

Community-Led Systems Change in a Public School District through Parent Participatory Evaluation

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>> Hello, everyone. I'm Dr. Melanie Reese, the Director of CADRE. Thank you all for joining us for today's webinar: "Community-Led Systems Change in a Public School District through Parent Participatory Evaluation." This presentation is another in our continuing series of valuable CADRE webinars and will be recorded and made available on our website shortly after we're done here today. Next slide, please. A few technical notes: Your phone lines have been muted to minimize interruption. You can enter any questions or comments into the questions box, not the chat box, on your control panel, and CADRE will be monitoring questions from the question box, and we will get to them as time allows. At the end of the presentation, we will share your question with the presenters as answer as many as we can, and finally, your feedback is very important to us, so we ask that you respond to the brief survey at the end of today's webinar. The link to the survey will be posted in the chat box. Next slide, please. We are extremely excited to bring to you today's topic and presenters. CADRE has a long history of supporting and encouraging stakeholder engagement, and when we learned of the excellent work happening in Minneapolis public schools, we knew we wanted to share it with you, so let me introduce Amanda Dionne and Maren Henderson. Amanda Dionne is an enrolled member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe and from the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians born and raised in the Twin Cities. With her degree in business economics and business management, her career has been devoted to creating positive change within Minnesota's American Indian community. She served 2 years as an AmeriCorps member at Native American Community Development Institute and has spent many years partnering with tribal communities to change narrative of cancer outcomes at the American Indian Cancer Foundation. In her position at the Minneapolis public schools as an engagement, education and outreach specialist, Amanda works to strengthen partnerships and connectiveness with American Indian families. Maren Henderson holds a master's in public policy from University of Minnesota and currently serves as an evaluation specialist for Minneapolis Public schools. There, she oversees the use in parent participatory evaluation programs and provides evaluation support for the district's full service community school sites. She is committed to empowering youth and parents as leaders and decision-makers. She previously worked for the Minnesota Office of Higher Education and the Page Education Foundation. With that, I give it to you, Amanda and Maren. Thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> Thank you so much for having us. We're really excited to share with you some of the work we're doing in Minneapolis public schools and really hope to have an opportunity to connect, be it virtually, and to answer some questions you may have, really thinking about how we can

empower parent leadership throughout the country. So we want to start with some context for the program in Minneapolis Public Schools, and before I dive into our school district, I just want to acknowledge the context of Minneapolis right now. We're very much a city in grief with the murder of George of Floyd, and we think that all of these discussions are very relevant. We're having a real awakening to the need for antiracism, commitment from the district and our community more broadly. So our objectives for today are first to just help you all understand what we mean when we say we're leading parent participatory evaluation or what we call PPE. We recognize we have a bit of a branding problem in this pandemic with COVID and the need for personal protective equipment, but we've been doing this for several years, and we're excited to share that with you. Amanda and I are really committed to bringing parent voice forward as much as we can, but at the same time, something we wrestle with a lot is parents saying, "I've said this so many times, and I just need you to hear what I'm saying," and so we're really sensitive to when it is that we ask parents to copresent with us, and we've made a commitment to try to bring their voice today to use through some videos where they are sharing their testimony about their experience with Minnesota Public Schools, so we'll make some time for you to hear directly from the parents we work with. For this audience, we know we want to really focus in on the issue of special education, and so we'll make sure we have some time to not just look at what we have heard from parents related to special education but also how the district is working in response to parent concerns, and then we'll hopefully give you just some insight into how we are facilitating systems change, and I think we would both very much say it's a work in progress, and we welcome some of your ideas and input as well. So just briefly who we are as the Minneapolis Public School District, we're the third-largest school district in the state. We have roughly 35,000 students. We're racially diverse. About a third of our students identify as white, about a third as Black or African American, and within that is the largest Somali population in the country, Latinx, Asian American and predominately our Hmong immigrant population and a very notable American Indian population in our city. The main thing we want you to take away from this slide, though, is sort of the disconnect between who we are as a staff and who we are as students and families we serve, and that's something we're really trying to highlight as we move forward and really advocate for parent leadership. And then just some brief data, I won't get too much into the data that I have in our evaluation and research department, but we just wanted to sort of highlight some other disconnects that we have that we see when we look at our data and then really use this time to tell you the stories of how that plays out in practice, so what this slide is showing is our disproportionality in special-education identification in each racial group or category, so, really, what you're seeing here is that we are overidentifying African American, Hispanic or Latinx and American Indian students in our special-education services, which is on par with national trends, and then one other contextual data point we just wanted to bring forward, especially because you'll hear from parents about how this is their lived experience, is, this is specifically looking at

disproportionality in our suspension data, and so you could read this as saying our African American students are 4.6 times more likely than their peers to be suspended, so, again, here you're seeing especially our African American and American Indian populations are overrepresented in our population of young people being suspended from school.

