

University of Washington – College of Education

Racial Equity Team Survey Results - 2017

SPS/UW Partnership and RET Survey Development

In 2015, Seattle Public Schools (SPS) and the Seattle Education Association (SEA) developed a joint initiative to design and support Racial Equity Teams (RETs) in cohorts of schools from across the district. As part of the RET evaluation process, a survey was co-developed by the University of Washington's College of Education, SPS's Department of Racial Equity Advancement, SPS's Research and Evaluation Department, and SEA's Center for Race and Equity. We aimed to illuminate the work of the teams, understand the organizational conditions for racial equity work in schools with RETs, and develop baseline data about culturally responsive practices. This partnership is among the first in the nation to undertake systematic data collection and inquiry into equity team efforts to drive systemic improvements for educational justice.

Three Key RET Survey Findings

1. Racial Equity Teams: most Racial Equity Teams have prioritized building their schools' understanding of inequities through professional development and trainings.

This finding is aligned to previous research findings about addressing individual understanding and awareness prior to addressing instructional or school practice or policies. This finding raises questions, however, about the extent to which RETs have the organizational support and capacity to translate theory and improved knowledge/awareness into practices and systemic changes that reduce racial inequities and disparities in student outcomes.

2. Organizational Conditions: schools with Racial Equity Teams reported relatively positive organizational conditions for racial equity work in their buildings, though teachers of color perceived, on average, significantly less conducive conditions for racial equity work than their white colleagues.

Differences between the perceptions of teachers of color and white teachers align with the research literature. Further case studies (in RET and non-RET schools), should provide more insights into these differences, the role of school leaders, and the nature of the conditions and existing assets to continue to build racial equity work throughout the district.

3. Culturally Responsive Practice: educators in schools with RETs consistently rated their culturally-responsive practice as above average, with exceedingly little variability either within or across schools.

This finding was incongruent with the finding that RETs reported limited focus on instructional practice in the classroom. That is, instructional practice does not appear to figure prominently in the work of RETs yet culturally responsive practice was reported as strength of most educators in these schools. This raises questions about how teachers and other instructional staff define and enact culturally responsive instruction in their classrooms.

Data Collection

- ❖ The survey was administered in June 2017 to all instructional staff (including all paraprofessional and SEA certificated nonsupervisory staff) at the 32 SPS schools with Racial Equity Teams
- ❖ Response rate: 33% (559 out of 1686 recipients)
- ❖ Individual school response rate: 14-51% (from 5 to 46 respondents per school)

Next Steps for Partnership

- ❖ The district is using this data to inform improvements and supports for the RET initiative
- ❖ The UW is conducting qualitative case studies in 4 schools with RETs to develop a more nuanced understanding of change processes
- ❖ Measures from this survey are informing a district-wide system of progress measures
- ❖ The partnership will launch a co-design effort next year focused on promising equitable practices and school change processes