LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY

How is your heart?

20 months into my job, my heart is languishing; an existence that is not depression but is certainly not thriving as I urgently push through life in the rush to return to a form of pre-pandemic normal. Interestingly, I am known in these streets as an exceptionally optimistic person who believes that we must lead with race to solve inequity in the U.S. and that the solutions we seek are found in the center of the communities we serve.

To that, you’ll likely notice one key difference about how I lead at the Community Center for Education Results—I don’t start with the answer. I might even drive you wild with all of the questions.

In my role as CCER’s executive director, you might expect me to share the numbers at this point. The cliffs that our kindergarten readiness stats fell off from during the pandemic; the yawning gaps that ripped wide open despite all our innovative waiver solutions to ensure college-going and high school completion didn’t suffer the same fate. But I ask you to wean yourself from the tic that says the numbers will save us.

Today, with this report, you hold a new perspective on the state of our community. I’ve always wondered what the stories would be if we started in, and centered community. What would it sound like if we centered those in our community we have made every excuse not to listen to? Rather than telling them the data and asking them to make meaning of it, what if we started by asking what impacted their lives—good and bad—and what their visions are for a more equitable and transformed education system?

As we attempt to answer genuine questions of impact, we take this first step to ask: how is your heart? What impacted you this year? What don’t we know that we should know about our community from your perspective? Who do we need to talk to and what do we need to see that is having a meaningful impact—however YOU choose to define that—in the Road Map Project region?

Impact can’t always be measured in culturally and community-relevant ways with data. Often, it is the stories we tell each other that illustrate the true meaning of our existence. In a day and age where many of us don’t know our neighbors’ names or stories, how could we possibly know who is on the edge of brilliance or breakdown if we don’t start with humane curiosity?

As you read through this pulse-taking of our community, tell us: how is your heart?

B Merikle
Black | They | She
Executive Director, Community Center for Education Results
The vision of the Road Map Project is to see every child in South King County and South Seattle—particularly students of color and students from low-income communities—thrive in their education, community, and life. Part of our collective efforts to realize this vision must include centering student needs and working with those who impact the trajectory of young people’s education and lives.

As the backbone organization for the Road Map Project, the Community Center for Education Results (CCER) has been striving to listen to students and families, and to amplify their lived experiences and expertise. We understand that families, community-based organizations (CBOs), and educators who support children’s aspirations and help them thrive are pivotal partners in our work, so this report shares their perspectives and visions for an equitable education system that values young people for their brilliance, celebrates their diverse cultures and stories, and honors their needs and dreams.

COVID-19 has further exposed the gross inequities in our systems and disrupted the way we think, the work we do, and our lives. Leading with the voices of young people, parents, CBOs, and educators, this report shares their accounts of how the pandemic impacted their lives; it also highlights some ways we (CCER) have begun to transition our work to lead with race and center community, including several efforts with partners working toward educational justice. We recognize our founding role in the Road Map Project and are taking steps to clarify how we can best serve in partnership with you. We have a responsibility to respond to the evolving context of our current time, our recent public reckoning with racial injustices, and the deep-seated oppression that has denied opportunities to Black and Brown families.

For this report, we conducted surveys aimed at youth, parents/caregivers, CBOs, and educators and received 65 responses. We share some common themes below, and are developing future courses of action to better support young people and families in our region. What we heard shows the impact of a deadly pandemic that also laid bare the heightened racism that disproportionately affected our Black and Brown families. We have work to do in listening to and learning from those furthest from educational justice, and in partnering with the people who love, support, and teach our students. We recognize we are missing many voices and perspectives, and we will be intentional in continuing to hear from more of you.

“In a transformative, equitable, and liberated school system, children are taught, nurtured and loved by people from their own, and other non-white communities. They are honored as people and as powerful learners, the inherent wisdom of their ancestors and community is part of their learning experience, they are seen as brilliant and filled with potential, and their families are honored and valued as educators and partners in education alongside teachers. Becoming an educator is seen as an honorable path and future educators, particularly educators of color, have the support, encouragement, and resources needed to complete their preparation. The experiences of being from a community of color are valued as important aspects of educator preparation, not as deficits.”

EILEEN YOSHINA, DIRECTOR, EQUITY IN EDUCATION, PSESD
WHAT YOUTH ARE SAYING

“I need people like me around myself a lot because it helps me to know I’m not alone.”