-Thank you, Maren, for setting the ground and providing us that context of what our district is comprised of and the families that make us who we are. Maren and I wanted to bring the subject of identity to this webinar today because even though parents in our participatory evaluation program aren't explicitly calling out identity, which you will hear through their video testimony that we have provided today, is this value and priority and desire for what they are experiencing in our education system to align with an individual identity because having a positive relationship with your identity is something that, as a parent, is one of the most important things for me. That is my son right there that you see in that picture, and our identity is made up of so many different things, what we're born with, our genetics, our biology even from the moment we were born, what hospital we were at, and all of these different things make who we are and really about how we view ourselves within this world. Education has a big role in our self-identity and our self-awareness, and as special-education practitioners and those who are in the field, whether you know it or not, when you are writing IEPs, when you are labeling our children and going back to the disproportionality Maren was talking about, you are literally filling in one of those puzzle pieces into an individual's identity. So what we hear from our parents in our participatory evaluation is, "Please, when you are doing these things, when you are educating our children, when you are providing them this service, to do it with compassion and with grace and with thought." And we all get busy, and sometimes, we try to work the fastest that we can, but when it comes to special education, when it comes to educating our kids, we really need to take a step back and really think about what it is that we're doing, and you'll see what I'm talking about when we listen to our parents in our videos, but I just wanted to put that out there that a positive relationship with one's identity is extremely important for all of our kids, and now we will listen to our first parent evaluator, Allison Waukau.

>> Hi, everyone. My name is Allison Waukau. I'm Menominee and Navajo. I have a 5-year-old son, Kanan, and he'll be attending Bancroft in the fall in kindergarten. I currently work at Hennepin County Library out of the Franklin Branch as a American Indian Community Liaison. My son went to the Zero to Three Program with MPS. He was diagnosed with autism, and so we had a really great program with the Zero to Three, and then he went into the pre-K program at Bryn Mawr and MPS still to this day with him going into Bancroft. Well, what kind of was interesting to me is that there was so many of us that had the same story but different versions, so I think one thing that our families were really feeling was, yeah, everybody is nice. Teachers are nice to my kids. I don't see this and this or whatever, but they don't see us. They don't hear

us. My son being called a girl when he comes into school even though the staff member sees us two to three times a week, and it's really hard to be that parent that has to understand that this is the world that they're going to be in for the next 7, 8 hours, and how do I show him that it's okay to have long hair when this person that's with him doesn't seem to agree with me? My 4-year-old, 3-to-4-year-old son having the confidence to stand up and say, "It's okay to be a boy and have long hair," but I sometimes was conflicted because he's still finding out who he is, what he likes, what he doesn't like, and here he's having to stand up for something that maybe he shouldn't have to fight for so young of an age, so that was hard, too. It was difficult. We all have this, "Oh, this doesn't feel right to me culturally, but this is what the school defines as correct," and so it's really seeing that internal battle as a parent. How do I show my child respect, and how do we navigate something that isn't really ours to navigate, right? It's not made for us. It's made for a non-Native student that doesn't maybe have a particular culture or traditions that they need to live by, and so how do we go through that? That's one thing that I would ask of a teacher now is, just acknowledge, "Okay, I really don't know about this, but I really want to learn," and that's all we can ask, really, but just put your teacher lens on and analyze that book, and is this really an appropriate way to represent a human being? And if you need resources, I'm here to help.

>> Yeah.

>> So we're just a good bunch of people that want to have happy kids and happy lives and ...

>> We love our babies.

>> Yeah. We do. We love our babies, and we just want what everybody else wants and want the good life, right, and so that's what I would want for them to know, I guess. You have my son for a good portion of the day, and he is my heart, and you need to take care of our kids.

>> Thank you.

>> So that was Allison in that video. Every time I watch it, it is just so powerful, but even though she wasn't explicitly saying it, she is narrating the experience, her lived experience so far, and her son is just starting school, of some of the challenges that students of color, parents of color face when entering into this Eurocentric school system. We're having to make decisions on, "Do I uphold my culture and keep my long hair, or do I cut it so that I can feel comfortable in my classroom?" And that's the identity piece that I am trying to talk and process through with you all today. There is the quote from one of our parent evaluators from our Somali parent group that says, "If I don't see my culture, I am either a guest, or I don't exist as a part of the community," and that is a really powerful quote in that the school is their community. The school is in their neighborhood. Teachers may or may not be in that neighborhood, but the school is, and they want representation. They want their individual identity and culture to be

