

April 22, 2022

# City of Winooski and Winooski School District Equity Audit

## Final Report



OPPORTUNITY  
CONSULTING

Made possible with support from the  
Municipal Planning Grant Program of the  
Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Executive Summary	2
Introduction	6
Methodology	7
Findings	11
Theme 1: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Winooski	11
Theme 2: Promising Community Engagement and Inclusion Practices	19
Theme 3: Inequities in School Discipline and Law Enforcement	22
Theme 4: Lack of Diversity in the City and WSD Workforce	29
Theme 5: Inequitable Resource Distribution	35
Theme 6: The Silencing of BIPOC Voices and Lack of Representation	39
Theme 7: Inequities in Housing Policy and Practice	47
Conclusion: Diverse but Not Inclusive	53
Recommendations for WSD	55
Joint Recommendations for WSD and the City	61
Recommendations for the City	66
References	71

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Winooski (City) and the Winooski School District (WSD) contracted with Opportunity Consulting to:

- Conduct an equity audit
- Explore areas where experiences in the City and WSD are inequitable
- Find the opportunities to adopt equity-focused policies and practices to address the inequities

Opportunity Consulting conducted the audit using its Outcome-Led Equity (OLE) approach that begins with reviewing outcomes of inequality, then explores their potential drivers, and finally identifies the policies and practices that may contribute to them. The OLE approach centers on grounding the analysis in outcomes, connecting these outcomes to lived experiences through interviews and focus groups, and only then connecting these lived experiences and outcomes with potential policies and practices at the city or school district level. In addition, findings become informed through research about the ways in which city life and school experiences connect to each other and influence one another (O'Day and Smith, 2016; Mizrav 2021). This equity audit of the City and WSD identifies connections and ways in which the City and WSD can work together to improve the lives of all residents in the City, whether they are children or adults.

To conduct this audit, we collected data from the City and WSD regarding:

- Student outcomes
- Discipline in WSD
- Climate and culture
- Law enforcement in the City

- Voting in the City and other data

Utilizing these data collections, we visualized inequality in the City and WSD. Then, we conducted focus groups and interviews to identify the drivers of this inequality. Finally, we developed and outlined themes of inequitable outcomes and their drivers in this report. This report also includes recommendations to the City and WSD.

This report discusses the following themes and the findings within each theme:

- ❖ Theme 1: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Winooski. This section describes findings related to the City's success in creating an environment that is significantly more diverse than the state of Vermont or the Burlington region. At the same time, the City and WSD struggle with equity and inclusion. Examples are segregation in neighborhoods in the City (resulting in a majority of residents not being exposed to the diversity of the City); Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and New American residents that have a vastly more challenging experience of living in the City than their White neighbors; and BIPOC students that generally score lower than their peers while also reporting a more challenging learning environment.
- ❖ Theme 2: Promising Community Engagement and Inclusion Practices. This section addresses successes in community engagement practices that are led mostly by WSD. Those community practices include using community liaisons that play a dramatic role in WSD's ability to engage with New American families. Those practices also include the use of the school as a community hub and the role that WSD plays in city life.
- ❖ Theme 3: Inequities in School Discipline and Law Enforcement. This section focuses on the disproportionate use of disciplinary and law enforcement against BIPOC residents and students in the City. This includes disproportionality in disciplinary incidents in WSD coupled with the students' and parents' feelings of differential treatment of BIPOC students. In addition, disproportionate traffic stops for Black residents of the City have been identified.

- ❖ Theme 4: Lack of Diversity in the City and WSD Workforce. This section discusses a disproportionately White workforce in the City and WSD. This chapter also discusses some of the drivers for this outcome at the City level.
- ❖ Theme 5: Inequitable Resource Distribution. This section focuses on how the City and WSD prioritize where to invest resources. It also questions whether investments in the City and WSD are sufficiently prioritized. One issue discussed in this chapter is the lower prioritization of student transportation, despite its disproportionate impact on BIPOC students and the negative effect this may have on their schooling experiences.
- ❖ Theme 6: The Silencing of BIPOC Voices and Lack of Representation. This section describes gaps in BIPOC students' representation in curriculum, particularly in reading, and their feelings that they do not have a voice in their school's decision-making processes. This section also outlines the ways in which the City created barriers for BIPOC residents to participate in civic life and in voting and running for public office specifically.
- ❖ Theme 7: Inequities in Housing Policy and Practice. This chapter explains how the approach the City has taken to ensure the supply of affordable housing and adequate living conditions for tenants has profoundly impacted the lives of its residents and students.

In correlation with the findings, this report includes the following recommendations for WSD:

- Use effective, early reading strategies with high-quality instructional materials for multilingual learners.
- Implement strategies to reduce instances of and inequities in exclusionary school discipline.
- Afford students regular and structured opportunities to provide input to their education.
- Develop a strategy to diversify and localize the educator workforce.

This report also includes the following joint recommendations for the City and WSD:

- Strengthen the WSD-City collaboration and include the WSD superintendent as a member of the City leadership team.
- Expand the community liaisons program in WSD to the City.
- Provide school transportation by increasing drivers' pay.

In addition, this report includes the following recommendations for the City:

- Develop affordable housing through research and action planning.
- Educate and train landlords and renters.
- Change advertising and recruitment practices to those that effectively create a more diverse workforce.
- Develop strategies to increase civic participation among BIPOC residents.

## INTRODUCTION

Inequality in life outcomes in the U.S. is rising. There are racial inequities across the country—in every jurisdiction—across every indicator of success, including education, jobs, housing, civic participation, and more. Research shows this gap is not a result of natural differences in talent, ability, or aspiration, but rather a result of systemic barriers (Smeeding, 2005). For example, the Black-White achievement gaps closed substantially between 1970 and 2000, before widening again. Gaps are a product of life experiences affected by systemic policies and practices (Mizrav, 2021). Additionally, it is broadly agreed upon that the COVID-19 pandemic has likely exacerbated these gaps and worsened existing inequities. Later in life, continued discrimination in public policy further exacerbates these gaps. For example, inequity in mortgage lending has led to inequality in housing outcomes for adults (Apgar & Calder, 2005).

### **A Combined City and WSD Auditing Approach**

With the understanding that inequitable policies and practices can widen or shrink gaps between people's opportunities and outcomes, the City and WSD contracted Opportunity Consulting to conduct an equity audit. The intent of the equity audit is to uncover some of the drivers of these gaps and to provide recommendations to help the City and WSD improve equity.