LAVANCIA MCCLENDON, STUDENT AT SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Young people are the experts of their own experience, and often have solutions to the barriers they face in school and beyond. When asked what school staff needed to focus on as in-person school resumed, students said they wanted schools to prioritize their health and safety, which included proper sanitation and mask mandates. Some young people shared that they hoped schools would allow them time to adapt back to being in person; give more attention to the mental, physical, and emotional well-being of students; and provide individualized support for the transition back to school. Some students expressed excitement about returning to school buildings and seeing friends. Others expressed uncertainty given safety concerns and nervousness about socializing with peers in person again.

“My emotions were high and low and it was difficult to focus on irrelevant material while the nation was on fire.”

KYRI MILLER, RECENT GRADUATE OF SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS, FIRST-YEAR AT DILLARD UNIVERSITY

The pandemic and heightened incidents of racism exacerbated inequities. When we asked young people what effect that had, they shared how their learning and mental health were impacted. Students faced trauma at a larger scale this past year which affected their ability to be present in their remote classes, and continues to affect their transition back to in-person school. Students found it challenging to focus and engage in online class discussions and to adjust to the lack of hands-on learning. A few of the surveyed students didn’t feel comfortable going to their teachers to seek extra support, and some kept quiet while their mental health deteriorated.

In the context of serving the whole child, we asked “What key supports do you need to thrive in your education and life?” The overwhelming themes emerging from responses included: having people to talk to for help, wanting individualized support including mental health support, and needing more diverse educator representation. These responses point to ways the school system can meet students where they are at rather than pushing them to quickly catch up on learning when they are still coping with the aftermath of 2020.
Do school in a home environment definitely took more adapting, and more responsibility as well. Staying organized and engaged was hard. But I worked at it and grew my organizational skills. Due to the extra work, I always felt tired and had to take naps. I’m really proud, though, because I maintained my grades and kept straight A's!

I left in-person school as a freshman and I’m coming back as a junior so I’m a little nervous; it’ll definitely take some getting used to, especially with safety concerns that I have. I think it should be mandatory in schools for everybody to wear masks just so that everybody can stay safe. And I think schools should help students have a smooth transition to a new in-person school year.

Last year, heightened racism really impacted students' mental health and I don’t think schools realized the full impact. The student community at my school did a great job of letting us address our issues with how the school was addressing mental health in a sort of performative way. I heard classmates say that they felt as though teachers and staff were telling us to take care of our mental health, but the thing that's damaging our mental health is the overload of work and assignments that we have in class. So it felt contradictory (that they were) asking us to take time off but then still expecting us to do the same amount of work.

If we want to start with race, we need to prioritize students of color, and make sure they have a voice in decisions. My school district can hire more teachers of color. If that isn’t going to be addressed, then the school district isn’t starting with race. The data is there. I want to see schools address the lack of diversity in the teacher population as well as how monitoring attendance during online school could negatively affect students. The key support I need to thrive in school is just support from teachers and knowing that I can go to them if I need help with my work and time management, which is what I need to focus and stay on top of my learning. Overall, just support from friends and family in life is always needed.”
For years, we have heard students call for schools to focus on educator diversity and representation. Some efforts have been made to address the need, including the work of The Puget Sound Educational Service District’s Grow Your Own Initiative and Educators of Color Leadership Community. As of 2020, there has been a marginal increase in hiring and retaining teachers of color in the Road Map Project region, which includes four of the most diverse school districts in the country. Students of color account for 74 percent of our region’s 128,760 students. Of 7,261 teachers, only 1,568 (or 22 percent) are teachers of color. In addition to racial diversity, our region is rich with cultural and linguistic diversity, with students coming from 176 different birth countries, 44 percent of students speaking one of 194 different languages other than English at home, and a growing emergent multilingual population.

The need for more teachers of color remains high. Students have stated they feel safer, understood, and more supported by teachers who look like them.\(^1\) There are also many accounts of the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 and heightened racism on students of color, particularly Black students. As these students return to schools, a safe environment needs to mean being free of racial discrimination and bias inflicted on them by their peers, teachers, and other school staff. For them, safety includes—but also goes beyond—protection from COVID-19.