represented in those spaces. So now we'll get into, what is PPE? So Minneapolis Public Schools promises an inspirational education experience in a safe, welcoming environment for all diverse learners to acquire skills necessary to confidently engage in the global community. To honor this vision, Minneapolis Public Schools has utilized and invested in participatory evaluation which enables people who are closest to the issue to take the lead in the evaluation and to put together and bring forth recommendations that come from the community and are community-driven. MPS has supported a Youth Participatory Evaluation program since 2015 and launched our Parent Participatory Evaluation in 2018, which allowed us to engage key stakeholders to identify priorities and opportunities for improvement on innovative solutions that best reflect the priorities of our community. This graphic was developed by one of our youth participatory evaluators. She wanted to visualize or put together a graphic that is a visual of what participatory evaluation is, and so you can see the many mouths, and that represents collecting community voice. You see the ear which represents hearing and listening and authentically listening to what the community is saying, synthesizing the information and the data, analyzing the data, and then you see the megaphone which represents sharing those recommendations and those priorities to district leadership to initiate the systems change. Another foundational piece in our parent participatory evaluation program is this concept of cultural humility. Cultural humility is a lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique and commitment to understanding and respecting different points of view and engaging with others humbly, authentically and from a place of learning. Oftentimes as human beings, we naturally want to organize things into buckets, and that way, it makes it easier for our brains to process. It makes it easier for us to take all of these date pieces that we are constantly bombarded with in every second of the day and make sense of the world, but what cultural humility is really saying, is calling for, is not developing a cultural competency of one particular group of people, so it's not that I'm American Indian, and I know all that there is about all American Indian tribes because that is not true, and that does not hold water. It's really about taking a step back and learning who an individual is. Part of their identity may be to be American Indian, and going a step further, for me, being an Ojibwe woman, but that doesn't mean that another Ojibwe woman has the same lived experience that I do, and so it's really about taking the time to get to know who that person is and building that relationship and doing it in a way that you aren't bringing your assumptions forward and that you're taking a step back and practicing humility and authentically engaging with that person and then checking your biases, and so that's where that part goes back to the self-critique and commitment to understanding. Maren already went over the context of our school district and our student population and our teacher population. From this slide, we really want to highlight that when we do traditional research and evaluation, most of our respondents are not from communities of color, and so when we collect data, we're not getting the voices of the diverse communities in which our school is made up of, and so in order to get to that information and really understand those voices, parent

participatory evaluation is a tool for us to listen to voices that oftentimes are overlooked or marginalized or oppressed, and so that's what we wanted to highlight with this slide, and we have been able to have some success with the participatory evaluation and hearing those voices and collecting those voices. This is a model of how we partner within our institution as well as with parents and which party brings to the table, as you can see, and so in our engagement and external relations team, we bring expertise in building authentic relationships. We are constantly doing engagement with parents at the district level in many different ways. There is a communications piece that is sometimes can be a barrier when engaging with parents whether it's language or cultural rules and norms, and then you see language at the bottom. Our research and evaluation team brings expertise and data collection methods, analyzing parent voice, identifying overarching themes and then putting together reports for district staff in order to respond to what parents are telling us. And then we have our parent evaluators, and they are connected to their community. They have their networks. They have their friends, and they have their children, and they bring that expertise of how we can connect and capture that parent voice, as well as they have their lived experience within Minneapolis Public Schools. We wanted to provide this slide of how just basic information of how we do PPE in our program. This program is designed so that you can take it to work for you, but this is how we do it at Minnesota Public Schools, so we have five parent groups. The first one is African American, American Indian, Hmong, Latinx and Somali, and there's usually about 10 parents per group. We have done our parent participatory evaluation program in two phases. The first phase is really around collecting the parent voice and getting experience in data collection, and the second phase is diving deeper and how to put action behind the recommendations that were put forward in the first phase. There's 10 meetings total, so the first phase has five meetings. The new phase has five meetings as well in a yearlong process, and we try our best to align our yearlong program with our budget cycle and so that the senior leaders can invest in the parent recommendations. We have one district leadership in between the two phases where district staff and leaders have an opportunity to put together context and information and kind of a map of the current reality of where they're at with some of the recommendations and where they would like to be. We've had two parent presentations to district leaders and community stakeholders, so this takes place after ... phase, and so the first phase has five meetings, and then there's this large presentation. The second phase has five meetings, and then there's this large presentation of information that they collected. We have embedded three parent and district leader table conversations, and so there is one point in time where the district leaders are meeting amongst themselves and developing their plan to respond to parents, but then we also were intentional about providing space so that parents and district leadership can come together and co-create and collaborate on how to put action behind recommendations. In some areas, there has been continuous and ongoing one-on-one meetings with a district content holder, and our ethnic studies is a really good example of that

where our district program facilitator is continuously working with Allison, the parent that you heard from earlier, about developing relevant social studies content to put into our high school curriculum to accurately represent and show American Indian history, which I like to say that American Indian history isn't only American Indian history. It is US history. And then we have continuous progress monitoring on making sure that we are constantly checking in with district leadership about their progress towards response and actualizing parent recommendations, and Maren will talk about that a little bit more. And so through our parent participatory evaluation process in the year that we launched, we were able to reach 2,272 plus parents within the various cultural communities, and so as you've seen on the slide that I had before that oftentimes when we do traditional research and evaluation, that number is significantly low, and so this process and this program is showing success in collecting parent voice that oftentimes is left out. And then we have our research question which is, how can a school value and respect your child for who they are? So each parent was able to take that research question, process it, internalize it and create a data collection project that is culturally reflective of who they are and collect parent voice based off of that question. Now I will transition over to Maren to talk through what we heard.

