

2017-2018 Racial Equity: Student Perspectives

Listening Groups I: VHS May 2018

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I spoke to 28 students over 5 sessions.

1. I hear students use racial slurs and insults at school.
 - All 28 students replied yes they hear racial slurs regularly at school, with 17 reporting on a daily basis.
2. I see/hear other students make racial jokes and comments at school.
 - All 28 students spoke of or agreed to their classmates' comments about jokes being said around them or jokes and stereotypes being said: "We don't say anything because it's a joke"; "when someone has said something and I'm with all my white friends, how am I supposed to respond? It's awkward and uncomfortable"; They spoke of hearing the N word regularly and students just saying it like it's a joke. One said, "I don't take it personally. They spoke of hearing more racial comments towards Latinx students, "mocking their language and words directed at them." One commented that "if they speak Spanish, then the administration gives them the shaft; they get a bad rap; get screwed over a lot and looked at as if they're always doing something wrong."
 - In regards to addressing others who are saying the N word: students said they "don't say anything because it's a joke". "And because I'm the only black guy walking around with my mostly white friends, if I said something that would look bad or be uncomfortable. However, if they came to a gathering with my all black friends and talked like that, they would not be treated well.";
 - "I thought you had good eyesight" was said to an Asian American student; "Of course you are good at math and science" Or, "you're good at math and science?" One student spoke about something that happened that day. She was in a class and a ball had gone over the fence and a teacher (****) said to the student that was with her, who is Mexican, "too bad you're not out there to jump over the fence for us.";
 - Also some students heard more comments to African-Americans like "whipping, cotton-picking or they are scary" and it was harder to hear them getting called names. They heard, "Don't belong here,

others pretend it's a joke", "beaner and wetback"; Perception: "They think of us like Mexican hood-rat kids"; "They look at you like you are suspicious, shady, go after you first because they say we act with the wrong crowd"; "We get picked on and no one did anything".

- Sport Culture: they hear "wetback" from other teams and a lot of stuff is said in the locker rooms.

3. My intelligence is disregarded by my peers or teachers because of my race/ethnicity.

- "They underestimate people of color—think less of us academically".
- "They talk to you like you were a little kid or a baby and explain it differently than they would with others." They use better vocabulary with others too".
- One student said yes by teachers and others did not have that experience with teacher only peers, related back to the stereotypes others can say.
- Two students haven't felt that way either by peers or teachers. They both spoke of having that happen in the opposite direction with teachers. "I feel like they walk on eggshells around me" or, "go to great lengths to make sure I am treated well."
- One student spoke of **** thinking the student only spoke Spanish and tried speaking in Spanish to the student for the first week of class, assuming this, when finally the student told him, he also spoke English.
- Another example: **** asking a student, "are you meeting up with your horrible friends?" Or, they sat a student with Special Ed students who is not in Special Ed; A student was mocked by **** when asked where to turn something in, in a mocking voice the student reported the teacher repeated, "where do I turn this in?" And two of the other students also heard them speak to this student in this way.

4. I feel comfortable reporting incidents of harassment/racial abuse to teachers and principals.

- One felt they didn't trust the administration to help, "because they don't do anything". For example, "punishments aren't fair or make

sense. A lot of students were drinking at homecoming and only some got into trouble and others didn't. The standards are different for those who are higher on the echelon. Some students come to school high daily and everyone expects this and nothing is said to them. Or, students sell drugs and everyone knows this and nothing is done."

- One, would not because they would want to be anonymous, "because in a small school, even when things are anonymous, people often find out." If we report things, nothing is done about them. 2 have not had to report anything.
- One student spoke of seniors calling him names "fat Mexican and beaner, because they think it's okay." And two guys in PE class; as well as a group of kids calling him "beaner" when he comes into school regularly and said he was open to talking to a safe adult to receive some help with these situations.

5. Students report having a safe adult to speak to and help them in a process or, with a difficult situation at school.

- 16 students reported having a safe adult to speak to if they needed assistance; 2 maybes and 2 no's.
- One group thought that if teacher's witnessed an incident some would help and some would not.

6. What are you doing with your daily stress?

- plays video games; is an athlete and talks to teachers throughout the day; the other does not feel stressed about anything.
- no reports of needing to do anything to relieve stress
- talk to friends; listen to music; punch walls or chop wood; ignore others; go to Journeymen and eat Nutella.

7. What suggestions/feedback do you have for the school on how things could improve around issues of race and racism moving forward?

- Latinx students would like someone to help them more with College stuff; They spoke of **** taking them to colleges and wanting to have their own person that helps them know what they need to get ready for colleges; how to think and plan and visit more as most do not have family members who have finished high school. They asked if that same McM teacher could come and do an informational follow-up so they could have a list of things they could be planning and looking at to make sure they get done

for college and when each thing needs to happen, meaning Freshmen, Soph, Junior and Senior years.

- Latinx would like to plan activities for next year's Hispanic History Month: decorate, have music and share with others; they would also like to have altars for El Dia de Los Muertos and using the idea of Las Posadas (processions) they could go from place (class) to place (class) sharing different ones and sharing food.
- They would like to have more Latinx Teachers
- A club for students of color
- A cross-cultural club
- That administration not force cultural things as then students of color could be singled out
- Having clear standards for all students in regards to drinking, drugs and hitting others (like with the ping pong paddle incident—why did the student who hit someone not get punished?)
- Stop the profiling and assuming bad things are happening with the Latinx students (as requested by a non-Latinx student)

2017-18 Building Survey Equity Question Results