Cooley, S. (2017) Start With Us: Black Youth in South King County and South Seattle. Seattle, WA: Community Center for Education Results.
YOUTH HEALING PROJECT

The Youth Healing Project is a youth-led community funding project that launched in 2021. The project provides resources and support to young leaders and grassroots organizations in South King County. The goal is to support creative, youth-led solutions that improve the mental health, connection, and well-being of young people ages 16-24 in South King County.

In late 2020, CCER received funding from the Aspen Institute for COVID-19 response, which provided an opportunity to respond directly to the In Their Own Words opportunity youth survey results and to support activities in the community that align with the report’s recommendations. Young people who helped lead the survey now work as paid interns at King County Reconnect to Opportunity and are helping to lead this follow-up funding project, in partnership with staff at CCER, King County, and citiesRISE. Partners used the following values to guide their decision-making: youth voice, equity and inclusion, collaboration and partnership, community involvement, taking risks and creating opportunities, quality of impact of services, and centering the experiences of those that are Black, Indigenous, and other people of color. There are currently eight youth grantees and three CBOs who have received funds, with more organizations set to receive funds soon through King County Best Starts for Kids. Learn more about the projects as the work develops via the #youthhealingproject hashtag on social media.

YOUTH STORYTELLERS PROJECT

To change our inequitable education system, we need to focus on our students’ experiences in their schools. To center community and lead with race, we need to reimagine who “experts” are, resource young people of color to own their stories, and follow their visions of transformation. In summer 2021, CCER launched a new initiative, the Road Map Project Youth Storytellers project. The project aims to train and collaborate with South King County and South Seattle youth as expert consultants for communications projects, to engage them in anti-racist education work, and to resource them to elevate their own stories and their community stories.

The inaugural cohort of storytellers consisted of five young people of color across our region who developed creative communications projects to amplify the topics they feel passionate about. Their projects covered mental health and wellness, bringing awareness to inequalities students with disabilities face, stories of community leaders and youth working for food justice, storytelling on how to support dual language classrooms, and a podcast on youth activism. The storytellers moderated Facebook Live panels and shared their projects in a final showcase event. Learn more about their projects.
WHAT PARENTS ARE SAYING

“My vision for my sons’ school is for the culture of the building to be a place where students and families are met where they are mentally and emotionally, to move them towards empowerment. What that looks like is, where educators focus on themselves instead of so-called “fixing” the students or families.”

KATRICE CYPHERS, PARENT OF CHILDREN IN TUKWILA SCHOOL DISTRICT

We know parents are their children’s first educators. This was all the more true as parents heroically adapted their home environment to support their children’s learning, in the midst of the coronavirus and racial uprisings. Schools that didn’t have family engagement as a core strategy recognized the need to be in partnership with families. In our survey for parents and caregivers, we asked what immediate concerns, appreciations, and hopes they had as their children returned back to school buildings. Themes included health and safety concerns, concerns about academic expectations as students return to school buildings, hopes for prioritizing anti-racist practices, and appreciation for educators’ adaptability when schools abruptly closed.

When we asked what their vision was for schools to better support their students, parents said they sought better communication and partnership with their children’s teachers and a mutual sharing of knowledge and resources between school staff and families. Parents want to be part of the decision-making process in order to voice what supports their families need as their students return to school. Additional requests include more family support specialists and individualized, culturally responsive support where students are approached with care rather than punishment. They want a school environment that is inclusive of all student cultures and ethnicities, including a comprehensive anti-racist curriculum, and more dual language programs where their children can learn and receive credit for their home language.

44 percent of students in our region speak one of 194 languages other than English at home, and yet, as of 2020, there are just 23 dual language programs in four of the seven Road Map Project school districts across more than 230 schools. Most dual language programs are offered in elementary schools and programs are currently offered in only two languages: Spanish (21 programs) and Vietnamese (2 programs). Other programs working to fill this need include the World Language Credit Program and various heritage language programs in our region that are run by community members in partnership with schools within our seven school districts. Multilingualism is an asset, and for our over 55,000 multilingual students, there is a need for more programs (across all grade levels) that help students develop their primary language and have the opportunity to earn credits in school for their home language.
ELEVATING PARENT LEADERSHIP AND DEEPENING PARTNERSHIPS

Last year, CCER experimented with what it means to be in partnership with or in right relationship with families. We thought about how to create pathways to authentic parent leadership and asked several questions in the process, including: How do you build trust and relationships between parent leadership and organizations? How do you build parent leadership and working groups that are representative of the communities we serve and have real authority and power? How do you build a culture where parent voice and expertise are valued and there is shared understanding of how to collaborate effectively? and more.