>> Thanks, Amanda. So as Amanda said, each parent created their own sort of adaptation of how they would want to collect parent voice, and part of that adaptation comes through methods, but they also are allowed to really shake the questions that we are trying to gather, right, so when we say, how can a school value and respect your child for who they are, the first benefit of PPE is that it's allowing parents to not just answer the question but to determine which questions to ask, and we think that's critically important to really understanding and gathering authentic truth, so the other thing Amanda said is that our department comes into this partnership and is trying to work with parents to really synthesize all of this information that's coming across our community, so when we first looked at what parents came back to the district and really felt like we needed to talk about, they identified seven themes, and I'll just read a few of these, but then we're going to dive in a bit more deeply to some of them, so we heard loud and clear that there's a need to really learn about, honor and embed students' cultures and histories into not just our instruction and curriculum but our entire school experience. We heard a lot about communication, especially positive communication. I want to hear when my child is succeeding, not just when they're in trouble. I want you to speak my language and to connect with me in a way that I can understand, and then really about parent partnership I would say is the other thing that was just abundantly clear, that parents have expertise about their young people that they want to bring to the table and really work with school staff in their child's education, and right now, that wasn't happening in MPS. But when we tried to start thinking about ... Yeah, you can go to the next slide, Amanda. We really wanted to make sure we honored the parents' ways of grouping this information, but we also knew that what was going to be critically important was using the information to take action, so

our departments in partnership with a process where we looked at how the themes aligned with our MPS equity framework, and I just want to name and honor that this is built around a medicine wheel image, and the other thing that our equity framework does is, it aligns work to our organizational structure, so when we are talking about families as education partners, we are also naming our office of family engagement and communications, and there is a senior executive who's responsible and held accountable for parent information, and that was critically important, so when we tried to do that sort of reimagining how it was that we could get from themes to action, we actually identified that we needed 11 memos, and we'll walk through why that was, so when we are talking about our academic experience, we first went in to outline all the ways in which parents are talking about a pedagogy of equity and to align that with the work that's happening in our division of academics, and here is what we learned from parents. They feel like the academic experience does not reflect and value the languages, cultures and histories of MPS students. They expect staff to create safe learning environments by addressing issues of bullying and student conflict, and I would just add within that, it's a real cultural understanding and shared understanding of what bullying is. Parents need better communication about school's expectations for behavior as well as equitable treatment in response to behavior, and parents of students in special education programming want to better understand special education services and the progress their child is making. In those four areas, we work with staff within our academics division to facilitate use and systems change, and we'll talk more about that specifically with the special education example is just a bit. The next organizational area is related to engagement and communications, and we oversee the families as education partners in our organizational chart in our equity framework. So parents told us they want to be partners in their child education, but they need school-wide structures to support them in this role. They seek more positive communication from the district and their child's school. They want to be able to communicate with school staff but often do not find multilingual staff or interpreters at MPS schools, and they find it essential that schools make their cultures visible by creating and displaying culturally specific works and languages and acknowledging important cultural holidays. And then the third area is in our operations department or division, and this is where human resources, transportation fall under there. So here's what you see from parents: that we must prioritize hiring staff who represent the students who attend schools in the district, that they want staff to know more about their students cultural histories, values and practices and that MPS provide transportation to all students. We currently use our metro transit system or public transportation for secondary students. So that's where that's coming from, but just to highlight why it was that we moved from seven to 11, I think this operations gives some examples of that. So when we talk about students having access to teachers who look like them and speak their language, some of that is an HR issue, and it falls under operations, but some of it is also about school budgets through our communications division that's ensuring that even if we don't have enough staff that

there's enough budget to provide interpreters at family nights or conferences, et cetera. So you see an issue at its root coming up in multiple ways that the district needs to respond, and so by pulling these apart and giving that evidence to our district leadership, we're able to really better build a case for taking action. So we have another video for you, and this is from one of the large group sessions that Amanda named. So one thing ... I left in a few clips just so you can see sort of the energy in the room and what it feels like to be present with our parents as they are presenting to our members of the school board, our superintendent, our district leaders, principals, and you see that they are literally at the same table, and we think that's a really important metaphor for what this is attempting to do.

>> We are so, so grateful that you as parents are partnering with us and pushing us and allowing us to think differently and change our mindset to really work on that system change that we all need to work. So thank you so much, and we're going to proceed to the presentations. I like to welcome the first group, the African American Parent Participatory Evaluation Team, to the podium.

>> Well, welcome, everybody. A short introduction. My name is Charisma Smith, and I am the engagement specialist with the family engagement department, and I am accompanied by the Black Parent Advisory co-chairs and two of the speakers tonight from the Black Parent Group for the Parent Participatory Evaluation, and these ladies can introduce themselves.

>> Hello. I am Asia Gibbons.

>> And I am Miss Washington, and if I knew this was being videotaped, I would have worn something different ... who we talked to, 17 people did sticker voting, 64 people did a survey, 67 people did interviews and focus group, a total of 148 people.

>> We came up with the theme of parents not seen as experts. The five, I guess, subthemes from that is behavior issues and special education currently operate as the same, but are not, lack of relationships, lack of transparency and consistency in implementation of policies. Special education evaluation does not consider as a larger environment.

>> One of the themes was lack of relationships. So I did video interviews. So I talked to a parent who didn't feel relationships came first. MPS is focused on process rather than relationships, and this is a little example, special ed with IEPs. "There was a template and format to follow, that you had to goals and objectives, that we could only include goals for 1 year, that there were many more things I could have asked to include in the IEP, that sometimes teachers were using an existing template from other students, and they didn't even bother to edit out the other students name because it was easier for them, and they really hadn't thought through what the child needed." And that was from a special ed parent, and so our group had some recommendations. Training for MPS staff on cultural humility, parent and staff dialog on school

structures and policies, ongoing communication, adapt school to student needs. Another theme was lack of transparency. So another parent said, "Through my experience with special ed, I learned you can request anything on an IEP." Parents would appreciate having an IEP one-on-one prior to the meetings, meaning just that they had someone to kind of go over the acronyms and kind of do a little quick run-down so they can feel comfortable at meetings. In a survey, we found 98 percent of parents do not know the bullying protocol while 65 percent of them had children who have been a victim of bullying. Some more recommendations, training for MPS staff on how components of school structure work, parent and staff dialog one school structures and policies, ongoing communication, adapt schools to student needs, accountability, monitor implementation.

