U.S. public schools, describing eight forms of racism operating at all levels of schooling: (1) insensitive or hostile acts; (2) biased application of harsh sanctions; (3) inequality in the amount of teacher attention given; (4) biased curriculum materials; (5) inequality in the amount of instructional time provided; (6) biased attitudes toward students; (7) failure to hire educators and school Staff of Color; and (8) denial of racist actions. In sum, the ubiquitous and commonplace existence of whiteness in U.S. public schools is doing irreconcilable harm to Black bodies, minds, and spirits.

**Culturally Responsive Teaching**

This section of the literature review focuses on culturally responsive teaching. Gay (2010) identified five indicators of culturally responsive teaching:
1. Acknowledging students’ cultural heritage and recognizing that it contains content worthy of being included in the curriculum;

2. Building meaning between students’ home and school experiences;

3. Using a wide variety of instructional strategies;

4. Teaching an appreciation of students’ own cultural heritage as well as that of others;

5. Incorporating multicultural information, resources, and materials in all subjects and skill sets. (p. 192)

While Gay recommends leveraging more of students’ identities in the classroom, her use of the term *multicultural* here does not call for the same transformational pedagogical practices that other researchers in this category have advocated.

Ladson-Billings (1995) described culturally relevant pedagogy as teaching in opposition, with a commitment to collective empowerment. According to Ladson-Billings, the three criteria of culturally relevant pedagogy are: “(a) students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order” (p. 160). A strength of Ladson-Billings’ work that I took away for my research is the need to develop within students the skills to oppose social injustices.

Lastly, Hammond (2015), a giant in the field of culturally responsive teaching, drew on neuroscience research to approach the design and implementation of brain-compatible, culturally responsive instruction. She described culturally responsive teaching as an educator’s ability to recognize students’ cultural displays of learning and meaning making and respond positively and constructively with teaching moves that use
cultural knowledge as a scaffold to connect what the student knows to new concepts and content in order to promote effective information processing. (p. 15)

Hammond, like Gay, approached culturally responsive teaching through a set of practices designed to strengthen student connectedness with school and enhance learning. While Ladson-Billings (1998) took a narrower approach, this literature review leads to a broader definition of culturally responsive teaching that includes employing cultural knowledge, knowing how the brain works, and developing critical consciousness.

**Critical Consciousness**

This section connects to ideas about identity, diversity, and justice from culturally responsive teaching by proposing a framework for action through education among individuals who are marginalized. In his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1973) stated that critical consciousness involves recognizing oppressive social forces that shape society and taking action against them. If the oppressed are unknowing of the causes of their subjugation, they submit to their exploitation. According to Freire, for the oppressed to fight for liberation, they must view the reality of oppression as a “limiting situation” to be transformed, not as a closed world with no exit (p. 49).

Citing Freire’s (1973) work, many researchers have contributed to the notion of critical consciousness and its applications for teaching and learning practice in classrooms. Watts et al. (2011) advocated youth social justice education and engagement to help students, especially students who have been marginalized, understand themselves in a sociopolitical context. In their conceptualization of critical consciousness, Watts et al. discerned three components: critical reflection, political efficacy, and critical action. Critical reflection encompasses social analysis and moral rejection of societal inequities such as social,
economic, racial/ethnic, and gender constraints that impede well-being and human agency. Political efficacy refers to the perceived capacity to enact social change by individual and/or collective activism. Indeed, individuals who feel they can create change are more likely to engage in critical action. Critical action refers to individual and/or collective action, including voting, community organization, and peaceful protests, intended to transform aspects of society deemed unjust (Watts et al., 2011). Together these three aspects of critical consciousness address the reciprocal relationship between reflection and action: As oppressed people begin to analyze their social conditions, they feel able and compelled to act and change them (Freire 1973; Watts et al., 2011).

Classroom teaching and learning about critical consciousness fosters academic engagement and achievement (Muhammad, 2020; O’Connor, 1997; Ramos-Zaya, 2003; Seider et al., 2019). O’Connor (1997) conducted research on six low-income Black adolescents who articulated an acute recognition of how race and class serve to subjugate individuals with marginalized identities. The case analysis revealed that these high school students demonstrated strong evidence of their personal competence, concrete experiences reinforcing counternarratives, and learned strategies for upward mobility. As a result of their critical consciousness, the students expressed high academic achievement and optimism while also recognizing their subjugation (O’Connor, 1997). In a longitudinal, mixed-methods study, Seider et al. (2019) also examined the critical consciousness development of Adolescents of Color and the impact on their academic achievement. The results of the study revealed that students’ critical reflection and critical action intercepts predicted SAT scores whereas critical reflection and critical action slopes predicted grade point averages (GPAs). These findings support the inclusion of ethnic studies and civics offerings in schools where
students can grapple with learning about oppressive external forces and develop a sense of efficacy around navigating and challenging those forces (Seider et al., 2019).

Muhammad (2020) researched 19th-century Black literary societies to conceptualize a framework connecting critical consciousness, which she termed criticality, with identity, skills, and intellectualism. Muhammad viewed criticality as an opportunity to question both the world and texts within it to advance understanding of power, inequity, racism, and oppression. Along with the other three literary pursuits of identity, skills, and intellectualism, criticality is integral to cultivating genius and supporting students in discerning between truth and falsehood (Muhammad, 2020). Extending beyond the school context, Ramos-Zayas (2003) uncovered similar findings in her ethnographic research of Puerto Rican nationalism in Chicago. Ramos-Zayas examined how Puerto Rican nationalism served to highlight class, gender, racial, and generational distinctions while challenging systemic inequity and false notions of meritocracy in the United States. These efforts, which align with the definition of critical consciousness, promote social mobility through education, resistance, and cultural identity (Ramos-Zayas, 2003).

In addition to academic achievement, critical consciousness also has a positive impact on students’ social-emotional wellness and resilience. Ginright (2010) and O’Leary and Romero (2011) discussed how critical consciousness is a source of hope, healing, and care among Black students who have been disproportionately oppressed by systemic social issues such as joblessness, violence, and substance abuse. To nurture their personal resilience, youth leverage strategies for remaining engaged in the nation’s civic processes (O’Leary & Romero, 2011). Community organizations also address Black youth civic engagement by creating opportunities for healing through caring relationships, social networks, and social
justice action. This nurturing of critical consciousness enables youth to unveil injustice and take action from the perspectives of agents, not victims (Ginright, 2010).

Diemer and Blustein (2006) discussed the relationship between critical consciousness and professional aspirations of youth who have been marginalized. Their research investigated the role of critical consciousness as a key factor in predicting progress in career development among urban high school students. Diemer and Blustein found that study participants with greater levels of critical consciousness were more committed to their future careers, suggesting that youth might most effectively engage in career development by embracing individual agency and a critical awareness of sociopolitical inequity and opportunity structures.

**Race Talk**

I included race talk in this literature review to inform the role of the educational practitioner in alignment with the CRT framework of this study. Just as issues of race, racism, and white supremacy have been minimized or manipulated to fit the narrative of achievement gap discourse, meaningful discussions about race and racism among students, staff members, and families have largely been absent from educational practice in schools. Fear of saying the wrong thing or of receiving pushback from stakeholders has inhibited authentic race dialogue, even though CRT literature has emphasized the importance of constantly centering and dynamically addressing race and racism (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 507). Schools that prioritize racial equity must encourage race talk among all community members because doing and sustaining this work over time will build a school culture in which critical conversations about race, racism, and equity are accepted and eventually embraced.
Benson and Fiarman (2019) highlighted the importance of creating the conditions for educators to talk about race and their own unconscious racial biases. According to Benson and Fiarman, teaching about the unconscious nature of racial bias provides an entry point to race talk, especially for white people. Ultimately, school communities must name and discuss race, examine data, and assume an inquiry approach to unpacking how racial bias impacts student learning (Benson & Fiarman, 2019). Sue (2015) focused on the unintentional ways that race talk occurs as well as the effects of these racialized interactions. Sue stated that difficult dialogues on race are most likely to occur when interpersonal encounters

(a) highlight major differences in worldviews, personalities, and perspectives; (b) are challenged publicly; (c) are found to be offensive to others; (d) may reveal uncomfortable personal racial biases and prejudices; (e) arouse or trigger intense emotional responses. (p. 6)

Sue also noted that honest race talk can dispel biases and stereotypes, increase racial literacy, and develop critical consciousness about race issues.

In a different vein, Coles-Ritchie and Smith (2017) viewed race talk as a method for intentionally bringing the voices and experiences of individuals who have been historically marginalized to the forefront of their research. Coles-Ritchie and Smith leveraged professional development to promote race talk as an expected and transformative process for educators (pp. 173–174). Though engaging educators in race talk is a crucial first step, race talk with students and families is equally necessary to develop their critical consciousness and co-conspiratorship.

Pollock’s (2004) research focused on barriers to race talk in the context of a California high school and district. She discussed the role race plays in everyday and school
policy talk about discipline, achievement, curriculum reform, and educational inequality. Pollock stated broadly, “All Americans every day are reinforcing racial distinctions and racialized thinking by using race labels; but we are also reinforcing racial inequality by refusing to use them” (p. 4). I first encountered Pollock’s research in the beginning of Brown Elementary School’s racial equity work, and the idea that using and avoiding race labels perpetuates inequity resonated with me. Indeed, the phrase “race matters at the Brown” underscores the importance of race talk. As West (1993) wrote in *Race Matters,* 

> Race is the most explosive issue in American life precisely because it forces us to confront the tragic facts of poverty and paranoia, despair and distrust. In short, a candid examination of race matters takes us to the core of American democracy. And the degree to which race matters in the plight and predicament of fellow citizens is a crucial measure of whether we can keep alive the best of this democratic experiment we call America. (p. 107)

Despite abundant research acknowledging that “race matters” (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2010; Kendi, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tatum, 1992; West, 1993), this “explosive issue” is too often avoided by educators as a topic of discussion, exploration, and learning (Singleton & Hayes, 2008). In their research in K–12 school districts, Singleton and Hays (2008) found that students are typically much better at engaging in conversations about race than the educators who facilitate those conversations. Knowing that students are captive audiences for engaging in race talk, Singleton and Hays offered guidelines for leading intentional and effective interracial dialogues concerning critical issues. These guidelines—the “Four Agreements of Courageous Conversation”—are designed to address racial tensions and elevate racism as the central topic of discussion. The agreements ask educators to stay
engaged, expect to experience discomfort, speak one’s truth, and expect and accept a lack of closure. This roadmap for race talk acknowledges that conflict and tension are inevitable, but having a plan for the flow and direction of these critical dialogues will help educators prioritize this learning for students (Singleton & Hayes, 2008).

Racial Equity, Social Justice, and Culturally Responsive Leadership

This section reviews the educational leadership literature to inform and give credence to this study’s collaborative leadership among educators, families, and community partners. It also validates the intentional vision of racial equity that was acted upon by the school-based leadership team, representing diverse perspectives at the school level. Since the literature on educational leadership is vast, this overview focuses narrowly on racial equity, social justice, and culturally responsive leadership.

Skrla et al. (2004) established clear connections among instruction, leadership, and equity in their description of an equity audit as “a practical leadership tool for developing equitable and excellent schools” (p. 133) in the “present climate of federally mandated, high-stakes educational reform” (p. 140). Citing research showing that the avoidance of overt discussions of race by educators and administrators is a factor in inequitable school outcomes (McKenzie, 2001, 2002; Pollock, 2001), the researchers advocated for equity audits to facilitate discussion of and response to systemic patterns of inequity in schools without naming race or unpacking white supremacy culture (p. 141). An equity audit includes a set of 12 indicators grouped into three categories: teacher quality equity, programmatic equity, and achievement equity (p. 142). However, the prescribed formula for teacher quality equity does
not include any mention of culturally responsive teaching or culturally relevant pedagogy (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Hammond, 2015; Khalifa et al., 2016) (p. 143). The current research on racial equity remains siloed, illustrating the need for an inclusive model of racial equity education that connects the multiple layers.

In “Leadership for Social Justice: Preparing 21st Century School Leaders for a New Social Order,” Jean-Marie et al. (2009) attributed the increased focus on social justice by educational scholars and practitioner to cultural transformation and demographic shifts, increased achievement and economic gaps, and accountability pressures and high-stakes testing (p. 3). Bruner (2008) also highlighted that nearly one-third of the United States population will soon comprise people of diverse races and cultural backgrounds (p. 483). This acknowledgment of various shifts in demographics and education aligns with Bogotch’s (2000) assertion that social justice as an educational intervention is a continuously relevant topic. According to Jean-Marie et al. (2009), common threads of social-justice educational leadership include creating equitable schooling and education; examining issues of race, diversity, marginalization, gender, spirituality, age, ability, sexual orientation and identity; and conceptualizing the preparation of leaders for social justice (p. 4).

Given that schools have a social and moral obligation to foster equitable practices, processes, and outcomes for learners of different racial, socioeconomic, gender, cultural, dis/ability, and sexual orientation backgrounds, leadership roles entail advocating on behalf of students who have been historically marginalized. To meet this responsibility, “traditional hierarchies and power structures must be deconstructed and reconfigured, thereby creating a new social order that subverts a longstanding system that has privileged certain students
while oppressing or neglecting others” (Jean-Marie et al., 2009, p. 4). Bruner (2008) also called upon school leaders to question the assumptions that drive school policies and practices to create more equitable schooling (p. 484). According to Jean-Marie et al. (2009), this means that school communities must increase their awareness of “various explicit and implicit forms of oppression,” challenge the dominant paradigm, and act deliberately as advocates for educational change that makes a meaningful and positive impact on the education and lives of students who have been historically marginalized (p. 4). Jean-Marie et al. also broadened the scope and reach of social justice educational leadership:

If educational leaders with this perspective on their practice can sufficiently increase their stock of courage, intelligence, and vision, they might become a social force of some magnitude and extend their scope of influence well beyond the school’s walls. (p. 4)

In identifying the potential impact of social-justice educational leadership on society, Jean-Marie et al. situated social justice as a powerful lever of change while highlighting it as an interdisciplinary concept with roots in philosophy, economics, political studies, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and public policy (p. 3).

In “Educational Leadership and Social Justice: Theory into Practice,” Bogotch (2000) described social justice as a deliberate educational intervention that requires the moral use of power. His conceptualization of social-justice educational leadership draws on Dewey's (1904) essay “The Relation of Theory and Practice in Education,” in which Dewey distinguished between two kinds of school practice: apprentice practice and laboratory practice (p. 2). Apprentice practice refers to a mechanical process dedicated to performing an
action as closely to how it was previously demonstrated, whereas laboratory practice is a more intellectual activity with the power to construct new knowledge and new practices. Though fundamentally different, these two practices are not mutually exclusive as they both possess potential opportunities for practitioner learning. This echoes Dewey’s assumption that all learners, students and educators alike, bring with them human capital based on their lived experiences. It is the responsibility of teachers to leverage that human capital by connecting authentic examples from life experiences to theories introduced in the classroom. In valuing students’ lived experiences, classroom teaching and learning should be closely connected to practical experiences and learning.

According to Bogotch (2000), this theoretical understanding proposed by Dewey should inform how educational leaders approach theory, practice, and social justice (p. 3). Leaders must value the lived experiences of educators and continuously engage in self-directed intellectual and moral growth. By connecting theory and practice to larger social reform dynamics, schools can critically consume educational programs and policies. This social justice work should challenge existing structures that reproduce the dominant culture and values in society, making social justice a continuously relevant topic for every era (p. 2). Accepting that there is no single definition of social justice to fit all contexts, Bogotch synthesized his view of social-justice educational leadership in the following tenets:

1. There can be no fixed or predictable meanings of social justice prior to actually engaging in social and academic discourses;

2. The center or unity of any educational reform is so dynamic that it cannot hold together for long;
3. The results of our work [just and unjust] are always fragile and fleeting; and, therefore,
4. All social justice/educational reform efforts must be deliberately and continuously reinvented and critiqued again and again. (p. 10)

Turhan’s (2010) conceptualization of social-justice educational leadership shared similarities with Bogotch’s. He did not believe one social justice definition would work for every situation, especially given the rapidity of social change. Instead, the concept and understanding of social-justice educational leadership should be viewed as situational and renewed constantly since outcomes cannot be predicted in education (Turhan, 2010).

Like social-justice educational leadership, culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) is an educational leadership framework dedicated to fostering equitable school practices, processes, and outcomes for all students. Both frameworks operate with a similar premise, that as population demographics shift, so must the leadership practices and school contexts that respond to the needs that accompany these shifts. Culturally responsive school leadership, however, is narrower in its focus on minoritized students, who have been historically marginalized within most school contexts (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1273).

In “Culturally Responsive School Leadership: A Synthesis of the Literature,” Khalifa et al. (2016) showed how CRSL influences the school context and addresses the cultural needs of students, families, and teachers (p. 1274). Their definition of minoritized students considered individuals from “racially oppressed communities that have been marginalized—both legally and discursively—because of their nondominant race, ethnicity, religion, language, or citizenship.” According to Khalifa et al., culturally responsive school leaders
facilitate professional development to ensure that educators and curriculum are continuously responsive to minoritized students. Beyond professional development for staff members, culturally responsive school leaders intentionally create the conditions for safe, supportive, and inclusive school settings that honor all identities and counter oppression. Khalifa et al. stated, “Because minoritized students have been disadvantaged by historically oppressive structures, and because educators and schools have been—intentionally or unintentionally—complicit in reproducing this oppression, culturally responsive school leaders have a principled, moral responsibility to counter this oppression” (p. 1275).

In their review of the CRSL-related literature, Khalifa et al. (2016) identified four primary strands of leadership behaviors exhibited by culturally responsive school leaders. According to the authors, these school leaders commit to critical self-reflection, contribute to culturally responsive teaching and curricula, promote culturally responsive school environments, and engage the community in culturally responsive ways. Critical self-reflection gives school leaders time and space to identify and challenge their own conscious and unconscious oppressive understandings and actions. By constantly dissecting interactions with students and families, debriefing professional development sessions, and digesting staff members’ feedback, school leaders must engage in critical self-reflection to progress monitor their efforts to eliminate oppression within their school settings. Culturally responsive teaching and curricula should also be priorities for of school leaders. Since the teaching and learning that occurs in classrooms represents the core of every student’s education, it is important that teachers identify and unpack their biases, critically consume the curriculum, and validate all students’ racial, ethnic, and linguistic identities. Beyond the classroom, all students should also experience a culturally responsive school environment. School leaders
create this environment by “resisting exclusionary practice, promoting inclusivity, and integrating student culture in all aspects of schooling” (p. 1296). Lastly, school leaders engage the community in culturally responsive ways by bringing the community into the school and establishing a school presence in the community. Because every school setting is unique, it is important for school leaders to know the different communities of their students and families and to identify authentic opportunities for developing meaningful and lasting relationships (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Theoretical Framework

To explore how an urban public elementary school enacted a multilayered approach to racial equity toward a school culture of achievement for Black students, this study employed a theoretical framework that leveraged critical race theory. This inquiry integrated theory, research, and practice to support a pragmatic approach to racial equity schooling designed to resonate with communities committed to antiracism.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory centers race by challenging dominant narratives and acknowledging the subjectivity of human experience in a racialized society. As Solórzano and Yosso (2002) revealed, social scientists tell stories under the guise of “objective” research, but these narratives uphold deficit-based, racialized notions about People of Color (p. 23). CRT’s human-centered approach counters oppressive narratives and privileges experiential knowledge to transform everyday notions of race, racism, and power. Originating in the mid-1970s in response to the shortfalls of critical legal studies (CLS), CRT focuses on the effects of race, racism, and white supremacy on meritocracy in American society (Ansley, 1997; Bell, 1980; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Sleeter, 2011). Delgado and
Stefancic (2013) described the construction of racism in their introduction to the third edition of *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*:

> Our social world, with its rules, practices, and assignments of prestige and power, is not fixed; rather, we construct with it words, stories and silence. But we need not acquiesce in arrangements that are unfair and one-sided. By writing and speaking against them, we may hope to contribute to a better, fairer world. (p. 3)

Delgado and Stefancic’s claim about “writing and speaking against ... arrangements that are unfair and one-sided” speaks to counterstorytelling, an essential tenet of CRT that challenges privileged discourses of the majority, therefore serving as a means of giving voice to marginalized groups (Matsuda, 1993). Ladson-Billings (2013) summarized other essential tenets of Delgado and Stefancic’s explication of CRT:

- Racism is commonplace to the United States;
- White people seek racial justice only when there is an interest convergence—when their interests align with the needs of Black people;
- Race is a social construction;
- Voices of the oppressed should be used to provide counterstories to dominant narratives;
- Intersectionality (the intersecting categories of oppression felt by marginalized peoples who embody more than one category of oppression) exists and must all be considered. (p. 8)

Derrick Bell (1980), widely regarded as the father of critical race theory, introduced the associated theory of interest convergence, according to which commonly held beliefs are generated by the majority. These beliefs created by the dominant group serve to oppress
individuals within minority groups. Whites, therefore, will allow racial justice as long as they will gain something from it or if there is “convergence” between the interests of whites and People of Color. CRT focuses on dismantling the majoritarian narrative as it seeks to silence People of Color while legitimizing white supremacy.

To challenge oppression, the intersecting categories of oppression felt by marginalized people must also be considered (Ladson-Billings, 2013, p. 8). Solorzano and Yosso (2002) challenged discourses that separate race from issues of gender and class and instead advocated for the “intercentricity” (p. 25) of race and racism to be examined through interrelated identity categories. The idea of intercentricity in education borrows from Crenshaw’s (1989) theory of intersectionality, which emphasizes the intersections of multiple dimensions of oppression. Crenshaw argued that the “single-axis” (p. 58) understandings of both feminism and antiracism provide an inaccurate picture because they fail to acknowledge the multiple oppressions that exist for Black women specifically and People of Color in general through their intersecting identities. In addition to race and gender, other intersecting systems of oppression and privilege include socioeconomic status, immigration status, dis/ability, language, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, culture, and age (Burnham, 2001).

Every social position is defined by an interaction between these hierarchical systems insomuch that speaking of gender apart from race, class, ethnicity, and other divisions is inaccurate and distorting (Brewer 1999). Indeed, social relations are so complex that everyone is privileged in some ways and disadvantaged in others, though everyone is not equally privileged and disadvantaged.

As a microcosm of society, the education system is ripe with various forms of intersectionality that disproportionately impact schooling experiences. Black students
experience higher rates of suspension, detention, and expulsion than their white peers; within
the same schools, Black students are punished with more severe forms of discipline than
white students for the same offenses (Sojoyner, 2013; Wald & Losen, 2003). As a result of
residential racial segregation, shelters for students and families affected by housing
instability tend to be located in white, not BIPOC, communities (Crenshaw, 1991). Students
who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, and/or asexual
(LGBTQIA+) are more likely to demonstrate youth risk behavior because of peer
relationships (Poteat et al., 2009), school culture (Chesir-Teran, 2003), and community
environments (Saewyc et al., 2008). For emerging multilingual students, there is often a poor
match between the cultural norms of the home and of the school because what is considered
appropriate in minority-language homes may be unexpected or socially awkward in the
school setting (Greenfield et al., 2000). While each of these nondominant identity markers
are associated with oppression, the concept of intersectionality highlights the compounded
discrimination faced by individuals with multiply marginalized identities. Ignoring the
intersectional nature of these identities means systematically overlooking the experiences of
many different groups of marginalized individuals and, by default, focusing only on the most
privileged individuals (white, middle-class, able-bodied, heterosexual, male), on whom most
theorizing and research are based (Weldon, 2008).

As a social justice-oriented theoretical framework, CRT is well-suited for not only
understanding, but also confronting educational inequity (Crenshaw, 1995). Ladson-Billings
and Tate (1995) first introduced CRT to education, filling what was previously a void in
theoretical frameworks that addressed issues of race in education. In their attempt to theorize
and apply race as an analytic tool for understanding inequities that prevent Black students
from attaining educational excellence in U.S. public schools, Ladson-Billings and Tate made propositions about race and property and their intersections. The proposition that racism is endemic and deeply ingrained in American life is clearly supported by evidence that educational excellence and equity do not exist in the nation’s public schools (p. 55).

The proposition about race and property was delineated further by Harris (1993), who framed whiteness as property through analysis of expectations grounded in white privilege and safeguarded by law (p. 281). The legal sanction of Black subjugation is evident throughout the history of the United States as far back as the 1660s, when “the especially degraded status of Blacks as chattel slaves was recognized by law” (p. 278). Leveraging the pseudoscience of eugenics and craniology of the 18th and 19th centuries, the law continued to privilege whites and other Blacks by defining race as “immutable, scientific, and biologically determined” rather than as a socially constructed hierarchy for preserving white supremacy and marginalizing Black people (pp. 283–284).

Still relevant today, whiteness as property maintains that individuals’ whiteness earns them unearned privileges and human rights that are restricted from Blacks, including citizenship, wealth, education, and voting rights. More specifically, the racial exclusion of Black individuals has consistently benefited whites in the labor context where white workers receive higher compensation as well as what DuBois (1935) termed the “public and psychological wage” (pp. 284–285). To summarize these white-owned benefits, DuBois noted that whites

were given public deference ... because they were white. They were admitted freely with all classes of white people, to public functions, to public parks.... The police were drawn from their ranks, and the courts, dependent upon their votes, treated them
with ... leniency.... Their vote selected public officials, and while this had small effect upon the economic situation, it had great effect on their personal treatment....White schoolhouses were the best in the community, and conspicuously placed, and they cost anywhere from twice to ten times as much per capita as the colored schools. (p. 285)

These hallmarks of white privilege resonated with my white racial identity and positionality as a school leader. Furthermore, Harris and DuBois illuminates the explicit connections between whiteness as property and schooling in the United States. School funding, coaching and supervision, family engagement, hiring practices, political influence, and other essential aspects of schools are susceptible to the racial bias protecting property interest in whiteness.

**Attack on Critical Race Theory**

CRT has recently been a controversial topic of discussion as school districts across the United States enact policies to ban CRT from classrooms. This attack on CRT comes on the heels of a racial awakening that erupted in 2020 after the unjust murders of so many Black people, including George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, by law enforcement and white supremacists. In response to these atrocities, protests for justice and antiracist change swept the nation, #BlackLivesMatter occupied social media, and discussions about race and racism became more prevalent in K–12 classrooms. To counter any threat to white dominance and quell this growth in racial consciousness, white supremist leaders at all levels of government have enacted a widespread movement to eliminate CRT in schools.

Many CRT experts and educators have pointed out that CRT is most often taught in law and graduate courses, not K–12 schools (Cornish et al., 2021). An examination of
proposed bills across various states that name CRT reveals that the current bans are not about CRT itself but about prohibiting teaching and learning about such concepts as systemic racism, conscious and unconscious bias, and privilege. Legislation that restricts students from learning about history, including deculturalization, segregation, and denial of educational opportunities in the U.S. education system, is deeply troubling. This censorship will prevent students from developing a critical lens by silencing educators and eliminating teaching and learning that promotes independent thinking and social justice. CRT is needed in the field of education to illuminate how educational policies, beliefs, and practices uphold white supremacy and sustain racism in all aspects of society. CRT offers a pathway toward creating antiracist schools and achieving equitable outcomes for BIPOC students who have been historically marginalized by the education system (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Stovall, 2006).

Case Study CRT Tenets

In an effort to be intentional and precise during data analysis, this case study focused on specific tenets of CRT: (1) whiteness as property; (2) racism is commonplace in the United States; (3) voices of the oppressed should be used to provide counterstories to dominant narratives; and (4) intersectionality exists and must be considered (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2013). These four CRT concepts in particular informed a racial equity lens that acknowledges the predominance of white supremacy in schools and the multifarious ways that white individuals claim educational institutions as their own. This lens also includes an understanding that counterstories challenge dominant narratives and that intersectionality demands affirmation across all identity groups. This case study’s CRT framework unpacks the influence of white supremacy and offers insights for dismantling racism and working toward racial equity in the school context.
The disconnect between the demand for racial equity in schools and the racial equity practices of schools informs the CRT framework applied throughout this study. According to Khalifa et al. (2016), inclusion, equity, advocacy, and social justice in schools are inextricably linked within education; the failure to explicitly match these core values to education practices at the school level results in consistent opportunity gaps and exclusionary schooling practices that negatively impact Black students (p. 1272). CRT centers race and calls for a close examination of a school’s antiracist practices affecting all community members, especially Black students (Turhan, 2010, p. 1360). With the understanding that intentional collaboration has a tremendous impact on organizational conditions and student engagement, analyzing the education setting through a CRT lens yields a greater understanding of the relationship between racial equity moves and outcomes within a school (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000, p. 416). By applying CRT, this study sought to contribute to the collection of scholarly works that highlight the centrality of race in discussions about educational equity in the United States.

Conclusion

In an era when the educational community is saturated with opportunity-gap discourse, it is clear that the numerous studies, policies, and reports from district, state, and federal agencies have provided data, albeit misleading data, but not outcomes. Furthermore, these top-down data-collection initiatives have been leveraged to substantiate opportunity gaps that marginalize Black students and preserve white dominance. The oppression of Black students through the racist education system continues to be an urgent but trivialized issue in education, even though the vanguard of education leaders has consistently advocated for
change over time. In his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Brazilian educator, philosopher, and fierce advocate of critical pedagogy Paulo Freire (1970/2000) wrote,

> The truth is … that the oppressed are not “marginals,” are not people living “outside” society. They have always been “inside”—inside the structure which made them “beings for others.” The solution is not to “integrate” them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become “beings for themselves.” Such transformation, of course, would undermine the oppressors’ purposes. (p. 74)

Over 50 years ago, Freire proposed the solution that society must transform racist structures so individuals who have been oppressed can become “beings for themselves” (p. 74). Educators have a moral obligation to act upon Freire’s poignant words and lead the social justice change that will dismantle unjust systems in schools.

This racial equity work must occur at the school level because past and present words and actions prove that district, state, and national leadership cannot be relied on to make equitable decisions that serve the best interests of Black students. Educators, leaders, families, and community partners are well-positioned to engage in racial-equity school leadership because they intimately know their school settings and can implement a multilayered approach to creating and sustaining a school culture of achievement for Black students. At the heart of this adaptive work is the centrality of race and racism, discourses that, according to Khalifa et al. (2016) must begin early in elementary schools without being “diluted to the extent that they become ineffectual” (p. 507).

This literature review reveals that critical conversations about race and racism have not yet been prioritized in the education literature. Furthermore, racial-equity collaborative
leadership has not yet been critically examined from the perspective of school-based leadership teams engaged in this work. These gaps in the literature reveal that research is needed to investigate how a multilayered approach to racial equity can be applied in education settings. How do educators, leaders, families, and community partners maintain the centrality of race? Moreover, how can a case study capture participants’ reflections on positionality, process, and progress monitoring?
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

What was unique about Brown Elementary School and the work that they were doing was the specificity on centering race. All work in schools connects with race and racism. In other schools, my work around improving inclusive opportunities for students was deeply connected to race, but it wasn’t necessarily talked about as an explicit part of that work.

—Alison, case study participant

This chapter presents a rationale for applying single-case study methodology in this research, including an analysis of how other single-case studies have examined school settings. The chapter details the study’s research design, offers a description of Brown Elementary School as the research site, discusses the ethical concerns accompanying this school-based research, and describes of the researcher and participants involved in the study. The data collection, data analysis, and interpretation strategies that aligned with the single-case study methodology are also described.

With the understanding that top-down leadership has served to maintain the racist status quo in public education by oppressing Black students and privileging white students, this case study sought to confront opportunity gaps by exploring racial equity at the school level. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, opportunity gaps persist because schools are too often resistant to racial equity work and do not have clear models that combine scholarly research and effective practice. Instead of identifying solutions to racist issues at the core of
racial inequity, district, state, and federal leaders have perpetuated racism by assigning blame to “underachieving” students and citing racial subgroup achievement data from standardized measurements (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

At the individual school level, educators, families, and community members are more knowledgeable than top-down leaders and policymakers about resources, systems, and structures and are uniquely positioned to facilitate reform within their school communities (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990). Even so, sustained racial equity work requires intentionality in not only addressing systemic racism, but also establishing counternarratives that normalize Black achievement (Bell, 1995; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

To explore how Brown Elementary School approaches racial equity, I employed case study as a methodology. Specifically, I relied on case study methods to describe and systematically analyze the experiences of educators, families, and community members collaborating to develop a school culture of achievement for Black students in a racially and ethnically diverse elementary school community.

**Single-Case Study Rationale**

This study aimed to capture how Brown Elementary School, an urban public elementary school, enacted a multilayered approach to racial equity. Acknowledging that Brown prioritizes racial equity as its schoolwide focus, I selected a single-case study approach (Stake, 1995). In my role as the researcher, I carefully investigated the candidate case to ensure that Brown would provide ample case study evidence aligning with the research questions for and overall focus of this study. As an elementary school to be studied, Brown represents elements that make it both a common and unusual case. Brown is a
traditional public elementary school serving students from kindergarten through Grade 5 that, at the time of this study, had been working toward a vision for racial equity for over 6 years. In this manner, an urban elementary school can become a site for learning about potential considerations for collaborative practices and processes that can contribute to the development of a school culture of achievement for Black students. An in-depth analysis of Brown confirmed, challenged, and extended knowledge and theory building about racial equity in the elementary school setting (Yin, 2018).