We incubated a learning environment by formalizing the Road Map Project Parent Leadership Team (PLT) and highlighting their role in building regional capacity for grassroots parent advocacy in our region. We’ve learned that centering parent leadership requires a healthy adaptive leadership approach: the ability to live in, and through, individual and corporate disturbance, time for all to build the capacity to lead, beyond formal and informal authority, and institutionalizing reflection and continuous learning.

We are collaborating with the PLT to wrap resources and support around their ambitious efforts to chart a strategic plan for regional systems of parent leadership. Their goal is to amplify parent voice, create opportunities of individual transformation, and build authentic partnerships between families and schools. The PLT intends to report on their learnings and their strategic plan in early 2022.

PARENT SPOTLIGHT: NATALIE HESTER

NATALIE IS PARENT TO A 10TH GRADE STUDENT AT SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

“When the pandemic hit, keeping (my child) at home all year wasn’t a tough decision. She wanted to stay home even when the options to go back were offered. She didn’t feel safe going back to school unvaccinated at the time. I’m grateful she had the option to stay home. I know so many parents have concerns about virtual learning, but my daughter did well learning online because of her middle school experience.

With students back in school buildings, I still have concerns but I’m hopeful. I want vaccines and masks to be mandatory. I hope Seattle Public Schools communicates and makes decisions early, with parent input. Teachers should receive more consistent training with new teaching tools and have higher expectations for our students. Rainier Beach High School did provide many services and supports to families in need during this pandemic. However, we didn’t have enough virtual parent meetings last year outside of the PTA meetings. I think overall Black parents needed spaces to connect and talk about everything. I feel like there are so many things that aren’t being shared regarding the High School and Beyond plan, college and career planning. I want to be in partnership with the school. If parent and student voices matter, then why aren’t we included in important decisions made at the school level that the district controls? I have faith in the individual teachers and administrators at the school level, but the school district has yet to completely earn my trust.”
CBO SPOTLIGHT: RENTON INNOVATION ZONE PARTNERSHIP

Renton Innovation Zone Partnership (RIZP) works with community partners who provide resources to support basic needs, community and family engagement, and early learning opportunities for students, parents, and families in the Sunset Highlands neighborhood of Renton, Washington as well as the Skyway/West-Hill community in unincorporated King County.

When COVID-19 hit, amplifying many inequities our community faces, we had to adapt and immediately respond to the needs of our community. With support from our partners, we began providing weekly pop-up food pantries in the Renton Highlands and the Skyway neighborhood. We are supporting direct service providers to build a sustainable food system in Skyway. In September 2020, the Skyway Resource Center emerged as a result of a yearlong process advocating for a community center. The drive-through multiservice center offers free resources to the community. In 2020 and 2021, we partnered with SPIN (Stem Paths Innovation Network) to bring virtual STEM programming to our schools. Due to a lack of access to COVID-19 vaccines within the Skyway/West-Hill neighborhood, we also supported the coordination of an ongoing mobile COVID-19 vaccination program for residents in Skyway.

Resources in our part of the county are insufficient for meeting community needs. Through RIZP’s Community Cafes and many other conversations, parents have told us of their interest in and desire for early learning programs. However, within the Renton Innovation Zone, existing services for families with young children are limited. Three of the four schools we are targeting in this project are located in unincorporated King County and, as such, there are very limited public funds available that these schools can access for building their own early learning, developmental growth, or early intervention programs. We are currently coordinating culturally-appropriate efforts to begin closing these inequity gaps and are hopeful that through our resources, families will receive important knowledge and access to services to help their children thrive.”
BOLSTERING COMMUNITY-LED PARTNERSHIPS

In 2020-2021, members of the Road Map Project Community Leadership Team joined funders and staffers of the Rapid Resource Fund in discussions about shifting funding to serve immediate community needs in the wake of COVID-19. In partnership, the Fund revised its guidelines to focus investments in small community-based projects led by and serving Black, Indigenous, and other people of color in our region. In response to community needs, the Fund prioritized projects that supported mental health, academic supports, and basic needs. In 2021, the Fund additionally prioritized funding smaller, grassroots organizations led by people of color who are responding directly to the needs of communities of color (and particularly those of young people) in the region.