In this report, we present a joint view that connects residents' experiences in the City with students' experiences in school. This opportunity for a joint perspective allows for identifying the linkages between drivers of inequality that happen in the streets of the City or in the hallways of its school. This joint perspective also identifies root causes that may have been impossible to observe using a narrower focus on the City or school only. Throughout this report, we describe how experiences shaped by policies determined in city hall can impact student outcomes and how WSD practices may impact their lives outside of school.

## METHODOLOGY

This equity audit uses the OLE framework outlined in Exhibit 1. The OLE audit began by reviewing and characterizing the inequality in the City and WSD before isolating the potential drivers causing the inequalities. Rather than focusing on civil and educational policies, the audit reviewed actual inequality outcomes before explaining their causes, which makes for a more focused process that will result in real change.

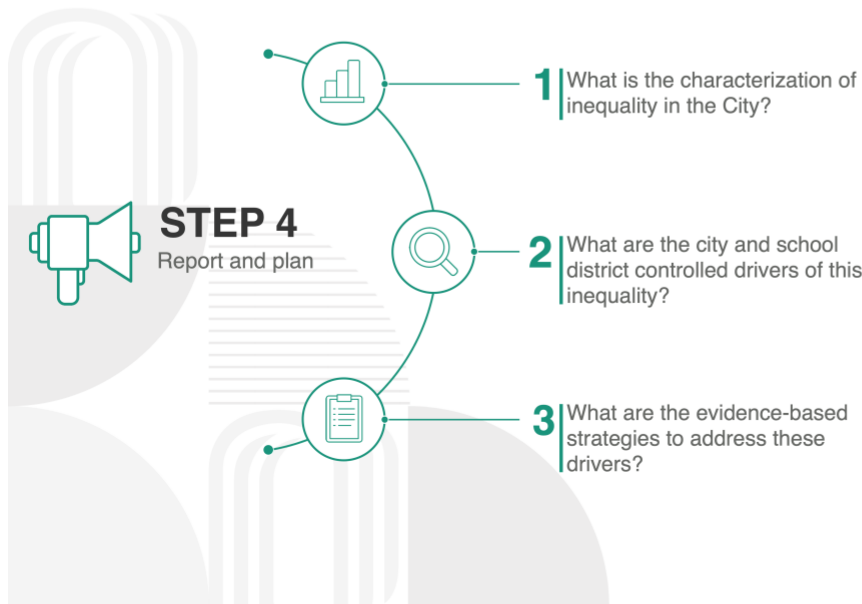
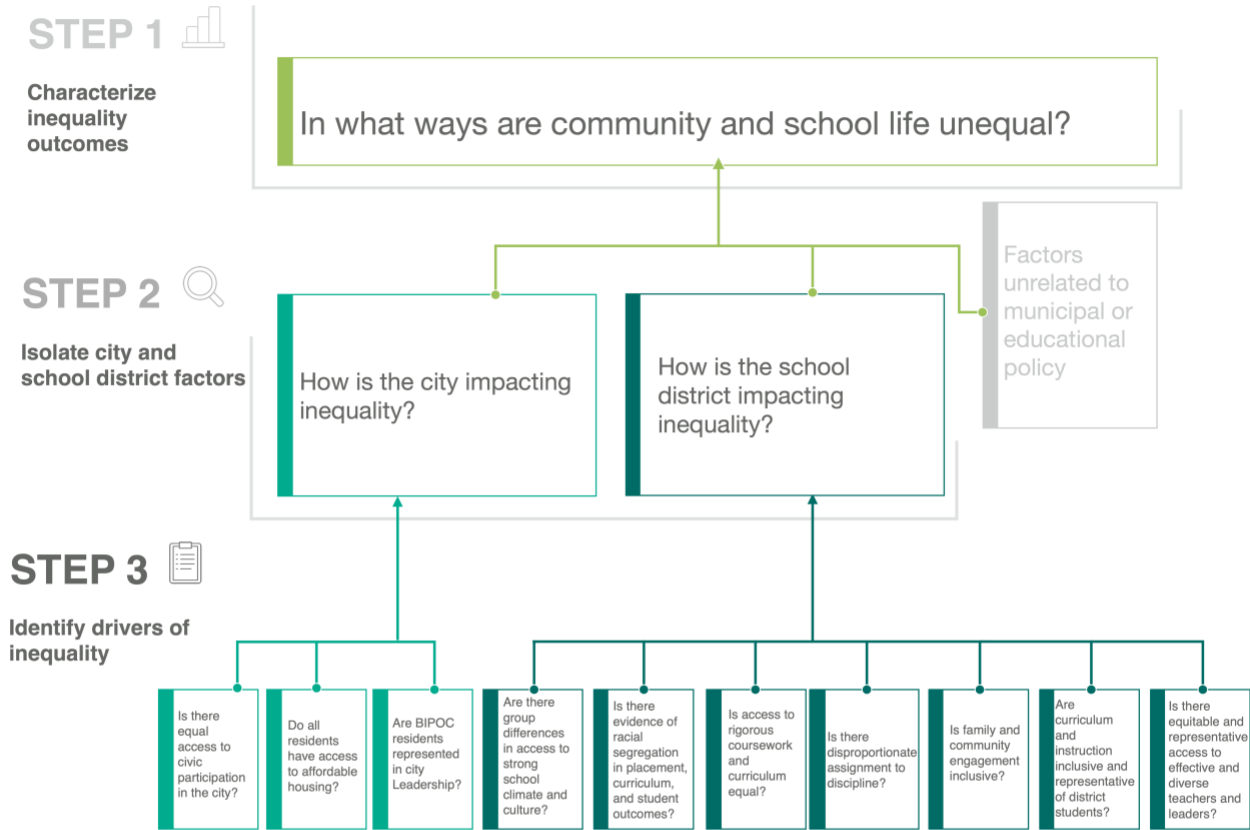
The review took place utilizing the following three steps to characterize inequality in the City and WSD by asking in what ways are residents' outcomes inequitable and who is impacted by inequality in the City:

1. Utilizing interviews, focus groups, and administrative data from the City and WSD, we sought to identify which potential drivers may apply to the City and WSD. To do that, our team synthesized quantitative data shared by the City pertaining to 10 guiding questions. Exhibit 1 outlines these questions.
2. We utilized the findings from the analysis to guide our interviews and focus groups with city officials, employees, residents, students, teachers, and other stakeholders. These focus group participants were able to reflect on the findings, corroborate them, and contribute additional potential drivers of inequality not identified using the administrative data.
3. The final step of the process focused on tying the characterization of the inequalities—the identified drivers and their potential reasons—to existing policies and practices that could be amended or to new strategies that could be adopted. The Recommendations section of this report discusses this component of the audit.