>> So the inconsistent implementation of policies, and I feel like the directors in here should really know this because as I said it last time in a PPE meeting, a lot of our information was taken and then it was implemented in a way, but parents should have been sitting at that table. So the policy should be adhered to by all, and not just pointed out by staff based on comfort, feelings or persons. When I advocate for a policy based on an issue parent was experiencing, I was told that it already exists, and if we already have these policies, then parents should know about these policies, and it should be implemented. So the recommendation is training for MPS parents on how components of school structure should work, and the special education evaluation does not consider the larger environment. It was specifically, in my evaluation, I talked to 40 Black men who all went to MPS schools or their sons went to MPS schools. Sixty-five percent of them were diagnosed with an EBD or learning disability that was disputed by adults and later to come find out, of course, they didn't have no type of issue. It was basically a racial or the comfortability of the school. And so we're finding that the environment is causing a lot of emotional issues. So the training should be based off of trauma-informed care and PTSD and also historical trauma, and many of our families should know about that. Behavioral issues in special ed currently operate as the same but are not. "Behavioral issues: Families often think it's just a document with academic goals and don't understand that they can include things that would address sensory needs," and that was some parents that I interviewed. Recommendations, MPS staff adapt school to suit needs. So they want things more customized and not looking like a cookie-cutter.

>> And then the recommendation I forgot to talk about was that Black men should have the Black male programming, will increase the Black male achievement and also implementing those practices, the Black male achievement into the SEL practices and restructuring what SEL means because some practices with SEL, Black people or people of color cannot do the same type of practices.

>> My name is Mohamed Kali. I'm a father, and sure to say everything you said, we agree 100 percent, and I'm a father for seven kids, and I want to start with our statement. In this country, I don't know if you guys heard this song, they always said if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. I think we're going together. Also, I want to introduce you to ...

>> Yeah, my name is Abdi Mohamed-Ali. I'm a parent for Minneapolis Public School. My children is five kids that goes to Minneapolis Public School.

>> My name is Zaynah. I have three kids. I have two kids in the Minneapolis Public Schools, and I have one of them is special need kid. I congratulate my sister, Sarah Washington. We need your voice. We need a big voice, a loud voice in the special education. So congratulations, my sister.

>> Okay, let's move forward. As you know, Somali, we be a group. We are community. Somali student make at least 12 percent of the MPS population. There are 21 schools with more than 100 Somali students. At 12 schools, Somali students are more than 20 percent the population. Many Somali families are choosing charter schools because they don't feel culture welcome or value MPS. So gathering Somali voice, we have 10 families. Two of them didn't make it. Eight of us Somali parents evaluation talked to them, 101 Somali members. Primarily used conversation, interview and focus group because we are an oral society, neighborhood, community center, religion places, Somali mall and most of Somali radio. That's where we have discussion over the air. So our topic, is Somali culture represented in staff and value for the school? One of the parents respond, if you don't see my culture, I'm either a guest or I don't exist as a part of the community. Representative Somali culture MPS, the special education money, the special need kids Somali community needs Somali special education teacher and assistant. Better to serve students: We want our kids to have someone who look like and speak like their parents so that they can connect. Better serve parents: too few interpreter, and even when they do have interpreter they don't understand the special education system and terminology. Somali proverb: A common Somali proverb saying, "Qowda Maqashii waxna ha u qaban." That means, let them hear the loud voice but not ...

>> So I know Mohamed gets a bit cut off there, but what he's saying is that we expect action and that our culture values action over words. You also heard him say how much there is sort of a sense of community across all of these groups and an opportunity to sort of identify a shared experience or shared story, and that momentum from that group is really what has pushed us into our sort of accountability process that Amanda is going to start talking to us about.

>> So facilitating systems change: What does it take? In this slide, we have our superintendent. His name is Ed Graff. He is somebody who is dedicated to listening to parents' voice, and he's very action-oriented. And so if he hears something, if he learns something, he wants to be able