Case study research includes an expansive collection of explanatory works that have uncovered key understandings within their respective fields. Allison’s (1971) study of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis revolutionized the field of international relations through its use of single-case methodology. Allison proposed three different theories to explain the crisis—that the United States and the Soviet Union performed as (1) rational actors, (2) complex bureaucracies, or (3) politically motivated groups of individuals. Allison contrasted the lessons from the case study with prevailing alternative explanations in post-Cold War studies and international politics, demonstrating how a single-case study can serve as the basis for insightful generalizations (Yin, 2018). Similarly, in the field of education, case study research has contributed significant findings to the discourse community. Educator and researcher Andrew Pollard (1996) has worked with students, families, and educators using multiple forms of data collection to “identify and trace the major social influences on children’s approach to classroom learning” (Pollard & Filer, 1996, p. xi). Reflecting on case study methodology, Pollard (2011) stated,
Since I wanted to understand the social influences on learning which you would expect to be holistic, complicated, and multilayered, it seemed to me that getting close to community and families was a necessary part of looking at that issue. (p. 14)

Pollard’s positionality as a former teacher influenced his decision to engage in case study research. As an educator, he understood and appreciated the importance that case study methodology ascribes to the complexities of individuals, variables, and interactions—all essential components of educational communities (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013).

As with all research methods, there are particular concerns associated with case study research. One prevalent concern with case study research is a presumed need for greater rigor, which must be addressed by following systematic procedures, including the fair reporting of all evidence (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). One critique that is unique to the single-case study design is that it lacks the analytic benefits of having two or more cases, the assumption being that analytic conclusions arising independently from two cases will be more powerful than those emerging from a single case (Yin, 2018). While the study of more than one case does allow for comparison, a case study by definition is expected to capture the complexity of a single case, “coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (Stake, 1995, p. xi). Indeed, a case study enhances understanding of contexts, communities, and individuals (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013).

Case study research is not sampling research; the aim of studying a case is to maximize learning from that one case, not to understand other cases (Stake, 1995). The deterioration or amelioration of a school system, for example, has neither simple causes nor simple manifestations, and what is true in one instance will not be true under different circumstances or in a different context. Indeed, the most effective case study, and the aim of
this single-case study, is to contribute to understandings, to assertions, and even to modifying preexisting generalizations (Stake, 1995). The goal is to expand and generalize theories, not to extrapolate probabilities (Yin, 2018). This single-case study offers the opportunity for a “generalizing,” not a “particularizing,” analysis (Lipset et al., 1956, pp. 419–420).

Another critique of case study research is the ostensibly “unmanageable” level of effort it involves, which can consume considerable amounts of time and produce massive, unwieldy documentation. According to Yin (2018), this concern stems from the way case studies have been conducted in the past, as Feagin et al. (1991) noted in their seminal work *A Case for the Case Study*. Case study methodology has evolved, and there are alternative ways to compose a case study to make the research process more manageable. Case study research can be incorrectly confused with a specific method of data collection, such as ethnography, which typically requires long periods in the field and emphasizes detailed observational and interview evidence. In the context of this research study, I was an observer and a participant—as the school leader for 5 years—but did not collect data the entire time. Given the time limitations and descriptive nature of this study, a case study was a more appropriate fit since, as a form of inquiry, single-case study research does not depend solely on ethnographic data (Yin, 2018).

This single-case study of Brown was of special interest because we needed to understand what was happening while acknowledging that it was both similar and unique to other cases. Such duality of uniqueness and commonality contributes to the nuanced complexity of a single-case study. Case study was appropriate for examining the Brown Elementary School context because it offered thorough investigation and analysis of a singular case. Implicit and explicit engagements within the school magnified different
elements of the community and contributed to the ultimate goal of understanding the case itself.

**Research Questions**

As noted earlier, I established a rationale for confronting racial opportunity gaps at the school level based on the failure of district leaders and policymakers to challenge white supremacy and dismantle the systemic racism that marginalizes Black students in public education. This research explored the Brown Elementary School context, an educational community striving to become an antiracist and inclusive institution. With critical race theory as its theoretical framework, this study addressed the following research questions:

- How does an urban public elementary school enact a multilayered approach to racial equity?
- How do educators, families, and community members describe their experiences collaborating to develop a school culture of achievement for Black students in an urban elementary school setting?
- What collaborative practices and processes were instrumental for educators, families, and community members in fostering a school culture of achievement for Black students in an urban elementary school?

**Research Design**

To fully grasp case study’ roots in experiential understanding, it is necessary to explore the nature of qualitative research more broadly. According to Stake (1995), the purpose of qualitative research is to understand the complex interrelationships among all that exists. Rather than explain why things are the way they are, qualitative studies describe in depth how things are at a particular place at a particular moment. Qualitative research
leverages the resulting narratives to provide readers with an opportunity to gain an experiential understanding of the case. Another hallmark of qualitative research that distinguishes it from quantitative research is the role of interpretation as method. Unlike quantitative designs that intentionally limit personal interpretation, qualitative research encourages researchers to be in the field, making observations, exercising subjective judgment, analyzing and synthesizing, and developing their own consciousness through interpretation (Stake 1995).

Case study research involves the study of an issue explored through a case within a bounded system (Creswell, 2007). Cases are deeply embedded in their contexts and include investigatory learning focused on a specific sociocultural group, with the goal of better understanding a particular phenomenon (Stake, 1995). From this perspective, any social institution can serve as a case to be studied. Schools in particular fit this depiction given their reproduction of societal phenomena and their propensity to function as microcosms of society. Indeed, case study is an especially powerful tool for researchers and practitioners who work with people in multicultural settings, such as educational institutions. Rooted in the tradition of qualitative research, case study as a methodology combines cultural analysis and interpretation (Stake, 1995). Through deep analysis, often illuminating conflict or tension, the nature of people and systems becomes more transparent. The resulting stories told by case study researchers are intended to resonate with others through their particular nature, lending this methodology to critical perspectives confronting the ways power and privilege are both reproduced and resisted (Stake, 1995).

As discussed previously in the “Single-Case Study Rationale” section, within case study design, there is a primary distinction between single- and multiple-case studies. The
single-case study provides an opportunity to explore a theory with a clear set of circumstances within which its propositions are believed to be true. The single case can then be leveraged to determine whether the propositions are correct or whether some alternative set of explanations might prove more relevant (Yin, 2018). In *Implementing Organizational Innovations*, Gross et al. (1971) focused on a single school whose history of innovation was the primary reason for selecting it for research since no one could claim that the school suffered from “barriers to innovation.” Gross et al. (1971) showed that, in this school, an innovation also failed but that the failure was attributable to implementation processes rather than barriers. Though limited to a single case, the book represents a pivotal finding in organizational innovation theory. Since the study, the literature has shifted significantly to focus more on implementation processes rather than identification of barriers to innovation (Yin, 2018).

A single-case study considers both the uniqueness and commonality of the case (Stake, 1995). A case is deemed unusual when it deviates from theoretical norms or everyday occurrences. Conversely, the common case is also well-suited for a single-case study, as the objective is to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday situation. Both unusual and common cases have the propensity to provide lessons about the social processes related to some theoretical interest. A revelatory case exists when a researcher has an opportunity to observe and analyze a phenomenon previously inaccessible to social science inquiry. For example, in his study of the drug-dealing marketplace in Spanish Harlem, in New York City, Bourgois (2003) gained the trust and long-term friendship of two dozen community members, revealing a lifestyle that few had ever been able to study. When researchers can uncover some prevalent phenomenon previously inaccessible to social
scientists, such conditions justify the use of a single-case study (Yin, 2018). The current study was also categorized as an intrinsic case study because the focus was on the case itself wherein the case presented an unusual or unique situation (Creswell, 2007). In the context of Brown Elementary School, the usual met the revelatory where a school-based leadership team applied a multilayered approach to racial equity.

At the heart of confronting systemic oppression, the issues that case studies intend to investigate are articulated in the research questions. The case study’s research questions highlight the complexity and contextuality of the case while narrowing the focus and minimizing interest in the situation and circumstance. The research questions also highlight the issues to be grappled with by identifying constraints and coping with problems. The formulation of research questions around particular issues provides a conceptual structure for organizing the study of a case, with issues being intricately wired to political, social, historical, and personal contexts. According to Stake (1995),

Issues draw us toward observing, even teasing out, the problems of the case, the conflictual outpourings, the complex backgrounds of human concern. Issues help us expand upon the moment, help us see the instance in a more historical light, help us recognize the pervasive problems in human interaction. (p. 17)

Racial equity was the issue embedded in and that guided this single-case study’s three research questions (Stake, 1995).

**Research Site: Brown Elementary School**

This study took place at Brown Elementary School, a traditional public school located in an urban district in the northeastern United States. According to a 2020 “School and District Profile” published by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary
Education, the “Student Race and Ethnicity” statistics of Brown are as follows: 25.7% of students identify as “African American”/Black; 3.6% identify as Asian; 22.2% identify as “Hispanic”/Latinx; 2.4% identify as “Native American”; 39.5% identify as white; and 6.6% identify as “multi-race, non-Hispanic” (DESE, 2020). Because Brown is more heterogeneous than most other schools in the district, which are segregated according to their geographical neighborhoods, the racial breakdown of the Brown student body made it a strong fit for this study focused on racial equity leadership.

In the school district where Brown is located, school registration is based on the Home-Based Assignment Plan (HBAP), which was launched by the school committee in March 2013 with the intention of ensuring that each family has a range of high-quality school choices both within and outside their neighborhood (Levinson, 2015). However, after several years of implementation, the algorithmic component of the school assignment process served to further segregate K–12 schools by protecting the options of educationally and geographically advantaged families and failing to mitigate the lack of high-quality choices available in underserved neighborhoods. Consequently, Black, Latinx, and lower income students and families were concentrated in lower tier schools “while simultaneously, Asian and white students became increasingly concentrated at a small number of schools that were more likely to be of high quality” (O’Brien et al., 2018, p. 3).

The neighborhood where Brown is located is not immune to the effects of the misguided HBAP policy and rampant gentrification. The DESE School and District Profile reveals that Brown’s students were 31.7% Black, 31.7 Latinx, and 28.7% white in 2013. In just 7 years, the dominant majority shifted from Black and Latinx to white students, even though the 2019 district-level enrollment data show higher numbers of Students of Color,
with 30% Black, 42.4% Latinx, and 14.9% white (DESE, 2020). This change in racial demographics also highlights Brown’s value as a research site. Teachers and leaders in schools experiencing racial demographic shifts need training in how to prevent and address inequities as well as facilitate integration within a racially diverse school.

As a gentrifying neighborhood, the Brown school community might be experiencing resegregation through what Mordechay and Ayscue (2020) identified as a process of “pass-through” diversity, whereby “communities become diverse at the forefront of neighborhood change, followed by a process of resegregation” (p. 26). The Brown school seems to be in the resegregation phase of this phenomenon as white enrollment increases and the number of Black and Brown students decreases. Without intentional antiracist intervention, representational shifts can be accompanied by transitions in power that disproportionately benefit the white privileged dominant group and marginalize minoritized groups. An additional demographics chart from DESE with the heading “Selected Populations” indicates that 22.2% are students whose first language is not English; 20.4% are English language learners; 25.7% are students with dis/abilities; 48.5% are labeled as “high needs”; and 27.5% are categorized as “economically disadvantaged” (DESE, 2020). These data offer contextual school site information that shapes Brown’s racial equity work.

Brown Elementary School utilizes a variety of framework tools to support reflection and progress monitoring toward racial equity goals. The Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist Multicultural Organization is one resource the school-based leadership team leverages to self-assess where the Brown community is situated along the continuum (see Appendix G). In practice, this tool is utilized by individuals and teams to provide data on where
community members see traction as well as opportunities for growth (Regional Arts and Culture Council, 2020).

Brown’s priorities, leadership teams, and overall vision for equity are grounded in Perry’s (2017) research, namely her theory of practice, “Towards a Definition of a Culture of Achievement” (TACA), which comprises detailed and actionable indicators. In her TACA framework, Perry asserted that schools must create conditions that normalize achievement for Black students, who must be given the opportunity to engage as full members of an educational program in which membership means being an achiever. Perry stated,

A school has a culture of achievement when it is animated by articulated and taken-for-granted beliefs, practices, routines, rituals and traditions that combine to create an organizational context where students understand that being a member of the school community means being an achiever. (p. 1)

To create this type of educational setting, schools must offer a broad range of supports that enable students to acquire the skills and behaviors necessary for being an achiever. Also, all adults in the school community—and, over time, students—must believe that all students can do high-level academic work. According to Perry, adopting this mindset results in educators rejecting the practice of “exceptionalizing the achievement of a category or a few students” as well as higher levels of self-efficacy among teachers and students in meeting the standard of excellence for equitable teaching and learning (p. 1). Perry detailed 19 TACA indicators, all of which are designed to be implemented across various organizational systems at the school level. Brown Elementary School’s ILT, for example, used the TACA indicators to facilitate peer observations during the fall of 2018. Each grade-level team was asked to select one TACA indicator as an area of focus for the observers. After observations for all K–5
classrooms were completed, the ILT reviewed evidence of TACA collected at Brown. This process resulted in the Brown Excellence in Teaching tool (see Appendix H), a resource now used regularly for observation and feedback, instructional coaching, educator evaluation, and unit design.

**Ethical Concerns**

Since this research focused on the ways that educators, families, and community members described antiracist collaborative work to develop a school culture of achievement for Black students, ethics played an important role in this study. Individuals from the Brown community and their individual perspectives, experiences, and overall influence have been interwoven throughout the narrative components of this research (Morse, 2002). Since this research incorporated interviews, observations, and artifacts involving the work and voices of others, this study was treated in the same way as other social science research requiring Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Comprising faculty members and district administrators who review and approve research, the IRB ensured that the practices of this study adhered to the principles of “informed consent,” “right to privacy,” and “protection from harm” (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 662).

Recognizing the long and problematic history of exploitative research practices between white researchers and Communities of Color, protecting the rights of all Brown Elementary School community members was essential. To this end, I ensured that disclosing my identity as the researcher did not make the identities of others become transparent to the broader audience. To protect the privacy of others connected to me through the school community, I used pseudonyms for contributors, created composite figures based on factual
details to obscure identities, and allowed others’ voices to tell parts of the story (Chang, 2016).

Given the involvement and leadership of so many individuals who have contributed to the racial equity work at Brown Elementary School and to this study, all research undertaken at Brown honored the efforts that were underway and guarded against disrupting the work in progress. To this end, all knowledge gleaned from this inquiry was shared with the community. As the case researcher, I spoke with—not for—the Brown community about the collective journey toward racial equity. This single-case study was a co-construction of perception and consciousness living within the Brown community. All co-constructed knowledge and solutions will be used to strengthen racial equity efforts as this work is collectively owned by Brown community members. Participants in this research knew upfront that they would be credited for their contributions in any future publications related to the study. As the researcher, I also made it known that my positionality as a white, heterosexual, cisgender, male school leader contributed to a specific lens that includes bias. More specifically, my whiteness, maleness, and single-administrator role in a school that serves Students of Color was of great concern. To avoid a potentially harmful ethical dilemma and conduct this single-case study with special care and sensitivity, I engaged in critical self-reflection and reflexivity (Yin, 2018). Lastly, I clarified the aim of this research study, which was not to dictate what should or should not be done in schools based on the work happening at Brown Elementary School, but to employ a critical theoretical lens (i.e., CRT) to unpack research questions related to racial equity leadership. Although this case study tells the story of racial equity at Brown Elementary School, I affirm that the resulting narrative is not mine to own. My multifaceted role as a case researcher, informant, and
author, required self-awareness that no story is written in a vacuum and that so many others have contributed to this complex narrative.

Participants

This single-case study leveraged the perspectives of representative community members to center the connections between participants within a broader sociocultural context, provide ways to explore complex relationships, and ultimately illuminate Brown’s racial equity work targeting racist systems that permeate schools and society (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Once my study proposal was approved by my dissertation committee, the University of Massachusetts Boston’s IRB, and the school district’s IRB, I selected interview participants using a criterion selection process. In such practices, participants are chosen who meet predetermined criteria of importance to ensure a minimum baseline experience (Patton, 2002). The participant selection criteria for this single-case study included: (1) school-based staff members who were employed by the district in which Brown is located; (2) families who had at least one child attending Brown; (3) community members who had been involved in Brown’s racial equity efforts; and (4) community members who reflected the racial, cultural, gender, and linguistic diversity of Brown.

In alignment with the fourth criterion, selection focused on individuals who self-identified as BIPOC and possessed identities, including gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity, representing the diversity of the Brown community. In honoring the voices and preferences of people who contributed to this research study, BIPOC includes identity terms they most recognized for self-identification. Stakeholders who self-identified as white were not excluded from the research collective, as antiracist work must be understood and championed by white individuals. Any efforts to become an antiracist multicultural
institution cannot be solely championed by BIPOC individuals who are too often expected to do the work of racial equity leadership. Also, I prioritized participants who were involved in the school at different moments in time to capture different perspectives on racial equity efforts over the course of 7 years. Lastly, participants’ roles within and/or relationships to the school community were considered for the purpose of representation across multiple stakeholder groups.

The sample size target was 12–15 staff members, families, and community members who would provide a large enough interview pool to respond appropriately to this single-case study’s research questions concerning a multilayered approach to racial equity. Participant recruitment included write-ups in the family and staff newsletters as well as email outreach to collaborators in racial equity leadership at Brown (see Appendix I). These individuals included lead teachers, instructional coaches, Race and Ethnicity Committee co-chairs and participants, Dialogues on Race and Ethnicity facilitators and participants, racial affinity group family and staff participants, and REC Family Liaisons, and Equity Roundtable participants (see Appendix A). From those who expressed interest in the study, participants were selected based upon the degree to which they met the determined criteria. Ultimately, the target sample size goal was exceeded, and 16 community members participated in the study (see Table 1). As a result of an intentional selection process that prioritized BIPOC participation, 10 of the 16 educators interviewed in this study identified as such. More specifically, nine of the participants identified as Black, five as white, and two as Latinx and white.
Table 1

*Interview Participants: Race, Role, and Years of Service*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher *</th>
<th>Ethno-Racial Identity</th>
<th>Pronouns</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Years at School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alison</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>she/her</td>
<td>principal fellow</td>
<td>2020–2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>she/her</td>
<td>educator</td>
<td>2018–2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arewa Obas</td>
<td>Black, Haitian</td>
<td>she/her</td>
<td>educator</td>
<td>2021–2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Sky</td>
<td>Black, African American</td>
<td>she/her</td>
<td>STEM coach</td>
<td>2020–2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol Atkins</td>
<td>Black, non-Latina</td>
<td>she/her</td>
<td>family</td>
<td>2018–2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cece</td>
<td>Black, Haitian Afro-Latin</td>
<td>she/her</td>
<td>family</td>
<td>2015–2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celia</td>
<td>Black, African American</td>
<td>she/her</td>
<td>principal fellow</td>
<td>2021–2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebony</td>
<td>Black, Jamaican</td>
<td>she/her</td>
<td>community member</td>
<td>2015–2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>white, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>she/her</td>
<td>principal</td>
<td>2013–2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirabel</td>
<td>Latina, white</td>
<td>she/her</td>
<td>family/community member</td>
<td>2015–2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molly</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>she/her</td>
<td>family</td>
<td>2015–2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>he/his</td>
<td>family</td>
<td>2018–2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priscilla</td>
<td>Hispanic, white</td>
<td>she/her</td>
<td>family</td>
<td>2008–2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shantel</td>
<td>Black, Haitian American</td>
<td>she/her</td>
<td>educator</td>
<td>2015–2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacey</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>she/her</td>
<td>educator</td>
<td>1987–2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terry Jackson</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>he/his</td>
<td>family liaison</td>
<td>2021–2022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *All names in this study are participant-selected pseudonyms.*

When participants were selected, they were notified via email and asked to agree to an informed consent form (see Appendix J), which provided a description of the research, the
potential risks and discomforts of involvement, a disclaimer concerning benefits to the participant, measures taken to ensure participant confidentiality, a notice of voluntary participation, and the researcher’s contact information for research-related questions or problems. Once participants reviewed the informed consent form, they expressed their agreement by signing and returning electronic or hardcopies of the document, all of which were added to my data-storage system located in a password-protected computer. Though I did not intend to look for performance issues or impart judgment on individuals during the interviews, I acknowledged the power dynamics at play given my whiteness, maleness, and school leader role (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013). To this end, I shared steps I was taking to conduct this case study with special care and intentionality, and safeguard against any negative repercussions beyond the potential risks and discomforts named in the study’s consent form. In addition, I scheduled one-to-one check-ins as needed to give participants an opportunity to learn more about the research and raise questions about the single-case study. Given the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic, interviews occurred either in person at the school (in accordance with the district’s health and safety policy) or remotely via Zoom conferencing software. At the start of each interview, participants provided verbal authorization to be recorded via Otter recording and transcription software.

**Alison**

Alison was a principal fellow with the Brown community during the 2020–2021 school year through a school-leader preparation program located at a local private university. Before joining Brown, Alison was a second-grade teacher at an in-district charter school. Alison’s racial equity efforts at Brown included planning and facilitating the Race and Ethnicity Committee Dialogues, white affinity groups for staff members, and collaborative
learning sessions for staff members. Alison now serves as the principal of a different K–5 full-inclusion elementary school in the same district.

Ann

Ann is a second-grade learning specialist and co-teacher. Prior to joining the Brown community in 2018, Ann was a high school special education and ESL teacher at an in-district charter school in the same district. Ann has participated in the REC Dialogues as well as collaborative learning sessions for staff and families focused on intersectionality, culturally responsive teaching, and antiracist social justice unit planning. Ann also planned and facilitated white affinity group sessions for staff members.

Arewa Obas

Arewa is a Grade 5 learning specialist and co-teacher who joined the Brown community in 2021. Arewa also serves as lead teacher, a stipended role that involves collaborating with the school’s administrators to plan and facilitate Instructional Leadership Team meetings, collaborative learning sessions, peer observations, and other staff-facing opportunities related to equitable teaching and learning at Brown. Before teaching at Brown, Arewa was an elementary ESL teacher at a different public school in the same district. Arewa’s racial equity efforts include planning and facilitating the REC Dialogues, Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action, collaborative learning sessions for staff members, and REC Equity Roundtable meetings for staff and families.

Blue Sky

Blue Sky is a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) instructional coach who joined the Brown community in 2020 through a district initiative designed to support strategic improvement in STEM teaching and learning in elementary
school classrooms. Before joining the Brown community, Blue Sky was a sixth- and seventh-grade science teacher at a middle school in the same district. Blue Sky has planned and facilitated collaborative learning for staff members, including planning and coaching sessions that wove STEM, literacy, and antiracist social justice teaching and learning. Blue Sky also participated in the BIPOC affinity group.

Carol Atkins

Carol was a family member at Brown from 2018 to 2020, when her grandson was in Grades 3 and 4. Throughout her 2 years at Brown, Carol engaged in the REC Dialogues, as well as collaborative learning sessions for staff and families focused on culturally responsive and antiracist social justice unit planning. Carol was also lead organizer of Arts Night, a community event to celebrate the arts and diversity at Brown. The REC event raised funds to support equitable access to student-facing opportunities, including instrumental music, before- and after-school enrichment, and the 10 Boys and 10 Girls Initiatives (see Appendix K).

Cece

Cece is mom to a Grade 5 student and has been a family member at Brown since 2015, when she participated in the community’s inaugural REC Dialogues. Cece is also a high school educator at a different public school in the same district. Since REC began in 2016, Cece has served as the team’s co-chair, working closely with the other co-chair and Brown school administrators to act upon the REC vision for racial equity. To that end, Cece’s REC leadership has involved co-developing schoolwide priorities, facilitating collaborative learning sessions for staff and families, providing community resources in response to current events, co-planning and facilitating the REC Dialogues, organizing
BIPOC affinity spaces, and consistently applying an antiracist lens to teaching, learning, and decision making at Brown.

*Celia*

Celia was a principal fellow with the Brown community during the 2021–2022 school year through a school-leader preparation program located at a local private university. Before joining Brown, Celia was an administrator at a different K–8 public school in the same district. Celia’s racial equity efforts at Brown included planning and facilitating the REC Dialogues, Equity Roundtables for staff members and families, and collaborative learning sessions for staff members. Celia also took part in the BIPOC affinity group.

*Ebony*

Ebony was a family engagement liaison for the district and responsible for supporting several schools, including Brown Elementary School, from 2014 to 2017. Ebony transitioned to director of the family engagement team in 2017, but she still remained engaged in the Brown school community throughout the 2017–2018 school year. Her initial involvement with Brown began in 2014 when the principal asked for support engaging more BIPOC dads. Ebony became more involved the following school year (2015–2016) when she co-planned and co-facilitated professional learning for staff focused on identity and racism, engaged in the school’s first Dialogues series, helped launch the “Race Matters” campaign, and co-developed the REC with community members from Brown. Ebony also supported professional learning for staff and participated in Dialogues during the 2016–2017 school year. Ebony now serves as the principal of a K–2 full-inclusion elementary school in the same district.
**Kathy**

Kathy was the principal of Brown Elementary School from 2013 to 2017. When she joined the community, there was no evidence of explicit conversations about race in any contexts. In her second year at Brown (2014–2015), Kathy leveraged the Common Planning Time (CPT) structure to engage educators in instructional work related to race and equity. These activities included taking the Implicit Associations Test, reading an APA article about biases in preservice teachers, sharing personal stories about racialized incidents, and disaggregating data by racial subgroups. For the following school year, there was an articulated priority focused on engaging families in racial equity efforts, which was also informed by a mom’s accounts of racism impacting her Black son in pre-K at the school in the spring of 2015. Throughout the 2015–2016 school year, Kathy affirmed the school’s racial equity priority, co-planned and co-facilitated professional learning for staff focused on identity and racism, organized the school’s first Dialogues series, helped launch the Race Matters campaign, and co-developed the REC with community members from Brown. Under Kathy’s leadership, the racial equity priority remained and was supported by professional learning for staff members, an established REC, and a second Dialogues series during the 2016–2017 school year. Kathy transitioned from Brown at the end of the 2016–2017 school year and now serves as a leadership coach with a school-leader preparation program located at a local private university.

**Mirabel**

Mirabel is mom to a Grade 5 student and has been a family member in the Brown community since 2015. Mirabel also works for an education-focused nonprofit committed to providing educational equity and supporting educational opportunities for Students of Color.
and others who have been denied educational opportunities. Mirabel has volunteered time and expertise from her professional work to support co-planning antiracist and culturally responsive social justice teaching with educators at Brown. Mirabel has also participated in Dialogues, School Site Council, Equity Roundtables, and REC collaborative learning sessions. She served as the Family Council co-chair during the 2016–2017 school year, and she facilitated a white affinity book group for families in 2020.

_Molly_

Molly is mom to a Grade 5 student and has been a family member at Brown since 2015, when she participated in the community’s inaugural Dialogues. Since REC began in 2016, Molly has served as the team’s co-chair, working closely with the other co-chair and Brown school administrators to act upon the REC vision for racial equity. Molly’s REC leadership has involved co-developing schoolwide priorities, facilitating collaborative learning sessions for staff and families, providing community resources in response to current events, co-planning and facilitating the REC Dialogues, organizing a white affinity book group, and consistently applying an antiracist lens to teaching, learning, and decision making at Brown.

_Paul_

Paul is dad to a third-grade student and first-grade student and has been a family member at Brown since 2018. Throughout his 4 years at Brown, Paul has engaged in the REC Dialogues, School Site Council, Family Council, and collaborative learning sessions for staff and families focused on culturally responsive and antiracist social justice unit planning.
**Priscilla**

Priscilla is mom to a fifth-grade student as well as a Brown alumni who moved on from the school in 2015. Priscilla has been a family member at Brown for 14 years. In the first 7 years when her daughter was a student at Brown, there were no discussions about race and no opportunities to engage in racial equity work. During the most recent 7 years, Priscilla has participated in the REC Dialogues, School Site Council, and Equity Roundtables. She also served as the Family Council co-chair during the 2014–2015 and 2017–2018 school years.

**Shantel**

Shantel is a second-grade co-teacher. Prior to joining the Brown community in 2015, Shantel was a second-grade teacher at a K–5 school in the same district. Shantel has participated in the REC Dialogues as well as collaborative learning sessions for staff and families focused on intersectionality, culturally responsive teaching, and antiracist social justice unit planning. After participating in the inaugural Dialogues in 2016, Shantel helped launch the Race Matters campaign and co-developed the REC with other community members from Brown. Shantel also planned and facilitated numerous BIPOC affinity group sessions for staff members and has served as the co-leader of the REC Family Liaisons since 2018.

**Stacey**

Stacey is a substitute teacher, home and hospital tutor, and student mentor at Brown. Prior to retiring from teaching in 2018, Stacey taught first grade at the Brown Elementary School for 33 years. Her involvement in racial equity efforts included staff collaborative learning opportunities during CPT and professional development from 2014 to 2018 as well
as leadership of the 10 Girls Initiative from 2018 to 2020. Beyond participating in the school-based teams and collaborative structures, Stacey prioritized racial equity by serving on hiring committees to increase staff diversity, communicating openly with administrators and establishing strong relationships with students, especially male Students of Color.

**Terry Jackson**

Terry is a family liaison who joined Brown Elementary School in 2021. Before arriving at Brown, Terry worked as a student counselor for a nonprofit organization based in a high school in the same district. Terry has planned and facilitated REC Dialogues, including collaborative learning sessions focused on generational wealth and racial equity with three other school communities. Terry is also involved in the Equity Roundtables and REC Family Liaisons.

**Researcher**

At the time I conducted this single-case study focused on collaborative leadership toward racial equity, I was a case researcher and doctoral student at the University of Massachusetts Boston as well as principal of Brown Elementary School, the school community under investigation. My school leader role meant that I was in a position to enact change, and it would have been reckless not to use the power and privilege embedded in the principalship to engage in racial equity work.

In my dual identities as a white, cisgender, male researcher and practitioner in a single-administrator school, there were critically concerning power dynamics that required special attention. In Chapter 1, I explained how my identity as a white, cisgender, male school leader impacted the way I collected and analyzed data. I also acknowledged that my school leader role and membership within the Brown school community shaped my view of
this work and may have affected how the study’s participants responded to my insider/outsider positionality (Banks, 1998, p. 8).

Knowing that absolute objectivity is impossible, I engaged in reflexive practices and critical self-reflection (Khalifa et al., 2016) as a primary leadership behaviors exhibited by culturally responsive school leaders. Throughout data collection, interpretation, and analysis, I reflected on my research practices and journaled about what I was observing, learning, and questioning. My researcher journal, which included reflexive notes from interviews, observations, and artifacts, allowed me to unpack my thoughts and remain aware of my biases throughout the research process. As detailed earlier, I also used additional strategies for ensuring that this research produced findings consistent with the realities of the discourse and participants in this single-case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Data Collection Methods

Qualitative researchers are often criticized for doing too little fieldwork, for observing too few cultural members, and for not spending enough time with others whose perspectives and experiences are different from their own (Buzard, 2003; Delamont, 2009; Fine, 2003). Furthermore, in utilizing experiential understanding, case researchers are thought to not only rely on subjective data, but also neglect the scholarly obligations of hypothesizing, analyzing, and theorizing (Anderson, 2006; Atkinson, 1997; Gans, 1999). In acknowledgment of these criticisms of qualitative research methods and with a commitment to contributing meaningfully to extant discourse, this inquiry employed multiple methods, including observation, document review, and interviews. This triangulation of data supported a broader understanding of the phenomena under investigation, thus adding reliability and validity to the inquiry (Denzin, 1978; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015).
Each of these methods alone could not provide sufficient evidence to address the study’s research questions. Yet, when combined, a richer, more comprehensive account of Brown Elementary School’s collaborative and multilayered approach to racial equity could be considered. Throughout data collection, this case study’s research questions and theoretical lens served as a north star, facilitating continuous interaction between the issues being studied and the data being collected (Yin, 2018).

**Observation: Data Collection**

To achieve a more nuanced understanding of this case and the issues under investigation, rich and meaningful information was collected via observations (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2018). The data gleaned from observations contributed another layer of understanding to this study and supported the validity of research findings (Patton, 2002). Observations included staff collaborative learning (professional development), common planning time, classroom instruction, and school-based team meetings (Race and Ethnicity Committee, School Site Council, Instructional Leadership Team, Family Council, Culture of Achievement Team, and Equity Roundtables).

To support systematic data collection, this study borrowed from Merriam’s (1998) six key elements for observation data collection: (1) physical setting; (2) participants; (3) activities and interactions; (4) conversation; (5) subtle factors; (6) researcher’s behavior. The “researcher’s behavior” element provided a delineated space for engaging in self-reflection and remaining aware of any assumptions that may have contributed to bias. Throughout all observations, I paid close attention to detail to gather necessary data for developing vicarious experiences for readers of this single-case study (Stake, 1995). Because details are fundamental to construction of meaning for readers, observation included such data as
classroom configurations, bulletin board displays, and classroom book titles. To support detailed notetaking during observation data collection, I embraced a peripheral membership role and limited my interaction with participants. Given the realities and responsibilities of my principal role, there were contexts in which I was expected to be a fully participatory member immersed in the setting and engaged in active participation (Adler & Adler, 1998). These contexts were not included, and only observations where I could engage as a peripheral member were selected for this research study.