Exhibit 1: The Outcome-Led Equity Audit Process

# Outcome-Led Equity Audit in Winooski



## Data Collection

### **Administrative Data**

Opportunity Consulting collected administrative data from the City and WSD to answer the audit guiding questions. The data included the following information from the City:

- Demographics in different neighborhoods of the City
- Police traffic stops
- Demographics of city employees
- Pay of city employees
- Demographics of elected officials and people serving in city commissions

The data also included the following information from WSD:

- Student demographics
- Student performance in state and local assessments
- Disciplinary incidents in WSD
- Climate and culture student surveys

### **Interviews and Focus Groups**

To supplement the quantitative data, we conducted interviews with 11 members of the City leadership (current and former). In addition, we facilitated focus groups of stakeholders to collect data about areas for which quantitative data was unavailable. This data served to complement existing data and to deepen the understanding of the underlying root causes of the gaps. During this process, we conducted the following interviews and focus groups:

- Two focus groups with WSD students
- Three focus groups with the City residents and parents

- Two focus groups with teachers in WSD
- One focus group with BIPOC teachers only
- One focus group with WSD leadership
- One focus group with BIPOC city employees

We designed these focus groups to seek understanding regarding the experiences of those who are potentially underserved. As a result, parent and city employee focus groups concentrated specifically on BIPOC and New Americans in the City. Moreover, we conducted parent groups with the assistance of interpreters to minimize language barriers to participation.

### **Document and Literature Review**

Opportunity Consulting conducted a separate literature review to research best practices the City could consider adopting that are related to the findings.

## FINDINGS

### THEME 1: DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN WINOOSKI

The study begins with an equity-focused review of diversity and equity outcomes for the City and WSD, which the findings explain in subsequent chapters. This is the first component in the review that is meant to characterize the magnitude of gaps in the City and WSD and to identify which groups are most impacted by those gaps. Opportunity Consulting uses other components of the study to explain these outcomes. This analysis seeks to demonstrate clearly who is experiencing inequality in the City and WSD.

#### Finding 1.A

**The City and WSD are a model for diversity but are challenged with equity and inclusion.**



City

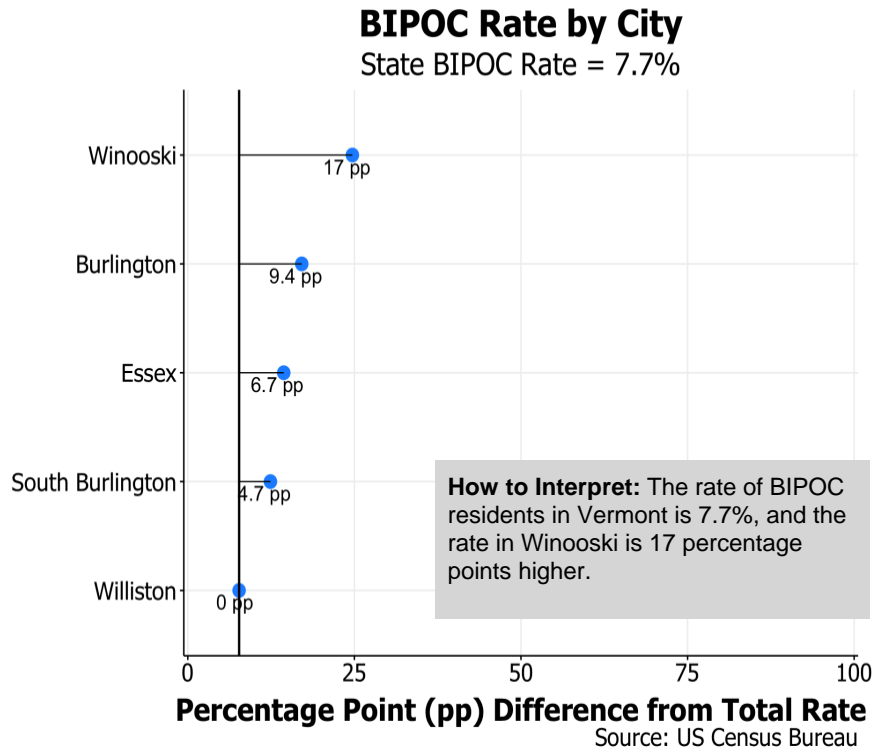


School

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are terms that often are combined and used interchangeably and commonly are used for referring to equity-related work in general. But the findings in the City and WSD point to the important distinction between these three elements. Diversity is the actual presence of differences in race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, (dis)ability, age, religious commitment, and other characteristics. Equity focuses on promoting justice, impartiality, and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems. Inclusion is about ensuring everyone can participate fully in the decision-making processes and development opportunities within an organization or group (eXtension Foundation, 2022).

When looking at diversity, we found the City and WSD were successful in creating diverse city and school environments compared to the state of Vermont. Winooski is the most diverse city in the state of Vermont with BIPOC residents making up nearly a quarter of the City's population compared to the statewide average of 7.7% (see Exhibit 2).