Centering the community in grantmaking takes time and requires questioning the status quo. Big shifts included building grantmaking criteria based on community needs and engaging directly and indirectly with the community members who would be impacted. We also learned that stakeholder alignment is key—building relationships between funders and community leaders was imperative to coming to a shared understanding around community engagement and drawing connections between funding basic needs and improving equitable education outcomes.

CENTERING COMMUNITIES IN GRANTMAKING

“There is power in a group of funders determining mental health, academic support, and meeting basic needs as a very important part of community engagement and student success. So important that we’re saying ‘here’s a specific grant for it.’ ”

STEPHANIE UNG, COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP TEAM MEMBER

In 2020-2021, members of the Road Map Project Community Leadership Team joined funders and staffers of the Rapid Resource Fund in discussions about shifting funding to serve immediate community needs in the wake of COVID-19. In partnership, the Fund revised its guidelines to focus investments in small community-based projects led by and serving Black, Indigenous, and other people of color in our region. In response to community needs, the Fund prioritized projects that supported mental health, academic supports, and basic needs. In 2021, the Fund additionally prioritized funding smaller, grassroots organizations led by people of color who are responding directly to the needs of communities of color (and particularly those of young people) in the region.

Centering the community in grantmaking takes time and requires questioning the status quo. Big shifts included building grantmaking criteria based on community needs and engaging directly and indirectly with the community members who would be impacted. We also learned that stakeholder alignment is key—building relationships between funders and community leaders was imperative to coming to a shared understanding around community engagement and drawing connections between funding basic needs and improving equitable education outcomes.
Appreciation for educators magnified as the pandemic hit and necessitated that they adapt to online learning. Educators recognized they had to pivot in the instructional support they provided to make online learning engaging for students. Many educators mentioned they had to shift the support they gave by collaborating with CBOs to provide basic needs for students and families. Educators stated they had to adjust and be more intentional with their curriculum planning to include SEL components within classroom learning to support the well-being of students. Educators also expressed desiring a safe, supported, anti-racist work environment for students and staff, including compensation and recognition for BIPOC educators who were doing extra labor, e.g. race and equity work.

When asked to envision a better system, educators pointed to having smaller classes for those furthest from educational justice and better access to resources for students. Educators acknowledged that in order for a disruption of racist norms to be successful, systems leaders need to use student and family voices as the guiding route and work collaboratively with them to understand what students need in order to be successful and feel safe in our schools and on campuses.

EDUCATOR SPOTLIGHT: KYLA CRAWFORD

Kyla Crawford
Elementary Teacher and Librarian
Tukwila School District

I envision an anti-racist, student-centered system that seeks with intention to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline, in which families are seen as assets and valued for their perspectives, in which teacher ethnicity demographics reflect student identity, and holistic student safety is held sacred.

Some policies that could be disrupted to make a difference for our students furthest from educational justice include changing discipline referrals and exclusionary practices that attempt to “fix” students and their behavior to student justice-centered conference style problem-solving sessions where adults are disciplined and stand firm in care and love, and where students learn how to self-reflect and think about the root issues of their pain. We could also require teacher evaluations that verify practicing anti-racist teaching methods, as well as student evaluations of educators.

When the pandemic started, some of the shifts I had to make to support and uplift my students’ learning and well-being included creating and maintaining Google Voice accounts, giving and receiving feedback via an online platform, email, and phone; creating online Family Reading Night for K-2 families; creating virtual book fairs; making home visits to talk with parents and to drop off student work materials and Chromebooks; organizing alternative book distribution; and volunteering with local CBOs to provide resources for families. There was such a high need during the pandemic and there still is. There were so many additional stressors for our BIPOC students and families that were not inquired about or addressed.