Data collection notes were recorded during the observation in a Microsoft Word note-catcher document using a laptop computer. The note catcher was organized into six sections aligned with the six elements for observation data collection (Merriam, 1998). Detailed notes related to physical settings, participants, activities and interactions, conversations, subtle factors, and my researcher behavior were categorized into their corresponding sections of the note catcher.

**Observation: Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Observation data analysis included review of note-catcher data immediately after each observation. Note-catcher data were used to write up observations as fieldnotes, which were structured according to the study’s theoretical framework and research questions. This intentional structure ensured alignment between the inquiry’s examination and the existing literature throughout various phases of data analysis, including back and forth between inductive and deductive reasoning. The fieldnote format included eight sections: (1) whiteness; (2) racism is commonplace; (3) counternarratives; (4) intersectionality; (5) multilayered approach to racial equity; (6) collaboration toward developing a culture of achievement; (7) collaborative practices and processes; (8) opportunities for growth and
threats. To support the triangulation of study data, observation analysis occurred simultaneously as other data analysis methods were being applied. The note catchers and fieldnotes were added to the case study database and the observation fieldnotes were reviewed to inform the study’s data analysis codebook (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018).

**Document Review: Data Collection**

To understand the experiences of each of case study participant as well as the case context, I collected and reviewed a range of documents for this research. Since school-based documents are typically produced for reasons other than research and are not determinant on individual participants or social settings, these artifacts facilitated new understandings of the inquiry (Merriam, 1998). Muncey (2005) argued that artifact collecting is a valuable data collection technique in qualitative research because “additional evidence is supplied by meaningful artifacts ... to fill some of the gaps left by the snapshots” (p. 2). In determining which documents to include in the study, Merriam’s (1998) selection criteria were applied to discern documents that contained “information or insights relevant to the research question” (p. 153). To this end, official documents, including school, district, and state policies revealing details about Brown Elementary School’s norms and standards as well as the broader educational and sociopolitical context in which the school community is situated were collected (Chang, 2016). Additionally, textual and non-textual artifacts concerning racial equity work and the school context were included in data collection. These artifacts encompassed articles about the school, emails, handwritten notes, curricular materials, and pictures. To protect confidentiality, documents were de-identified and uploaded to the case
study database (Yin, 2018). Consent was received for inclusion of non-public-record artifacts associated with individuals from the research site.

**Document Review: Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Document analysis included reviews of collected artifacts at three separate times throughout the data collection phase of this study, with the understanding that qualitative data analysis is neither terminal nor mechanical (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In reviewing the documents, I gave attention to content saturation to inform future data collection where additional documentation was still needed. For the second and third document analysis, only new artifacts were included in the review to narrow the focus. Since document review occurred concurrently with other data collection and analysis methods, this strategy also supported the triangulation of research findings.

During each document review, I composed a research journal entry to record perspectives, priorities, and questions that were generated authentically from documents retrieved from the research site. After the third round of document analysis, I reviewed the research journal entries together and wrote a document analysis memo to synthesize and organize the data. In alignment with the study’s theoretical framework and research questions, the memo was organized into the following eight sections: (1) whiteness; (2) racism is commonplace; (3) counternarratives; (4) intersectionality; (5) multilayered approach to racial equity; (6) collaboration toward developing a culture of achievement; (7) collaborative practices and processes; (8) opportunities for growth and threats. I reviewed the document analysis memo to consider themes and inform the codes that were included in the data analysis codebook (Merriam, 1998).
Interview: Data Collection

To center the voices of community members leading racial equity work in this case, interviews were the primary data source. In qualitative research, interviews provide opportunities for participants to share important details and relevant background information, with the understanding that what cannot be observed firsthand by the researcher has been, or is being, observed by others from varying viewpoints (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This single-case study employed person-to-person interviews to generate information concerning experiences and perspectives of racial equity efforts at Brown Elementary School (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018). Focus group interviews were also intended and included in the methodology of the initial dissertation proposal presented to the dissertation committee in June 2021. However, due to COVID-19 health and safety restrictions as well as unforeseen complications of the 2021–2022 school year and increased demands on school-based staff, focus group interviews were ultimately not feasible for this study. To achieve saturation of content for this inquiry, additional questions were added to the semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix L). Also, intentional efforts to recruit participants who met the determined criteria resulted in a target sample size (n = 16) greater than the initial goal of 12–15 interviewees.

These semi-structured interviews were designed to capture the ways that community members made sense of racial equity work at Brown. While this structure was flexible enough to allow individual experiences to direct the inquiry, it allowed for each respondent to address specific elements of the study’s research questions concerning collaboration and racial equity. The order and wording of the questions were determined in advance to facilitate progression through a curation of grand-tour, mini-tour, and reflection questions...
(Creswell, 2013). Even though the question order and wording were predetermined, they were not fixed, which supported responsiveness and authenticity during the open-ended interviews. The interview protocol also included potential probes to ask as follow-up questions to participant responses. The audio of the in-person and remote interviews was recorded using Otter recording and transcription software, enabling me, as the researcher, to be fully present throughout the interview process. Immediately following the completion of each interview, I added an entry to the researcher journal to capture pertinent observations, learnings, and questions to be revisited during data analysis and interpretation (Stake, 1995).

While listening to each recording within the Otter software, I manually read and edited each interview transcript for accuracy and anonymity. To safeguard participant authenticity and voice, precise transcribing methods were used. Stalling words, silences, pauses, hesitations, and any details that could influence the interpretation of the data were noted and included in the transcripts (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Once the transcripts were cleaned in Otter, they were imported into Microsoft Word for open coding and memo writing. The Microsoft Word files were titled with the date and interview number and then coordinated with a master interview number coding sheet, which were both saved to the data storage system located in a password-protected computer. The transcripts were then imported to NVivo qualitative analysis software for analysis and interpretation.

For interviews to elicit authentic descriptions of an episode, linkages, and explanations, participant voices, and my voice as the researcher needed to carry equal weight (Stake, 1995). To this end, the predetermined interview questions were positioned equally to guidance from the interviewee. The interview design was organized into four sections, with each section building upon the previous component to facilitate an arc of inquiry. Indeed, the
interview questions were a narrowing of this study’s central research questions in ways that honored the research site and context (Creswell, 2007).

The first section of the interview, titled “Background,” introduced the purpose of the interview as well as the focus of this single-case study (see Table 2). Given my positionality as the school’s principal, rapport with the participants was preestablished, allowing more time to ask questions that provided essential data for answering the study’s research questions (Maxwell, 2012). The initial questions of this section asked participants to share background information to be included in the interview participant, race, and role data. This information was collected via interviews to ensure that all data gathering occurred at one time in an open format in which participants could self-identify freely and ask clarifying questions.

The second section of the interview, titled “School,” centered on more global aspects of the Brown community before narrowing the focus to racial equity. The guiding questions were designed to begin broadly and build toward specificity to elicit perspectives on the school community, the school’s racial equity work, and any relationships between the school and its racial equity work. The focus on racial equity that concluded the second section provided a clear transition to the next portion of the interview.

The third section of the interview, titled “Multilayered Approach to Racial Equity,” focused on research topics related to racial equity and education, as well as racial equity practices that were named in Brown’s Instructional Focus and Priorities (see Appendix D). Participants were asked to share their viewpoints on racial equity in schools while reflecting upon specific elements of racial equity work within the Brown community. The interview questions also focused on collaboration across individuals, teams, systems, and structures.
The fourth and final section of the interview, “Wrap-Up,” was designed to give participants an opportunity to ask questions and contribute ideas that were not captured in previous sections. This final section served as a relatively unstructured space for revisiting previous questions or responses and garnering new information related to Brown Elementary School’s racial equity work.

### Table 2

*Interview Sections, Questions, and Probes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Section</th>
<th>Question Order</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Probe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>How do you identify in terms of race, ethnicity, and preferred pronouns?</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>What name or pseudonym would you prefer to be called in this case study?</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>What is your role or association at the school [parent, teacher, community member, administrator, etc.]</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>How long have you been connected to the school [as a parent, employee, etc.]</td>
<td>[If family] how many children attend/attended the school? [If staff member] At what other schools have you worked; subject, grade level, years of teaching experience? [If family] have you been involved in any racial equity efforts, engagement opportunities, or teams (Race and Ethnicity Committee (REC), REC Family Liaison, Dialogues, affinity groups, etc.)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Section</td>
<td>Question Order</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Probe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>[If staff member] have you been involved in any racial equity efforts, engagement opportunities, or teams (Race and Ethnicity Committee (REC), REC Family Liaisons, Dialogues, affinity groups, etc.)?</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>What things do you think work really well here?</td>
<td>Resources, environment, staff, activities, etc. Can you provide some examples?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>What things could be improved?</td>
<td>Resources, environment, staff, activities, etc. Can you provide some examples?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>How does this school value the identities (racial, ethnic, linguistic, and gender) of its students?</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>How does this school address racial/ethnic issues?</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>How and when did you first become aware of Brown’s efforts to address racial/ethnic issues?</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>How could this school improve when addressing racial/ethnic issues?</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Based on your knowledge, how are Black students performing academically?</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Based on your knowledge, how do Black students, families, and/or educators experience belongingness in this community?</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Section</td>
<td>Question Order</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Probe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>How does this school promote family engagement?</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>How could this school better promote family engagement?</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Multilayered Approach to Racial Equity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Do you believe issues of race/ethnicity should be discussed in K-12 classrooms?</td>
<td>Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Do you believe race plays a role in the educational experiences of students?</td>
<td>Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Is it important for students to see themselves represented in the curriculum?</td>
<td>Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Do you believe antiracist, culturally responsive social justice teaching and learning benefits all students, Black students?</td>
<td>Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>To the best of your knowledge, is the school’s current curriculum representative of different racial/ethnic identities? How?</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Beyond the curriculum, how are other aspects of the school related to instruction, school culture, family engagement, etc. aligned with racial equity?</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>For you, what has been the most important experience or aspect of racial equity in this school community?</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>For students, what has been the most important experience or aspect of racial equity work in this school community?</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Section</td>
<td>Question Order</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Probe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>How do you see different community members involved in racial equity work?</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>And of the community members, which group/team/individual role is most important in moving the work of racial equity forward?</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>What evidence, if any, is there that racial equity work is having a positive impact on the community?</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>What do you view as the necessary next steps for this school community in service of racial equity?</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wrap-Up</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>That’s my last question. Is there anything that I didn’t ask about that you would like to share related to any of the topics we covered?</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Do you have any questions for me?</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interview: Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Data analysis and interpretation were ongoing with data collection to give a culturally meaningful account of the data and tell the full story of Brown Elementary School (Chang, 2016). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) explained the cyclical nature of qualitative data analysis: “The process of analysis, evaluation, and interpretation are neither terminal nor mechanical. They are always emergent, unpredictable, and unfinished” (p. 479). Like the Brown case itself, the depth and breadth of this inquiry evolved with the data as emerging patterns and themes were interpreted and analyzed. The researcher journal provided an important space
for documenting these timely observations and analytic thinking before formal analysis commenced (Stake, 1995).

Once the interviews were completed, analysis and interpretation continued on a deeper level, which involved “zooming” in and out to assign meaning to the data (Chang, 2016). To zoom into the data, open coding was applied to the interview transcripts. Open coding included a thorough line-by-line review of each transcript, with corresponding annotations using the comment feature in Microsoft Word. The marginal notes generated a broad range of potential codes during this early phase of analysis. After each transcript was open coded, a data analysis memo was generated to synthesize annotations and organize the data according to the study’s theoretical framework and research questions. The data analysis memo was organized into eight interpretive sections to support zooming out and viewing data through the particular lens of this inquiry (see Table 3). These memos were written using Microsoft Word and were titled with the date and interview number and coordinated with a master interview number coding sheet. Upon completion, the data analysis memos were shared with participants for member checking and an opportunity to review the data and provide feedback (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995).
Table 3

*Data Analysis Memo Template*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Framework: Selected Tenets of CRT</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Potential codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whiteness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism is commonplace</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counternarratives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intersectionality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multilayered approach to racial equity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration toward developing a culture of achievement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative practices and processes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for growth and threats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next stage of analysis began with an in-depth review of open-coded interview transcripts and memos generated in the earlier phase. In vivo coding was utilized to emphasize the actual spoken language of the participants and highlight their specific words and phrases (Saldaña, 2015). Through the process of repeated readings, coding categories surfaced organically and were based solely on the authentic content produced in the interviews. The marginal notes, including open codes, were critically consumed during this stage, and new patterns and analytic thinking were documented in the researcher journal (Stake, 1995). Once the open-coded transcripts were reviewed and new thinking was documented, the transcripts were imported into the NVivo qualitative analysis software. In NVivo, each transcript underwent focused coding, utilizing the coding categories that were previously generated while narrowing the focus for clarity. Line-by-line focused coding in
NVivo contributed to code reorganization, resulting in refined codes and themes organized in a codebook that was stored in the case study database (see Table 4).

**Table 4**

*Interview Analysis Themes and Codes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whiteness</td>
<td>Privilege, Resistance, Power and resource hoarding, Perfectionism, Openness to learning, Ignorance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism is commonplace</td>
<td>Adult modeling, Policies, Gentrification and demographics, Community narratives, Reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial equity practices</td>
<td>Adult modeling, Naming and calling out racism, Multiple access points, Intentionality, Consistent values and data-informed vision, Hiring, Race talk, Access to resources, Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiracist and culturally responsive social justice instruction</td>
<td>Curricular critical consumption and modification, Restorative justice, Racism and white supremacy, Criticality and social justice, Student relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counternarratives</td>
<td>Representation, Asset orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intersectionality</td>
<td>Socioeconomic status, Gender, Dis/ability, Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant status</td>
<td>Antiracist lens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education history</td>
<td>Resource allocation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Celebrating diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>Family engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff culture</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structures and systems</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>District support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Self-reflection</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Learning continuum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adult mindset</td>
<td>Collectivism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Insider vs. outsider positionality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belongingness</td>
<td>Capacity building</td>
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<td></td>
<td>BIPOC representation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Opportunity gap</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Trust and transparency</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth opportunities</td>
<td>Academic family engagement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since data analysis is neither terminal nor mechanical, this holistic process teased out relationships and probing issues as they related to the single-case study’s research questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). During the final stage, the codebook, memos, and researcher journal were reviewed to consider themes and patterns and make meaning of their implications. This stage of data analysis supported the identification of essential features for this inquiry and description of interrelationships among them (Wolcott, 1994). The data findings were recorded in the researcher journal.
Validity and Reliability

To ensure that this study rendered findings consistent with participants’ perspectives as well as discourse realities, several strategies were employed to secure data validity and trustworthiness (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). A significant validity concern in this research involved my role as an administrator within the case under study. Although my insider positionality afforded me an understanding of this case and the urgency surrounding this research, intentional action was required to minimize the impacts of bias in the study (Banks, 1998).

As noted in the “Positionality Statement,” I disclosed and remained aware of how my identities, experiences, perspectives, and assumptions contributed to bias. Acknowledging the existence of bias and the ways it might influence my view of this work, I engaged in reflexive practices and critical self-reflection to increase data validity (Khalifa et al., 2016). Throughout the research process, I reflected on my practices and documented what I was observing, learning, and questioning in a research journal to maintain self-awareness and counter bias. Another measure taken to mitigate bias and support the validity of this single-case study’s data was member checking. I solicited participants' views of the credibility of findings and interpretations by sharing with them the data analysis memos so they could judge them for accuracy and influence this research (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995).

In addition to researcher bias, the quality and reliability of data was a primary area of focus for this inquiry. To ensure that data collection was organized, systematic, and well-documented, I maintained a data storage system throughout the research process which was secured in a password-protected computer and included the study’s timeline, participant
information, fieldnotes, research journal, memos, transcripts, codebook, and artifacts (Stake, 1995). As evidenced by this inquiry’s methodological design, I also triangulated data to support the validity and reliability of the study’s research findings. Multiple data sources, including observations, interviews, and documents, served to triangulate the findings and provide a broader understanding of the case under investigation (Creswell, 2009; Wolcott, 2005). The use of triangulation also promoted transferability, allowing readers to make connections between their cases and the one detailed in this study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Lastly, a system of peer review allowed for insights from colleagues, both familiar and unfamiliar with the research case and topic, to check for unclear findings or flawed results.

**COVID-19 Data Collection Contingency Plan**

The global COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on education and educational research. Since this study relied on data from a school community impacted by COVID-19, I adopted a contingency plan outlining different precautionary measures taken during data collection. In alignment with district expectations, Brown Elementary School offered in-person learning to all students during the 2021–2022 school year with additional safety precautions, including face masks, physical distancing, classroom sanitization routines, and restrictions for visitors to the school building. Throughout the interview process, the researcher and all participants adhered to COVID-19 mitigation strategies as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the public health commission overseeing the school district. Direct semi-structured individual interviews that could not be conducted in person occurred remotely via Zoom with the same structure as previously outlined in the “Data Collection” section.
Conclusion

This study is premised upon the reality that top-down leadership has served to maintain the racist status-quo in public education, and that educators, families, and community members at the individual school level are uniquely positioned to work towards antiracism within their school communities. To explore how a school-based leadership team at Brown Elementary School applied a multilayered approach to racial equity, this inquiry relied on case study methods to describe and systematically analyze the experiences of educators, families, and community members. The next chapter presents findings from one school-based leadership team’s efforts to develop a school culture of achievement for Black students in a racially and ethnically diverse elementary school community.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Every interaction, I can't think of one interaction that I've had with educators in my own school context where race isn’t—so often it's incredibly loud and incredibly quiet at the same time. And less we name the ways that it's playing out in adult communication, we're dismissing the ways that kids are very aware that it's operating at all times.

—Alison, case study participant

Introduction

This single-case study acknowledged the omnipresence of racism and unpacked one method employed by a school community to embrace an antiracist lens and strive for racial equity. The study’s data were analyzed with the aim of understanding how educators, families, and community members from a K–5 public elementary school in an urban district located in the northeastern United States collaborated to enact a multilayered approach to racial equity. To center the voices of individuals who led antiracist work in the case under investigation, the study relied on interviews with 16 community members as its primary data source. All the interview participants were connected to Brown Elementary School and were involved in the school’s racial equity efforts for a period between 2015 and 2022. The participants included nine staff members, six family members, and one community member. In addition to interviews, document review and observation were used in this single-case
study’s methodology to triangulate the data and support the transferability and validity of the findings.

Data were analyzed through the lens of four CRT tenets comprising this study’s theoretical framework and its three research questions, though coding categories and themes emerged authentically from multiple readings of interview transcripts and from the content produced in the dialogues. As themes surfaced during coding processes, recurrent themes were aligned with the research questions and theoretical framework (see Table 5). As such, I organized the study’s findings into two overarching themes: (1) racism is commonplace and (2) collaborative practices and processes. The theme “racism is commonplace” includes the subtheme “explicitly naming racism” and echoes an existing CRT tenant: the predominance of white supremacy, a reality upon which this study’s research questions are premised. The subtheme “explicitly naming racism,” emphasizes the importance of naming a phenomenon that is simultaneously elusive and omnipresent. Indeed, the ubiquity of racism necessitates intentional, multilayered, and collaborative efforts from community members to counter white supremacy and work toward a culture of achievement for Black students. With “racism is commonplace” responding to the why, the second overarching theme, “collaborative practices and processes,” explains the what and how of the research questions.
Table 5

Findings: Themes and Subthemes

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<td>Racism is commonplace</td>
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The second overarching theme, “collaborative practices and processes,” leverages the voices of educators, families, and community members to capture their perspectives and detail the actions they had taken to combat racism at Brown. Analysis of participant discourse indicated that a multilayered approach to racial equity is collaborative, complex, and context-specific. As a result, this theme presents subthemes related to the Brown school-based leadership team’s enactment of a multilayered approach to racial equity. This chapter
discusses the following subthemes around collaborative practices and processes: (1) naming race and addressing racism; (2) prioritizing racial equity; (3) embedding racial equity; (4) embracing boldness; (5) committing to growth; (6) race talk: dialogues; (7) race talk: collaborative learning; (8) race talk: students; (9) antiracist and culturally responsive teaching: curriculum; (10) antiracist and culturally responsive teaching: critical consumption of curriculum; (11) antiracist and culturally responsive teaching: representation and counternarratives; (12) antiracist and culturally responsive teaching: social justice; (13) affirming identities and belongingness; (14) adult mindset; (15) family engagement: family and staff collaboration; (16) family engagement: racial equity lens; (17) family engagement: support systems and structures; (18) staff learning; (19) intentional hiring; and (20) inclusion and intersectionality. Despite the team’s multiple racial equity efforts, as represented in the collaborative practices and processes subthemes, this inquiry found that a school culture of achievement had not yet been realized for Black students at Brown Elementary School.

**Racism is Commonplace**

*I remember at the time [the facilitators] sharing the story about what took place on the playground and different [racist] incidents that had taken place. And I guess it was being heard for the first time throughout all the staff. And it was like...it was such a divide because I think the Teachers of Color were just like, “Okay, not surprised.” But the white staff were just like, "Oh my God, never. How could that happen? We can't believe it.” ... I think a lot of the Teachers of Color were like, “Why could you believe that this is not happening here?”*

—Shantel, case study participant

The CRT tenet that racism is commonplace acknowledges the predominance of white supremacy in schools and the various ways that educational institutions serve the interests of white stakeholders (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2013). As a way of knowing and understanding, this tenet represents the ideological thinking for this research study and a
justification for beginning the discussion with this CRT grounded theme. The theme “racism is commonplace” addresses all three of this study’s research questions, recognizing that racism’s pervasiveness is fundamental to enacting a multilayered approach to racial equity and working toward a school culture of achievement for Black students. Indeed, all participants involved in this inquiry shared examples of racism in their community. For instance, Cece, a Black mom to a fifth-grade student at Brown, shared about the ubiquity of racism: “There's not been one Black or Brown person that I have spoken to who doesn't have a story, whether on the parental side or on the child side.” Indeed, the genesis of racial equity work at Brown Elementary School was premised upon a series of racist incidents in 2015 that impacted a Black male kindergartner. Kathy, the white school leader at the time, shared her recollection of this student’s mom reporting her son’s racist experiences at the school:

So at the end of his [pre-K] year, she [mom] shared that for May and June, when it's blazing hot in the building, there's no air conditioning, the kid refused to wear shorts to school … because he wanted to cover as much of his Black body as possible. And when she was trying to mine him for information to understand what was going on, and why it was so important for him to cover up his body coming into our community, he shared various stories, some of which had to do with interactions with peers. Like on the playground during recess, telling him that he was dirty. Some interactions with older kids during afterschool programming expressing similar problematic, bias-based commentary. All the stories she shared were, like, peer-to-peer and happening on our watch.

In addition to Kathy, seven other participants referenced this particular story in their interview when describing some of their first experiences at Brown. Priscilla, a Hispanic and
white mom to a fifth-grade student and member of the Brown community for 14 years, recalled how several families were “really pissed” and felt the mom was “making a mountain out of a mole hill.” “Kids will be kids,” “Kids don’t know color,” and ”They don't know the difference” were the remarks that Priscilla remembered hearing from families at Brown when this story surfaced in the community. Priscilla, on the other hand, felt this mom was completely justified and conveyed empathy: “I think she felt, you know, isolated. There was nowhere for her to go, nobody to talk to.” For Ebony, a Black female school leader at a different school who previously supported Brown in her family engagement liaison role, this story was still “hard to swallow … 6 years later.” Ebony linked this example to the CRT tenet “racism is commonplace,” saying, “In elementary schools, we often say, ‘We don't see race, kids don't experience it’ and ‘you're colorblind,’ and all of those things are grounded in white supremacy culture because if I don't see it, then I don't have to acknowledge it and address it.”

Cece also made explicit connections between racism in the Brown community and society’s white supremacy culture, noting that “the very history of schools is entrenched in inequities … racism … and classism.” Cece further explained how systemic racism in society impacts the “way schools are run, and the way schools treat kids and families and the community members within that school.” Similarly, Celia, a Black principal fellow, identified both the “racist system” within which Brown was operating and the systems within Brown that perpetuated racism. She reflected upon the overrepresentation of Black and Latinx students on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) in substantially separate classrooms. Elaborating upon the impact of substantially separate versus inclusion classroom settings on students’ learning, Celia explained, “It could mean the difference between getting
access to grade-level content and completely changing the trajectory of your life versus not getting access to that and constantly having to play catch up.” Alison, a white female school leader in a different school and former principal fellow at Brown, also identified the systemic racism embedded in substantially separate special education, saying, “It wasn't good for kids. It wasn't good for white kids. It wasn't good for Kids of Color. It wasn't good for educators." Similarly, Ann, a white second grade teacher, explained, “I think there's a lot of intersectionality between race and dis/ability status at our school…. Our students on IEPs also happened to be Black boys or Boys of Color.” Ann also shared her perspective on the impact of educator biases on special education referral and placement, saying, “It's something I think a lot about in terms of the referral process or how we're writing IEPs when students are arriving to us.” Ann added that a student receiving special education services may be assigned to a “small-group setting,” but most of the time this decision “has nothing to do with the student and his or her abilities and more to do with the teacher and his or her bias.”

Ann also connected the correlation between race and dis/ability to the opportunity gap, another example of systemic racism that 11 of the participants named during their interviews. Ann said, “I know looking at the data, there is a gap and there continues to be a gap between our white students and our Students of Color, as well as our English learners and our students with dis/abilities.” Shantel, a Black second-grade teacher, highlighted the pervasiveness of the opportunity gap, saying, “I've been in education for some years now … [and] there's still a gap…. Black and Brown students are still not performing as well as [white] counterparts. And I mean, I don't know any school that I've worked at where that hasn't been the case.”
Cece commented on experiences from a parent’s perspective, suggesting possible explanations for an opportunity gap at Brown: “I can say that, just from talking to other Black parents … that there's definitely been times when they maybe felt like their children are not necessarily being challenged, or being academically cared for, or looked out for, or watched for, in the same way that their white peers were.” Cece detailed her own experience advocating for her daughter to receive an evaluation for special education services upon discerning some “difficulties” and “discrepancies” in reading and writing at home. In response to her concerns, Cece was repeatedly told, “She's fine, she’s fine, she’s fine, she’s fine.” Cece questioned the role of racial bias in this experience, wondering, “Would you have paid closer attention if she were white? Is she being perceived to be fine because that's where she’s supposed to be?” Cece further explained that her daughter “wasn’t fine” and qualified for services upon being tested. As a Black parent, Cece felt she needed to “bring out the whiteness” in order to “speak up and make demands” and ultimately be heard. Cece identified “speaking up” as the practice of white parents, noting the ease and comfort with which white families routinely make demands of their schools. In reflecting upon this experience, Cece expounded upon the weight she felt from “always having to be on 100.” She explained, “I have to be perfectly always watching out or else there's going to be a slip up. Because I've experienced it, even in a community where I know she's cared for and loved.” While Cece was the REC co-chairperson and involved deeply in the school community, she still experienced firsthand how racism was commonplace for Black families at Brown. As a result of the racism she encountered, Cece could not put her full trust in the school community to do right by her Black daughter.
In addition to academic instruction, participants provided examples of racism impacting the belongingness that BIPOC students and families experienced at Brown. Arewa, a Black female fifth-grade teacher, cited research positing that BIPOC students overall have “a less than ideal experience in schools than their white counterparts.” Also speaking to belongingness, Ann recalled a presenter from outside Brown observing racial discrepancies in staff responses to students’ unexpected behaviors. Ann remembered the presenter sharing with staff an instance on the schoolyard when a white student who was “jumping on things” and “pushing students” was told “Please stop” by a staff member, while a Black student who “did something very minimal was spoken to very harshly.” Participants’ stories linking students’ belongingness and race also extended to families, as detailed by Cece, whose partner, a Black man, was involved in the Family Council for a period of time and “didn't feel comfortable in that space because of the ways the white parents were.” Cece further explained how “the things [white parents] said or … did just weren't cool.” Based on her partner’s negative experience and the notion that Family Council exists as a “space for everybody,” Cece wondered, “Does it really exist for everybody?” Terry, a Black man and the school’s family engagement liaison, shared a similar experience in his interview. When he presented to Family Council and asked for winter clothes for students in need at Brown, Family Council members proposed donating “some of the stuff from the lost and found to the students whose families have asked for some things.” Terry’s response was that all families “deserve new things” and that Family Council was in a financial position to provide support “to the people who need it.” In reflecting upon this instance, Terry concluded that Family Council members “did not want to spend the money” and wondered what this instance might reveal about what “they think of other people” in the Brown community.
Explicitly Naming Racism

It was almost like, "Okay, finally, right. We're going to have these conversations." And so the fact that that was my feeling and even talking about it now leads me to understand that one of my issues with the school was that there wasn't representation for the diverse body of students that existed for years at that school. There's a lot of Brown and Black babies there. And I would say, at the time, when my daughter was there, the population was even higher for Brown and Black students.

—Priscilla, case study participant

In participants’ accounts of how commonplace racism is at Brown, a pattern that emerged was the explicit naming of racism and its impact on the school community. In response to the second research question of this inquiry, the explicit naming of racism was predominant in how educators, families, and community members discussed their collaborative efforts toward the development of a school culture of achievement for Black students. Discussions of racism did not always exist at Brown, as noted by Priscilla, who was connected to the school for seven years before the first dialogues about race and equity during the 2015–2016 school year. Referring to the dialogues, Priscilla shared, “Prior to that, there was no, there was no discussion of race.” She explained the impact of this silence, saying,” I remember how I felt as a parent of, you know, a Student of Color at the school, there not being much representation…. A lot of things just felt like they were swept under the rug or not paid attention to.” Priscilla noted how the absence of race talk contributed to an “environment that wasn't very welcoming,” an environment where “a lot of people just kind of stood back.” Kathy also remembered Brown as a school where there were “no conversations about race in any contexts” when she started as principal in 2013.
Before the mom shared her Black son’s story with Kathy in 2015, the staff at Brown had begun some work related to race and equity that included taking an “implicit associations test,” reading an “APA article about biases,” and sharing “personal stories of situations … where the impact of race was visible.” Ebony recalled facilitating professional development (PD) with Kathy focused on identity for staff members during the 2015–2016 school year, an experience she referred to as “eye opening.” Ebony detailed blowing “up a big picture of a clip art school” and saying to staff members, “‘So tell me about Brown as educators … some of you just got here, some of you have been here forever. Tell me about this place.’”

According to Ebony, staff members’ initial responses included only felicitous adjectives about the school. Kathy also recalled positive descriptors like “strong community,” “rigorous,” “getting kids into exam schools,” “getting kids into AWC (advanced work class),” “wonderful,” “safe,” and “happy.” Shantel, who had just joined the Brown community and was participating in the PD as an educator, only heard “positive adjectives” from staff when asked, “How do we view Brown?”

Ebony detailed how she then spotlighted impressions of Brown that she had heard as a neighborhood resident and registration team member to complicate the external narrative of the school. She said, “Let me tell you what I hear. I hear only white people can get their kids in school here. That it's privileged. That it's not welcoming of Families of Color.” According to Ebony, some Staff of Color, “some who were very new, like first or second year at the school,” responded with, “‘Yeah, that's what I experienced. This place is the whitest place I've ever been.’” Shantel also remembered a distinct shift in tone at this juncture, with adjectives like “insensitivity, prejudice, and racism” added to the clipart image of the school.
building. Shantel explained further that “everyone was just really shocked. And I remember sitting in that room like, ‘Why is that surprising?’ I don't know. I wasn't shocked. Although this was my first year, you know, that could exist.”

Kathy explained that during that same PD session, after a more “complicated” picture of Brown emerged, she “started telling specific stories” from the school community. She said, “Here's an experience of a [pre-K] child in our building last year…. What do you think that parent would say about our school?” Ebony recalled a particular story that “stood out the most” for her, one she still “oftentimes uses as an example”:

It was about a science experience that was happening in a [pre-K] class working with snails, and a Black student had a snail on their hand and … a little white girl said to this Black student that the snail isn't coming up out of his shell because it's afraid or scared of your Black skin.

Like Shantel, Ebony stated that “people were shocked” and that “the level of ‘That really happened here? Whoa, wait, that's not possible’ was mind blowing for my Black seat, like, not the person facilitating, but as a Black woman living in America.”

In her interview, Kathy also named resistance, saying, “People freaked out” and “had a really hard time hearing that any of the events that we were describing were happening at all.” Kathy also stated that “even if staff members could believe” these stories were happening, they were “written off as a singular event or an anomaly or the product of crazies. The majority of staff, in particular white staff, were not in a place to hear that.” Kathy noted that other staff members, including individuals who were “new to the community or had just
arrived from other schools” in the same district “were like, ‘This is happening.’” Ebony’s explanation for staff members’ denial of racism at Brown was that “it's easy to be blind when you don't have to deal with it, right? It's easy to believe that it doesn't exist.”