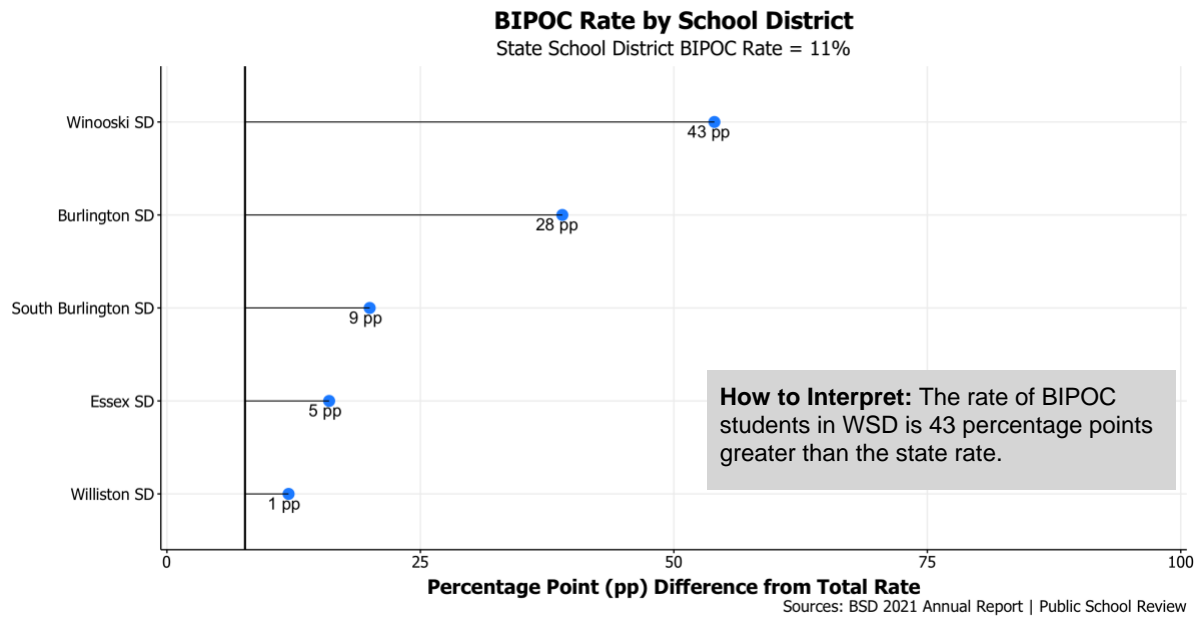
Exhibit 2: BIPOC Residents in Burlington Region



The City deserves recognition for its example within Vermont as a place that has increased citywide diversity successfully. In general, the BIPOC residents we spoke to emphasized how warm and welcoming the residents of the City have been to them. These residents also found that Winooski's diversity relative to the rest of Vermont contributes to a feeling of acceptance and comfort. Many students talked about how proud they were to be from Winooski. The students also expressed how much they enjoyed the diverse school environment where they have an opportunity to meet and learn from other students from all over the world.

Like the City, WSD is also more diverse than its neighboring districts. Exhibit 3 demonstrates how the demographics of WSD are much more like the diversity of the country than to the more racially homogeneous state of Vermont.

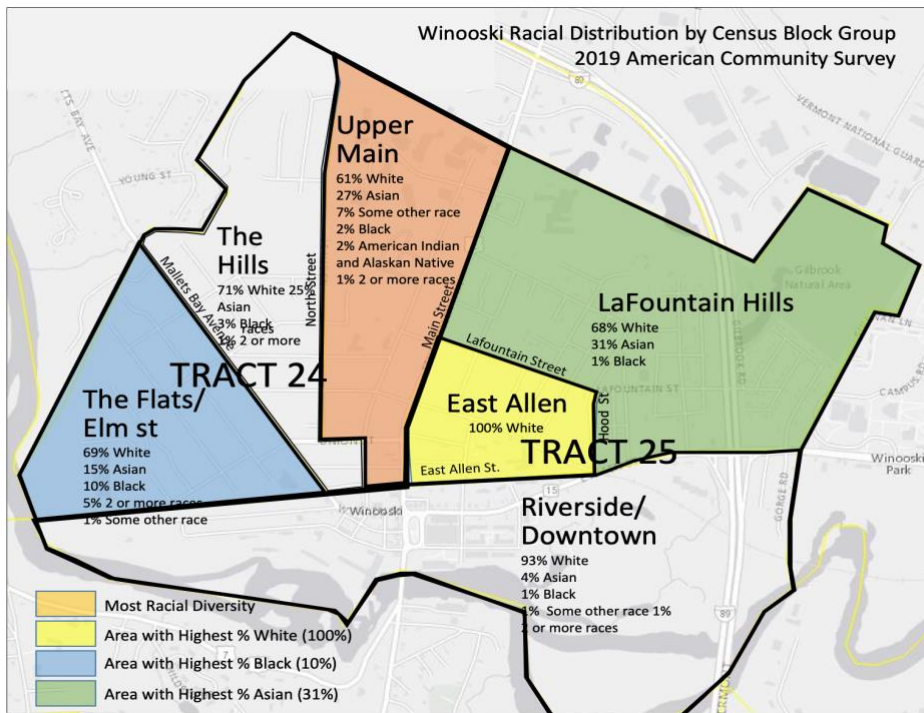
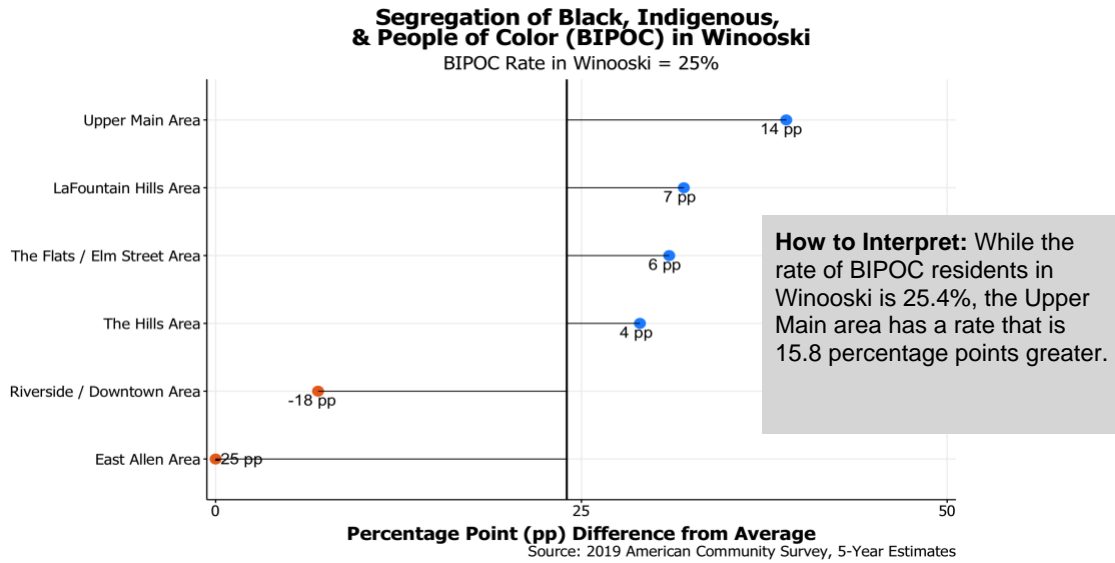
Exhibit 3: School District BIPOC Rate in Burlington Region



However, the picture looks different when we examine equity and inclusion. Interviews and focus groups with the City and WSD employees, BIPOC residents, parents, students, and educators demonstrated that having a diverse city, on its own, is not sufficient to create an equitable and inclusive community. Without explicit effort to create a community that is inclusive of individuals from all backgrounds and perspectives, the community that results reflects a majoritarian perspective. As one resident observed, “the feeling of community exists in Winooski, but I think it exists in pockets. There are communities within communities in Winooski.” These feelings are reinforced by the demographic segregation of the City.