As an educator, I need to have a safe, supportive, anti-racist work environment. This includes easily accessible resources for students and families so that I don’t even need to consider whether I can afford to take resources from my family bank account to support another family. Additionally, being recognized, valued, and compensated for extended labor—especially for race and equity work, and having mentorship or affinity groups with other BIPOC educators.”
BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN STUDENT ASPIRATIONS AND STAFF BELIEFS

The College and Career Leadership Institute (CCLI) team leads with a racial equity lens to shift adult mindsets and increase in-school supports that are vital for many first generation, low-income, and students of color. At the center of their work is learning from students. The four core tenets of this work are to increase college knowledge, increase financial aid completion, increase college application completion, and improve college transitions. CCLI has surveyed thousands of students in the Road Map Project region to ask them about their academic and life goals, and to learn what supports they need from their schools. Before the pandemic hit, 95 percent of young people shared that they want to go to college. This number remained consistent even during the pandemic, with 95 percent of the 12,713 surveyed students affirming their aspirations to attain a postsecondary credential, and 93 percent expecting to continue their education beyond high school. Students desire a fulfilling career, economic mobility, and a good quality of life. In contrast, when staff were surveyed about their knowledge of student aspirations, school staff believed that 77 percent of students in their schools aspire to attend postsecondary; and when asked about their students’ postsecondary expectations, staff believed on average just 67 percent of students expect to attend postsecondary.

One of CCLI’s goals is to bridge this gap between student aspirations and staff beliefs about student aspirations. Through workshops geared towards school staff at 18 Road Map Project schools last year, discussions included assessing the readiness of students to pursue their aspirations. An analysis of survey data of school staff helped CCLI school teams understand staff’s knowledge of postsecondary options, financial aid, college requirements, and staff’s role in supporting the college and career readiness of students. These findings helped identify the college and career readiness areas where staff needed more training, and how adult mindsets have been a barrier to fully supporting students. Over the last two years, efforts to change advisory classes and to focus on how students are doing have made a difference in terms of building trust. These shifts have led to stronger relationships between advisory teachers and students and made advisory more useful for students. Throughout the school year, the school teams review data disaggregated by race and ensure these aspects of their work specifically focus on creating or improving supports for students of color in their school.

POSTSECONDARY ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

- 95% Students Aspirations
- 77% Staff Perception of Students Aspirations
- 93% Students Expectations
- 67% Staff Perception of Students Expectations

Source: 2020-21 College and Career Staff Survey (n=1,088) & 2020-21 College and Career Student Climate Survey (n=11,990)
COLLECTIVE ACTION TO PUSH FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

Over the past few years, Road Map Project partners have collectively worked on research and developed two major reports that call out systemic racism and call in systems leaders to take recommended actions to shift systemic barriers for our students.

OUR RISING VOICES: A CALL TO ACTION TO SUPPORT EMERGENT MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS

Nearly half of students in the Road Map Project region (42 percent) are emergent multilingual at some point during their education and nearly all emergent multilingual students (89 percent) are students of color. They are central to our communities and supporting them means leading with anti-racist strategies. **We need a systems-wide shift that includes multiple strategies for uplifting multilingualism as a strength and for developing multilingualism in our students.** In close collaboration, OneAmerica, CCER, and the Road Map Project English Language Learners Work Group partnered to share data, research, and stories that reveal the inadequacies of our current education system in supporting immigrant families.

**Our Rising Voices: A Call to Action to Support Emergent Multilingual Students** highlights ways we can all contribute to bring about systemic changes. The report pinpoints five specific recommendations for building transformative changes and uplifting community voices. It is a tool for anyone who is advocating for emergent multilingual students—families, grassroots organizers, educators, policymakers, and the young people most impacted by education policies and programs. The recommendations include actions to undo racist policies and practices, engage the love and wisdom of families, build the workforce our students and region require, and transform educational instruction so that equitable practices are in place in every school and classroom.

INEQUITY BY DESIGN: HOW COLLEGES ARE PERPETUATING INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

After three years of research and close partnership, Puget Sound College and Career Network, Highline College, and CCER released an extensive report highlighting **how college placement policies perpetuate institutional racism**. The work was a result of the collective expertise and labor of many individuals and organizations working together with and for students in South King County and South Seattle, including an advisory board of college leaders and individuals from the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges.