Ebony, Kathy, Priscilla, and Shantel detailed a range of reactions from community members when racism was explicitly named and openly discussed for the first time at Brown. According to Kathy, the practice of seeing and calling out racism gained momentum soon after the PD session that she and Ebony facilitated. Identifying this as “evidence of progress,” Kathy explained,

There were a flood of incidents and moments and phenomena that we were getting made aware of from both staff and families. People who could not see any of the bias or problematic reinforcement of narrative or role of racialization and race in the way people were experiencing life in our community could see it and they still didn't know what to do with it. So they just kept reporting. They didn't have better skills at navigating it, but they could see it.

For Shantel, the practice of naming racial bias also represented progress for the Brown community: “I love the fact that when we started, we really took into consideration the complaints … and really worked towards resolving some of those complaints, which is why we started the race dialogues.” Similarly, for Priscilla, this moment at Brown provided a “sense of relief” and represented “the beginning of good things”:

This change was also relieving for a lot of … Staff of Color, having that representation, and being able to say, “Okay, we can talk about this, now here are the problems that I see XYZ, this is what we need to do. This is how my Students of
Color are being affected. And I didn't feel comfortable saying anything, I didn't feel like anything was going to be done about it.” So I think that it gave a big giant window of opportunity for the school, the staff, the parents, the students, to address a lot of issues. I think it's going to always be a work in progress.

Unlike Priscilla, who had already been a member of the community for 7 years before discussions about race and equity were happening, Mirabel was a new parent of a kindergartener in 2015 when stories about racism affecting a Black boy in kindergarten were shared at a Family Council meeting. Mirabel, a white and Latina mom whose daughter is now in fifth grade, described her first experience of hearing race and equity discussed openly at Brown. She said, “I think my first time … was that conversation being explicitly named right up front in that first Family Council meeting in September of that year.” Mirabel contextualized further, saying, “The principal at the time was there also and was giving context about the survey data and what the school’s commitment was. So it wasn't just the parent leader, but the principal was there really speaking to the importance of the work.”

Molly, a white mom to a fifth-grade student, also reflected upon the impact of that first Family Council meeting of the 2015–016 school year, saying, “It lit a fire in a lot of people, including the principal at the time, who was a white woman. And from that Family Council meeting, that's how the dialogues came about.” Also, a kindergarten family at the time, Cece shared her and her partner’s reactions upon hearing about instances of racism discussed in detail at their first Family Council meeting. Cece said,

My partner felt like “See, this is the issue I was talking about. Look, here it is right here. I'm not dealing with this, and I'll be damned if my child has to deal with this.”

And so I said, “Well, listen, if we're going to give this a chance, the way that we're
going to give this a chance … we're not going to be outsiders, we're not gonna be bystanders, we're going to be in the sauce as they say, we're going to be all up in the sauce.... And so we went to the first Dialogues and we were busy young parents, but we made it our business then that whatever the school was doing, we were going to be a part of it. Whether we had time or not, we were going to make time for it and we were going to split it up. We're going to be in different things. We're gonna cover our grounds. We're going to show up to everything. And we're gonna just be as much a part of the community as possible because it felt like a way to protect our daughter and to also have a hand in and changing the community that she was in for the better because if she was going to be a part of that community, we wanted to make sure that we were going to do our part diligently and intentionally to make sure that that was a community that we wanted her to be a part of.

**Racial Equity Collaborative Practices and Processes**

*We joined the first Dialogues and that was why I stayed. Because by the end of it, I felt like, “Okay, we might be going somewhere here.” And everywhere she goes, there’s going to be an issue. We’re not going to be able to shield her from racism, but if I can be a part of a community that acknowledges this thing head on, and is willing to face it head on, I’d rather be here than somewhere else. And so we decided to keep her here because by the end of the Dialogues that was kind of the feeling that I had ... and so we decided to keep on, and I stayed a part of the work from then until now.*

—Cece, case study participant

With the theme of “racism is commonplace” established as central to this inquiry, the overview of findings continues with a discussion of the collaborative practices and processes that participants identified as components of Brown Elementary School’s multilayered approach to racial equity. The theme “collaborative practices and processes” delineates the
ways that educators, families, and community members from Brown translated their understandings and beliefs into antiracist action.

Responses from interviewees revealed how the study’s three research questions are inextricably linked. Accordingly, this thematic review of racial-equity collaborative practices and processes outlines connections to the research questions and is organized into several subthemes that emerged authentically from dialogue with participants. These subthemes constitute specific aspects of a multilayered approach to racial equity at Brown Elementary School as described by case study participants.

**Naming Race and Addressing Racism**

The explicit naming of race and racism was an emergent practice initiated during the 2014–2015 school year as a result of both the impact of racism on a Black student and deliberate moves from school leaders and other community members to address racial bias at Brown. The subtheme “explicitly naming racism” is similar to the racial-equity collaborative practices and processes subtheme “naming race and addressing racism.” This thematic repetition underscores both the ideological underpinnings of this study and the intentional efforts at Brown to call out and combat racism in the school. An example of this intentionality was evident in Kathy’s interview when she spoke about Race Matters, an initiative germinating from the Dialogues on Race and Ethnicity that included a “documentary” and involved participants wearing “black t-shirts with lettering that said, R’ace Matters at Brown’ at the school’s “big end of the year barbeque event.” There were “opportunities to secure information about REC,” and Dialogues participants were “talking to anyone who would listen” to put a “stake in the ground that there was a problem to be
solved” in the Brown community. According to Kathy, REC members were not there “to argue about whether or not there was a problem.” They were saying, “‘There is a problem,’” and the team’s collective energy was dedicated to “solving the problem.” Referring to Race Matters as a form of “education,” Priscilla also identified this initiative as having a “big” impact on the community. For Cece, this intentionality meant conveying “context” and “framing” with “transparency”: “The transparency is what enabled me to be aware. I was already coming in with anxieties that this kind of a school is gonna have these kinds of issues … and I appreciated knowing exactly where I was and what was going on. That made me feel better.”

Throughout the interview process, participants repeatedly identified the naming of race and racism as regular practice at Brown Elementary School. Indeed, identifying and discussing race was an important aspect of how educators, families, and community members described their experiences collaborating to develop a school culture of achievement for Black students, and it speaks to the second research question of this study. Alison stated, “I think what was unique about Brown Elementary School and the work that they were doing was the specificity on centering race.” Terry shared, “I've noticed that the school addresses [racism] head on. And you know, they leave no room for misinterpretation by tiptoeing around when something is racist.” Terry observed the impact of race talk on students after “a racist comment in kindergarten class” when “the teacher took the time to read two different books to help students understand why that was wrong.” Terry further explained, “If you don’t tell me why then I'm not learning, but I'm just saying, ‘Okay, I can't say that here. I will say it somewhere else.’” Terry identified the importance of teaching students “a moral right
and wrong” so they can “process the information for themselves and come up with their own rationale … once they have the information.”

Paul, a white dad to two students at Brown in the first and third grades, shared his perspective that race talk is necessary and that white families especially need to discuss “privilege” and provide opportunities for “perspective building” with children. Paul also shared that school-based incidents related to race and equity were “communicated home in an open and transparent way.” Paul discussed an “incident around race involving one of [his] student’s classrooms this year.” He received “a communication from the principal” that allowed his family to “talk about it” and reinforce expectations for being an “upstander not a bystander.” Paul shared his perspective that the “Brown School is equipped to handle these situations because the staff is aware … and teaching an antiracist curriculum.’ Paul further explained that “if that wasn't happening, I'd be wondering, ‘Okay, how was it handled?’”

Paul’s account highlights the naming of race as one of the core components of how Brown Elementary enacted a multilayered approach to racial equity, setting the conditions to unpack white privilege, call out racism, and address biased-based behaviors.

Celia, Priscilla, and Stacey expressed similar viewpoints regarding the ways that Brown names race and addresses racism. Celia stated, 'One thing I value about the school is we don't shy away from having difficult conversations about race. We don't tolerate racism and I've seen we don't sweep it under the rug. Like, we call it out and address it as needed.” Similarly, Priscilla shared, “Things are addressed when they come up. So I think that's what works. And I think that one of the biggest things and changes that has made such a big difference for all families has been the Race and Ethnicity Committee.” Stacey, a Black
substitute teacher, home and hospital tutor, and student mentor who taught first grade at Brown Elementary School for 33 years, said: “I feel like the Brown handles [race and racism] head on…. We don't shy away…. I feel like it's always addressed.”

**Prioritizing Racial Equity**

In addition to naming race and addressing racism, the prioritization of racial equity on a schoolwide level was a recurring subtheme in participants’ responses. A collaborative practice in itself, prioritizing racial equity was also deeply embedded in the ways that educators, families, and community members described their experiences collaborating to develop a school culture of achievement for Black students. Kathy recalled an intentional decision in her third year as principal to “articulate a priority … related to race and equity and engaging families in that work.” Alison also noted that racial equity was reflected in the “priorities of the school.” Alison explained how things could be done “superficially as a checklist,” but because racial equity was “embedded in the school leader’s beliefs,” that “carries significant weight in how staff and families get to make sense of why you do the work you do.” Alison shared how “that transparency helps other people get on board, too, because the school is leading with that.” Referring to racial equity at Brown, Ann said, “It's all pretty aligned, and it’s the mission and vision of the school.” Mirabel stated, “Brown is a community of people who share a common purpose and commitment, and work towards that with earnestness and integrity. And so that shows in everything.” Paul also highlighted that racial equity was “the work that we want to be doing,” prompting him to self-reflect early on in his membership at Brown, “We're going to need to go to the REC committee more.” Like Paul, Arewa also discerned racial equity as a Brown priority in her first interactions with the
school: “I was aware of [the racial equity focus] through my interview process… It was something that was being brought up a lot. Every conversation, every question that I got, every feedback that I received was connected to racial and social justice work.” For Terry, the number of teams dedicated to racial equity signified prioritization of the work. He said, “I just heard all these committees … and, you know, one committee can be performative, but just like the different levels, and different ways that people can be involved in it, made it obvious that it was a commitment.”

Blue Sky, a Black female STEM instructional coach, said, “The leadership makes it very clear that racial equity and gender equity” and other aspects of identity are a priority, and “that curriculum and things that [educators] teach should be through a lens of equity.”

Celia shared that “one of the strongest pieces of evidence” she collected was during “an entry meeting” when she met with a community partner who spent limited time in the school building. Celia explained, “She spoke so passionately about the racial equity work that was happening here … and it was very clear the school had done a lot of work to make sure that everyone understood the mission and vision of our school.” For Priscilla, the school’s prioritization of racial equity was evident in the ways community members spoke about Brown Elementary School. Priscilla said, “I tell people where my kids go to school, and they're like, ‘We've heard such good things about their inclusion and … Race and Ethnicity Committee.’” Priscilla reflected, “You take for granted the fact that this is happening because it should be normal … what the school does, around race, and ethnicity…. But clearly, it's not because you have some people that are like, ‘I want my kid in that school.’”
Embedding Racial Equity

Related to prioritizing racial equity, another subtheme from participants’ interviews focused on embedding racial equity throughout all aspects of the school. As community members discussed their collaborative efforts toward a culture of achievement, they identified ways that racial equity was interwoven throughout their experiences at Brown. Molly, the REC co-chairperson, identified this practice as a shift: “I think when we started the REC, it felt separate. It felt like there's the school and then there's our committee, and that's the space where the equity work was happening.” Molly further explained, “I think in the last many years, most of the years, there's been an embedding in everything that we do.” Similarly, Celia said that “racial equity is woven throughout everything that we do as a school, even … our instructional focus and priorities.” She added, “And thinking about the several different teams that we have at the school level, including our ILT, our inclusion planning team … and our check-ins with our lead teacher, we're always looking at everything through the lens of racial equity.” Blue Sky also named school-based teams as sites of embedded racial equity. She said that the “ILT, culture of achievement team, and inclusion committee … continue to operate in ways that ask members of the group” to consider “how the work that the committee is doing addresses racial equity.”

Highlighting Brown’s multilayered approach to racial equity, Ann discussed “multiple tiers” in her response: “There is … tier 1 of setting expectations and educating everyone universally so that we have a common language … and source of knowledge to draw from.” Ann identified another tier as “naming the various parts of a student’s identity that might be playing in what we’re seeing, or how we are interpreting what we’re seeing … when we’re talking about incidents that might be happening in our classroom.” Ann also
mentioned the “core values” as “intentionally not grounded in … white supremacist notions of what it means to be successful.” She clarified, “When I think about core values, I think of predominantly white private schools, and the things they're trying to encourage from students.” Ann added, “The idea that kindness and openness are elements of a child's behavior and identity that we honor and celebrate I think is really important … and connected with antiracist social justice teaching and learning.” In describing his experiences collaborating with community members in service of racial equity, Terry said, “It’s clear that [racial equity] is just infused here. The effort is all the imagery and stuff in the main office and the hallways. We celebrate everyone here.”

**Embracing Boldness**

According to participants, naming race and prioritizing racial equity required a boldness and willingness to embrace tension, a practice that was instrumental in working toward a school culture of achievement. Carol, a Black grandmother to a former student at Brown, noted how the staff “unapologetically and comfortably leaned into identities.” Explaining that her grandson was the only child she had who had attended school in this district, she said the racial equity focus was “unlike anything I had ever witnessed.” Alison commented on her initial impressions, saying, “I was surprised, hesitant, about all the intentional ways that diversity and identity was brought up.” She continued,

Something I learned over time was the importance of saying and showing your values all the time in every moment and the impact that communication has in also changing hearts and minds. Not alone, but, like, that consistency in the messaging.

Ebony shared, “There was a level of boldness that the school leader and their [principal] fellow took on to explicitly name that if you were going to come to Brown, you
needed to understand that one of the priorities of the work was around racial equity.” In her role as a family liaison at the district level, Ebony recalled families attending school previews at Brown and sharing their impressions with her as they made decisions about which school they would select for their children. According to Ebony, some families said, “‘I love that that principal named that we're explicitly trying to combat and call out and be antiracist in our work … and highlight the genius of the Black and Brown community.’” Ebony also shared that school leadership was explicit in naming for families that, “if you're not comfortable with [this racial equity work], this may not be the school for you.” Priscilla stated, “I don't know that it’s been well received by everybody. But it's almost been, like, ‘Too bad. It's here, we're going to talk about it.’” Priscilla explained further, “If you don't want to talk about or you think it's silly, then maybe that's a reason why you should be a part of it.” Even with resistance from some community members, Priscilla named a “huge difference” and “shift” from what “race looked like at the school, 7 years ago versus now…. More people have accepted and understood the work that's being done and why it's being done.”

**Committing to Growth**

Interviews revealed an explanation for the shift in Brown’s ability to name race and address racism: the community’s commitment to growth. Indeed, Brown’s practice of committing to growth was an important aspect of the school’s multilayered approach to racial equity as represented in the first research question of this study. Ann said “There’s no complacency,” and the community is constantly “reflecting and thinking about ways to improve.” She added, “There's no sense of, ‘Okay, we're doing an excellent job, so now we need to stop questioning or stop learning.’” Arewa referred to racial equity at Brown as “a
work in progress” that “doesn't seem like it's gonna end, which is also very important.”

Arewa also said, “It's not one of those pieces just happening for this year because of what happened in 2020. But it seems like it's something that's started and it's gonna keep going.”

Ebony stated, “There is an intentionality to speak the truth of the mission and the work and to name that it's not complete.” Carol also identified Brown as an “adaptive” community that will “keep it going” because racial equity “continues to be woven into the fabric of who we are as a school community.” Similarly, Shantel said, “We’ll continue to do what we’re doing … and continue to build with family members.”

**Race Talk: Dialogues**

For the purpose of this case study, race talk is distinguished, but not disconnected from, the previous subtheme of “naming race and addressing racism.” In analyzing and coding participants’ discourse, race talk was identified as comprising structured and planned opportunities for Brown community members to engage in dialogues related to race and equity. Race talk represents both collaborative practice and an aspect of Brown’s multilayered approach to racial equity that was significant in participants’ descriptions of working toward a school culture of achievement for Black students. One structured opportunity for race talk discussed by all 16 participants was the Dialogues on Race and Ethnicity, often referred to as “Dialogues” or “Race Dialogues.” Reflecting on the impact of Dialogues, Cece shared,

The fact that I can be in a space with the administrator of the school and family members like me, and teachers and community members at the same time talking about the same thing and they're not having to be more than this person because we're all coming in with our own personal experiences … there's very few spaces where
hierarchy doesn't exist. But when you're coming in from your own story, you feel much less of a sense of that hierarchy, especially when you then lean into like affinity groups where people can just really be themselves and speak for real. That's been really, really powerful.

Priscilla highlighted the intentionality behind racial representation for the “very first Dialogues” to ensure “a good balance” of BIPOC and white participants and contribute to diverse perspectives that “being part of these conversations puts into place for people.”

Priscilla shared that “one of the most important things” for her was that “a lot of white families” who participated “realized how their children would never be affected by racism” in the same way as their Black and Brown classmates. Priscilla said, “What are the chances that your son's going to get pulled over and profiled versus … this family who has a Black son getting pulled over and profiled and probably traumatized?” In observing white families during Dialogues, Priscilla reflected,

It was very emotional. I remember some of the parents that were there that were really affected by it, like white parents. And I was shocked, to my surprise, I'm like, “Are they faking it? Are they for real?” You know, we always have this little skepticism about what's really happening. Is it a front? Or is it for real? But these were really open conversations, and, you know, it was a really safe space. It really did feel like a safe space and there were really hard conversations, like really uncomfortable conversations.

Shantel, who was also a participant in the first Dialogues, explained, “There's a trust that has to be built in order for people to be able to open up and share and not feel judged. Shantel said, “For me personally, it was just like, ‘Wow, we really are coming from very different
points of views based on our experience and the lens that we view life.” She continued, “Our experiences really shaped how we see things … and seeing it happening amongst the participants was really meaningful, impactful.” In reflecting upon the experience further, Shantel said, “I felt like that was a genuine conversation and genuine relationships developed with families and staff together, building and connecting and wanting to learn, sincerely wanting to learn.”

Ebony recalled the first Dialogues at Brown and noted how “unusual” and “not normal” it was for her as “district-level staff” to “participate in a school-based race dialogue.” She said, “But as a member of the community … I live in the neighborhood, I’d been serving this school for 2 years, and I had a sense of the need … and to be fully transparent, we needed another Black voice sitting at that table.” For Cece, “sitting in Dialogues with Ebony” was something she “will never forget.” Cece explained, “Up until that point, when you said ‘district,’ I thought of a three-headed monster.” She added, “But here [Ebony] was, a real human being, a Black human being, sharing and taking part of the experience just like me, this brand-new parent, shaking in my boots about my kid being here … I'll never get over that.”

About Dialogues, Mirabel shared, “It was super powerful when I did it, and I understand from others who have done it, it continues to be and I'm sure it keeps evolving. I thought about doing it again, and I know people have done these dialogues multiple times.” Carol said, “[Dialogues is] really raising awareness and being unafraid to have conversations.” Carol added that “for the longest time,” she experienced race talk as “cringy,” noting that “people don't want to talk about things that are uncomfortable or that make them feel uncomfortable.” Paul shared, “I participated in the race dialogues 3 years ago
and those were so meaningful to recognize how many privileges that I personally have as a white male.” Paul also said that Dialogues contributed to an “increased awareness” and enabled him to learn from the “perspectives of others.” Terry commented on the experience of observing a white parent attend Dialogues after expressing “concern with how race was being taught in kindergarten.” Terry explained, “I could tell he was still grappling with it and didn't want to say the wrong thing when he was talking on the phone, but I understood the sentiment.” Terry continued, “But then I noticed he was at one of the Race Dialogues last night and that made me feel really good that he was taking the time and, I will say, do his work, to learn about him and others and to get that fullest perspective.”

Reflecting on what Dialogues means to participants and how it supports race talk in the Brown community, Cece shared,

The creation of the space to have these conversations is a non-negotiable. It's happening. It happens every year. No matter how we feel, or how tired we are, how much is on our plates, no matter if it's a pandemic or not, we made sure that if someone was a part of the culture of the school, you knew that that was something that happened. And I know that newer members in the community were always encouraged to join … because we're there to talk about our racial experiences and the ways in which it impacts our children. Everyone has an entry into that conversation.

**Race Talk: Collaborative Learning**

Other opportunities for race talk included collaborative learning spaces where, like Dialogues, families, staff, and community members came together in their commitment to racial equity work at Brown. Cece highlighted the importance of ensuring that collaborative learning spaces “encompassed all members of the community.” She said, “It was the first
time I've ever been in anything where it wasn't just something for teachers. It wasn't just something for families. It was something for everyone in the community.” She added, “And everyone could come and take part including administrators, because usually when these things happen, administrators are on the outside of it. And that wasn't the case here.” Cece explained further,

This space doesn't separate families from educators like, “Oh, this is a learning space for teachers just as a learning space for parents.” Parent meetings are usually where you come and people talk at you. That's why people don't go to them. But this is not the case in this space. This is a space where the participants do more talking than the presenters do, and the presenters are not presenters. They're facilitators. They're there to facilitate conversation and create conversation space. To hold that space, and to keep it safe, but also to make sure that this space exists, that the voice can be heard at different layers of the community. Like I said, I've never seen that before. And I think that's a strength that we have and that the school should continue to build upon.

Cece added, “We like to say that families are assets … but how much more can you show that you believe that when you are engaging families with curriculum planning and … contributing to the curriculum.” Cece continued, “‘Hey, where do you not see your culture represented?’ Being able to use what families know, regardless of what country they came from, what language they speak, background they come from, how much education they have or not, like, to me, that was so powerful.” Dave also recalled opportunities for families to “have a voice in what's important” to be included in “the actual curriculum” as educators were developing the “scope and sequence” for an “antiracist curriculum.”
Carol shared that when race talk and antiracist learning “happens comfortably at the staff level, it translates comfortably to the parent community.” She added, “It was kind of nice to be back in an elementary school classroom and learning again, and not just, you know, geography or math, but this could be a curriculum in and of itself, around race, gender, and ethnicity.” Arewa said, “Giving opportunities for parents and educators to be in spaces where those [racial equity] conversations are happening I think is really important.” Molly explained that learning with and from staff has been “really powerful.” Molly identified various “entry points” for staff and families, including an affinity group for white community members that centered on the text *Me and White Supremacy* (MAWS) by Layla Saad and that involved “almost 50 people between two [school] communities.” In reflecting on why this learning opportunity was so popular, Molly said, “Maybe because it was so directed … we're going to read this book and do this thing … it just felt really digestible … and was presented as an access point.” Molly added that “being able to talk to white staff members, in particular, whether that be the MAWS group or in affinity spaces in the Dialogues” was especially helpful.

**Race Talk: Students**

In addition to benefiting adults’ learning, race talk was identified by participants as an important practice for students. Celia recalled a “first-grade restorative circle” where the class “read a text related to racial identity” and “had a class discussion about it.” Celia said, “I thought that was pretty impactful. And I know that those types of circles happen across multiple grade levels where students are discussing race.” Shantel explained how race was always discussed “from a young age” in her family. She said, “There are different ways in which you differentiate the discussion with those who are younger…. but I think every child
can learn about injustice at a very young age.” Carol said that learning about race and racial equity “in the formative years is most important … because it will definitely translate to great and wonderful things later in the student's life.” Carol identified the 10 Boys Initiative as a “fantastic” racial affinity space for Black boys in the school community “because Black men and Black boys in particular … in just about every room … are the smallest percentage of any population. So it was great to have a very specific track for young Black boys.” Molly envisioned “an affinity space for white students” to “learn healthy racial identities,” distinct from “positive racial identity.” to avoid “trying to redeem whiteness.” Molly added, “We're trying to teach the kids how their racial identity is attached to being a change agent and attached to being an ally … so they have the skills and tools to know how to do that correctly.” She continued, “They're more than ready in third, fourth, and fifth grade to learn the language around white supremacy and systematic racism and privilege.” In reflecting upon the importance of a white affinity space for students, Molly shared an experience with her white son:

We were reading a book and we got as far as Christopher Columbus…. He said, “You keep telling me I'm a bad person.” And I wasn't saying anything directly to him…. He saw himself in that behavior and felt shame, and I think that space and shame causes silence and paralysis and turning away. And so I think kids can understand and process that... You don't want to be associated with that kind of behavior. But that doesn't have to be your identity. Your whiteness doesn't have to be that.

Molly added, “It's complicated and nuanced, and I don’t know how to do it perfectly.” She named the importance of “normalizing the conversation” and “providing concrete examples of how to ally effectively, correctly, and respectfully … [by] giving them a concrete thing to
do as white children.” Ann also shared her reflections on the importance of students engaging in race talk:

Listening to people in our country right now be fearful of how our white students are going to feel bad about their identities in themselves because what they'll walk away with is, like, “I'm a bad person, if I'm white.” … That has never happened in our classroom.

Ann said,

And students, I think, walk away more with feeling empowered and wanting to continue fighting for equity. And because our classes are diverse racially, it also comes down to, “Well, I would want to make sure that I can play and learn with my friend.”

Ann continued, “Or in the case of my co-teacher and myself, ‘Wow, we get to learn with both teachers and we love both of you.’”

**Antiracist and Culturally Responsive Teaching: Curriculum**

For the purpose of this case study, antiracist and culturally responsive teaching encompasses several topics related to what Brown Elementary School refers to as “culturally responsive and antiracist social justice teaching” in its Instructional Focus and Priorities document (see Appendix D). An analysis of interview transcripts revealed that participants identified curriculum as a core component of antiracist teaching and Brown’s multilayered approach to racial equity. Throughout their responses, participants reflected on their engagement in collaborative practices and processes related to culturally responsive and antiracist social justice teaching. Shantel said, “If we are dismantling the strong root of racism in our country, it's really important that we are intentional in teaching a culturally
responsive social justice curriculum.” Celia also used the word “intentional” when referring to Brown’s curriculum, saying, “It’s the conversations that we're having with students in terms of teaching and learning … curriculum and instructional materials that we're putting in front of students.” Alison shared that antiracist curriculum “empowers educators to see that they can make choices about how they teach and what they teach…. They get to choose and make decisions about what to adjust and rethink and do different curriculum because they're also learners, too.” She continued, “They're thinking about who's in front of them, who's not in front of them, who are their families. And how do they promote a sense of belongingness through the curriculum and through the choices they make as educators?”

Ann articulated an appreciation for the district’s literacy curriculum that she and her co-teacher used in second grade at Brown: “Many of our students’ identities are represented in some way … you'll be reading a book and here is a student doing normal student things. The student also happens to speak Vietnamese.” Ann explained, “There's a lot of representation and it's threaded throughout. In One Word From Sophia, the main character is a young Black girl, and here is her family and it's her older grandma, her mom, her dad, she's got a white uncle … it just happens all the time.” Ann added,

I think it helps students use words like “accessible” and “inclusive.” And they're now starting to question, “What can we be doing as a school to be more inclusive?” and they were talking … about writing [a letter] for a ramp because our school is not physically accessible to all people. But something else they were thinking about is, like, “Okay, if you speak a different language and you come into our school, how will you know where everything is? Should we make a map and have it translated in different languages so someone knows where the first-grade classroom is?” And that
was just them, having those conversations and thinking about things, so I really like the curriculum.

Stacey also highlighted the role of culturally responsive books in her first-grade curriculum: “There was an issue with Black kids always wanting to stroke white kids’ hair. I said, ‘Well, you can do that when we go to the hairdresser. This is not beauty school.’” She explained further, “And then I knew it was time for Bippity Bop Barbershop or I Love My Hair because it explains that we're all different … and made up with all different colors.” Celia also discussed students “reading culturally responsive books” in art class to “cement” fifth-grade students’ learning about “different aspects of their identities” and “putting that into art.” Terry also mentioned art in his reflections about antiracist and culturally responsive curriculum, saying, “I really, really love what the art teacher does here, and how all the art connects to somebody's culture or a culture that exists in America and it's directly connected to what they're doing in class.” He added, “So it's almost a lesson in teaching them how to not appropriate … and learning that if you're interested in something that a culture does, it's your duty to learn about it.”

**Antiracist and Culturally Responsive Teaching: Critical Consumption of Curriculum**

Another recurring subtheme in participants’ responses was the collaborative process of critically consuming curriculum in service of antiracist teaching and learning and a school culture of achievement for Black students. Celia stated, “No curriculum is perfect…. We tell our teachers, ‘Curriculum doesn't teach kids, teachers do.’” She added, “So the work to be done as educators is how are we making sure that we're not just taking a good curriculum at face value and putting that in front of kids? How are we making sure that we are really taking a critical lens?” Celia recalled an ILT meeting focused on “critically consuming the
curriculum,” which involved “looking at” units from Expeditionary Learning and asking, “What are things that we want to keep?” and “What are the things that we want to change?” Blue Sky identified “opportunities” for critical consumption within the “current curriculum,” saying, “I think that teachers through some of their coaching experiences are able to do that.” She explained, “The teachers said, ‘Let's find other poems by other Poets of Color.’ So, through coaching and teachers meeting together, they then enhanced the curriculum. So I think if you look at the curriculum alone…there is not as much diversity as when teachers add to it themselves.” Arewa detailed a unit within the fifth-grade curriculum centering on *Esperanza Rising*, a book in which Mexican characters “had to leave their country [and] … come here, and then it was still bad for them because they're immigrants.” Arewa shared, “I hope my co-teacher and I did a good enough job of making sure that the students didn't see it as that one narrative.” She added, “And there are immigrants, there are people who are migrating to the United States from so many different places. But there’s also different reasons as to why people leave their own country to come here. And it's not always because of a negative reason.”

*Antiracist and Culturally Responsive Teaching: Representation and Counternarratives*

Like Arewa, many participants discussed the importance of representation and counternarratives in antiracist teaching and the school’s multilayered approach to racial equity as identified in the first research question of this study. Cece explained how “single stories” often “perpetuate stereotypes” that can be “internalized by Black and Brown” students and contribute to racism within white students. Cece said, “In my experience as a student and in the experience of the children around me, when the stories of Black and
Brown folks are represented, they’re only ever seen as one story, like slavery, for instance, that's all they know.” She continued,

What else do you know? What was your history before that? And so we know it's important to know ourselves because when we don't know ourselves, and if we are learning about ourselves from the point of view of people who have always oppressed you, you're not going to get the true story about yourself. And so I think it's important to not only make sure there's representation but who that representation is coming from. The source of it is also important for everyone, whether they're of Color or white because the harm of not having those representations is for everybody.

Also highlighting counternarratives, Celia noted how “the history of intellectualism” that exists within “Black and Brown children" was never “acknowledged for a long time.” She stated, “It’s important for students to see people who are like them who have been successful … it's important for that counternarrative to be there versus some of the things that we see in the media as it relates to Black and Brown people.” She added, “It's not a representation of the experiences that are true for students.”

Terry shared, “I only saw myself represented in the curriculum in February, so it was literally a sign of white supremacy because if you don’t see yourself in the curriculum, you just don't think that you're someone who's supposed to reach that level.” Terry said, “Kids need inspiration…. In the formative years, kindergarten through 8th, I think it's very important to see themselves in the curriculum…. What's the end goal? What are they trying to reach?” Blue Sky said, “I think seeing yourself represented in the curriculum is sometimes one of the ways that you overcome the feeling of weakness. When you see something amazing, produced, written, invented by someone who looks like you, you feel a sense of
pride.” Blue Sky also shared, “It doesn't always need to be someone who is super famous. It sometimes needs to be someone who came from the same place that they did…. It feels different inside when you see someone who has achieved so well, and they're the same race as you.” Similarly, Arewa said, “I think it makes them see themselves as enough. They're enough. They're also important. They see themselves as human beings who also have contributed to the history and to the culture of the country they're living in.” She continued, “And I think it gives children the ability to dream and to have something to look forward to in their future.” Arewa also emphasized the importance of BIPOC representation and counternarratives for “white children” so they see their Black and Brown classmates as “their equals” who are making “a difference for the future of our society.”

From a parent perspective, Molly referred to counternarratives as “validating” and “inspiring,” and Paul said the curriculum at Brown had “more mirrors and windows than a lot of other schools.” Paul explained how “diverse and inclusive” representation is something that he looks for “as a parent,” especially now being more “knowledgeable” from the “work at the Brown School” and the “CRT [culturally responsive teaching] course” in the district where he works. For Mirabel, curriculum that “centers different identities, including race and gender” has been “true throughout her daughter's learning at Brown.”