to respond in an authentic way in order to collaborate and actualize what it is that he is hearing. We won't go into his video, but we wanted to let you know that it is available on our website with the link that you see below, and so you can hear him and his commitment to responding and putting action behind parent recommendations. Some of those recommendations you heard directly from parents in the video clip that we just played. And so how has Minneapolis Public Schools and parent finding produced change? And so we'll go into a deeper dive into this special education-specific changes that happened at Minneapolis public schools, but this is a list for you to dive into. I'm not going to go through every single bullet point, but we just wanted to show that the district made a commitment to make some system change as well as surface-level change based off of what they were hearing from parents. So as you can see in the first bullet, increased budget for interpretation and translation services, and so that need and support for families to connect with district staff, and language being a barrier, how can we overcome that barrier, which Minneapolis Public Schools responded in by increasing the budget for that service. We hired in an additional recruitment and retention coordinator to increase staff of color, and so now in our HR department and that circle that Marin was talking through our equity framework, that was a change that happened on our operations side to get somebody in there and do intentional recruitment of staff of color to increase our staff of color in our institution in our school system. I also wanted to mention that our district is now going through a curriculum transformation that is centering race and culture as well as a climate change and building out a climate change framework, and although it wasn't directly from our Parent Participatory Evaluation of why we're doing this work. Those are things that we knew that we needed to do for a very long time, our Parent Participatory Evaluation Program really helped with the justification of why it needs to be done now and why it's so critical and the urgency behind making these changes. And so not only are we providing lip service for our families, we are really putting together the infrastructure, the senior leadership and the investment to actualize the changes we've heard from the parents. And so if you're interested in some of the specifics, I encourage you to go back to the slide to get more information. This is a systems change framework that we introduced to our parents because oftentimes when you're not a part of a system, there might not be clarity on what it takes to do systems change within an institution, a government entity. It takes time, and oftentimes you want to start at the policy level. You want to start at the top, but in order for that systems change and that behavior change, it's really about shifting mindsets. And so once you get the shift in the mindset, you're practitioners of cultural humility. You're ready to change the way that you do things. That creates a space to build authentic relationships and the redistribution of the power dynamics and really be able to partner authentically with the community and with parents and have a readiness on both sides of what that relationship and these new power dynamics will look like. That, in turn, will impact what policies will look like moving forward if you are developing a culturally-specific policy with your families and your students when you

have those two layers, the mindset and the relationship, covered then the policy will reflect it, and then all parties will be able to move the policy forward with fidelity as well as with authenticity for that longer-term change. And now Marin will talk about the special education memo.

>> Yeah, so you have in the handouts that are provided, you have the full memo of how we are sort of presenting what we're learning from parents who focused on something related to special education as they were designing their own research project, and you heard from several of them today. But I just want to sort of walk you through how that memo works and functions because it's really sort of the tool we're using to sort of ground conversations, but really the work, just to be clear, the work is around getting people to have conversations and that the memo just sort of serves as one grounding in that. But what you see is parents sort of draw out their understanding of how this change should happen. So they've presented a recommendation that they want to better understand the special education services and the progress that their child is making, but we've really pushed parents to say, "Help us better understand what this means to you. How do you define success?" Because we really didn't want to get into a space where we were judging the success of the district from our own perspective and lens. That felt very contrary to the whole foundation of the program. So we really worked with parents to define and to have conversations with staff to define success. So for parents, this means provide parent trainings to help parents understand special education services, set attainable goals and communicate progress with parents, accurately estimate and deliver on needed services of academic and behavior support, ensure documentation or IEPs are in an accessible language and hire culturally representative staff. But we all, of course, those of who work in systems know, change takes time. We know that we've been doing this work mostly at the central district office level, and we work with 75 schools. And so feeling that in your day-to-day experience as a parent is going to take time, and we have a roadmap of where we want to be in partnership with our parents, but we also needed staff to really commit and lead. So the next slide is showing you we also facilitated with staff sort of what is it that you can commit to doing? What's your way of understanding some of the short-term and longer-term steps in achieving this vision that you have agreed to in partnership with parents? And we presented sort of this information in two different ways, and really what I'm hoping to highlight for you is the ways that change happened. Some tasks are technical in nature, and they're things that we can check the box and move on from. What we're hearing from parents is, "Don't check the box without asking me if I agree that you've checked the box," but really emphasizing some of this work is technical. Some of it is we don't have things on our website for people to find, or parents don't know that there's a policy, and that's a communications gap. So we have done a lot of work with departments to sort of help them monitor their progress in more of a technical checklist fashion, but then the next slide is showing you, I won't get into the weeds here, but we are also bringing in implementation science to help us understand some of

this adaptive change that's going to take time. I'll also just name that a lot of this ways of thinking and presenting information is very white-normed, and that a lot of what we are doing and presenting in this section is to move this system, which again is a majority white staff and definitely operating under white norms. We also are very committed to reporting and communication that is happening in a really different way, and that is another reason why we have this strong partnership between evaluation and engagement communications. So I just wanted to name that, but within implementation science and more internal conversations, what we're really probing staff to be thinking about is, how are you articulating sort of this project over time, and how is that we would know when you've reached full implementation? And you can see here that no one is there yet, and we wouldn't expect change to happen quickly. We're worried that if things happen quickly then they aren't done through a systems-change framework, and they aren't done in strong relationships with shared power. And so we are using some of these tools to help staff have conversations, but again, they are not the work itself. They are just tools to facilitate for some people, especially staff.