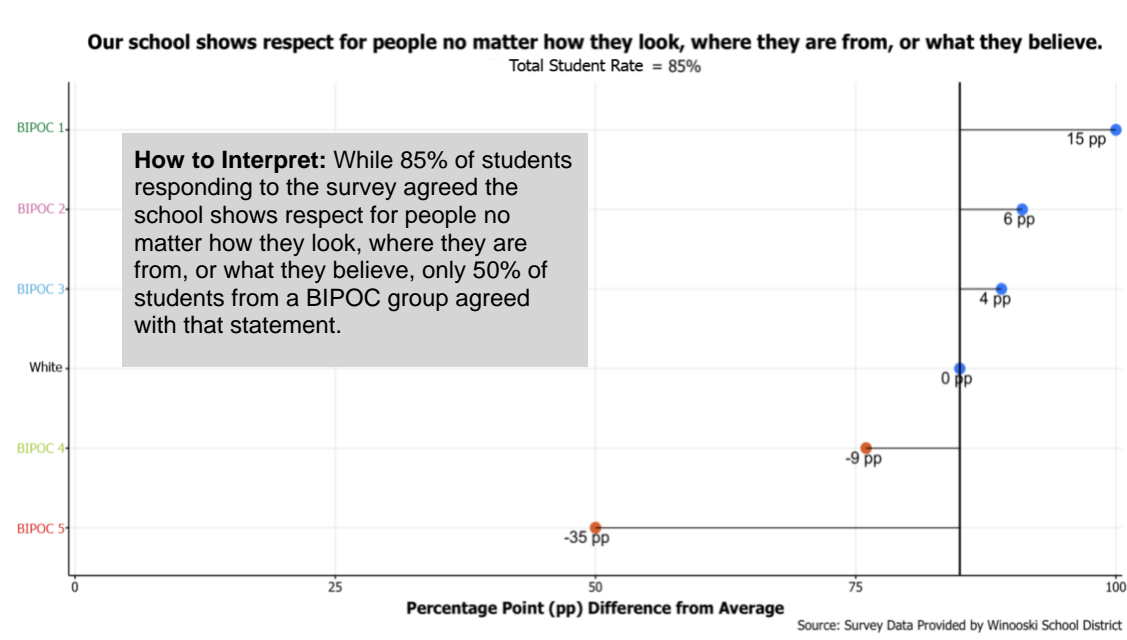
As shown in Exhibit 4, BIPOC residents are much more likely to live in the Upper Main and Elm/Flats neighborhoods, and they are very underrepresented in the Downtown and East Allen areas. Residential segregation serves to segment community life, which hurts the City’s efforts to foster public life that is equitable and inclusive.

Exhibit 4: Neighborhood Segregation in Winooski



We identified similar trends in WSD. Despite the diversity of the student body, BIPOC students in focus groups have shared more challenging experiences than their White peers on various issues, such as discipline, climate and culture, and other topics. In a student survey distributed by WSD, a disproportionately lower number of BIPOC students shared how they feel the school shows respect for people “no matter how they look, where they are from, or what they believe” (Exhibit 5).<sup>1</sup>

Exhibit 5. Differences in Survey Responses about Respect for Students



De facto exclusion from community life, even if unintended, also reduces BIPOC residents’ perspectives and voices in decision-making that could improve the community’s inclusivity. One resident observed that “we [BIPOC residents] are relatively voiceless. I would say that's true for all of us in terms of the Winooski community. We are largely voiceless, whether it's either by the absence of the vote [or] whether it is language.”

<sup>1</sup> Note: Survey conducted in 2020 with a sample of 168 student participants. Some of the racial and ethnic groups are extremely small in number, therefore limiting the ability to use the responses to make generalizable inferences. To protect student privacy, all BIPOC groups are not named.