**Antiracist and Culturally Responsive Teaching: Social Justice**

Another aspect of antiracist education that participants identified as instrumental in fostering racial equity was social justice teaching and learning. Celia stated, “Students feel empowered to make change because they've been exposed to antiracist social justice teaching.” Ann said, “I think a lot of the choices that we're making in our curriculum are preparing students to be citizens of the world…. There are a lot of issues that need to be
addressed in our country. And I think they’re the ones to help make the changes.” Ann continued, “It's really urgent work, so I think having conversations about racial justice, identity, doing antiracist work, talking about activism and change making can only help students.” Cece recalled her daughter learning about the “sociopolitical” context of the United States in 2020 and her third-grade teachers “weaving what was happening in a way that the children could access.” Cece said, “She came home with a Black Lives Matter unit … and talking about gender equality and sexism … and after church one day with her grandmas, she said to me, ‘You know, I don't know why it is that women are not allowed to be priests. I think that's really unfair.’” Cece added, “She connected it to some of the things that she was talking about in school, and she called out within her family’s Catholic faith the homophobia that she's witnessed or sensed.” Shantel reflected upon her social justice teaching in second grade, explaining how she and her co-teacher discussed “police brutality” and the “injustice of People of Color being mistreated.” As a second-grade community, “students shared how they felt” and what they thought was “fair and what was unfair.” Shantel highlighted that as a result of this teaching and learning, students “asked their parents if they could participate in a march” or “hang signs in windows or out on front lawns.” Shantel said that one Black student whose “family was in the police” shared his perspective that “all police are not bad.” Shantel explained, “It was just such a rich discussion happening in second grade … and students were open to share … and think about ways they themselves can be active to do something differently.” She continued saying, “That's a testament to … seeing what's going on in our world … addressing it … bringing it into the classroom and getting ideas from the students.”
Carol also emphasized the importance of students learning about social justice issues “because we are not a homogenous community.” Carol cited the “racial reckoning nationwide” and a “chasms” between “people who want to learn” and people who choose “ignorance.” Carol asked, “How do we close that gap and educate students so that we're all kind of singing from the same hymnal?” In thinking about a “particular practice” related to social justice teaching at Brown, Alison shared her observations and reflections: “Having staff center a critique of the Thanksgiving narrative or centering transgender lives during the schoolwide read that's connected to the Human Rights Campaign…. I was initially hesitant around the one off-ness and just wondered where that lands.” Alison also shared,

I also saw those as entry points for staff who might not otherwise do that kind of work and what I saw particularly with kids is that they didn’t necessarily see that as tokenizing but as part of the school culture … like, we talked about lots of people and lots of identities throughout the school year, and sometimes it's a little louder than other times, and I saw that as really valuable.

Similarly, Ann shared, “It’s not just a one-and-done kind of thing…. I'm thinking of Black Lives Matter Week of Action. That's a specific finite thing, but also the core beliefs of the movement are embedded in a lot of what happens in the school or in our classrooms.” Ann added, “I do think that there is an emphasis also on making sure that multiple identities are represented in curriculum in meaningful ways that don't feel like it's this special one-time occasion kind of thing.”

Molly remembered a moment over Thanksgiving when her son was talking to her dad about “all that he was learning about Thanksgiving.” She expressed appreciation for her son’s social justice learning at school, saying, “I don't know that I would have had the agency
to teach him in that way.” Molly also highlighted “full-school social justice projects,” including a “quilt project” in which “students and families and staff” created quilt squares that “celebrated their identities” and were “stitched together and displayed in the entry of the school.” Shantel said, “When we did the quilt as a school, that was awesome, you know, seeing everyone representing their identity, their language, what's important to them.” Shantel also recalled another schoolwide social justice story project in which students “wrote stories about family experiences” after doing “interviews of family members” and learning about “heroes” who fought for equity. In addition to the writing, students created “dioramas” to “show” their stories for “families and other community members” during a schoolwide “walkthrough.” Shantel said, “I just remember how engaged each grade level was. It was really impactful … and it was an important experience for the students as well as myself. I learned so much.” Paul also referenced this “whole school project … and the opportunity to see the “different projects around the school that were on display.” He said, “We still have that project in the basement on a shelf … because it was meaningful.” Cece highlighted schoolwide social justice practice saying, “We made sure that the end of the year always culminated in a social justice project that directly impacted children … which means that their teachers had to be along for the journey.”

**Affirming Identities and Belongingness**

In describing their experiences collaborating to develop a school culture of achievement for Black students, participants identified the practice of affirming identities and promoting belongingness as essential elements of racial equity. Shantel remarked, “I've worked at many schools, and I think Brown really, really focuses on making sure that everyone's identity is reflected.” Mirabel said, “Identities are named and talked about in the
teaching and learning throughout…. I think that's a piece of what the throughline is.”
Priscilla said, “I think the Brown School's ability to be inclusive shows that everybody's
different. And I think the kids know that.” Ann stated, “All identities in our school are
valued, and I think we are constantly looking and questioning to see if there are ways that we
can do better.” Ann recalled the staff “training for LGBTQIA, Safe and Welcoming
Families” and how the learning “provided staff with an opportunity to reflect on, ‘Are there
things that I can be doing on a personal level, but also in terms of my curriculum, and setting
the culture in my classroom in order to support students who might identify as transgender or
belong to the LGBTQIA community?’” Carol stated that identities are “boldly asked” and
“boldly delivered’ at Brown. She shared, “I remember an instance where someone didn't
subscribe to ‘she,’ but more ‘they,’ and it was just an outright conversation…. That was the
first time I'd had that conversation, but it was just delivered and explained so comfortably.”
Carol added, “I appreciated that … the staff did a great job navigating that for parents who
are new to that, such as myself.” Cece remembered her daughter studying “the Haitian
Revolution” and “learning a lot.” She said, “I felt like that was a great way for her to learn
about her identity, her ethnic identity, within the context of her American classroom. And to
see that it's a part of our history, our ethnic history … and American history, too.” Terry
recalled an interaction between a first grader and the school’s secretary, “who’s always
speaking Spanish to the kids … which makes them feel special.” Terry detailed the exchange,
saying, “He gifted her a dreidel and gold coins…. I don't know if the first grader realized, but
he was sharing his culture with no second thought, not being like, ‘Oh, she's not white, so she
doesn't do this holiday’ or anything like that.” Terry continued, “His first thought was, ‘This
woman is nice to me, and I want to show her that I appreciate her. Here’s a piece of my culture to share with you.”

Celia linked Brown’s intentionality to affirm identities with belongingness, explaining the school’s commitment to “making sure that students feel included” and that “assets they bring to the work,” including “diversity,” were not only “valued,” but also “celebrated.” Celia identified how educators developed relationships with students by “conferencing with them” and “getting to know what their interests are, what hobbies they like, what games they like to play” and “thinking about how to … infuse that information in the lessons they teach” so they are “more aligned to student interests.” Stacey said, “With the staff, I feel the kids really feel we’re not only a community … but like a family.” Stacey continued, “For example, there was a student who I never taught and he became like my son … and he called me his mom…. Basketball was his thing, and in the morning, a quick talk about the Celtics when they were on … and he was good for that day.” Stacey also explained how there were “cases where students wanted to speak to someone they felt they could trust,” and she “talked to several students.” She said, “I was one of those teachers where the kid came and talked to me … and I felt like, at Brown, it was okay for us to do that.” Similarly, Blue Sky shared that “one of the most important experiences” for her at the school was “being somebody who connected with Black and Brown students.” Blue Sky said, “This meant being a cheerleader, a form of support, connecting with them, talking…and making sure they understood me and I understood them.” She added, “How you feel at home versus how you feel at school, sometimes they’re so different depending on your identity and your ethnicity. I think that that’s one of the ways that somebody in a role like mine or an adult who's Black could help to minimize feeling that different.”
Arewa said, “I think families and students feel like they belong and feel like they are part of the community because I think that Brown has done a really good job creating a community so that parents feel like they can speak up … be a part of what they want to be a part of … and feel connected and supported.” From a family perspective, Cece shared an opportunity to further develop and expand relationships among BIPOC families that are “burgeoning” in affinity spaces. In recalling a BIPOC affinity group discussion about generational wealth, Cece said, “I saw the hunger that people have for that. One person had begun to crack a code that we're all anxious about but that isn't information that everybody has…. And so how do we rethink our structures then to enable that to happen? I see the need for it.” Cece explained further, “Because no matter what our stories had been, we could all relate to that. It was crazy. Like, ‘I don't know you and you don't know me, but we got the same story when it comes to this one thing?’ And so to hear that person start to talk about how they were working through that was gold.” Another practice for BIPOC belongingness that Cece identified was hosting school events “that incorporate the kids so that therefore the families could be incorporated.” Cece said,

I've always felt the best at those events more so than in, like, meetings because I could see, “Wow, the diversity the school does have.” I could see all kinds of people and I could see the kids and how they're interacting with one another. And those are the events where I go to speak the most with other Black and Brown families. Because it'd be like, “Oh, I didn't know, you know, like you're so and so's parent or whatever.” Those are the places where I did make connections. And I wish there had been more ways to keep those connections going. Because there are times where I feel like we'd be going through similar things, or maybe someone had gone through
something that you hadn't gone through that was race-specific or ethnic-specific, or that you would just feel more comfortable talking to another Parent of Color about. But because those things were far and few, and your life is so full, you're not keeping up with those efforts.

**Adult Mindset**

Throughout discourse about collaborative practices and processes, participants named the essential role that adult mindset plays in racial equity work. Specifically, the growth mindset and learning orientation of staff members at Brown was a subtheme relevant to all three of this study’s research questions. Carol shared, “The staff at the school were fantastic. I know sometimes it can be difficult to … gain consensus or get buy-in meaningfully. I really appreciated that the staff were so forthright in [being] willing to participate and really leaned in to find ways to bring this work through the lens of education.” Celia stated, “We have a very strong team of educators who are very reflective … and open to growth. The educators that I’ve worked with are always thinking about how to improve.” Celia also said, “By no means are we perfect in this work. When we do address those issues, we acknowledge the mistake that was made, learn from it … heal, and move forward as a community.” Alison remembered a specific scenario in which “one white educator was supported by another white educator,” and for “the one white staff member” receiving the support, “that was their first time doing something different.” Alison said, “In some ways, it was so far from what I might want to see as a fellow white educator who cares deeply about making sure kids feel like they belong, particularly Kids of Color.” She added, “And through that experience, that educator learned more about her own students and saw the value of thinking differently about how she presents students’ identities in the classroom. And that feels like a success even
though it's not exactly where we want to get. They have to go there and be part of their own reflection in order to keep seeing that there are better ways to be educators, white educators.

Stacey highlighted the “openness” of staff members, including “administrators” who were “big enough” to say, “I need somebody else’s help to fix this.” Stacey said, “I think people even ask questions like, ‘How would you handle the situation?’ And I think that was a big piece where people trusted that they could go to someone. It doesn't mean you're not doing your job. It just means that this person may be able to understand it better.” She added, “A lot of teachers would come to me, and I don't know if it's because I was motherly or I was older. People paid attention and respected the wisdom. I think at Brown, we were all open to listening to each other.” Terry also noted staff members’ openness to communicate and collaborate: “Everyone's interconnected, and that sure plays into retention of the staff and how we all can work together to 360 wrap a kid around, making sure we’ve got them in school and outside of school.” Paul cited educators’ “commitment” to designing an “antiracist curriculum” as evidence of a learning orientation displayed by the staff at Brown.

In reflecting on her own growth and learning, Ann said, “I actually remember my first time talking about racism as a white teacher, and as a white person who didn't really have a lot of practice talking about issues of racial equality in my own life with adults, let alone talking to second graders.” After feeling nervous and taking “cues” from her “Black co-teacher,” she realized that “it shouldn't just be” her “Black co-teacher facilitating those conversations with students.” She said, “As a white person, I needed to also be modeling to my white students how to have conversations, how to ask questions.” Ann realized that “having conversations with second graders is actually a lot easier than having conversations
with adults because they don’t have all of those years of building that stigma around talking about race.”

Adult mindset among families at Brown as an essential component of a multilayered approach to racial equity was also pronounced in the discourse. Alison shared, “I think about the two parent leaders [of REC] and their—what appeared to me as like—trust and care for each other, and ways that they showed up for each other.” Alison continued, “Their identities as a white woman and as a Woman of Color are different from each other … and they shared a commitment to creating a school where their kids and themselves and other families belong.” In thinking about the mindset of the “white parent leader,” Alison wondered, “What in her own journey, in her own class privilege in particular … what allowed for that to be possible?” Alison named what she discerned as a “sense of responsibility for her own kid and the kids in her child's classroom.” Mirabel also noted the collaborative relationship shared by the two parent leaders of the REC: “I just think of the power of that. There's something in that that feels very resonant and fertile and that it's been over years.”

Carol stated, “I appreciated the parent community…. I like to think that was probably 100% acceptance from wanting to do this work.” She added, “And you know, you might have some families that say, ‘Oh, well, this probably isn't my bag,’ but I appreciated there were parents who were also very open to being part of the work that REC was doing and you could see it also in the Family Liaison work.” Priscilla also referenced the mindsets of families: “I feel like families that were never open to exploring their biases or prejudices are now doing that. I think families who were never thinking about equity and inclusiveness are now thinking about that.” She added, “I feel like it's opened the door to a lot of people that may not have known how to handle these situations with their own kids.” Similarly, Ann
shared, “I think the parents that I've worked with who I've had multiple kids from … are beginning to think in terms of equity, which I think is really important.” Ann described exchanges with white families who were more intentional about “inviting all of the students” to “birthday parties,” seeking out “contact information for all parents in the class,” and asking for help “translating an invitation into Spanish.” Ann also detailed a conversation she had “with a parent during parent teacher conferences” when they “noticed” their child, who was a “white boy,” was “generally playing with white boys in the class” and wondered if that was something Ann was “also noticing.” The parent expressed, “Is there something like … we talk a lot about how we should play with everyone. What do you think that might be … how can we…?” Ann summarized how families “know they can also be having conversations centering on race” with educators “because that's a part of our school and our mission.”

**Family Engagement: Family and Staff Collaboration**

Given the collaborative culture that brought staff and families together to do racial equity work at Brown, the subtheme of family engagement was interwoven throughout all participant interview responses. Indeed, components of family engagement were integrated in other subthemes aligning with all three of the study’s research questions. Since family engagement in schools is fundamental to a multilayered approach to racial equity, this topic is also included as a self-standing element of collaborative practices and processes.

As noted earlier, family and staff collaboration at Brown Elementary School was spotlighted in participant discourse. Arewa stated that “giving opportunities for parents and educators to be in spaces where conversations” about racial equity “are happening is really important, and we're doing that with the Race Dialogues and Race and Ethnicity Committee.”

151
Celia described family engagement at Brown as a “partnership” that involves educators and families “working collaboratively” and “recognizing that our families bring a lot of assets to this work.”

Cece reflected on the “blended PD,” a specific opportunity for family and staff collaboration that was an “effort to make sure that the voices, histories and cultures of our families were represented within what the school does.” Cece said, “As a teacher, you could sit there in Google for 12 hours or you could sit with your families and have a genuine organic conversation, and suddenly your perspective shifts, your materials shift, and what you are bringing into your lessons and curriculum shifts, and so I think we need more of that.” Cece continued, “Because even if you sit there researching and Googling for hours and hours and hours, it's never gonna be the same as getting it from the source.” Similarly, Ann shared, “I like how there are learning opportunities that are provided, where families and staff can come together.” She said, “We had family members coming in and helping us lesson plan … and I really like that the Brown School views parents as assets and collaborators.” Ann added, “The fact that we're talking about racial equity as a school … is a good opportunity to learn with and from families.”

Reflecting on a specific experience when families collaborated with educators around an instructional problem of practice through an equity lens, Molly said, “Because the problem of practice was curriculum focused … I felt like a little bit of a fly on the wall … and I was just really impressed and floored … because there's so much depth happening … and I had the opportunity to see it.” Kathy recalled a collaborative learning space that responded to the needs of staff and families in a particular moment when Donald Trump was elected. She explained, “The escalating tensions around immigration and race that were
Family Engagement: Racial Equity Lens

Another recurring subtheme that emerged from the findings was the racial equity lens that is consistently applied to family engagement at Brown. Alison explained that “decisions” and opportunities related to family engagement were “almost always connected to talking about, learning about, and centering the ways that race impacts our school community.” Alison said, “Race dialogues, in many ways, was the family engagement practice for the fall. There wasn't ‘breakfast with the principal.' The work was doing Dialogues as a community, and I think that says a lot.” Mirabel described Dialogues as a “formative” experience as a “family member in this journey with the Brown Elementary School” as it “communicated something to her about what it means to be part of this school community, and therefore, what learning [her] daughter was going to engage in throughout her years at Brown.” Mirabel also discussed the REC Equity Roundtable team: “Family engagement and equity and access is just a constant lens. Part of how Brown engages families is just constantly being in inquiry and being conscious of ‘What are the barriers? What are the things we're not thinking of?’” Mirabel added, “Access and engagement on the family level with an equity lens … is just constant. So therefore, it trickles down to different ways that engagement happens.”

153
Carol detailed the racial equity lens that had been applied to a family engagement event that she organized to focus on the “arts at Brown.” She explained how the event “really amplified what Brown is” because “the undertone was really about diversity … in terms of what was offered for food, arts, entertainment, and overall engagement.” Mirabel also discussed applying a racial equity lens to family events in her description of the “Brown’s Got Talent Show,” which was “led by a Black woman” whose “son had just entered the school.” Mirabel highlighted the “very visible leadership” of this parent who also “brought in other professionals she knew in the music and entertainment industry and who were People of Color as well.” Mirabel said, “I just think that was super powerful as an amazing event.” She added, “And I think tangentially, it was connected to some of the intentionality that was happening in the Family Council and just sort of that seeking to be more representative around what events happened and who was leading things.”

In addition to family events, Mirabel also noted the racial equity lens applied to “family communication,” which involved “leaning into the complexity and the nuance and trusting that children can … examine the history of injustice but not to the exclusion of the history of justice.” Mirabel also stated that family communications convey “a sense of joy in the learning community and possibility, hope, and progress in all these things. But those are also grounded in looking at the reality of pain and injustice as well.” Molly said, “I see a commitment to equity in the language of whatever goes home to families. And always, I'm very often seeing a lens of equity in communication from the school.”

**Family Engagement: Support Systems and Structures**

Interview participants also named a variety of family engagement systems and structures. While many of these systems and structures were detailed earlier, including
Dialogues, Equity Roundtables, and Collaborative Learning, this section explores others that participants identified. For instance, Shantel described her role as a staff facilitator of the REC Family Liaisons as a point person for “connecting with Families of Color to make sure they're well informed of what's happening in the school and coming up with ideas for ensuring that other families are connected, involved, and feel like they're included as part of our community.” Paul described the REC Family Liaisons as “a bridge to communicate with families. Paul said, “It's good because we need to have, you know, not just the classroom teacher be the go-to person. Having the family liaisons provides another important voice coming from … a Person of Color to talk to families.” Cece shared, “The only space that I've seen parents that look like me—a lot of them anyway—was the Family Liaison meetings, but I think that's because that was intentionally made so.”

The school’s family liaison position was another discernable family engagement support in participant discourse. As Brown Elementary School’s family liaison, Terry shared, “I feel like because of the strong focus of equity here, I've been able to do a lot, and I feel like my role is focused towards that…. When I'm bringing programs and stuff, I generally send them to the Families of Color first to give them more time to sign up.” Terry continued, “I make the time to walk anybody through who needs it, or just knowing they have support can empower them to go and do it on their own.” Terry reflected, “That's been a big way I've been able to try and increase the equity here. It's just realizing society’s pitfalls and kind of augmenting it to make our own little world of idealism in terms of equity because it's not like that everywhere.” Highlighting the impact of Terry’s family engagement efforts, Ann said, “I think there’s even more of a positive shift” in family engagement “now that we have Mr. Jackson as our family liaison.”
Carol identified the learning opportunities that were provided to families through the REC as “tremendous” because the learning “could be used not just” with “young children who were attending Brown,” but also “in our workplaces and lives as human beings.” Carol added,

If we keep things that we've learned to ourselves, we're not doing anybody any justice. I enjoyed taking what I learned and having conversations at home with my little one, and then if I saw an instance or could bring some knowledge to another space, I enjoyed doing that and being able to come back to REC and say, “Hey, this is what I learned. And it was helpful because, you know, a couple of instances outside of school had cropped up and we were able to lean in and have a very direct conversation about why these things occurred. And it was the learnings from the REC that were helpful for me in those conversations with him.

Paul also assigned value to the learning opportunities provided to families, sharing that “conversations at the dinner table” with his children “around what” they were learning and what “he was learning within the Brown community” all helped “to give our own children perspectives … the language, and ways to deal with … and name racism when they see it.”

In reflecting upon opportunities to learn about racial equity as a parent at Brown, Mirabel shared,

I participated in a circle focused around the Me and White Supremacy workbook by Leila Saad. Actually, a parent at Brown who was one of the co-chairs of the Race and Ethnicity Committee, had alerted me to this book some years earlier. And so I had done it on my own, and I brought it to the organization where I work. We had done
that with a white affinity group within the staff. And then I did it a second time with Brown and community members from another neighboring school.

Alison noted that “a lot of families have been there for many years, and so the ways that narratives are conducted are developed over time as opposed to someone coming in or jumping in at the middle, there seems to be growth … for families.” Alison concluded, “The learning from previous years builds on the current school year.”

**Staff Learning**

Like family engagement, discourse about staff learning was present in other interrelated subthemes within the study findings. As an integral part of Brown’s multilayered approach to racial equity, staff learning was pronounced in participants’ descriptions of collaboration toward developing a school culture of achievement for Black students. This section focuses on certain staff learning opportunities, including professional development—referred to as *collaborative learning* at Brown—and affinity spaces, described by participants in their interviews. Alison shared, “The school prioritized the teaching and learning of their own staff…. Talking about our own identity, our own racial identities, and the identities of our students wasn't going to be something outside of the school day, but part of the professional development and which practices were centered.” Ann said, “My first training at Brown was centered on intersectionality and Kimberlé Crenshaw. That was one of the first things we looked at during summer collaborative learning, as well as looking at culturally responsive teaching, and some of the tools that we use at our school when we're observing other teachers.” Arewa reflected upon her first “collaborative learning” experience at Brown “in the beginning of the year”: “I felt like I could breathe a little because I definitely was coming in with my guards up.” Arewa explained that the “expectations” were clear and that
“race and social justice” were “intertwined in the conversation.” As a result of the collaborative learning, Arewa understood “that everything we do, racial equity is a part of it.” Celia recalled staff members “thinking about their own identities” during “the beginning-of-year collaborative learning.” According to Celia, this particular staff learning included an exploration of “textual lineage” and “how those specific texts impacted staff members’ identities.”

Shantel remembered staff learning sessions during the pandemic of racism in 2020 following the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor. She identified “affinity groups” in which educators “could be together” and “discuss how” they were “feeling as a staff.” Shantel also said, “We made sure that we addressed it with the students. I feel like we are intentional in making sure we connect everyday life with what's happening in society to help students understand how … they can be a part of the social justice movement.” Mirabel shared, “There's a nuance to how educators approach teaching and learning and the equity piece of that.” Mirabel explained further, “My sense and experience at Brown is that there's a sophistication that comes from really walking the walk year after year and having a depth of experience, plus reflection. So it's not platitudes.”

Affinity groups represented another staff learning experience referenced in participants’ interview responses. Ann said, “I think the addition of the racial affinity groups added a level of thinking more explicitly around what it means to be a white teacher and unpack privilege that I've had and grapple with learning how to talk about race and racism with other white people.” Ann continued, “So I feel like it's been the most fruitful in terms of the work and not only my personal development, but also how I view teaching Students of Color in my classroom every day.” As a BIPOC affinity group facilitator, Shantel discussed
how “she led affinity discussions” to read “articles and listen” to colleagues’ perspectives
“about what was happening in school” and “how to make sure that students are feeling
connected.” For Alison, “prioritizing affinity spaces” was essential to “staff members’
learning” about racial equity. Alison also highlighted “the space for bringing affinity group
facilitators together to debrief and think about the next steps and challenging conversations
that were had in those particular spaces.” Alison noted how these “challenging
conversations” centered on “pushing people forward on their own priorities and their own
bias and their own understanding of how the work moves forward.” In thinking further about
the learning and collaborative space for affinity group facilitators, Alison said, “There's
always going to be a continuum of folks at different points in their journey.” She observed
how facilitators were “not necessarily at the same point” but had “similar beliefs about what
the work could look like or what the impact could be.” Alison identified this as “really
powerful” for setting “a tone of those folks” who were “always three steps ahead of where
maybe the group was and having high expectations for where the group can go.” She said,
“This was an important way to keep the group moving forward as opposed to staying stuck in
a particular understanding or part of the journey.”

**Intentional Hiring**

Case study participants also identified intentional hiring as a component of Brown’s
multilayered approach to racial equity. Stacey shared that “getting more People of Color,
more people who looked like the children in the school” was a priority when she was on the
hiring committees. Stacey said, “That was really a plus because when I first went to Brown, I
was the only minority teacher…. So I felt like I played a role in that because the principal
came to me and asked, ‘I'm thinking of these teachers. What do you think?’” Stacey
explained, “It was really a good feeling because not only were there more Black people on the staff, but we also ended up having Spanish, Asian, and just more representation for all the children who were in the school. They started to see people that look like them.” Stacey described the positive impact of educator diversity, explaining how students “could go to staff members they could relate to,” especially in the context of “race and equity.” Stacey recalled the “custodian,” who was a “Black male,” facilitating the 10 Boys Initiative, which was “really, really good” and “important” because “some students didn’t always have a Black male role model at home.” Shantel highlighted data showing that “Students of Color who have had at least one Educator of Color in their lives” are “more apt to pursue higher education.” She shared, “I had my first Teacher of Color in high school, and I remember how she made sure the Students of Color really participated. She was intentional … Miss Austin…. That was my first time ever seeing a Person of Color teaching, ever.” Shantel also said, “I think it's good for both Students of Color and white students to see somebody that does not look like them…. Whatever negative stereotype or whatever that they’ve heard, seeing somebody that's different in front of them and teaching them is a rich experience.” Carol also reflected on the presence and impact of Educators of Color in her education. She said,

At my elementary school, there were two Teachers of Color in the entire school for the 5 years that I was there. I just wonder if my experience might have been different if I saw more Teachers of Color. I wanted to be a teacher at one point but I think I aligned with these women who were teaching. I just wonder if there were more Teachers of Color if I might have just leaned into it a bit more. I think people will
model who they see. And so if they have more people in their realm who look like them, or who identify as they do, I think it’s helpful.

Blue Sky said, “The teachers that the students have are really diverse, which is also a strong point … and a major bonus value added here.” Arewa said, “I am really impressed at the diversity of the staff. The fact that I'm not walking into a space where I feel like I am the only educator of my race or even my ethnicity, I appreciate that, and I think that benefits all the children.” Arewa added, “I think when you have such a diverse group of people working together, it’s not that issues won't come up, I think that it's harder because there are so many differences. I think it's harder for one group to marginalize another when there's diversity.” In thinking about her experience at a different school in the same district, Arewa noted fewer “Black and Brown staff” and a “larger school” context, resulting in “stronger racial power dynamics.” About Brown, Arewa said, “There's so many more of us. It seems like people have been here for a while now and I think they've created … this community, this sense of ‘I have your back mentality’ to support each other.” Terry also shared his “noticings” about the staff and focused more specifically on the “teacher pairings” of Brown’s co-teaching model. He said,

I don't know if they are strategic, but it is really cool. You know in second grade there’s a white woman and a Black woman, or a Haitian woman and a woman who's from Boston, like, multiple things that they have in common, multiple things that are different, two cultures coming together for the greater good. And then, in fourth grade, a similar situation. And then in third grade, a white man and Hispanic woman…. I don't know if that was strategic, but if it was, that was brilliant. Just having those different combinations so that the adults can play off each other and then
students can witness people who are different literally working together to help them … so they get so many different perspectives of how to take that in. I think it's very helpful. So intentional hiring works out if you do it right and thoughtfully.

**Inclusion and Intersectionality**

The final subtheme highlighted in this discussion of case study research findings focuses on inclusion and intersectionality, as articulated by participants who acknowledged the connections between race and dis/ability and the inclusion work happening at Brown. Given the myriad ways that race and dis/ability are inextricably linked, inclusion is vital to the antiracist efforts of educators, families, and community members fostering a school culture of achievement for Black students. Alison stated, “Dismantling of a sub-separate program that predominantly educated Boys of Color, and the ways that that's going to play out in terms of narratives around race and dis/ability, feels like … an incredibly challenging chapter … and an opportunity to take what has happened at the school and push it more.” In thinking about the school’s transition from sub-separate to inclusive classrooms, Alison explained,

The challenge of having another model is, how do you dismantle something while also addressing what was good or whole or loved about that model as you're shifting to a different model? And because the majority-plus of students in sub-separate were Students of Color compared to the general education classrooms where the demographics were … a more equal percentage between white students and Students of Color, that impacted the ways that race and dis/ability influenced how people talk about what is right for kids. It means to change certain structures at the school.
Blue Sky said, “There are more Black and Brown students than what is proportionately represented in general education classrooms in terms of race. The work that the school is doing in terms of moving to a full-inclusion school and thinking about racial inequities, the staff and leadership here are thinking about this deeply.” Blue Sky elaborated on the shift to inclusion:

The [sub-separate] classroom has a higher number of Black and Brown students in a setting that is not always resourced, a setting that is not always looked for … looked at … or included in conversations…. It’s always looked at for deficits and what it lacks, viewing students in terms of the minimum they can do as opposed to pushing them to excel and achieve beyond what people assume, which they can do. And I think that’s why the inclusion model here is something that is being taken very seriously. It’s not only providing equity and education for students who may be considered disabled, but it’s also representing a higher proportion of Black and Brown students. It is a form of social justice for those students who are Students of Color with a dis/ability.

Ann shared, “I think the work around inclusion also aligns with antiracist social justice teaching and learning at the school. The fact that we are working to develop systems so that unexpected behaviors aren't a gatekeeper for students getting access to inclusion, I think is really important.” Arewa said, “One of the reasons that I understood why we are going through the process of becoming a full-inclusion school is to eliminate the racism that comes with having certain classrooms, such as the ABA sub-separate, and not limit our Children of Color to certain environments because we don't have high expectations.” From a parent perspective, Priscilla shared that inclusion is a “big thing” for her and “the way that
Brown has handled” the transition “has been great.” She said, “I think some people might feel like inclusion could be disruptive to the students because things happen and there are students who have different needs.” Priscilla elaborated,

I feel like the integration has been gradual and it's also been something where the teachers are aware of what the student needs are. They know what they need to do so that it is inclusive…. If something needs to happen or change, I feel like it's such a fluid situation that staff are constantly communicating and working that out. But I think it also teaches kids to learn how different everybody is, that everybody has different needs, and there's no cookie cutter normal person. And that's been important for me because I think it teaches empathy. I think it teaches children empathy and kindness and patience and understanding, which is important because there's a lot of adults who don't have that. And it's probably because they just never had to deal with any of this when they're kids.

**Conclusion**

The data used in this single-case study’s methodology included interview, document review and observation from the Brown Elementary School community. For the primary data source, this study privileged the interviews with 16 community members to center the voices of individuals who led antiracist work in the case under investigation. As a result of coding processes during data analysis, this study’s findings were organized into two overarching themes: (1) racism is commonplace and (2) collaborative practices and processes. The first theme, “racism is commonplace” acknowledged the ubiquity of racism; the second theme, “collaborative practices and processes,” detailed 16 subthemes related to the Brown school-based leadership team’s enactment of a multilayered approach to racial equity. The next and
final chapter of this inquiry examines the findings from this single-case study, including a path forward toward a school culture of achievement for Black students.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

There's still conflict…. There are people who aren’t in agreement about where folks are at, or where the school is at, or where families are at. And that conflict can be talked about. There is a shared language on a continuum of how to talk about whiteness, racism, and anti-Black racism at the school, and other teachers can push each other on that … on a continuum. I think conflict is an important piece.

—Alison, case study participant

This final chapter begins with an examination of the findings from this single-case study, which explored how educators, families, and community members from Brown Elementary School collaborated to enact a multilayered approach to racial equity. The examination discusses (1) race and racism and (2) the multilayered approach to racial equity as two significant patterns that emerged from the interpretation and analysis of the data. The subsections related to (1) the opportunity gap, (2) BIPOC family engagement, and (3) community partnerships leverage participant discourse to detail areas of opportunity for Brown to continue working toward a culture of achievement for Black students. The following sections include a critical reflection discussing both hard truths and positive outcomes followed by recommendations for applying this racial equity research in the broader field of education. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the limitations of the study, opportunities for future research, and a closing summary detailing a path forward toward a culture of achievement for Black students in education.
Examination

This case study examined how a school-based leadership team approached racial equity. Three research questions guided this inquiry to acknowledge the pervasive influence of racism and propose understandings for challenging white supremacy and working collaboratively toward racial equity in schools. The theoretical framework was informed by four tenets of critical race theory: (1) whiteness as property; (2) racism is commonplace to the United States; (3) voices of the oppressed should be used to provide counterstories to dominant narratives; and 4) intersectionality exists and must be considered (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2013). CRT analysis of the research site yielded an in-depth examination of the complex relationships between strategic collaboration, organizational culture, and student impact (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). This single-case study revealed that race and racism is omnipresent, and any school-based racial equity efforts need to begin with and constantly confront this reality. A school will consistently combat white supremacy even as the school-based leadership team engages in antiracist collaborative practices and processes. The data demonstrated how an understanding that race matters and racism is commonplace is both a rationale for racial equity efforts and one of the collaborative practices that promotes a culture of achievement. The findings also highlighted how school-based leadership teams are well-positioned to engage in this work because they can navigate the complexities of their contexts while remaining diligent of the endemic nature of race and racism. Overall, a multilayered approach to racial equity was inclusive of a holistic lens acknowledging the ubiquity of racism and racial equity practices and processes that intentionally responded to the racism is commonplace premise.
Race and Racism

This inquiry found that acknowledgement of race as a social construct and racism as commonplace is both an ideological premise and antiracist practice at the Brown Elementary School. The omnipresence and elusiveness of race and racism must be openly acknowledged and discussed among all members of the community (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2010; Kendi, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tatum, 1992; West, 1993). This finding emerged from application of CRT tenets during data analysis. Specifically, the following CRT concepts comprised this study’s theoretical framework: 1) whiteness as property; (2) racism is commonplace in the United States; (3) voices of the oppressed should be used to provide counterstories to dominant narratives; and (4) intersectionality exists and must be considered (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2013). The “racism is commonplace” theme that emerged from this study’s findings was informed by these four CRT tenets because they emphasized the prevalence of white supremacy and proposed understandings for unpacking racism in schools. Indeed, every study participant recounted instances of racial bias in the Brown community. Since race talk was normalized, though not unchallenged, racist moments were leveraged as both evidence of an urgent problem to be addressed and as justification to prioritize racial equity schoolwide. Because no community exists in a bubble, explicitly naming racism did not eliminate racial bias at Brown; rather, several community members developed, over time and with support, skills to question, interrupt, and counter the racist incidents they inevitably experienced or witnessed.