>> I will do the closing and go over some next steps where we're currently at at Minneapolis Public Schools ... to share some of our additional core values at Minneapolis Public Schools and how we're doing our PPE program, just to highlight those in case you all are wondering how we make the program work and have been able to achieve some success is our commitment to shared power between district staff as well as parents. And so when we're working with parents and when we're engaging with parents, it's really about upholding their expertise and valuing them and welcoming them and upholding some of the things that we heard within their recommendations. We are able to provide a stipend for parents and the work that they're doing for the district, as anybody who is doing any type of work, you expect ... Well, you don't expect compensation, but as an institution you should be compensating people for doing work, and so we are able to do that and have invested in this program in a way so that we can compensate our parents. Alignment with district decision-making process: Parents gain awareness of district-wide processes. And so part of our program in the five-meeting schedule is a pretty intensive research and evaluation training that parents go through that is led by engagement specialists. So I am an engagement specialist, and I co-lead with an evaluation specialist. Each engagement specialist is representative of a cultural community, and so I facilitate the group for the American Indian parent group. On the video, you've seen our African American, Black engagement specialist, and then we all have our evaluation specialist. And so part of that training is we go over the systems change framework that we briefly touched on today so that parents have this understanding not only of research and evaluation, but also how to create systems changes within a school district and that it takes a lot of time. So what I talked about is our partnership and how we support parents and train parents. That goes into evaluation and engagement partnership. This would not be possible without a cross-divisional partnership with equity-minded staff. And then honoring time: Need to allot adequate time to

the program, including interpretation and translation services and process of progress monitoring. We do make sure that we have a budget for interpretation and translation, even though we have our engagement specialist that is able to provide that direct language support. We try to shy away from using our engagement specialists and tokenizing them because they are from a certain cultural community. It doesn't feel good to be a token. Sometimes it's very much needed in order to create access and accessibility into becoming more culturally grounded and practicing cultural humility, but we really try to create the infrastructure to support families and engagement specialists in this process, and so making sure that we have those line item budgets in place is important. Since we have parent evaluators that have gone through the program and lack an inability to authentically engage with the community and our traditional research and data collection methods, we were able to invest recently in a data collection initiative that we had around inequity diversity impact assessment where we had the ability to hire our parent evaluators, our PPE graduates to collect parent voice on student placement process. This was extremely important because we didn't want to leave those voices out, which we oftentimes had to because we weren't able to get them in through our traditional methods. And in the future, this year, we are launching a site-based PPE model, and so we have two schools on the north side of Minneapolis that will be launching a parent participatory evaluation at that site specific [Indistinct] parent evaluators that will provide recommendations at that school-based level, and so traditionally, our PPE has been on a district level. This will provide us an opportunity to create those systems changes very locally at a site ... share some of the adaptations that we are making, and so we are planning to launch our PPE program again this fall, but it will be from a virtual standpoint which will make it interesting to see how that works with our various cultural communities and just parents' general sense and knowledge and comfortability with technology, and so at the forefront of this effort is really going to be around prioritizing relationships, getting to know each parent, getting to know their unique set of circumstances and what it is that they need in support of helping them be successful in their projects. So that brings us to the end of what we had prepared and with enough time for some questions and answers.

>> Wonderful. Thank you so much, and there's just a few questions that folks have. How have you attempted to engage parents from the communities that you are not receiving enough feedback from?

>> Yeah. So that's really the center of this program is to empower parents who are well-connected to do that work in partnership with the district, right, so as an evaluator, I can tell you that it's not authentic to try to call a randomly selected list of phone numbers, right, but I do know that people are talking about Minneapolis Public Schools in the communities where they live, in their relationships with folks they know every day, they see in their apartment building or they see at the mall or they see in their spaces of worship, so what this program is

asking us to do is say, "Can we find parent leaders who are willing and able to work with us to learn a bit about how you might systematically collect voice and then to leverage their connections and what they've learned about data collection to really hear those stories and to gather that information in service of improving the district?"

>> Yeah. I will say our presentation today really covered the high level and findings of what parents learn from their community, but each parent evaluator develops a project and a evaluation research tool, and so they develop a survey, or they develop a participatory method, graffiti wall capturing, or they do focus groups, and then they go into their parent networks and collect data, and so some parent evaluators were able to connect with 50 parents. Some parent evaluators collected data from 100 parents, and so the slide that had that number closer to 3,000 is a collection of parent voice done by our parent evaluators, and so as a district, the intentional investment in PPE is a strategy that we're using to collect more community voices that we often don't hear from.

>> All right. Thank you. Can you speak to translation of materials and how you go about interpretation services?

>> Yeah, so we have a translation department at the central office, but as probably many districts, they're overworked, and they have more requests for translation than they could ever get through. We have had experiences where we have needed some things translated, and we've contracted that work out, but I would say something I've really learned is that they're not always accurate, and they're not always portraying information in ways that we are trying to communicate with our parents, and I think we especially heard that to be true with our special education memo and that parents are feeling that disconnect, that just because someone speaks Somali doesn't mean that they can speak in Somali about special education and be my sort of partner in navigating this complicated system, so we've really tried to center the need of hiring staff who are multilingual to provide language support. We're not nearly close enough to where we need to be, but that's been a real priority and a real learning, and I think something that really stood out from the first round of parent presentations which happened in December of '18, the superintendent was shocked, and he only speaks English. He's not a multilingual speaker, and so I think a lot of it has just been around this awareness of other lived experiences and really putting yourself into other people's shoes and that cultural humility piece of being a learner and trying to understand. Language has been at the heart of that, and a lot of the district investments have been around or in response to that need and really learning from parents that just because we have a budget for you to call a language line, that's not the work. That's not solving the problem, but it's really that it's language in partnership and working in relationships with families that's so important, so it's been a huge shift in how we've invested in language support.