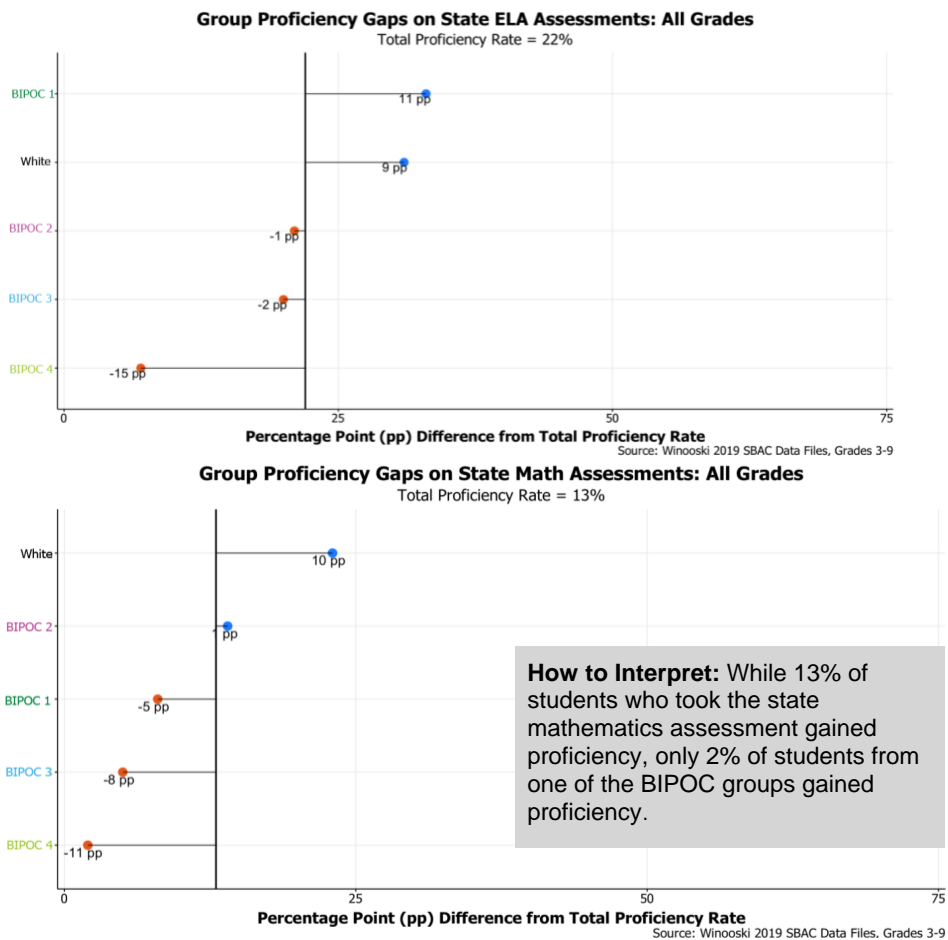
**Finding 1.B**

**BIPOC student groups are consistently underperforming across subjects and grade levels.**



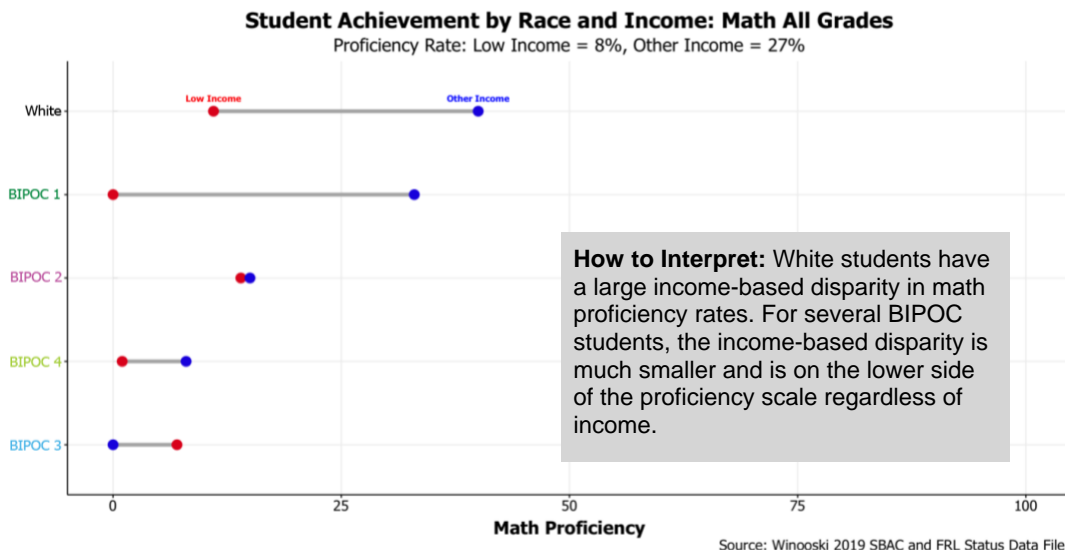
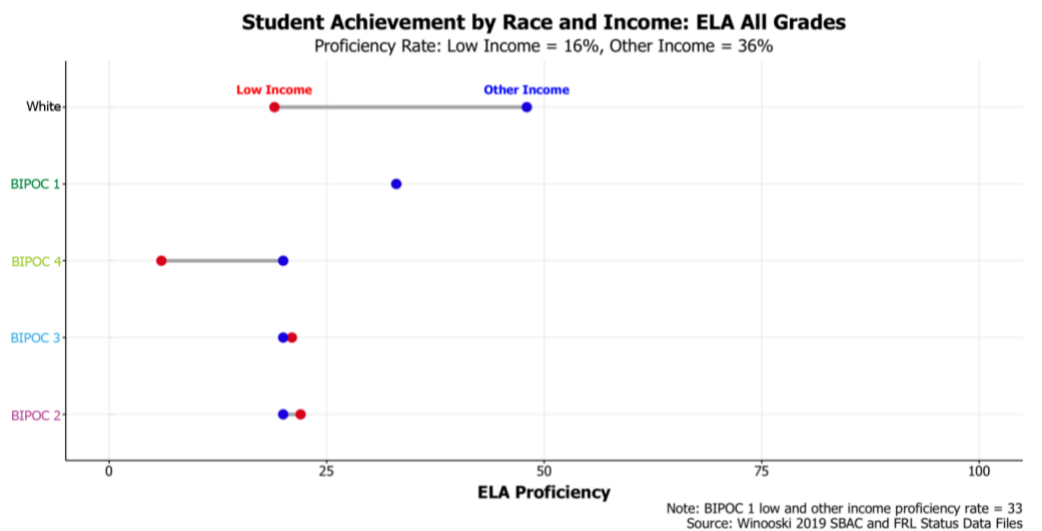
Exhibit 6 visualizes differences in proficiency across different groups in WSD. The charts show a consistent trend of inequality, where BIPOC students are underperforming compared to White students and compared to the average proficiency for WSD. For example, 22% of WSD students are proficient in English language arts (ELA); however, the rate is 15 percentage points lower (7%) for one of the BIPOC groups. In mathematics, 13% of WSD students are proficient; however, that rate is only 2% for one of the BIPOC groups.

Exhibit 6. Gaps in ELA and Math Proficiency



In addition, Exhibit 7 attempts to identify whether gaps are primarily a result of either racial or income inequality or whether gaps are a combination of the two. The charts suggest that differences in income are consistently significant for White students, but not for others. For other groups, income either does not result in any variation in performance, or it results in a small variation that is not significant. In other words, BIPOC students in the City are predicted to perform lower regardless of their incomes. As a result, it is our assumption that race is a significant root cause in the inequitable results observed in the City, and poverty alone is insufficient in explaining these results.

Exhibit 7. Student Achievement Gaps by Race and Income



### **SPOTLIGHT: Are the Results “Statistically Significant?”**

An equity audit of this type naturally and deliberately focuses on groups that are in the minority and not represented by the majoritarian trend. The WSD is a particularly small school district, and specific racial groups within WSD represent population size that is unlikely to result in inferences that statisticians may deem as “statistically significant.” Nevertheless, Opportunity Consulting recommends treating the gaps and differences among the groups reported here with seriousness and intent. We suggest considering the following:

1. The purpose of this study is not to use the results from the WSD to generalize regarding higher-level trends (which is when and why statistical significance is examined), but rather to describe inequality in the WSD.
2. “Statistical significance” is a concept that represents an arguably arbitrary cutoff that some academic journals are moving away from. Statistical significance usually means 90% or 95% of the time we would measure using this group of students the results would be consistent. As others have argued (McShane, 2019), establishing an 80% or a 70% level of certainty does not make the findings unimportant. We should know the caveats to the study and fill the blanks with other sources of data, as we do on this report.
3. Consider that it is not the fault of Black, Latinx, Native Americans, and other groups in WSD that they are, in fact, the groups in the minority. Even though their small numbers makes it so almost no inference that includes them would ever be “statistically significant,” they deserve our full attention. Gaps visualized here that are consistent across grade levels and subjects suggest they are likely to be real and should not be ignored.