Instances of racism identified by study participants were indicative of the CRT tenet “whiteness as property” (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2013). This study showed that white community members benefited from access to privileges that were deeply embedded within
the Brown school community and broader district context. These assumptions and benefits
gave white community members more control over critical aspects of their schooling
experiences, including access to educational resources, racially unbiased standardized
assessments, inclusion in the least restrictive environments, and community belongingness.
White families, staff members, and students expect and rely on these benefits in schools;
racially imbalanced expectations have been affirmed, legitimated, and protected by racist
policies throughout all layers of the education system. Black students and families, however,
are objects of white domination unless they demonstrate resistance or leverage different
sources of social capital to combat white supremacy (Harris, 1993). Understanding how
whiteness as property operates in schools to privilege white students and exclude Black
students is critical for school-based leadership teams. By mitigating resource hoarding,
elevating BIPOC voices, and applying an antiracist lens to school-based decisions, whiteness
as property can lose its pernicious influence in the education context, and access to equitable
learning can be accessible to Black students.

In a similar vein to whiteness as property, the CRT tenet “voices of the oppressed
should be used to provide counterstories to dominant narratives” also challenges the white
majoritarian narrative and calls for amplifying the voices of individuals who have been
historically marginalized (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2013). This inquiry contributes to
this discourse by including the perspectives of a school-based leadership team that engaged
in racial equity. By centering the voices of educators, families, and community members who
led antiracist efforts in an elementary school, this research leverages the perspectives of
changemakers who are closest to the work and therefore understand what it means to engage
in antiracist collaboration.
This study also extends existing literature by including families and community partners in the research about schools that embrace race talk, an antiracist practice that can dispel biases, promote racial literacy, and develop criticality within participants (Coles-Ritchie & Smith, 2017; Muhammad, 2020; Pollock, 2004). Schools that prioritize racial equity must encourage race talk among all community members, not just educators and students. In the case of Brown Elementary, families and community members were essential to co-planning and co-facilitating collaborative learning opportunities that engendered critical conversations about race, racism, and equity. The data findings suggest that family and community engagement is too often siloed; expanding race talk to include all community members can build a school culture where challenging discussions about race and racism are embraced, especially if this work is sustained over time.

This inquiry also underscores the importance of critical conversations about race and racism with students, an instructional implication that is well-documented in the literature (Benson & Fiarman, 2019; Singleton & Hayes, 2008; Sue, 2015). Despite the research, race talk as an educational practice is not globally enacted—or even embraced—in pre-K–12 classrooms. Under the overgeneralized umbrella of CRT, race talk has become politicized, attacked, and prohibited by policymakers and other individuals in power who support a racist agenda to maintain white supremacy in schools. Aligning with other extant studies, this research highlights the centrality of race in discussions about educational equity in U.S. public elementary schools.

**Multilayered Approach to Racial Equity**

As this study’s theoretical framework, CRT affirmed the multilayered characteristic of racial equity efforts; the numerous interrelated tenets of CRT convey the idea that race is a
social construct and that racism is not merely the product of individual bias or prejudice, but also something embedded in systems and policies (Delgado & Stefancic, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Matsuda, 1993). The tenet “whiteness as property” stresses the deeply rooted origins of white supremacy in the United States by outlining how property rights in the country were rooted in racial domination. In conflating race and property, only Blacks were subjugated as slaves, and only whites were privileged with property rights (Harris, 1993). Similarly, in education, Black students face opportunity gaps and are excluded from learning, while white students are granted full access to schooling experiences that contribute to whiteness as property.

In alignment with CRT, this inquiry’s human-centered approach to data collection, interpretation, and analysis privileged the experiential knowledge of study participants to reshape notions of race, racism, and power (Ansley, 1997; Bell, 1980; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Sleeter, 2011). Given the first and third CRT tenets of this inquiry’s theoretical framework, amplifying voices of individuals who have been oppressed or omitted from education discourse was critical to avoid contributing to the accumulation of unearned privilege and hegemony in white-centric research (Harris, 1993). Examination of the data through the lens of the four CRT four illuminated 20 racial-equity collaborative practices and processes that participants identified as instrumental in the efforts of educators, families, and community members to foster a school culture of achievement for Black students. From naming race and addressing racism to intentional hiring, these racial equity collaborative practices and processes were interwoven throughout participants’ interview responses and emerged organically in the data.
Viewed holistically, the intersecting and collaborative measures undertaken by community members at Brown represent the school-based leadership team’s multilayered approach to racial equity. While organized under individual subheadings to provide clarity and precision for readers, the subthemes, like the CRT tenets, were interrelated. A discussion of “antiracist and culturally responsive teaching: social justice” is incomplete without a consideration of affirming identities and belongingness, yet these two racial equity practices are also complex and robust subthemes that each requires its own exploration. This conceptual understanding is distinct from other studies that have a singular focus on culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995) or critical consciousness (Freire 1973; Ginwright, 2010; Watts et al., 2011). The CRT tenet “intersectionality exists and must be considered” provided a rationale for naming the intercentricity of this inquiry’s subthemes. Crenshaw’s (1989) theory of intersectionality, which emphasizes the intersections of multiple dimensions of oppression, was one of four guiding CRT tenets throughout this study’s data analysis. In applying this CRT lens, the inquiry opposed a linear process with discrete steps toward becoming an antiracist organization, embracing instead a multilayered and collaborative, as reflected in Perry’s (1993) “Towards a Definition of a Culture of Achievement” (TACA) framework (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2013).

As the conceptualization of one method for antiracist education, this study advances existing literature by weaving together multifarious components of racial equity, including intersectionality and race talk. Grounded in CRT, these clarifying strands all operate with
race at the center and reveal the nuance of the context and perspective of racial equity practice. As a case that included multiple viewpoints and intersecting identities spanning 7 years, this inquiry considered the ways that antiracist work at Brown Elementary evolved over time. The subtheme “inclusion and intersectionality,” for example, represents the school’s emerging work to disrupt the disproportionality of Black and Brown students with special education needs in substantially separate settings, a well-documented symptom of structural racism in the special education discourse community (Ferri & Connor, 2005; Pantić & Florian, 2015; Siuty, 2019). This subtheme emerged as a result of CRT data analysis, addressing how whiteness as property, racism is commonplace, counterstories, and intersectionality manifest in special education (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2013). Brown Elementary School became a full-inclusion community in 2022, and the school’s journey to this antiracist outcome was nuanced. As such, collaboration, priorities, and practices shifted continually to meet needs of the moment and propel the school toward becoming an antiracist community. While certain collaborative practices and processes changed, a multilayered approach and commitment to racial equity at Brown was paramount.

**Toward a Culture of Achievement**

Despite the intentional and robust racial equity efforts of the school-based leadership team, analyses of participant discourse revealed that a school culture of achievement had not yet been realized for Black students at Brown Elementary School. This discussion honors participant voice to detail areas of growth as well as opportunities identified by educators, families, and community members from Brown to continue working toward a school culture of achievement. The following subsections detail topics related to Brown’s areas of
opportunity: (1) Opportunity Gap, (2) BIPOC Family Engagement, and (3) Community Partnerships.

**Opportunity Gap**

Discourse concerning the existence of an opportunity gap was prevalent in the majority of participant interviews (Delpit, 1995; Irvine, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Milner, 2012). Celia stated, “Data shows that, compared to their white peers, Black students are … behind. There's work to do there.” Blue Sky said, “Based on my knowledge and based on what I see, Black students are not performing at the same level as their white peers.” Arewa considered the racial opportunity gap at Brown in relation to other school contexts, saying, “In my experience so far at Brown, I think Black students are still performing at a lower level than their white counterparts. I don't think it's as big of a gap as I've seen in the past, but they're still performing at the lower level.” Similarly, Shantel said, “I’ve been in education for some years now, and there’s still a gap. We've been fairly better than other schools, but there's still a gap. Black and Brown students are still not performing as well as white students.” Shantel added, “I don't know any school that I've worked at where that hasn't been the case. That's what we're working to try to close.” According to 2021 student achievement data from the state’s standardized testing accountability system, 36% of Black students at Brown met expectations for English language arts compared with 19% for the school district and 25% for the state. The data for white students who met expectations for the school, district, and state were 63%, 47%, and 45%, respectively. For math, the data for Black students meeting expectations was 18% for Brown Elementary School, 9% for the school district, and 14% for the state. The data for white students meeting expectations in math was 53% for the school, 38% for the district, and 35% for the state (see Appendix F).
**BIPOC Family Engagement**

An area of growth that could be linked to the opportunity gap data relates to how Brown Elementary School approaches engagement with BIPOC families. While family engagement was named as a strength, participants also identified specific practices and populations to address directly moving forward. Ann said, “I think our asset also continues to be the place where we could be doing more work, which is around parent involvement and making sure that we are including all families communicating with all families, and that all families are getting the same level of responsiveness at our school.” Ann elaborated, “I think a lot about the students who take the bus, which are primarily Students of Color living further away from the school. How can we be making their families feel like they're a part of our community and that their voices are heard equally in decision making?” Relatedly, Celia said, “I would like more voices from Black and Brown families. One thing that I noticed from REC Equity Roundtables is that there's a lot of white women on that team.” Arewa suggested, “I think the school can dig into more data to figure out why some parents are not able to come in because we know that it's never really because they don't want to. There's always a reason behind why they're not coming in or not participating in ways in the activities or meetings.” Cece said, “I really would love to see the day when our affinity groups … cater to different language affinities. In the past, if someone comes in and they don't necessarily have the level of English needed to participate, we lose them.” Cece also said,

I think we have to be really careful about intellectualizing these spaces because as time has gone on, I feel like we have so much wonderful information and we want to share it. But we have to be careful that we're doing it in a way … that doesn’t take it
for granted that “Oh, everyone knows these” or “Everyone works at a place where these things are just talked about.” That's not the case for everybody…. We need to be intentional about not over-intellectualizing it because that's something that white supremacy does: overintellectualize something and then the thing that you're supposed to have access to, now suddenly you don't have access to it. You feel like, “I don't even understand what these people are talking about. This isn't for me.” If my mom, who is an immigrant woman whose first language is not English, but she speaks it enough, can come into these meetings and participate fully, that's when I know that we've done our due diligence to be truly inclusive. I think we've made efforts to be inclusive, but we're not there yet. Everyone should be able to participate at every level regardless of what their background is.

A more specific theme that emerged in participant interview data was an opportunity to center academic instruction when engaging with families at Brown. Celia asked questions and generated numerous ideas about the relationships connecting families, educators, teaching, and learning. Celia said,

How do we more meaningfully engage families by connecting around a skill that's being taught in the classroom? What's a major skill in third grade that a child needs to be able to know at the end of the year? How can we as educators model those skills to families and give them different activities that they can try with their child at home? Do we set SMART goals and give families data? How can we share where their child is around a specific skill at the beginning of the year and then where they need to be at the end of the year and then progress monitor in between checkpoints? I think this would strengthen family engagement and also improve outcomes for students.
Blue Sky said, “When a family knows what the child is learning, they are going to feel more engaged. The family feels that they're a part of a team with the teacher.” Alison considered how family conferences “too often center teacher voice.” In thinking about ways to center “family voice,” and academic learning, Alison said, “Academic goal setting can help teachers center their communication with families instead of just always communicating about everything or just general activities. The feedback to and from families is around a particular goal that the kid and the family and the teacher have all talked about. Everyone gets to feel progress.” From his parent perspective, Paul shared, “It’d be nice to see a window into my child's day … once or twice a week, like a little snapshot, one-liner, email, or picture of a project in progress. It'd be nice to ask my kid about a read-aloud from class and spend 5 minutes talking about it to build oral language.”

**Community Partnerships**

Case study participants also identified community partnerships as an area of needed growth as the Brown community strives to close the opportunity gap. Arewa shared, “I don't think we have enough outside partners. I think that's one thing that we don't have enough of yet.” Cece identified community partnerships as “something we’ve always talked about” as a Race and Ethnicity Committee. She said, “We need partnerships with community organizations that are connected to the different communities that our students come from … different Latin organizations, Haitian organizations, and ethnic organizations that do work in the community.” Cece added, “They can connect to the school so that kids can see themselves reflected and can see those connections. And families can see themselves reflected and the school can be a hub for them.” Cece elaborated on her idea of school as a “hub” where families “can connect to their communities and their community resources.”
She explained how her “parents have always felt a lot safer in schools” where they could receive support related to the specific challenges they are facing. Cece said,

“Oh, you have this problem? Oh, yeah, the school’s got this Haitian lawyer that comes every day, this Haitian immigration lawyer.” Knowing that those things are happening, lets you know that “Oh, this place is hip. They know my struggles. They know the things that I’m having to deal with.” And they’re making the effort to put things in place to support my family, and therefore my child, and it just makes you feel safer. Versus those nice little flyers that we’re sending because conversation is nice, but action is even nicer. And if you're a white family and that's where your journey is, great. Or maybe you're a second-generation family, and that's where your journey is, great. But what about if that's not necessarily your identity? Where do you fit in? How do you get hooked in? And sometimes it's with resources, just hardcore resources that people need that can connect them to things that will make them feel like, ‘Yes, you do recognize my ethnicity. You do recognize my identity, because you know that this is something that in my community we are having to deal with.’ For me and my family, that was always immigration. And so any time we ever went into a school or a place that acknowledged immigration issues or had resources for immigration, for example, my family felt a little safer.

Priscilla also shared her parent perspective on community partnerships, highlighting the need for more robust and accessible options for afterschool programming:

I’d love to be able to see something like an afterschool situation where kids can take piano lessons or even languages. I think that would be huge. Just to give you a little perspective, I would rather pay $125 a week for afterschool that includes piano
lessons and learning Spanish or French or Italian than pay for the YMCA. It's $500 a month for afterschool for a few hours. I know that's difficult at the district level because I think it's more high school where they do those things. I think it is detrimental to the health and mindset of these kids, especially when they get in the older grades because all they want to do is play video games. There's nothing else to do, and some of these other teams that you can join outside of the town, the kids don't know each other. You can't really carpool with people because you don't know each other. I feel like the way that other public school systems have it set up is the way that it should be here. I know that's a bigger battle, but at the school level, if that's something that the Brown could integrate, that would be amazing.

**Critical Reflection**

The preceding discussion delineated areas of opportunity as Brown Elementary School continues working toward antiracism. In addition to next steps related to the opportunity gap, BIPOC family engagement, community partnerships, and a school culture of achievement, this inquiry uncovered hard truths that warrant critical reflection. The case study findings also revealed significant areas of progress.

As discussed in the positionality statement, my identity extended beyond the role of researcher, meaning that I could not walk away from the research site at the conclusion of this study. As the school leader, I needed to grapple with the reality that Brown Elementary School is both racist and working toward antiracism. As a white, cisgender, heterosexual male, I had to recognize and re-recognize the privilege connected to all dimensions of my identity. Though challenging and painful, acknowledging the truth of Brown’s successes and
shortcomings was one way to resist the either/or thinking characteristic of white supremacy, which could simplify complex issues and make it difficult to learn from mistakes (see Appendix C).

The study participants’ voices and the intricate points they raised reverberated with me, spurring tension and a sense of non-closure. I reflected on how a Black educator who was new to the school was acutely aware of the impacts that difficult dialogues about race and antiracism had on staff members who were involved in these efforts. I remembered when a Black parent expressed frustration that Brown was not doing more to affirm and support immigrant and multilingual families. From my perspective as a researcher, these personal experiences contributed to the direction and depth of the single-case study and provided numerous pathways for further examination. However, these heartfelt accounts reignited in me, as a school leader, a sense of urgency to address Brown’s failures and do better for students, staff, and families. Once again, the deceptiveness and insidiousness of white supremacy was unveiled, as a continued sense of urgency could make it difficult to be inclusive, encourage democratic and thoughtful decision making, and consider various consequences (see Appendix C).

I also recognized the reality that Brown’s school-based leadership team included other community members beyond me, the school principal. The leadership impact of staff, families, and community members on racial equity at Brown is irrefutable and well documented in this research study. Even so, I am aware of instances when I assumed sole responsibility for the Brown community’s shortcomings and successes, and there are undoubtedly more instances of which I am not conscious. Falling victim to the single-
administrator leadership structure, acting upon a sense of urgency, responding to external pressures and presumptions, and/or avoiding open conflict unintentionally undermined the school-based leadership team’s efforts and impeded progress toward a school culture of achievement. Addressing areas of opportunity highlighted in this study will require thoughtful collaboration among members of the school-based leadership team and critical self-awareness on my part as the school leader to evade top-down, unilateral leadership. This reflection aligns with the study findings, which indicate clearly that collaborative practices and processes were instrumental to Brown’s multilayered approach to racial equity and the resulting positive outcomes.

The positive outcomes of the Brown school-based leadership team’s efforts are manifold. A comparative analysis of Brown Elementary School state standardized assessment scores for 2021 versus 2019, for example, reveals significant growth (see Appendix M). This comparative analysis relied on 2021 state standardized assessment data because Brown Elementary School’s racial subgroup achievement scores were not publicly available at the time of this study. In 2021, 47% of students were “exceeding expectations” or “meeting expectations” for English language arts compared with 42% in 2019. The assessment data were especially positive in science and technology/engineering, with 43% of students “exceeding expectations” or “meeting expectations” in 2021 compared with just 10% in 2019. The data were less compelling in math, with 36% of students “exceeding expectations” or “meeting expectations” in 2021 and 38% “exceeding expectations” or “meeting expectations” in 2019. Comparing the 2021 racial subgroup data for Black and white students, it is clear that significant progress has been made since 2019 and that there is
still work to do in closing opportunity gaps at Brown. For English language arts, 36% of Black students were “exceeding expectations” or “meeting expectations” compared with 68% of white students. In math, 18% of Black students were “exceeding expectations” or “meeting expectations” compared with 64% of white students.

Overall, Brown Elementary School outperformed the school district and state in English language arts and science and technology/engineering. In math, Brown’s scores were higher than the school district and roughly even with the state. Brown also outperformed the district and state in racial subgroup achievement for Black and white students. As a result, in 2021, the state classified Brown Elementary School as making “substantial progress toward targets.”

Acknowledging that standardized testing is only one dimension of a holistic academic student portfolio, I highlight additional outcomes to offer a more complete picture. Indicator 17 of Perry’s (2017) TACA framework reads, “A school has a culture of achievement if it provides students with a narrative that helps them envision themselves in the world, in roles and work in their communities that require the acquisition of academic knowledge” (see Appendix B). Community members at Brown committed to instructional work that aligned with this vision by designing antiracist and culturally responsive social justice curriculum. Staff, families, and community partners critically consumed curriculum, applied critical frameworks designed by racial equity scholars, and developed new units of study. One example was a fourth-grade STEM unit that was co-created by the grade-level teachers, science specialist, and instructional coach using Muhammad’s (2020) equity framework for
culturally and historically responsive literacy (see Appendix N). The STEM unit provided fourth-grade students with an opportunity to think critically about renewable energy resources and their community impact while incorporating multiple complex and enabling texts. A third-grade English language arts and social studies unit asked students to make connections between literacy, history, and current events to better understand how communities respond to crises (see Appendix O). These global understandings were leveraged to inform students’ historical recounts of how school communities responded to a global pandemic. In a kindergarten classroom, students thought about how to make their city a more fair and just place for all community members (see Appendix P). After reviewing neighborhood maps and realizing that museums were concentrated in more affluent areas of the city, kindergarten students were assigned the task of writing procedures for designing museums that would be built in all neighborhoods and accessible to all people. Throughout the writing unit, students had several opportunities to speak with local museum educators from various institutions and learn about ways they were thinking about inclusion and equity.

In addition to the positive outcomes evidenced by what students were learning, there was also notable progress in the diverse representation of who was teaching in classrooms. Specifically, the number of BIPOC teachers at Brown increased over time. For the 2021–2022 school year, classroom teachers included seven Black educators, three Latinx educators, and eight white educators. The 2021–2022 fifth graders had a Black teacher in their grade-level classroom for 5 consecutive school years from first grade to fifth grade. Given the research delineating positive correlations between having a Black teacher in elementary
school and Black students’ postsecondary educational attainment, the positive impact of Brown’s teacher demographic data is clear (Dee, 2004; Dee & Penner, 2017; Liu et al., 2021).

Another impact of Brown’s multilayered approach to racial equity on student outcomes was the school’s transition to inclusion. Given that over 80% of students with dis/abilities in substantially separate classrooms were Black and Latinx, there was a stark contrast in racial demographics between general education and substantially separate classrooms. The racial segregation of Black and Latinx students impacted all learners, including children and adults, as evidenced by a white kindergartener who asked his mom why only Black students had autism. Since substantially separate classrooms were multigrade, access to grade-level curriculum and standards-aligned expectations was limited. Too often, an emphasis on behavior meant that students were expected to learn about compliance demands at the expense of cultivating their intellectual genius. To disrupt the racist structure of substantially separate education, Brown Elementary School transitioned to full-inclusion classrooms during the 2021–2022 school year.

A comparative analysis of state standardized assessment scores for 2022 versus 2019, reveals a positive impact on the achievement of all students, especially students with disabilities (see Appendix Q). In mathematics, the average composite scaled score for all students was 500.3 in 2022 as compared to 495.6 in 2019. For students with disabilities, achievement was 489.7 in 2022 versus 483.6 in 2019. In English Language Arts (ELA), overall achievement for all students decreased from 499.8 in 2019 to 497.5 in 2022. For the
students with disabilities subgroup, however, ELA achievement increased from 485.4 in 2019 to 493.1 in 2022. Lastly, the student growth percentile (SGP) rates were higher in 2022 as compared to 2019 for both mathematics and ELA. In mathematics, the SGP increased from 50.9 in 2019 to 61.5 in 2022. In ELA, the SGP increased from 46.5 in 2019 to 50.3 in 2022.

Beyond standardized assessment scores, the positive impact of inclusion on both the achievement of students who are neurodiverse and on the overall success of all students could be discerned in qualitative data from everyday teaching and learning in inclusion classrooms at Brown. In one instance, a Black fifth grade student with autism, who was in a substantially separate classroom for six years with limited oral language output, delivered a presentation about bears to his classmates. After reading information from his slidedeck and receiving thunderous applause from his classmates, he hugged his teacher. On another occasion, a white student with autism, who was also in a substantially separate classroom prior to entering the inclusion setting, used his parents’ old iPhone to record himself singing various harmonies of the song, “We Don’t Talk About Bruno” from the Disney movie, *Encanto*. He then taught himself how to use Garage Band software and layered his voice recordings into a musical composition, which he shared with his teacher and peers during music class. There are countless other anecdotes from Brown that shine the light on the genius of students who are neurodiverse and illustrate why they and their neurotypical peers should have every opportunity to learn with and from each other.
This adaptive change from substantially separate to inclusion classrooms was the culmination of nearly a decade of inclusive learning opportunities for students and investment in special education resources for educators, including a co-teacher model. As challenging as conversations about race and equity were for many community members, dialogues about dis/ability and inclusion were even more difficult, especially as I reflect on my positionality and perspective as the school leader. Even though inclusive learning opportunities had been underway for many years prior, the intensity of full inclusion was met with fear and resistance from community members who were also feeling the overwhelming effects of multiple pandemics, including COVID-19, on schooling. To revisit an earlier critical reflection, I wonder how stronger co-leadership on my part with members of the school-based leadership team could have supported the shift to inclusion.

Timing was also a factor because Brown’s racial equity efforts had already been established before the notion of full inclusion was introduced. When inclusion was intentionally framed as an antiracist social justice issue, staff members had difficulty acknowledging the intersectionality between race and dis/ability. I wonder how applying an antiracist lens to inclusion may have unintentionally contributed to an omission of ableness. How could the Brown school community have been more engaged in learning about disability justice in ways that were similar to our collaborative learning from racial equity scholars? “DisCrit,” for example, is a critical framework influenced heavily by BIPOC individuals with dis/abilities that considers how the intersection of dis/ability and other marginalized identities can have a compounding, adverse effect on children, adults, and families (Anamma et al., 2013). As Brown Elementary School becomes a full-inclusion
community, collaborative learning focused on DisCrit led by the school-based leadership team might provide a path forward to ensure that dis/ability justice is prioritized without racial equity work falling prey to ableness.

**Recommendations**

In alignment with this case study’s focus on school-based leadership towards racial equity in elementary education, the recommendations section is organized into two subsections: 1) Recommendations for school officials engaging in antiracist work; and 2) Recommendations for collaborative practices and processes. The first subsection provides implications for members of school-based leadership teams who are working towards racial equity. The second subsection focuses on collaborative practices and processes that support antiracist work in schools. Practices refer to tangible events and structures with defined start and end times and objectives. Processes are intangible, continual journeys that evolve over time based on dynamic factors like school culture and individual staff members. Practice contributes to process, and this symbiotic relationship between practice and process drives the evolution of a school.

The CRT tenet “racism is commonplace” acknowledges that white supremacy is a societal norm extending beyond educational institutions (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2013). Given the ubiquity of racism, implications of this racial equity research can be applied across all professional and social spheres, even outside of education.

**Recommendations for School Officials Engaging in Antiracist Work**

Throughout my tenure as a principal, I have heard white school officials express resistance to engaging in racial equity work. Citing their whiteness as a barrier to leading antiracist efforts in their school community, I have witnessed white administrators say they
are underqualified, unprepared, and unsure about where to begin. These same individuals assign the responsibility of antiracism to BIPOC teachers and district leaders or outsource this work to outside consultants. Collaborating with community members and centering the voices of BIPOC individuals are essential components to any racial equity approach; white resistance to leading antiracist efforts because of fear or fragility, however, is fraught with privilege and misunderstanding of the educational leadership role. Too often, the responsibility of dismantling racist structures is placed solely on BIPOC individuals, thus perpetuating racial injustice. Indeed, when white individuals, particularly those holding leadership positions, refuse to name race, discuss racial issues, and prioritize antiracism, the role of race is minimized and the power of racism is legitimized. This reluctance to engage in race talk or any degree of antiracism maintains dominant white supremacy structures in schools and society (Haney Lopez, 1994; Pollock, 2004).

For any school officials who are engaging in antiracist work and do not know where to begin, I recommend starting somewhere. Since white supremacy is so deeply embedded in the structures that govern our public school system in the United States, an approach to racial equity can truly begin anywhere. This work is nonlinear and there are a multitude of entry points. As long as school officials take an initial step, see the effort through, and continue collaborating with members of a school-based leadership team, the next steps will become clear. Even with clear next steps towards racial equity, however, school officials must acknowledge that mistakes are inevitable. When mistakes are made, school officials should take responsibility for any negative impact on community members, especially BIPOC individuals, and leverage this opportunity to self-reflect and course adjust moving forward. Modeling this critical self-awareness for others can build trust and illustrate the relationship
between growth mindset and progression towards greater cultural proficiency. Another common understanding for school officials who are engaging in antiracist leadership is that the more we do this work, the more realize how much more work there is to do. We see and cannot unsee the racism that exists in our schools and the impact it has on Students of Color; this noticing undergirds the realization that good leadership means taking action to dismantle systemic racism in schools.

One practice that should be embraced by school officials engaging in antiracist work is explicitly naming race and calling out racism, especially because race is learned, modeled, and reinforced before children are even school age (Aboud, 2008; Haney Lopez, 1996; Hartley & Newcomb, 1947; Omi & Winant, 1986; Waters, 1990). Establishing a culture in which critical conversations about race and equity are as commonplace as racism normalizes talking about an issue that impacts everyone. In preparation for dialogues about race and equity, facilitators should pursue training and identify resources so they are more equipped to support others. Introducing race talk to a community for the first time requires a level of intentionality and responsiveness to anticipate and counter racism that will inevitably emerge. While racism within the community may not actually be any more rampant than before race talk, people will begin noticing and reporting racist incidents with more frequency once the cloak of invisibility has been removed from race.

There are several practices for facilitating race talk with community members, including affinity spaces, book groups, and professional development. Offering a variety of options for race talk allows for choice and differentiation, leading to greater buy-in from participants and capacity for change within the organization. Whichever structures are selected for racial equity dialogue, it is important that they include regular opportunities to
meet in racial affinity groups to mitigate the harm of racial aggression for BIPOC community members. Relatedly, community agreements and facilitator roles should be established for clarity and safety. Discussion about race and equity must extend beyond structured opportunities for this practice to translate to a lens for viewing daily decisions and interactions. A racial equity lens can be applied to all facets of an organization. With intentionality, data analysis, resource allocation, priorities and vision setting, policymaking, and hiring can support progress toward becoming an antiracist institution.

The CRT tenet “intersectionality exists and must be considered” asserts that identities are interrelated and manifest within individuals as disproportionate privilege or oppression (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2013). Crenshaw’s (1989) theory of intersectionality delineates the intersections of multiple dimensions of marginalization for Black women specifically and BIPOC individuals in general. To leverage this foundational understanding, an intersectional lens should be applied at all levels of an organization. For schools, one implication discussed in this study’s findings is the intersectionality between race and dis/ability, which informed Brown Elementary School’s shift from substantially separate to inclusive classrooms. As a result of this adaptive change, students with dis/abilities, 81% of whom are Black and Brown students, are now learning in the least restrictive environment supported by a co-teaching model and push-in special education services. This means that Black and Brown students with disabilities who were previously segregated in multigrade classrooms now have access to standards-aligned instruction with their grade level peers.

Another school-based example of intersectionality from this single-case study was how LGBTQIA+ identities were named, discussed, affirmed, and explicitly linked to race in the Brown community. As a result, LGBTQIA+ students, staff members, and families felt a
greater sense of belonging and viewed the school community as a safe place, even if feelings of security were not available elsewhere in individuals’ lives. In acknowledging intercentricity, communities can centralize race and racism while addressing the interplay between racism and other forms of subordination based on gender, class, dis/ability, sexuality, language, immigrant status, and other identities that have been historically marginalized (Crenshaw, 1989).

**Recommendations for Collaborative Practices and Processes**

This study detailed numerous collaborative practices and processes that participants identified as components of Brown Elementary School’s multilayered approach to racial equity. The following subthemes were discussed in chapter 4: (1) naming race and addressing racism; (2) prioritizing racial equity; (3) embedding racial equity; (4) embracing boldness; (5) committing to growth; (6) race talk: dialogues; (7) race talk: collaborative learning; (8) race talk: students; (9) antiracist and culturally responsive teaching: curriculum; (10) antiracist and culturally responsive teaching: critical consumption of curriculum; (11) antiracist and culturally responsive teaching: representation and counternarratives; (12) antiracist and culturally responsive teaching: social justice; (13) affirming identities and belongingness; (14) adult mindset; (15) family engagement: family and staff collaboration; (16) family engagement: racial equity lens; (17) family engagement: support systems and structures; (18) staff learning; (19) intentional hiring; and (20) inclusion and intersectionality.

As outlined in the previous subsection focused on recommendations for school officials, race talk is essential to antiracist work. Race talk practices such as affinity spaces, book groups, and professional development influence the processes of embedding racial equity, embracing boldness, committing to growth, affirming identities and belongingness,
and prioritizing inclusion and intersectionality. Engagement in critical conversations about race and racism provide opportunities for participants to build trust, embrace vulnerability, develop self-awareness, and advance their cultural proficiency. When community members move along the cultural proficiency continuum through race talk, their experiences of evolving with and from others contribute to organizational change. With the evolution of the community and its members comes a greater propensity for embedding racial equity, embracing boldness, committing to growth, affirming identities and belongingness, and prioritizing inclusion and intersectionality. As processes, these dynamic and ever evolving aspects of a multilayered approach to racial equity require consistent collaboration and critical reflection for the entire community.