Findings revealed how our region’s current college and technical **college placement policies and practices perpetuate inequity between racial groups**. Students of color are disproportionately placed into precollege courses and racial disparities persist regardless of high school GPA or course-taking. The report included voices and perspectives of high school students across the region and provided a toolkit with opportunities for both immediate and longer-term actions. It called for institutional leaders at Road Map Project region CTCs and K-12 districts, along with system leaders at the state level, to take anti-racist approaches to correct the injustices across our education system, **center the experiences of students of color, and improve student supports in the transition from high school to college**. Our partners intend to keep the momentum going, including advocating for a statewide paradigm shift to reduce and eliminate the harm caused to students and communities of color.
CONTEXTUALIZING DATA THROUGH AN ANTI-RACIST LENS

Our efforts at CCER to align to our new pillars of centering community and leading with race have included developing data and research principles to guide our work to support regional change through an anti-racist lens. Given data’s potential to harm communities of color, we must actively disrupt white-dominant norms and power dynamics across data and research strategies, resources, relationships, approaches, analyses, data stewardship, and impact. Specifically, projects must align with CCER’s emerging anti-racism strategies; resources and staff time must be used to uplift communities of color and to decenter whiteness; relationships must be mutual and work to build community trust and accountability with analyses that center communities; and data must be grounded in ethical and responsive data stewardship. Finally, regional impact must be connected to each project, co-created, and sustainable, and have clear community or partner accountability.

In addition to updating our Data Dashboard, where you can find in-depth data on education indicators, we recently published the first blog post in our series, Data for Action, in an ongoing effort to discuss and engage with data to make it more accessible and broaden awareness of the disparities present in educational data. The series is in response to community requests for education data to show a more thorough and inclusive story, parent leader input, and emerging advocacy priorities, and is an effort to amplify different perspectives across the education continuum.

LOOKING AHEAD

Our new ways of working are just the beginning of what we hope develops into long-term community-driven partnerships and a shared vision to transform inequities in our region, one that more fully supports young people in our region in realizing their greatest ambitions—starting with loving and seeing our students who are farthest away from educational justice. We (CCER) are just one part of the Road Map Project initiative. You—young people, parents, educators, CBOs, districts, systems leaders—are vital stakeholders of this initiative and vision. We are working towards more transparency, collaboration, and anti-racist work, and aim to model backbone leadership for the Road Map Project initiative in ways that invite you in and put us in right relationship with the community we are here to serve. In the coming months, we are:

• Going through identity work with Imago Consulting: With support from Imago, CCER and Road Map Project community and partners will be engaging in work to help define the Road Map Project initiative’s strategic direction and to evolve CCER’s identity to serve the initiative.

• Sharing a Beloved Blackness statement: The Road Map Project Community Leadership Team (CLT) will share a living document that reflects the care and love that is Blackness. The statement will address the history and rich track record of fight, joy, and accountability. The CLT will also highlight their commitment to action for our Black siblings, acknowledging that when we start with Black communities, we ultimately center our Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and Pacific Islander communities.

• Convening and co-facilitating conversations which include Road Map Project region youth, parents, CBOs, educators, school staff, and district leaders to come together in shared space and discuss solutions and ways forward on persistent challenges in our education system. Topics will be selected by participants and a forum is yet to be determined.

As we continue to reflect on our notions of progress, we must act on what students are telling us. There’s much to think through, from how we can collectively respond to young people’s calls to advance mental health supports, and how that’s linked to equitably funding our schools, to continuing to push for dismantling barriers to getting to and through college and supporting strong family engagement practices. We are hopeful that transformation in our education system is possible. We invite your participation and insights and ask that you join us in our ongoing conversations and actions that aim to right the inequities our Black and Brown children continue to experience.
THANK YOU

We thank the young people, parents/caregivers, community-based organizations, and educators who shared their experiences via our surveys for this report in conversations, in meetings, and through partnering with us on this work in various ways. We thank all our partners, who are committed to the Road Map Project’s efforts to increase equitable policies and practices in our education system and to eliminate opportunity gaps for our Black and Brown students.

ABOUT THE ROAD MAP PROJECT

The Road Map Project is a collective impact initiative that began in 2010 to improve student achievement from cradle through college in South King County and South Seattle. Through multisector and community collaboration, we aim to increase equitable policies and practices in education systems to eliminate opportunity and achievement gaps, and for 70 percent of our students to earn a college degree or career credential by 2030.

STAY ENGAGED

Sign up for our newsletter: roadmapproject.org/newsletter

Follow us on Twitter and Facebook

Contact our community engagement team: cafe@ccedresults.org

Participate in conversations on the Data for Action series: rdmap.org/data-conversations

Front and back page images courtesy of Auburn School District, Federal Way Public Schools, Highline Public Schools, and Tukwila School District.