## THEME 2: PROMISING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION PRACTICES

### Finding 2.A

**The WSD is the heart of the Winooski community and serves as a successful community engagement hub.**



City



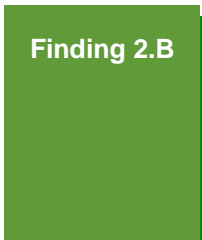
School

Community schools are public schools that create and coordinate community services that respond to the unique needs of the community and accelerate student success. Recently, there has been growth in research and practice in models that strengthen the connection between schools and communities. For example, California recently invested \$3 Billion in community-based schools that become a neighborhood hub for parents (Maier & Niebuhr, 2021).

We found a community-based model already exists in WSD. The community strength that WSD has developed was evident in all focus group conversations. Prior to COVID-19, community meetings held at the school allowed students and families to share their experiences safely and securely. The multilingual liaisons are also a critical component of the strength of the Winooski community.

Students said they felt they had adults in the school they knew they could talk to about problems they were having and believed their teachers cared about them. In addition, parents mentioned many teachers check up on their students regularly. While COVID-19 and the lack of in-person interaction it caused made maintaining a sense of community difficult, it also facilitated more regular (albeit digital) communication between some teachers and parents, which allowed them to build even stronger relationships in some cases.

Importantly, we found that WSD plays a significant role in acclimating New Americans to the City. New American parents with children at school have more engagement with other parents who are American-born. Their children sometimes serve as interpreters to their parents. In addition, the school disseminates communication about important issues that are sometimes unrelated to education, such as voting information. While this may create a gap for residents who do not have children in WSD, this is a very positive WSD feature that should be further utilized to integrate and promote inclusion in the City.



**Finding 2.B**

**The school’s use of community liaisons is a national best practice for family and community engagement.**



To serve all students well and integrate them into the school and community, WSD hired several part-time school liaisons who know the language and culture of many of the students. For example, WSD employs liaisons who speak Nepali and Swahili. The liaisons support students’ academics and socio-emotional wellbeing. They also serve as a bridge between the school and parents who are often non-native English speakers and are less familiar with American schooling. Research points to these types of paraprofessionals as playing a crucial role in supporting recent immigrants and refugees (Pryor, 2001).

Teachers, administrators, and New American families all noted the important role of community liaisons inside and outside the school, describing how many of them go far beyond their duties to support families and help them integrate into the community and school. One WSD leader explained, “Community liaisons want to not just

*“Community liaisons want to not just translate. They want to mentor, support in the classroom, and be a resource to teachers to learn and understand.” (WSD Leader)*

translate. They want to mentor, support in the classroom, and be a resource to teachers to learn and understand."

In focus groups, parents credited community liaisons with informing them of critical information about their students, making sure parents are aware of and attend meetings, and helping parents navigate daily life outside of school. In a focus group, parents shared how liaisons helped acclimate them to the community upon their arrivals and kept them informed about their children's behavior at school. Parents explained when they first came to the country, the school helped them with housing supplies, setting up internet, and doing paperwork. They would bring their paperwork to the liaisons and the liaisons would complete it for them. Outside of school, community liaisons support families in several ways.

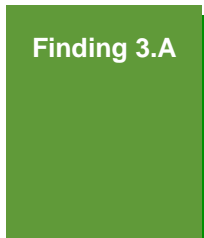
In addition to helping families understand and trust the educational context of a new home country, the liaisons also help school staff better understand New American families. District leadership also shared an example of a program created to help New American students feel safe and supported, which one of the school's multilingual liaisons taught. Moving toward equity and preventing bias begins with understanding. Not only understanding the radicalized identities of New American families or their cultural backgrounds, but also understanding that each family is unique. For these reasons, community liaisons are a critical component in helping build cultural understanding and trust.

Community liaisons are so effective at engaging New American families that these families are more represented at school meetings than other parent groups. Liaisons not only ensure parents attend school-wide meetings and parent-teacher conferences, but also attend these meetings themselves to interpret, to help build trust between parents and school staff, and to build trust and understanding of the American educational system.

Liaisons also help communicate with families about what educational options look like after graduation. One teacher shared how she experienced distrust and some skepticism from

parents when trying to recommend community college as an option, but the parents received the message much more positively when it came from a liaison. Liaisons are often from the same background as the families they work with, which helps establish trust between the liaisons and the families. In turn, it also helps build trust and build relationships among the families, WSD, and the greater Winooski community.

### THEME 3: INEQUITIES IN SCHOOL DISCIPLINE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT



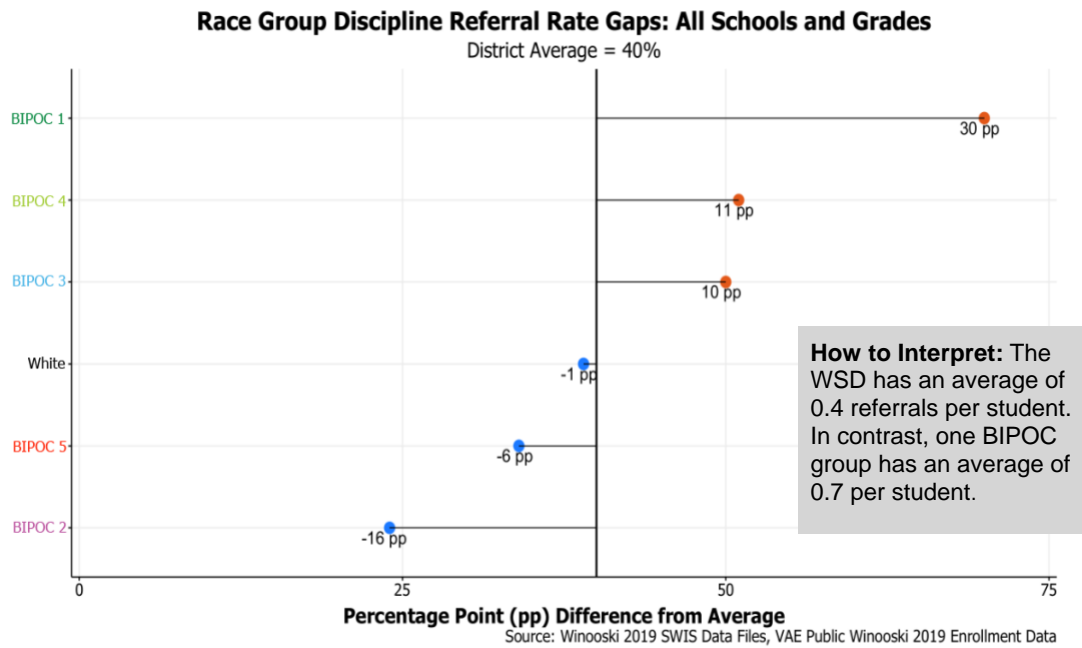
**Finding 3.A**

**BIPOC youth and adults are disciplined at school and pulled over on the street at higher rates than their White peers.**