Professional development is a recommended practice for building the capacity of staff members to not only engage in race talk but also design culturally responsive and inclusive learning experiences for students. When racial equity is embedded throughout the school’s priorities, the professional development should align with this antiracist focus. A school culture of achievement for Black students as reflected in Perry’s (1993) “Towards a Definition of a Culture of Achievement” (TACA) framework requires educators to apply a high degree of intentionality to all instructional decisions. Selecting a text, composing a question, designing a task, and grading a student, are all ripe with potential to disrupt white supremacy norms and reinvent classrooms that are inclusive of all students’ identities. To support educators in planning antiracist and culturally responsive instruction, professional development must braid together a number of research-informed practices related to excellence in teaching, culturally responsive teaching, race talk, and critical consciousness. There are a multitude of resources from BIPOC racial equity scholars, several of which are
cited in this study, that provide racial equity research as well as recommended practices for educators.

Another recommended practice that contributes to antiracist change processes in schools is the inclusion of families in professional development and decision making. Engagement for families and professional development for educators are often siloed, contributing to missed opportunities for collaborative learning. In education discourse, families are referred to as “partners,” “assets,” and “team members,” but school-based practices restrict opportunities for families to exercise agency and influence in the community. When families are invited to a planning meeting or the decision-making table, curated information is presented with allotted time for feedback and questions. Furthermore, families are not able to leverage the funds of knowledge they bring with them to school because learning spaces are designated for students and educators (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Hedges et al., 2011; Moll et al., 2013; Saubich & Esteban-Guitart, 2011). To promote more authentic engagement, collaborative opportunities for families and educators to learn with and from each other should be considered. Specifically, learning opportunities that center identity and equity, like race talk, are access points; all individuals can share about their identities and reflect upon their lived experiences. In addition to learning, empowerment should also be a guiding objective for collaboration among families and educators. In this way, both family and educator voices are centered during hiring processes, curriculum design, and school policy changes. Offering a variety of structured and unstructured options increases engagement because families and educators can select opportunities that appeal to their interests, align with their availability, and consider different levels of comfort and commitment. Lastly, intentionality and attention to the diversity represented within the
community involves offering opportunities for community members to gather in affinity spaces for a variety of intersecting identities, including race, ethnicity, and language.

Intentional recruitment and retention of BIPOC educators is another recommended practice to support a school community’s work towards racial equity. There are short- and long-term positive impacts of having a Black teacher in an elementary school on Black students’ postsecondary educational attainment (Dee, 2004; Dee & Penner, 2017; Liu et al., 2021). Unfortunately, there is a striking disproportionality of Black educators in U.S. public schools (Farinde et al., 2016; Farinde-Wu et al., 2017; Farinde-Wu & Griffin, 2019; Taie & Goldring, 2017). With fewer Black teachers in the education system, intentional hiring through a racial equity lens is paramount to working toward a culture of achievement for Black students.

Various practices can promote hiring BIPOC educators who better represent the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of students in classrooms. Educator recruitment efforts, for example, present an opportunity to articulate the school’s commitment to hiring Black educators and working toward antiracism. The language employed by job descriptions, school websites, and recruitment fairs conveys information to prospective candidates about the school’s mission, vision, priorities, and belief systems. Similarly, the interview process should also be designed through a lens of racial equity by including educators, families, and Students of Color on hiring committees, composing questions that discuss antiracist and culturally responsive social justice teaching, and naming ways that the community is addressing race and racism. To retain Black educators once they are hired, racial equity must be a lived priority, as evidenced by schoolwide practices that enable all staff members to
explicitly name race and racism, affirm and celebrate diverse identities, and apply an equity lens to teaching, learning, and decision making.

Conclusion

The U.S. public education system has historically and systemically relied on white supremacy to marginalize Black and Brown students. The resulting opportunity gap is symptomatic of Black subjugation by white dominance. Relatedly, multiple equity gaps reveal that Students of Color are not entering schools on the same plane as their white peers, for whom mainstream education was designed (Ladson-Billings, 2006). While education officials continue to fixate on the underachievement of Black students, an expansive body of research has called for urgent focus on addressing the opportunity gap that perpetuates white supremacy in pre-K–12 schools (Anderson, 2007; Irvine, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Milner, 2012).

Failed efforts at the district, state, and federal levels to close the opportunity gap that plagues Black students and privileges white students guided this inquiry’s exploration of racial equity at the school level. Too often, policy decisions inform top-down changes that neglect the voices of school-based leadership teams, dismiss racial equity scholarship, and exacerbate inequities that harm BIPOC students. To investigate how inequity can be addressed from multiple angles by individuals who are closest to children, this research examined the antiracist efforts of a school-based leadership team that enacted a multilayered approach to racial equity.

The methodological design for this inquiry utilized a single-case study approach to examine Brown Elementary School, a traditional public school located in an urban district in the northeastern United States (Stake, 1995). As a pre-K–5 community that had sustained a
vision for racial equity for 7 years, Brown served as a research site for exploring one school-based leadership team’s nuanced method for working toward antiracism. Affirming existing literature, the analyses revealed that racism is ubiquitous and must be explicitly named and discussed within the school setting. As such, the CRT tenet “racism is commonplace” and the related practice of race talk were instrumental to the collective consciousness and antiracist growth of the Brown school community. Participants acknowledged openly the racism and corresponding responses they observed and experienced in the community. This discourse was viewed as both evidence of progress and leaders steering the course for more antiracist action. Indeed, the more antiracist work that school-based leadership team members engaged in, the more they realized how much more work there was to do at Brown. The perpetual nature of racial equity work was evident in participants’ responses, elucidating the germination and evolution of 20 collaborative practices and processes.

The racial equity collaborative practices and processes that comprised Brown’s multilayered approach to racial equity detailed the ways that educators, families, and community members worked toward antiracism. This study began with a recognition that racial equity work encompasses multiple layers by reviewing the literature of race talk, culturally responsive teaching, and critical consciousness. However, the study’s findings revealed the depth and breadth of racial equity work in one elementary school community by delineating 20 interrelated and dynamic subthemes, all of which represented antiracist practices employed at Brown Elementary. This inquiry also confirmed that collaboration among staff members, families, and community members supports a shared leadership model that sustains antiracist efforts. Therefore, a multilayered approach to racial equity is
collaborative, complex, and context-specific, a finding that aligned with the single-case study methodology of this inquiry.

Despite the ways that scholarly research informed the antiracist understandings, beliefs, and actions of community members at Brown, a school culture of achievement for Black students has not yet been realized. Participant discourse underscored the opportunity gap that disproportionately impacts Black and Brown students. To subvert the opportunity gap and foster a school culture of achievement promoting equitable outcomes for all students, participants emphasized BIPOC family engagement and community partnerships as next-level antiracist work. Ultimately, the school’s journey along the continuum toward becoming an antiracist multicultural institution is dynamic and nonlinear. The multidimensional aspects of collaborative racial equity efforts at Brown Elementary continue to evolve. While all contexts undergo change, the intentionality with which schools prioritize racial equity must be constant if the community is to remain committed to establishing a school culture of achievement for Black students.

**Limitations of the Study**

As detailed in the positionality statement in Chapter 1, my identity and related experiences as a researcher and member of the Brown Elementary School community impacted how participants and I engaged with this inquiry. My positionality as a white, cisgender, heterosexual, male leader of a public elementary school in an urban school district exerted influence in ways both known and unknown. The privilege connected to all dimensions of my identity meant I was more susceptible to blind spots and less likely to be called out by community members for demonstrating bias (McIntosh, 1988). Readers should
also view this research with an awareness of the lens through which the case study was conceived and conducted. Acknowledging that absolute objectivity in research is not possible, this study leveraged a nuanced sense of positionality to illuminate and unpack inherent power dynamics embedded in the research process (Bourke, 2014; hooks, 1990; Maher & Tetreault, 1994; Malterud, 2001; St. Louis & Barton, 2002). Stated explicitly and often throughout this study, my identity as a researcher and school leader as well as my investment in racial equity discourse inform how others orient to this inquiry.

A commitment to critical self-awareness and reflexivity guided decision making throughout this research process, including the privileging of participant voice to narrate this study’s findings. Descriptive details from educators, families, and community members representing diverse racial, ethnic, ability, sexual orientation, and gender backgrounds illustrated conceptualizations of one elementary school’s approach to racial equity. While the identities of participants were representative of the school community and research site, student voice was not included in this study. Given the vulnerability of children as research participants, especially in the context of my positionality, this inquiry was limited to adult community members with more individual autonomy and less susceptibility to harm. Since this case study was dedicated to improving educational experiences and outcomes for Black students, the absence of student voice, while an intentional choice to mitigate risks, represents a limitation of this research.

Another limitation was the scope of this study, which is inherent in all single-case studies that concentrate on one research site. While an investigation of multiple cases can
yield a broader understanding of the phenomenon and facilitate greater transferability, Brown Elementary School provided ample evidence that aligned with this study’s research questions. Indeed, the aim of studying a case is to maximize learning from that one case, not to understand other cases (Stake, 1995). The singular focus on Brown contributed to an in-depth analysis that served to confirm, challenge, and contribute to existing understandings and assertions related to racial equity in elementary schools (Yin, 2018).

The exclusion of student voice was also a limitation of this study. Insights from students about how they experienced Brown’s racial equity efforts would have expanded our understanding of this case study. The decision to collect data solely from adult community members prioritized the safety of students at Brown. Given the vulnerability of elementary students and the historical marginalization of Black and Brown children, this case study was designed to avoid further harm to students as research subjects.

**Future Research**

Policymakers have historically attributed the opportunity gap that exists in U.S. public education to Black families, students, and communities (Hilliard et al., 2003). Similarly, the pervasive influence of white supremacy has spurred education leaders to leverage achievement-gap discourse to the detriment of Black students, families, and educators. To interrupt the existing opportunity gap in education, school-based leadership teams should collaborate to enact a multilayered approach to racial equity. Future research must acknowledge the nuance of racial equity and dedicate more attention to examining antiracist work in schools led by educators, families, community members, and students.

To broaden the scope of this research and promote greater transferability and generalization, a multiple-case study investigating school-based racial equity approaches
should be considered. Specifically, studies that explore racial equity practices across a
diverse range of school contexts have the potential to confirm findings from existing research
and uncover new revelations related to the phenomena. Research sites with different grade-
level bands and student and staff demographics, for example, will yield new understandings
about this inquiry. Brown Elementary School was diverse in terms of racial representation,
and cases that feature more homogenous student and staff populations could generate new
themes and implications. Similarly, middle and high schools as research sites unlock
opportunities for a more holistic understanding of collaborative practices and processes that
engender racial equity.

There is also potential embedded in thinking beyond case study methodology for
future inquiries. A longitudinal study that involves data collection from beginning to end and
captures a community’s growth along an antiracist continuum might reveal unique
perceptions of how racial equity work begins and evolves over time. Scaling up the research
to include district-level staff and other stakeholders beyond the school site has the capacity to
broaden the impact of a school-based leadership team’s efforts. Since this study was
premised on bottom-up leadership, scaled-up studies would still need to privilege the vision
and voices of families, educators, and community members who drive racial equity forward.
Inviting outside stakeholders to participate in the inquiry could be presented as an
opportunity for district-level staff members who are not situated in schools to learn from
school-based leadership teams about a multilayered approach to racial equity. Scaling up this
research might also create space for collaboration across school communities within and
beyond the district where ideas, resources, and best practices related to racial equity can be
shared and strengthened.
In addition to district-level staff, students represent another participant group to consider for inclusion in future inquiries when scaling up this research. With roots in Central European political traditions, the phrase “Nothing about us without us is for us” is a mantra within the dis/ability activism community as well as a justification for including student voice in future research about racial equity in schools (Charlton, 1998). Given how the opportunity gap subjugates Black and Brown students, research processes that exclude Black and Brown students’ voices will have a limited impact on racial equity. An understanding that students know what is best for them should be leveraged so future research does not rely solely on adult perspectives. Students’ perceptions can shape antiracist work in schools and significantly reduce blind spots. Furthermore, an intimate understanding of how students experience racial equity efforts that adults are facilitating in the school community will provide critical information about how antiracist work is internalized and/or reproduced by students. More in-depth knowledge about how students explicitly name race and respond to racism will inform school-based practice and future research.

**Closing Summary**

The marginalization of Black students in U.S. public education is evidenced by the opportunity gap that is kept open by the institutionalized racism and culture of white supremacy embedded in the education system. This single-case study investigated the Brown Elementary School, where a school-based leadership team addressed racial equity from multiple angles, as Perry (1993) outlined in “Towards a Definition of a Culture of Achievement.” Although the Brown school community is still working toward fostering a culture of achievement for Black students, the journey, as narrated by families, educators, and community members, provides insight into the collaborative practices and processes that
facilitate racial equity. The multilayered approach as well as the extensive collaboration among community members inform an understanding that racial equity cannot be siloed and must function as an all-inclusive lens. The study’s findings also revealed that embracing race talk and acknowledging that racism is commonplace are at the heart of this adaptive work (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 2013). Only once we center the voices of families, educators, community members, and students who are leading antiracist work and learn from their nuanced perspectives concerning racial equity will we interrupt the subjugation of Black students and achieve equitable outcomes in schools.
APPENDIX A

SCHOOL-BASED LEADERSHIP COLLABORATORS

**Dialogues on Race and Ethnicity:** Dialogues on Race and Ethnicity is a community-based discussion and action forum featuring an interracial intercultural group of staff and families. The goal in doing this is to build on the many strengths of the diverse Brown community and to create an even safer more inclusive environment for all students, families, and staff. These structured dialogues start with trust building and sharing experiences among participants through both small-group and whole-group discussion and activities. The dialogues follow a dialogue to action model that culminates in the group devising an action plan that specifically benefits our community and addresses systemic racism. There are five sessions in the dialogues that focus on the following topics: (1) Race and Ethnicity and Personal Identity; (2) Racial and Ethnic Group Experience; (3) Race and Ethnicity and Opportunity; (4) Vision for Inclusion; (5) Action Plan

**Equity Roundtables:** Equity Roundtables are a district-wide team structure intended to help schools achieve coherence in providing equitable access to learning and resources for all students and families. Equity Roundtables are led by the school leader and composed of parents/caretakers, school staff, and neighborhood and community stakeholders (partners, advocates, etc.). The Roundtable will be an opportunity to review school-based efforts to meet students’ needs, and ensure that deliberate, tailored outreach and supports are provided to Students of Color, students with special education needs, English Learners, and others with high needs.

**Inclusion Planning Team:** The Inclusion Planning Team provides a collaborative space for educators to brainstorm ideas and identify supports in service of our school’s shift to full inclusion. Team members share a collective commitment to the creation of inclusion classrooms in order to foster a culture of achievement and align with our belief that “all students can do high level academic work” (Perry, 2017). The team’s efforts include schoolwide systems of support, professional learning, instructional strategies, and identification and allocation of resources.

**Instructional Leadership Team (ILT):** The Instructional Leadership Team ensures that the Brown Instructional Focus drives the school’s efforts schoolwide. This is achieved by analyzing schoolwide data to assess the effectiveness of our practice and inform discussions about how to improve. Members support colleagues’ professional growth during Common Planning Time and Professional Development sessions.

**Lead Teachers:** Lead Teachers build upon their capacity to be agents of change who promote Brown’s school wide priorities. Lead Teachers engage in inquiry related to problems of practice identified by the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT). Lead Teachers will reflect on their own identities and biases; collaborate with school leadership to work towards the standard of excellence for teaching and learning; promote equity and inclusion at
Brown; and actively lead work toward dismantling systems of oppression and closing opportunity gaps.

**Race and Ethnicity Committee (REC):** The REC works to make Brown a community where it is safe to acknowledge, discuss, and unpack people’s lived experiences based on their race, color, and ethnicity. Genuine discussion and dialogue is necessary to make the school community a place where race is not a reliable predictor of people’s experiences here. To this end, the current REC objectives include: engage members of the Brown community who have been marginalized; create safe and affirming spaces for racial affinity group work in the Brown community; implement action steps from the Dialogues on Race and Equity.

**REC Family Liaisons:** REC Family Liaisons are family representatives for each classroom at Brown who serve as critical links between families and staff. REC Family Liaisons enable the entire community to work collaboratively to tackle issues related to race and opportunity gaps at the classroom and school level. Responsibilities associated with the Family Liaison role include: (1) Serving as the REC point of contact for the classroom teacher and REC Staff Liaisons; (2) Serving as the point of contact for families in the designated classroom to bring concerns to, generate ideas, and help coordinate family-led activities; (3) Attend 3 meetings where all Family Liaisons meet together; (4) Act upon action steps from the 3 liaison meetings in service of closing opportunity gaps.
APPENDIX B

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF A CULTURE OF ACHIEVEMENT

1. A school has a culture of achievement when it is animated by articulated and taken-for-granted beliefs, practices, routines, rituals and traditions that combine to create an organizational context where students understand that being a member of the school community means being an achiever.

It is important to note that school culture can do the heavy lifting for educators. It can create a context where students can co-construct identities as achievers. “Identities are the stories we tell the world and ourselves about who we are...Identities are what make a modicum of self-direction possible.” From Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds. By Dorothy Holland et al.

2. A school has a culture of achievement if it is organized around the belief, shared by most of the adults in the school community, and overtime by students, that all students can do high level academic work. Over time and with some intentionality, teachers and school leaders reject the practice of exceptionalizing the achievement of a category or a few students.

3. A school has a culture of achievement if most of the adults in the school community believe that with support and working together they can help all students achieve. Not only do the teachers believe that all students can do high-level work, they have self-efficacy, confident that they can help students achieve at high levels.

4. A school has a culture of achievement if most of the adults in the school community understand that even if students have skill deficiencies, the enterprise is about high academic achievement, not simply remediation. They understand that skill deficiency does not mean that a student is intellectually deficient.

5. A school has a culture of achievement if the school culture is highly relational, that is relationships with students and their families are viewed as the sine qua non for helping students achieve at high levels.

6. A school has a culture of achievement if the belief that all students can do high level academic work is routinely communicated, with sufficient complexities and nuance, to students, parents, family members in public settings and in private interactions.

7. A school has a culture of achievement if the school has organized and predictable public events, throughout the year, where this message is communicated in compelling ways to students, parents, siblings and extended family.

8. A school has a culture of achievement if the message that all students can be achievers
and do high level work includes an acknowledgment that achievement will often occur in the midst of setbacks, failures, detours, hardships, and doubts.

9. A school has a culture of achievement if students are told explicitly, over and over again, in ways that are meaningful and compelling, that academic achievement demands the same kind of hard work that is required to become the best in other arenas—at baseball, basketball, playing video games, being a spoken word artist and so on.

Excellence requires practice, persistence, and hard work. It requires thoroughness. It often requires doing things over and over again, that at first glance might appear boring, but necessary in order to acquire fluency and expertise in an area of study or performance. Some teachers have used sections of The Outliers by Malcolm Gladwell with high school students in discussions about what it takes to become an expert.

10. A school has a culture of achievement if it structures multiple opportunities for students to learn and practice, in the context of academic work, the behaviors an’ practices that are necessary to be an achiever—persistence, doing one's best, thoroughness, hard work.

This might mean structuring and requiring as part of the school day, two hours of homework assistance after school for freshmen. It might mean having a required month-long session for freshmen the summer before the beginning of high school, where students can begin to do the kind of work that will be required of them in high school, if they are going to be achievers. It often means coaching students in the acquisition of the organizational and study skills that are critical in becoming an achiever.

11. A school has a culture of achievement if its teacher and administrative leaders are committed to making a challenging curriculum available to all students and as a consequence, have an organized context where they are always trying to figure out how to do this effectively and efficiently.

12. A school has a culture of achievement if the school community, teachers and school leaders have made pedagogical, curricula and policy changes that increase the possibility and likelihood that all students can effectively navigate a challenging curriculum.

(Please note some examples of changes that have been made by high schools that are committed to providing universal access to a challenging curriculum include supplementary instruction; professional tutoring; formal pre-teaching and post teaching classes for high level mathematics and science classes; summer orientation and a summer academy for entering freshman; using books that are written at lower reading levels but with sophisticated concepts to provide initial points of entry to topics in biology, chemistry, and political science; audio and videos of lectures that provide initial points of entry and background knowledge for advanced topics; using talking books with
comments and questions embedded in the text to model the queries of a sophisticated reader; using children’s literature to introduce students to literary analysis; introducing students to compelling socio-political topics while teaching them how to conduct ethnographic research, do statistical analysis and read census tract data.)

13. A school has a culture of achievement if its teachers know what excellent work looks like in their respective disciplines and the constitutive skills and competencies needed for students to do excellent work in the discipline. These teachers teach constitutive skills and competencies, while providing students with examples of excellent work and careful guidance in the completion of an assignment at a high level.

14. A school that has a culture of achievement if teachers know where each student is academically and the skills, competencies and background knowledge that are required for each one of them to access a challenging curriculum. With this knowledge, faculty and administrators develop systems, curricula, pedagogical practices and a plan to teach students so that they can access a challenging curriculum.

15. A school has a culture of achievement if it regularly and routinely provides students with examples (in the literature they read, in the lectures they hear, in the poems they recite, in aphorism and visuals in the building, in the dramas they perform) of how this journey of achievement has been made by individuals like them. All of the aforementioned is designed to affirm for African American and Latino students that achievement for historically oppressed people often happens and has happened in the midst of constraints, setbacks, and detours and because of the extraordinary commitments and beliefs of individuals and families. School achievement thus becomes coincident rather than at odds with their ethnic and/or racial identities. This brings into the classroom the rich canonical and vernacular traditions of Black and Brown students. (In some cases, schools with knowledge and expertise have included these changes to quickly change the school engagement and the levels of academic performance of its students. See essay by Kim Parker and practices of the Carter G. Woodson Middle School in Chicago.)

16. A school has a culture of achievement if it routinely provides students with a vision of what it takes to strive for academic excellence, giving them concrete examples of individuals who late in their academic careers began to take school seriously and became achievers, to include individuals who without the benefit of a formal education decided to educate themselves and became writers, poets and intellectual giants—Christopher Paul, Affa Weaver, James Baldwin, Endesha Mae Holland, Ta’nehisi Coates, Arturo Schomberg, Malcolm X, Richard Wright and hip hop artist who have created innovations in the field of technology.

17. A school has a culture of achievement if it provides students with a narrative that helps them envision themselves in the world, in roles and work in their communities that require the acquisition of academic knowledge. “You are going to be the next generation
of public intellectuals in this community.” “You are going to be the leaders of this community.” You are going to be the doctors this community needs, the pharmacists, the people who will deal with diabetes, obesity, crime, etc. And while giving students this vision, schools with a culture of achievement teach curricula that allow students to study the issues their communities and the world are grappling with. Discipline area electives or units in existing courses are contexts in which these students can begin to see concretely how their intellectual work is connected to meaningful work in the world and their respective communities.

18. A school has a culture of achievement when the school is conceptualized as a place where students are expected to think about the big issues in our society and where teachers understand that reading, writing, research, and analysis of these issues in the context of discipline area knowledge is at the center of what the academic enterprise is about.

19. A school has a culture of achievement if media (website, brochure, facebook, etc.) about the school makes it clear that the school is organized around belief that all students can be high achievers. This belief is also captured in the school’s visual and material culture, in its curricula, in after school programming and in its celebrations.

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APPENDIX C

CHARACTERISTICS OF WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE

This is a list of characteristics of white supremacy culture which show up in our organizations. Culture is powerful precisely because it is so present and at the same time so very difficult to name or identify. The characteristics listed below are damaging because they are used as norms and standards without being pro-actively named or chosen by the group. They are damaging because they promote white supremacy thinking. They are damaging to both People of Color and to white people. Organizations that are People of Color led or a majority People of Color can also demonstrate many damaging characteristics of white supremacy culture.

**Perfectionism**
- little appreciation expressed among people for the work that others are doing; appreciation that is expressed usually directed to those who get most of the credit anyway
- more common is to point out either how the person or work is inadequate or even more common, to talk to others about the inadequacies of a person or their work without ever talking directly to them
- mistakes are seen as personal, i.e., they reflect badly on the person making them as opposed to being seen for what they are—mistakes
- making a mistake is confused with being a mistake, doing wrong with being wrong
- little time, energy, or money put into reflection or identifying lessons learned that can improve practice, in other words little or no learning from mistakes
- tendency to identify what is wrong; little ability to identify, name, and appreciate what is right

**Antidotes:** develop a culture of appreciation, where the organization takes time to make sure that people's work and efforts are appreciated; develop a learning organization, where it is expected that everyone will make mistakes and those mistakes offer opportunities for learning; create an environment where people can recognize that mistakes sometimes lead to positive results; separate the person from the mistake; when offering feedback, always speak to the things that went well before offering criticism; ask people to offer specific suggestions for how to do things differently when offering criticism

**Sense of Urgency**
- continued sense of urgency that makes it difficult to take time to be inclusive, encourage democratic and/or thoughtful decision-making, to think long-term, to consider consequences
- frequently results in sacrificing potential allies for quick or highly visible results, for example sacrificing interests of Communities of Color in order to win victories for white people (seen as default or norm community)
• reinforced by funding proposals which promise too much work for too little money and by funders who expect too much for too little

Antidotes: realistic work plans; leadership which understands that things take longer than anyone expects; discuss and plan for what it means to set goals of inclusivity and diversity, particularly in terms of time; learn from past experience how long things take; write realistic funding proposals with realistic time frames; be clear about how you will make good decisions in an atmosphere of urgency

Defensiveness
• the organizational structure is set up and much energy spent trying to prevent abuse and protect power as it exists rather than to facilitate the best out of each person or to clarify who has power and how they are expected to use it
• because of either/or thinking (see below), criticism of those with power is viewed as threatening and inappropriate (or rude)
• people respond to new or challenging ideas with defensiveness, making it very difficult to raise these ideas
• a lot of energy in the organization is spent trying to make sure that people’s feelings aren’t getting hurt or working around defensive people
• the defensiveness of people in power creates an oppressive culture

Antidotes: understand that structure cannot in and of itself facilitate or prevent abuse; understand the link between defensiveness and fear (of losing power, losing face, losing comfort, losing privilege); work on your own defensiveness; name defensiveness as a problem when it is one; give people credit for being able to handle more than you think; discuss the ways in which defensiveness or resistance to new ideas gets in the way of the mission

Quantity Over Quality
• all resources of organization are directed toward producing measurable goals
• things that can be measured are more highly valued than things that cannot, for example numbers of people attending a meeting, newsletter circulation, money spent are valued more than quality of relationships, democratic decision-making, ability to constructively deal with conflict
• little or no value attached to process; if it can't be measured, it has no value
• discomfort with emotion and feelings
• no understanding that when there is a conflict between content (the agenda of the meeting) and process (people’s need to be heard or engaged), process will prevail (for example, you may get through the agenda, but if you haven't paid attention to people’s need to be heard, the decisions made at the meeting are undermined and/or disregarded)

Antidotes: include process or quality goals in your planning; make sure your organization has a values statement which expresses the ways in which you want to do your work; make sure this is a living document and that people are using it in their day to day work;
look for ways to measure process goals (for example if you have a goal of inclusivity, think about ways you can measure whether or not you have achieved that goal); learn to recognize those times when you need to get off the agenda in order to address people’s underlying concerns

**Worship of the Written Word**
- if it’s not in a memo, it doesn't exist
- the organization does not take into account or value other ways in which information gets shared
- those with strong documentation and writing skills are more highly valued, even in organizations where ability to relate to others is key to the mission

**Antidotes:** take the time to analyze how people inside and outside the organization get and share information; figure out which things need to be written down and come up with alternative ways to document what is happening; work to recognize the contributions and skills that every person brings to the organization (for example, the ability to build relationships with those who are important to the organization’s mission)

**Only One Right Way**
- the belief there is one right way to do things and once people are introduced to the right way, they will see the light and adopt it
- when they do not adapt or change, then something is wrong with them (the other, those not changing), not with us (those who know the right way)
- similar to the missionary who does not see value in the culture of other communities, sees only value in their beliefs about what is good

**Antidotes:** accept that there are many ways to get to the same goal; once the group has made a decision about which way will be taken, honor that decision and see what you and the organization will learn from taking that way, even and especially if it is not the way you would have chosen; work on developing the ability to notice when people do things differently and how those different ways might improve your approach; look for the tendency for a group or a person to keep pushing the same point over and over out of a belief that there is only one right way and then name it; when working with communities from a different culture than yours or your organization’s, be clear that you have some learning to do about the communities’ ways of doing; never assume that you or your organization know what is best for the community in isolation from meaningful relationships with that community

**Paternalism**
- decision-making is clear to those with power and unclear to those without it
- those with power think they are capable of making decisions ’or and in the interests of those without power
- those with power often don't think it is important or necessary to understand the viewpoint or experience of those for whom they are making decisions
- those without power understand they do not have it and understand who does
- those without power do not really know how decisions get made and who makes what decisions, and yet they are completely familiar with the impact of those decisions on them

**Antidotes:** make sure that everyone knows and understands who makes what decisions in the organization; make sure everyone knows and understands their level of responsibility and authority in the organization; include people who are affected by decisions in the decision-making.

**Either/Or Thinking**
- things are either/or, good/bad, right/wrong, with us/against us
- closely linked to perfectionism in making it difficult to learn from mistakes or accommodate conflict
- no sense that things can be both/and
- results in trying to simplify complex things, for example believing that poverty is simply a result of lack of education
- creates conflict and increases sense of urgency, as people are felt they have to make decisions to do either this or that, with no time or encouragement to consider alternatives, particularly those which may require more time or resources

**Antidotes:** notice when people use either/or language and push to come up with more than two alternatives; notice when people are simplifying complex issues, particularly when the stakes seem high or an urgent decision needs to be made; slow it down and encourage people to do a deeper analysis; when people are faced with an urgent decision, take a break and give people some breathing room to think creatively; avoid making decisions under extreme pressure.

**Power Hoarding**
- little, if any, value around sharing power
- power seen as limited, only so much to go around
- those with power feel threatened when anyone suggests changes in how things should be done in the organization, feel suggestions for change are a reflection on their leadership
- those with power don't see themselves as hoarding power or as feeling threatened
- those with power assume they have the best interests of the organization at heart and assume those wanting change are ill-informed (stupid), emotional, inexperienced

**Antidotes:** include power sharing in your organization’s values statement; discuss what good leadership looks like and make sure people understand that a good leader develops the power and skills of others; understand that change is inevitable and challenges to your leadership can be healthy and productive; make sure the organization is focused on the mission

**Fear of Open Conflict**
- people in power are scared of conflict and try to ignore it or run from it
• when someone raises an issue that causes discomfort, the response is to blame the person for raising the issue rather than to look at the issue which is actually causing the problem
• emphasis on being polite
• equating the raising of difficult issues with being impolite, rude, or out of line

Antidotes: role play ways to handle conflict before conflict happens; distinguish between being polite and raising hard issues; don't require those who raise hard issues to raise them in “acceptable” ways, especially if you are using the ways in which issues are raised as an excuse not to address the issues being raised; once a conflict is resolved, take the opportunity to revisit it and see how it might have been handled differently

Individualism
• little experience or comfort working as part of a team
• people in organization believe they are responsible for solving problems alone
• accountability, if any, goes up and down, not sideways to peers or to those the organization is set up to serve
• desire for individual recognition and credit
• leads to isolation
• competition more highly valued than cooperation and where cooperation is valued, little time or resources devoted to developing skills in how to cooperate
• creates a lack of accountability, as the organization values those who can get things done on their own without needing supervision or guidance

Antidotes: include teamwork as an important value in your values statement; make sure the organization is working towards shared goals and people understand how working together will improve performance; evaluate people’s ability to work in a team as well as their ability to get the job done; make sure that credit is given to all those who participate in an effort, not just the leaders or most public person; make people accountable as a group rather than as individuals; create a culture where people bring problems to the group; use staff meetings as a place to solve problems, not just a place to report activities.

I’m the Only One
• connected to individualism, the belief that if something is going to get done right, “I” have to do it
• little or no ability to delegate work to others antidotes: evaluate people based on their ability to delegate to others; evaluate people based on their ability to work as part of a team to accomplish shared goals

Progress Is Bigger, More
• observed in systems of accountability and ways we determine success
• progress is an organization which expands (adds staff, adds projects) or develops the ability to serve more people (regardless of how well they are serving them)
• gives no value, not even negative value, to its cost, for example, increased accountability to funders as the budget grows, ways in which those we serve may be
exploited, excluded, or underserved as we focus on how many we are serving instead of quality of service or values created by the ways in which we serve.

**Antidotes:** create Seventh Generation thinking by asking how the actions of the group now will affect people seven generations from now; make sure that any cost/benefit analysis includes all the costs, not just the financial ones, for example the cost in morale, the cost in credibility, the cost in the use of resources; include process goals in your planning, for example make sure that your goals speak to how you want to do your work, not just what you want to do; ask those you work with and for to evaluate your performance.