>> Thank you. Did you secure grants to provide parent compensation? And if not, how is that funding secured?

>> Yeah. That's a good question. We have a portfolio of funding, so we do use some title dollars, both Title I and Title IV. We also have a state integration, achievement integration budget that's tied specifically to sort of your equity strategies, integrating not just at the system level but also to ensure that the experience within a school is integrated and equitable, and then we have secured some grants as we've expanded the program over time.

>> Someone would like to know more about restorative justice practices as you should be committed to using. Do you have any restorative justice practices you're committed to using?

>> I'm sorry. Can you ... I'm not ...

>> Sure. The questionnaire asked, "I would like to know more about restorative justice practices they are committed to using," if any.

>> They as in Minneapolis ...

>> [Indistinct] Yeah, the Minneapolis School District and the program.

>> That is a really great question. I do know that with our client change framework, we had a program of district program facilitators that ran our restorative practices department. That wasn't ... We kind of did a reorganization within our institution and our rethinking about what that is and what that looks like and how staff are being trained to respond to incidents. I'm not sure if I'm answering your question.

>> There's some more clarification that just came in, so in the presentation, you mentioned that the teacher contracts, they're committed to using restorative justice practices. The questioner wanted to know a little bit more about those practices.

>> Yeah. We are not adopting a national model or framework and signing onto that. We are, right now, the sort of implementation process was that we needed teaching staff to be on board with that commitment to more restorative practices, and now you will see in this slide that the professional development is starting a year from now, so the work for this year on that area is around creating a shared understanding and defining success, so it's another example of where parents and staff are coming together at the table to design what they want it to look like. I know there has been just a lot of concerns about doing that with an equity mindset and through cultural humility. It's very similar to the ways that we've approached social emotional learning, and you heard Asia talk about that in her presentation, too, that we're not just signing onto a national SEL model but really trying to make sure we're catering the work we're doing in

Minneapolis to our Minneapolis community and building that partnership, so I know that's true of the restorative practices commitment as well.

>> Thank you, and for the final question, did you attempt to connect parents of special needs children with the special education advisory councils in order to learn more about IEPs and other special education topics?

>> Yes. So a number of our parent participatory evaluators that participated in the program are actually parents whose children receive specialized services. Some of them are actually graduates of Minneapolis public schools that graduated with an IEP, and they are now on our special education advisory council, and so they are able to take the information that they learned by collecting parent voice and bring that into their work there. It wasn't intentional. I don't think it was intentional to recruit a number of special education parents, but we were able to have a number of special education parents in each cultural group, and so that was kind of not by design, but because we had that lens in each group, we were able to pull specific information around special education from each cultural community, and that definitely made an impact when we did our equity diversity impact assessment that some parents really wanted to focus on that subgroup that we have with the Minneapolis Public Schools and were able to identify needs and equity consideration for that group.

>> And I would just add, we have parent advisory councils that work in the district that are separate but in service of and working together with PPE, so our parent advisory councils I would say are more of a traditional representative parent advisory group that you see in a lot of places. We also, it's kind of like into a student council. Participatory evaluation is also trying, though, to really think more about a grassroots bottom-up sort of model of representation and organizing, and so oftentimes, what you're seeing is that those groups are working together, where PPE, and this is also true for our youth program, they're asking broad questions, and they're sort of identifying the pulse of the community, and they're bringing that forward so that the parent advisory councils can really bring that forward and use some of their sort of position and power to advocate for their broader community. So that's certainly true with our special education group, and I'll ... Anecdotally, historically, a lot of the special education parent group identified as white, and so this has been a really great way to empower all parents in this group, too.

>> And one more question came in, if you don't mind. Has there been any exploration of expressive, receptive and pragmatic language deficits in regards to behavioral concerns, especially since children who have language deficits, sometimes, their behavior becomes their language?

>> I'd say I haven't heard that being talked about systematically, but I have heard that concern and consideration from our parents and so taking the materials that are developed that special education families receive and translating them, even if it's from English to English into language that is accessible, and I think that that what we hearing is going deeper in, what does that mean for student accessibility and understanding? Because that is the person who the IEP will be impacting the most, and so my son, actually, he has an IEP for language, and that question has just opened up my thought about, yeah, does he understand what it is that is happening at school, and how, as a parent, can I help him do that, and then how can I ask the school to help him navigate that? So ...

>> Thank you. This is just so rich and so many ideas for us all, so thank you so much for joining us today. Wanted to let you know for the audience, your feedback is very important to us, so please click on the link in the chat box to fill out a very brief SurveyMonkey to evaluate today's webinar. We greatly appreciate it. Again, that link is in the chat box, and please visit our web page if you would like additional information. From our home page, you'll find a section devoted to improving your system that's easy to navigate and has a plethora of resources available at your fingertips, and this webinar will also be posted in a few days, so if you missed anything, you can come back and look through it. There's so much information. Finally, for updates on new products and where to find out what CADRE is up to, please sign up for the CADRE Caucus newsletter, and, again, thank you, Amanda and Maren. This was just absolutely wonderful, so thank you.

>> Thanks for having us.

>> Thank you, everyone.

>> Sure.

>> Please stay safe, everyone. Thank you. Bye.