**Objectivity**
- the belief that there is such a thing as being objective
- the belief that emotions are inherently destructive, irrational, and should not play a role in decision-making or group process
- invalidating people who show emotion
- requiring people to think in a linear fashion and ignoring or invalidating those who think in other ways
- impatience with any thinking that does not appear “logical” to those with power

**Antidotes:** realize that everybody has a world view and that everybody’s worldview affects the way they understand things; realize this means you too; push yourself to sit with discomfort when people are expressing themselves in ways which are not familiar to you; assume that everybody has a valid point and your job is to understand what that point is.

**Right to Comfort**
- the belief that those with power have a right to emotional and psychological comfort (another aspect of valuing “logic” over emotion)
- scapegoating those who cause discomfort
- equating individual acts of unfairness against white people with systemic racism which daily targets People of Color

**Antidotes:** understand that discomfort is at the root of all growth and learning; welcome it as much as you can; deepen your political analysis of racism and oppression so you have a strong understanding of how your personal experience and feelings fit into a larger picture; don’t take everything personally.

One of the purposes of listing characteristics of white supremacy culture is to point out how organizations which unconsciously use these characteristics as their norms and standards make it difficult, if not impossible, to open the door to other cultural norms and standards. As a result, many of our organizations, while saying we want to be multicultural, really only allow other people and cultures to come in if they adapt or conform to already existing cultural norms. Being able to identify and name the cultural norms and standards you want is a first step to making room for a truly multicultural organization.
**APPENDIX D**

**2021–2022 BROWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS AND PRIORITIES**

**Instructional Focus:** Brown Elementary educators will **co-plan and co-teach** culturally responsive and antiracist social justice teaching for the inclusion setting in order to create independent learners and increase opportunity and achievement for our most marginalized students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2021-2022 Priority</th>
<th>Action steps to accomplish this</th>
<th>Teams Leading</th>
<th>Elements of Teacher Rubric</th>
<th>BPS Essentials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Leverage the diversity and expertise of our community and of racial equity scholars to implement inclusive, culturally responsive, and antiracist social justice practice in our classrooms.</strong></td>
<td>REC, ILT, CPT, ERT</td>
<td><strong>Rigorous Standard Based Unit Design (I-A-3)</strong></td>
<td>1.1 - Educators examine their personal biases cultural experiences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Implement the research of Hammond, Crenshaw, Perry, Love, and Muhammad during <strong>co-planning and co-teaching</strong> in order to establish a culture of achievement</td>
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<td><strong>Well Structured Lessons (I-A-4)</strong></td>
<td>1.3 - Educators create and maintain a safe, healthy, and sustaining learning environment</td>
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<td>• Engage in collaborative learning opportunities to act upon a collective vision for instructionally addressing subgroup achievement gaps in schoolwide data</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Meeting Diverse Needs (II-A-3)</strong></td>
<td>2.1 Educators employ appropriate actions and practices to get to know students and affirm cultural and linguistic backgrounds</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Co-plan and co-teach</strong> antiracist, culturally responsive, and inclusive lessons in alignment with the Brown's excellence in teaching</td>
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<td><strong>Safe Learning Environment (II-B-1)</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Co-plan and co-teach</strong> SFL writing and BEES units that decolonize curriculum, incorporate UDL principles and social justice standards, and cultivate students' identity, skills, intellect, and criticality (Muhammad)</td>
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<td><strong>Respects Differences (II-C-1)</strong></td>
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<td>• Partner with families to co construct resources and supports to extend classroom discussions and engage in antiracist learning and action, including racial affinity groups, Racial Equity Dialogues, REC meetings, and Equity Roundtables</td>
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<td>• Leverage Welcoming Schools to unpack biases and promote a more inclusive community through an LGBTQ+ lens and understanding of intersecting identities (Crenshaw)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2021-2022 Priority</td>
<td>Action steps to accomplish this</td>
<td>Teams Leading</td>
<td>Elements of Teacher Rubric</td>
<td>BPS Essentials</td>
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</table>
| **2** Collaboratively create inclusion classrooms in order to foster a culture of achievement and align with our belief that “all students can do high level academic work” (Perry). | - Develop our skills in *co-planning and co-teaching* and our understanding of UDL and multilingualism  
- Leverage systems, curricula, scholarship, and pedagogical practices to provide equitable access to challenging, grade level standards-aligned curriculum for all learners (Perry)  
- Collaborate with team members to *co-plan* and progress monitor inclusion that promotes a culture of achievement for all students (Perry)  
- *Co-teach* lessons that enable students to accelerate learning and make progress toward IEP goals, grade level standards, and/or WIDA can do descriptors in the inclusion setting  
- Leverage the presence, collaboration, and skillsets of all adults to effectively implement inclusive practices and create a culture of achievement for all students  
- Continue to discuss inclusion and frame differences as assets with all students  
- Approach expectations and practices during *co-planning and co-teaching* from the belief that with support and working together we can help all students achieve (Perry) | ILT  
CPT  
IPT  
CAT | Analysis & Conclusions (I-C-1)  
Meeting Diverse Needs (II-A-3)  
Access to Knowledge (II-D-3)  
High Expectations (II-D-2)  
Professional Learning & Growth (IV-B-1)  
Professional Collaboration (IV-C-1) | 2.4 Educators ensure students exercise agency over what and how they learn  
3.1 Educators facilitate learning experiences so student, rather than educator, does most of the cognitive work  
3.4 Educators design learning experiences that every student is able to access and actively engage in |
| **3** Use data strategically to plan in response to students and according to current research in order to monitor progress towards increasing opportunity and achievement for our most marginalized students. | - Use data to *co-plan* strategically, differentiate instruction, and provide necessary intervention and enhancement in service of increasing opportunity and achievement for our most marginalized students  
- Engage in EL progress monitoring for emerging bilinguals in alignment with the WIDA can do descriptors  
- Utilize grade level standards aligned assessments to analyze student data and inform progress monitoring through an inclusive lens  
- Leverage writing data in *co-planning and co-teaching* teams to inform SFL writing unit design and support students in meeting the standard of excellence  
- Learn about the research of equitable literacy instruction in order to inform shifts in literacy practice, including assessment, progress monitoring, and tier 1 instruction | ILT  
CPT  
ERT  
IPT  
CAT | Adjustments to Practice (I-B-2)  
Analysis and Conclusions (I-C-1)  
Sharing Conclusions with Colleagues (I-C-2) | 4.5 Educators use information gathered through assessment to monitor student progress and design appropriate supports or opportunities for acceleration  
4.2 Educators use formative assessment as a daily practice in order to adapt instruction |
### APPENDIX E

**BROWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EVOLUTION OF PRIORITIES FROM 2020–2021 TO 2021–2022**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2020-21 Priority</th>
<th>2021-22 Priority</th>
<th>What does this mean?</th>
<th>Why the shifts?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 | Leverage the diversity and expertise of our community and of racial equity scholars to implement inclusive and antiracist pedagogical practice in our classrooms. | Leverage the diversity, lived experiences, and expertise of our community and of racial equity scholars to implement inclusive, **culturally responsive, and antiracist** social justice practice in our classrooms. | We will engage staff, families, and students in increasingly in-depth discussions and learning about race, ethnicity, gender, and ability grounded in scholarly research and respectful of individuals’ lived experiences. Through an antiracist and culturally responsive social justice lens, we will make intentional shifts to our teaching practices and curriculum in service of achieving greater equity and inclusion. | • Brown School data demonstrates significant gaps between academic achievement of white students and that of Black and Brown students  
• We will continue to leverage “race matters” awareness to impact the narratives, histories, and practices that students experience  
• We will offer a variety of collaborative learning opportunities for staff and families to engage in learning, reflection, and action towards equity and inclusion  
• We will apply Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) in our writing approach to co-plan antiracist and culturally responsive social justice writing units  
• We will leverage the social justice teaching standards to co-plan and co-teach lessons that build students’ critical consciousness to name biases and interrupt racist/prejudiced practices and beliefs  
• We will continue our collaboration with HRC Welcoming Schools to unpack biases and promote a more inclusive community through an LGBTQ+ and intersectional lens and earn the Seal of Excellence for a Welcoming School |
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2020-21 Priority</th>
<th>2021-22 Priority</th>
<th>What does this mean?</th>
<th>Why the shifts?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Implement meaningful inclusion opportunities for all students in order to foster independent learners and align with our belief that “all students can do high level academic work” (Perry).&lt;br&gt;Collaboratively create inclusion classrooms in order to foster a culture of achievement and align with our belief that “all students can do high level academic work” (Perry).</td>
<td>We will implement year 1 of our transition to full inclusion, including inclusion classrooms in K0/K1, 2nd, and 5th as well as inclusive learning opportunities in K2, 1st, 3rd, and 4th. As we shift to full inclusion we are ensuring that all Brown School students, including students who benefit from targeted support such as students with exceptionalities and emerging bilinguals, are able to learn with and from each other in the least restrictive environment (LRE).</td>
<td>• Co-teach®s, related service providers, and paraprofessionals in K0/K1, 2nd, and 5th will collaborate to design and facilitate full inclusion classrooms&lt;br&gt;• Co-teachers, related service providers, and paraprofessionals in K2, 1st, 3rd, and 4th will collaborate to design and facilitate inclusive learning opportunities that expand over time in preparation for the transition to full inclusion in SY22-23&lt;br&gt;• Co-planning and co-teaching teams will leverage professional learning and supports to create more inclusive classroom communities&lt;br&gt;• Teams will critically consume grade level curriculum in order to co-plan and co-teach lessons that ensure equitable access to standards-aligned, grade level instruction that cultivates every student’s genius&lt;br&gt;• We will align our expectations and practices with the belief that with support and working together we can help all students achieve (Perry, 2017).</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Use data strategically to identify and plan in response to students’ needs and monitor progress towards increasing opportunity and achievement for our most marginalized students.&lt;br&gt;Use data strategically to plan in response to students and according to current research in order to monitor progress towards increasing opportunity and achievement for our most marginalized students.</td>
<td>Data is a necessary component to all aspects of our practice. In order to be transparent about our areas of growth, we have prioritized literacy, more specifically writing, and increasing opportunity and achievement for our most marginalized students as the lens through which we look at data. In alignment with equitable literacy, instruction must be explicit and research-based in order to close opportunity gaps.</td>
<td>• Brown data indicates that writing is an area of growth; to address this area of growth, we will implement explicit, research and text-based disciplinary writing via SFL writing&lt;br&gt;• We will leverage professional learning and supports to increase our knowledge and skills related to explicit and systematic instruction in the function of language&lt;br&gt;• We will invest in more complex and enabling texts in alignment with equitable literacy practices&lt;br&gt;• We will progress monitor subgroups of our most marginalized students during data inquiry to focus on writing and interrupt patterns of inequity&lt;br&gt;• We will use subgroup data to inform the writing and progress monitoring of Student Learning and Professional Practice goals, which will focus on writing</td>
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## APPENDIX F

### BROWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STATE STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENT DATA

#### GRADERS 03 - 08 - ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Group</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>State</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accountability Subgroups</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Students w/ Disabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>EL and Former EL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
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<tr>
<td>High Needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amer, Ind. or Alaska Nat.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
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<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multi-Race, Non-Hisp./Lat.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other Subgroups</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Disabled</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Economically Disadvantaged</td>
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<tr>
<td>EL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Former EL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ever EL</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Foster</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All Students</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td></td>
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219
## GRADES 03 - 08 - MATHEMATICS

### Accountability Subgroups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Group</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Student Group</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Student Group</th>
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<td>Students w/ Disabilities</td>
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<td>54.3</td>
<td>624.75</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<td>7.22</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.2</td>
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<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>39.96</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>9.63</td>
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<tr>
<td>African Amer/Black</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<td>52.47</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.6</td>
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<td>Amer. Ind. or Alaska Nat.</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>16.65</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>18.46</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
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<td>93.5</td>
<td>8.06</td>
<td>7.1</td>
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### Other Subgroups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subgroup</th>
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<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
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<th>%</th>
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<td>20</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>7.5</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<td>38</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
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<td>100</td>
<td>4.7</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>15.54</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>EL</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>36.47</td>
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<td>200</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<td>84.96</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ever EL</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>22.49</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>9.46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foster</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>31.66</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>31.66</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### All Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>50.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist Multicultural Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intentionally and publicly excludes or segregates African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans</td>
<td>Tolerant of a limited number of “token” People of Color and members from other social identity groups allowed in with “proper” perspective and credentials</td>
<td>Makes official policy pronouncements regarding multicultural diversity</td>
<td>Growing understanding of racism as barrier to effective diversity</td>
<td>Creates a process of intentional institutional restructuring, based upon anti-racist analysis and identity</td>
<td>Future vision of an institution and wider community that has overcome systemic racism and all other forms of oppression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentionally and publicly enforces the racist status quo throughout institution</td>
<td>May still secretly limit or exclude People of Color in contradiction to public policies</td>
<td>Sees itself as “non-racist” institution with open doors to People of Color</td>
<td>Develops analysis of systemic racism</td>
<td>Allies with others in combating all forms of social oppression</td>
<td>Institution’s life reflects full participation and shared power with diverse racial, cultural, and economic groups in determining its mission, structure, constituency, policies and practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalization of racism includes formal policies and practices, teachings, and decision making on all levels</td>
<td>Continues to intentionally maintain white power and privilege through its formal policies and practices, teachings, and decision making on all levels of institutional life</td>
<td>Carries out intentional inclusiveness efforts, recruiting “someone of color” on committees or office staff</td>
<td>Develops intentional identity as an “anti-racist” institution</td>
<td>Implement structures, policies and practices with inclusive decision making and other forms of power sharing on all levels of the institutions life and work</td>
<td>Members across all identity groups are full participants in decisions that shape the institution, and inclusion of diverse cultures, lifestyles, and interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually has similar intentional policies and practices toward other socially oppressed groups such as women, gays and lesbians, Third World citizens, etc.</td>
<td>Often declares, “We don’t have a problem.”</td>
<td>Expanding view of diversity includes other socially oppressed groups</td>
<td>Begins to develop accountability to racially oppressed communities</td>
<td>A sense of restored community and mutual caring</td>
<td>A sense of restored community and mutual caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unintentionally maintains the dominant group’s power and privilege</td>
<td>“But...”</td>
<td>“Not those who make waves”</td>
<td>Increasing commitment to dismantle racism and eliminate inherent white advantage</td>
<td>Allies with others in combating all forms of social oppression</td>
<td>Actively works in larger communities (regional, national, global) to eliminate all forms of oppression and to create multicultural organizations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Adapted from the Regional Arts and Culture Council. 2020.
## APPENDIX H

BROWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING TOOL

### Equity, Access, and Inclusion
- Trust and belief in students as intellectuals and people of strong character is communicated explicitly and implicitly
- Culturally competent and responsive pedagogy
- Curriculum and tasks do not explicitly or implicitly subscribe to or advance bias
- All students are able to access learning because of intentional design and execution of instruction that takes into account dis/ability, language barriers, and other factors that may prevent access

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Product</th>
<th>Clear &amp; Rigorous Expectations</th>
<th>Rigorous Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Demonstrates high degree of mastery and nuance</td>
<td>• Aligned with rigorous objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students are to accurately assess and reflect on</td>
<td>• Require nuanced critical thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the quality of their product</td>
<td>• Require content knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precision of Language and Ideas</td>
<td>• Nuanced, precise and specific language used by teachers and students, in order to express nuance and sophistication of idea</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Content-specific vocabulary used by teacher and student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students are introduced to new terms and concepts with the correct vocabulary, rather than cute names or modified language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students are accountable for precision of language orally and in writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Accountability and Feedback</td>
<td>• Students do the vast majority of the work, with teachers &quot;shining the light&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher pushes students to correct or deepen their thinking</td>
<td>• Discourse requires evidence, reasoning and analysis/synthesis/evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teachers provide students with specific, accurate, academic feedback that follows the “Excellence/Steps/Support/Belief” frame</td>
<td>• Students build on each other’s thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teachers craft exemplary answers and use them to guide in-class feedback</td>
<td>• Teacher &quot;shines the light&quot; to push students to dig deeper at most salient ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Discourse</td>
<td>• Students are engaged in discourse talking with peers and adults, asking high level, open-ended questions, probing for deeper understanding, and articulating their understanding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Discourse requires evidence, reasoning and analysis/synthesis/evaluation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students build on each other’s thinking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher &quot;shines the light&quot; to push students to dig deeper at most salient ideas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration and Co-Teaching</td>
<td>• Clear communication between co-teachers is evident through prior co-planning and co-teaching interactions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Co-teachers’ decisions are informed by students’ needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Co-teachers facilitate learning that is accessible to all students because they take into account dis/ability, language barriers, and other factors that may prevent access.
Hello,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Michael Baulier. I am a doctoral student at the University of Massachusetts Boston. I am writing in hopes of recruiting you for my research study, which will be conducted at Brown Elementary School during fall and winter 2021. My research examines how an elementary school enacts a multilayered approach to racial equity. Specifically, I ask: 1) How does an urban public elementary school enact a multilayered approach to racial equity? 2) How do educators, families, and community members describe their experiences collaborating to develop a school culture of achievement for Black students in an urban elementary school setting? 3) What collaborative practices and processes were instrumental in educators, families, and community members fostering a school culture of achievement for Black students in an urban elementary school?

The following eligibility criterion was selected for my family member participants:

1. Parents, guardians, or relatives of students attending Brown Elementary School

The following eligibility criteria were selected for my teacher participants:

1. Full-time employees of Brown Elementary School

The following eligibility criteria were selected for my community member participants:

1. Employees, community partners, and/or parents, guardians, or relatives of students attending Brown Elementary School who collaborated with or within the school community for a period of time between 2015 and 2021

Do you meet the selected criteria? If so, may I interview you?

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to engage in a semi-structured 1:1 interview, lasting 60-90 minutes. The semi-structured 1:1 interview questions will inquire about participants’ perceptions of race/ethnicity in the classroom and whole school context, aspects of racial equity work in the school, and collaboration in service of a culture of achievement.
The interviews will conclude by offering participants a platform to express any additional comments or concerns.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will sign an informed consent form prior to participating in the study. If you have any questions pertaining to this study, please do not hesitate to contact me at michael.baulier001@umb.edu. I cannot thank you enough for assisting me in this matter, and I hope to hear from you soon.

Warmest regards,

Michael Baulier  
Doctoral Student  
Department of Leadership in Education  
College of Education  
University of Massachusetts Boston  
100 William T. Morrissey Blvd.  
Boston, MA 02125
Race Matters: Schooling with Racial Equity at the Center

Introduction and Contact Information
You are asked to take part in a research study that examines a multilayered approach to racial equity in the elementary school setting. The researcher is Michael Baulier, a graduate student in the Department of Leadership and Education at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Please read this form and feel free to ask questions. If you have further questions later, Mr. Baulier will discuss them with you. His email address is mbaulier@bostonpublicschools.org.

Description of the Project:
In partnership with families, educators, and community members from Brown Elementary School (a northeast region public school), the purpose of this study is to examine how an elementary school enacts a multilayered approach to racial equity and how this collaboration influences students’ school experiences and progress. The length of this project is one academic semester. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to engage in a semi-structured 1:1 interview lasting 60-90 minutes.

The semi-structured 1:1 interview questions will inquire about participants’ perceptions of race/ethnicity in the classroom and whole school context, aspects of racial equity work in the school, and collaboration in service of a culture of achievement.

Participation in this project is voluntary, and even if a participant agrees to participate, they may still decline to answer or skip any question or ask to conclude the interview at any time. In addition, fieldnotes will be collected through observations throughout the duration of the project.

Risks or Discomforts:
A risk of participation is the emergence of negative or distressful feelings in completing the research materials. You may speak with Michael Baulier to discuss any distress or other issues related to study participation. If you wish to discuss concerns, you are encouraged to contact him at michael.baulier001@umb.edu or at 508-878-1441.
Another risk of participation is a breach of confidentiality. In alignment with the guidance from the Institutional Review Boards of University of Massachusetts Boston, we will do everything we can to protect your information.

**Benefits:**
*There is no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. Your participation may help us learn more about* participant experiences in a community that is committed to enacting a multilayered approach to racial equity and its impact on student progress.

**Confidentiality:**
Your part in this research is confidential. That is, the information gathered for this project will not be published or presented in a way that would allow anyone to identify you. Information gathered for this project will be password protected or stored in a locked file cabinet and only the researcher will have access to the data.

Identifiers will be removed from your identifiable private information that are collected during this research, that information will be stored for up to 5 years and used for future research studies.

Any information about your participation, including your identity, will be kept confidential to the extent possible. The following steps will be taken to ensure this confidentiality: 1) data will be transcribed and de-identified; 2) data will be referred to by coded identifiers for all analysis; and 3) data will be stored on a password protected laptop computer, and only the researcher, Michael Baulier, will have access to it.

In addition, the researcher would like to remind participants to respect the privacy of your fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group interview to others.

**Voluntary Participation:**
The decision whether or not to take part in this research study is voluntary. If you do decide to take part in this study, you may end your participation at any time without consequence. If you wish to end your participation, you should email Michael Baulier at mbaulier@bostonpublicschools.org. Whatever you decide will in no way affect you or your relationship with your employer.

**Questions:**
You have the right to ask questions about this research before you agree to be in this study and at any time during the study. If you have further questions about this research or if you have a research-related problem, you can reach Michael Baulier at michael.baulier001@umb.edu

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact a representative of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, which oversees research involving human participants. The Institutional Review Board may be reached by telephone or e-mail at (617) 287-5374 or at human.subjects@umb.edu.

**Signatures:**
*I HAVE READ THE CONSENT FORM. MY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. MY SIGNATURE ON THIS FORM MEANS THAT I CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of Participant</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Signature of Person Obtaining Consent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printed Name of Participant</th>
<th>Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Dear Parent of ________________________________,

I am writing to let you know about an upcoming opportunity we have that we think might be useful for your child.

As our mission states, we believe that academic, artistic, social-emotional, and physical learning are essential aspects of our education that all students deserve. To further support students’ academic and social-emotional learning, we are launching the 10 Boys Initiative at the Mozart. The 10 Boys Initiative acknowledges that an increasing number of our boys are not achieving to their full potential. This problem affects all of our boys, but the problem is far more significant among Students of Color. For the success of our young boys it is essential we address this issue in a meaningful way.

The mission of the Initiative is to serve as an intentional support system for our young male students. The topics of focus will include:
- Exploring racial, cultural, and gender identity
- Building trust, respect, and empathy among members of the group
- Making and maintaining friendships
- Resolving conflicts
- Learning and reinforcing academic support strategies

There will be a 45 minute session 1 time per week led by our Family Liaison, ___________. If you would like your child to participate in this group, please sign and return the consent below by Monday, October 25th. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me at ____________ or at ______________

---------------------------------------------

I consent to my child’s participation in the 10 Boys Initiative led by ________ at the Brown Elementary School. I understand that the group will meet 1 time per week beginning during school hours.

Student Name: ________________________________ Grade: _________

Parent Name: ________________________________

Parent Signature: _____________________________ Date: _________

---------------------------------------------
Dear Parent of ____________________________,

I am writing to let you know about an upcoming opportunity we have that we think might be useful for your child.

As our mission states, we believe that academic, artistic, social-emotional, and physical learning are essential aspects of our education that all students deserve. To further support students’ academic and social-emotional learning, we are offering the 10 Girls Initiative at Brown. The 10 Girls Initiative acknowledges that an increasing number of our girls are not achieving to their full potential. This problem affects all of our girls, but the problem is far more significant among Students of Color. For the success of our young girls it is essential we address this issue in a meaningful way.

The mission of the Initiative is to serve as an intentional support system for our young female students. The topics of focus will include:
- Exploring racial, cultural, and gender identity
- Building trust, respect, and empathy among members of the group
- Making and maintaining friendships
- Resolving conflicts
- Learning and reinforcing academic support strategies

There will be a 45 minute session 1 time per week led by our School Social Worker, ________. If you would like your child to participate in this group, please sign and return the consent below by Monday, October 18th. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to ________ at __________ or at the school at ____________.

I consent to my child’s participation in the 10 Girls Initiative led by ____________ at the Brown Elementary School. I understand that the group will meet weekly during the school day.

Student Name: _____________________________ Grade: __________

Parent Name: ________________________________

Parent Signature: ___________________________ Date: ________
APPENDIX L

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Thank you for talking with me today. As you may know, I am conducting a research study to better understand how educators, families, and community members from Brown Elementary School are engaging in racial equity work. As part of this research, I am talking to educators, families, and community members who participated in the school’s racial equity efforts. Before we start, I want to remind you that there are no right or wrong answers. I also want to let you know that you can stop the interview at any time or ask to skip or learn more about a question. As you answer the questions, please remember to not use your real name. Instead, use the identifier associated with you in this study. Before we get started, do you have any questions for me? [PAUSE] OK, great, let’s get started!

[Section 1: Background]
First, could you tell me a little about yourself?
1. What is your role at the school [parent, teacher, administrator, etc.]

2. How long you have been connected to the school [as a parent, employee, etc.]

   Probes:
   [If parent] how many children attend/attended the school?

   [If teacher or administrator] At what other schools have you taught/held a leadership role; subject, grade level, years of teaching experience?

   [If parent] have you been involved in any racial equity efforts, engagement opportunities, or teams (Race and Ethnicity Committee (REC), REC Family Liaison, Dialogues, affinity groups, etc.)?

   [If staff member] have you been involved in any racial equity efforts, engagement opportunities, or teams (Race and Ethnicity Committee (REC), REC Family Liaison, Dialogues, affinity groups, etc.)?

3. Before teaching at [School Name], what types of racial equity efforts were you involved in within other school settings?
[Section 2: School]
Next I’d like to ask you about [School Name].
1. What things do you think work really well here?
   Probes:
   Resources, environment, staff, activities, etc.
   Provide some specific examples

2. What things could be improved?
   Probes:
   Resources, environment, staff, activities, etc.
   Provide some examples

3. How does this school value the identities (racial, ethnic, linguistic, and gender) of its students?

4. How does this school address racial/ethnic issues?

5. How and when did you first become aware of the Brown’s efforts to address racial/ethnic issues?

6. How could this school improve when addressing racial/ethnic issues?

7. Based on your knowledge, how are Black students performing academically?

8. Based on your knowledge, how do Black students, families, and/or educators experience belongingness in this community?

9. How does this school promote family engagement?

10. How could this school better promote family engagement?

[Section 3: Multilayered Approach to Racial Equity]
Now, I’d like to talk to you about the different racial equity efforts of this school community.

1. Do you believe issues of race/ethnicity should be discussed in K-12 classrooms?
   Why or why not?

2. Do you believe race plays a role in the educational experiences of students?

3. Is it important for students to see themselves represented in the curriculum?
   Probes: Why?

4. Do you believe antiracist, culturally responsive social justice teaching and learning benefits all students, Black students?
   Probes: Why?
5. To the best of your knowledge, is the school’s current curriculum representative of different racial/ethnic identities? How?

6. Beyond the curriculum, how are other aspects of the school related to instruction, school culture, family engagement, etc. aligned with racial equity?

7. For you, what has been the most important experience or aspect of racial equity in this school community?

8. For students, what has been the most important experience or aspect of racial equity work in this school community?

9. How do you see different community members involved in racial equity work?

10. And of the community members, which group/team/individual role is most important in moving the work of racial equity forward?

11. What evidence, if any, is there that racial equity work is having a positive impact on the community?

12. What do you view as the necessary next steps for this school community in service of racial equity?

[Section 4: Wrap up]
That’s my last question. Is there anything that I didn’t ask about that you would like to share related to any of the topics we covered?
Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you for your time! Please feel free to contact me if you have questions—my contact information can be found on the consent form.
APPENDIX M

2019–2021 BROWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STATE STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENT DATA

English Language Arts—All Students

Math—All Students

Science and Technology/Engineering—All Students
Math—white

[Bar graph showing data for Our School, Our District, and Massachusetts over years 2019 and 2021. The graph segments represent Exceeding Expectations, Meeting Expectations, Partially Meeting Expectations, and Not Meeting Expectations.]

236
APPENDIX N
GRADE 4 RENEWABLE ENERGY UNIT OVERVIEW

4th Grade Energy Unit Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Goals: Wind Energy as Renewable Energy</th>
<th>Identity: Students will identify which United Nations Global Goal is an issue that needs urgent attention. Students will identify how renewable energy can reduce climate change trends and mitigate negative health impacts for people in marginalized communities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identity:</strong> How will your teaching help students to learn something about themselves and/or others?</td>
<td><strong>Identity:</strong> Students will identify which United Nations Global Goal is an issue that needs urgent attention. Students will identify how renewable energy can reduce climate change trends and mitigate negative health impacts for people in marginalized communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills:</strong> What skills and content learning standards are you teaching?</td>
<td><strong>Skill:</strong> Students will be able to write an opinion response using evidence to support their claim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intellect:</strong> What will your students become smarter about?</td>
<td><strong>Intellect:</strong> Students will create and test their own designs of wind power generators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criticality:</strong> How will you engage your thinking about power, equity, and anti-oppression in the text, in society and in the world?</td>
<td><strong>Criticality:</strong> Students will read text and understand William Kwamkwabe’s story of his wind power generator and how it impacted and powered his village. <em>The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Joy:</strong> How is genius and joy cultivated through this learning?</td>
<td><strong>Joy:</strong> Students learn that a young teen from a developing nation brought about transformational change.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# APPENDIX O

## GRADE 3 HUMANITIES UNIT: COVID-19’S IMPACT ON EDUCATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Justice Resources</strong></td>
<td>Essential Questions:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UDL Principles:</strong></td>
<td>+ What is the power of education and reading?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ How do school communities respond to a global pandemic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+ How do authors record history?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Genre &amp; Purpose: the purpose of the genre</strong></td>
<td>- Historical Recount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Purpose: to recount a historical event; to document a moment in history and record how the ___ Public Schools responded to the COVID-19 pandemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Medium: Collection of magazine articles to create class magazine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Audience: City of ___ Archives &amp; ___ community families, educators, and student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mentor Texts</strong> (text that reflect the genre being taught)</td>
<td>Mentor Text Ideas:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>? Forms of Bias:</strong></td>
<td>- Historical recount of San Francisco Earthquake &amp; Fire 1906 (see below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Historical recount of Spanish Flu in New York City Public Schools 1918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The Great Molasses Flood Boston, 1919 by Deborah Kopp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Historical recount of Hurricane Maria 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic Research Resources:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Background Information on the Spanish Flu</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(resources to build content knowledge of the topic)</strong></td>
<td><strong>How cities like Boston, Chicago and New York dealt with schools during the Spanish Flu</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Personal Interviews with Families, Educators, Community Members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Impact on Deaf Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Impact on Black Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Impact on Asian-American Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Impact on Indigenous Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Impact on Socialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Impact on Academics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What Do Kids Say?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

238
### K2 - Procedure, Constructing a Museum

**Task:**
Write a procedure piece of writing that tells how to make your museum. Your writing should include a title, materials, steps and pictures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research &amp; Mentor Texts</th>
<th>Non-Print Texts &amp; Experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every Day Recipes for Kids</td>
<td>Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milo's Museum</td>
<td>Aquarium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children's Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Field Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Museum of Science</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Eve

Materials
red wood
strong wood
sharp nals
thick metl
strong hammer
A big saw

How to make A museum
Get your wood
and nals and your hammer
Find A tree
Cut it in the right

shape with the later

take a ramp with the metl

make a later out of nales and wood

put the stuf that you went in it

build the roof with the saw

wood and nales that are
if there are many
these of wood that are
to big
A fun of underwater stuff

There is in my Museum

but only jelly had space
to sit down any more

Everywhere except bad gise can go to

The Museum

The Museum is in

The name of my museum is their
tree house. It is more fair because it has
camps and latinos.
APPENDIX Q
2019–2022 BROWN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STATE STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENT DATA

### English Language Arts Achievement - Average Composite Scaled Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>2019 Achievement</th>
<th>2022 Achievement</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>496.6</td>
<td>497.5</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High needs</td>
<td>491.9</td>
<td>489.5</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Income</td>
<td>491.4</td>
<td>485.5</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL and Former EL</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students w/ disabilities</td>
<td>485.4</td>
<td>493.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amer. Ind. or Alaska Nat.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Afr. Amer./Black</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
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<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-race, Non-Hisp./Lat.</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nat. Haw. or Pacif. Isl.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>512.5</td>
<td>504.3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Mathematics Achievement - Average Composite Scaled Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>2019 Achievement</th>
<th>2022 Achievement</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>496.6</td>
<td>500.3</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High needs</td>
<td>486.3</td>
<td>488.6</td>
<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low Income</td>
<td>485.7</td>
<td>487.1</td>
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<td>EL and Former EL</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students w/ disabilities</td>
<td>483.6</td>
<td>489.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amer. Ind. or Alaska Nat.</td>
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<td>Nat. Haw. or Pacif. Isl.</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>508.4</td>
<td>510.0</td>
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</table>
### English language arts growth - Non-high school

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Group</th>
<th>2019 Mean SGP</th>
<th>2022 Mean SGP</th>
<th>N</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
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<td>40.9</td>
<td>44.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>EL and Former EL</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>Students w/ disabilities</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>Asian</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Mathematics growth - Non-high school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>2019 Mean SGP</th>
<th>2022 Mean SGP</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>61.5</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High needs</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>54.5</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low income</td>
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<tr>
<td>EL and Former EL</td>
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246


247

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266


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