Across the country, BIPOC students are experiencing disproportionate disciplinary action against them in schools, and BIPOC adults experience inequitable law enforcement treatment (Pierson et. al., 2020; Smolkowski, 2016). Exhibit 8 shows the differences in disciplinary referrals by race at all grade levels. The chart shows WSD’s overall rate of disciplinary incidents is at 40% against the rate for each racial group (calculated as incidents divided by number of students). This visualization shows that Black, Latinx, and multiracial students are much more likely to receive disciplinary referrals relative to their peers. In addition, these students are much more likely to receive disciplinary referrals despite making up a much smaller percentage of the school population.

Exhibit 8. Disparities in Disciplinary Incidents in WSD



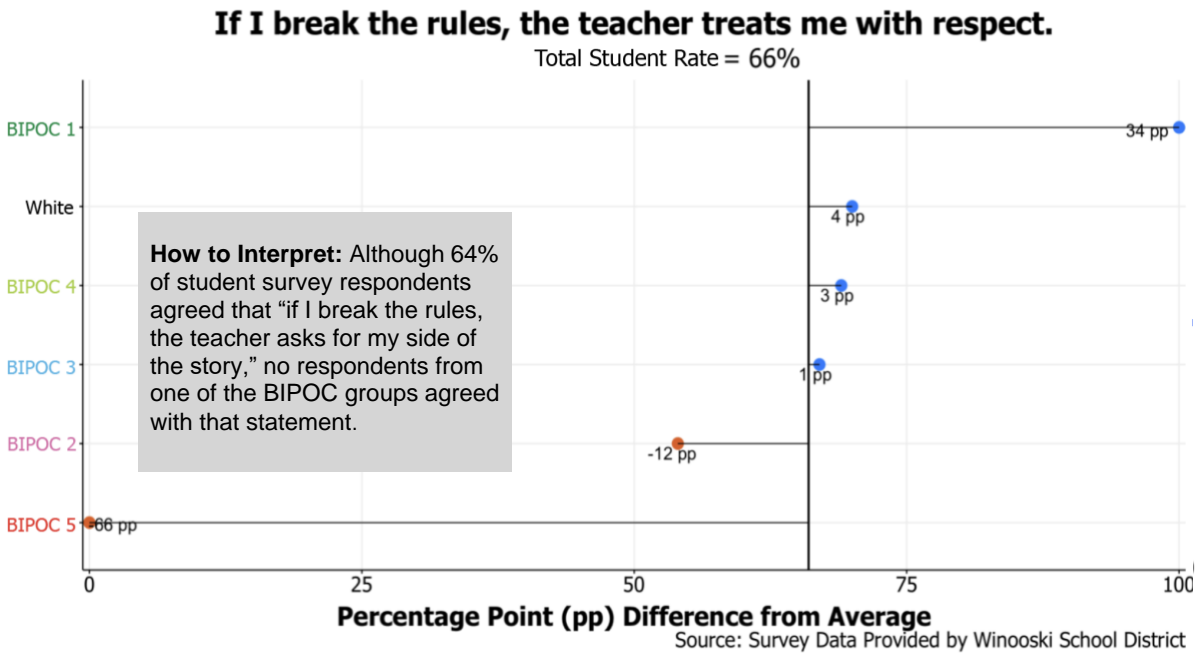
In focus groups with administrators and teachers, there was acknowledgement and recognition of this issue. Teachers in focus groups discussed multiple examples where they had observed or heard about students of different races receiving different levels of disciplinary response for the same behavior. This is consistent with national research on disproportionate discipline, which finds that race-based differences in disciplinary referrals occur even after controlling for behavior (Smolkowski, 2016).

Teachers and administrators suggested that WSD needed more consistent disciplinary policies, and the lack of a clear policy might be one of the factors driving racial gaps in disciplinary referrals. In focus group discussions, students also agreed the reason for disciplinary referrals was not always clear. Exhibit 9 also shows differences among students along racial lines regarding how teachers treat them if they misbehave. Lower rates of BIPOC students agreed if they broke the rules, the teacher treated them with respect or the teacher asked for their sides of the story. Student responses also varied along similar demographic



lines when asked if they agreed with the statement, "If I cause harm, I am given an opportunity to understand the harm." BIPOC student groups were least likely to agree to that statement.

Exhibit 9. Differences in Survey Responses on Asking Students' Side of the Story



When asked about the cause of the disciplinary gap, some administrators attributed this to the infraction of absenteeism and tardiness. Furthermore, these administrators attributed higher rates of absenteeism and tardiness in non-White student populations to cultural differences (such as differing relationships with the concept of time) and factors outside of school (such as pre-existing trauma) that might impact a student’s ability to attend school regularly. Cultural responsiveness is important, and the administration acknowledges this. However, New American students are not a homogenous group; therefore, cultural differences might not be an appropriate explanation in this case. In focus groups with parents and students, they both noted the biggest challenge to getting to school on time and regularly was the lack of consistent transportation. Theme 5 discusses transportation in depth.

The WSD leadership and teachers also attributed some of the observed differences in discipline to disruptive behavior demonstrated by students with disabilities. District leadership discussed how these students are more likely to be refugee students, because they have experienced high incidence of trauma and poverty before entering the school. National research finds that students of color and multilingual students are identified with disabilities at much higher rates than their White peers and are identified with disabilities that are the most subjective (i.e., such as an "emotional disturbance" which is subjective versus a visual impairment which is not). Administrators at WSD specifically referred to a high number of New American students being referred to special education for an "emotional disturbance" or autism.

### **Disproportionality in Discipline and Special Education Disparities**

Some teachers remarked that, until recently, they could not refer multilingual students to special education services. Teachers cited that part of the reason for the rule was that it may be difficult to differentiate between students who cannot speak English and those who have difficulty learning for other reasons. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or IDEA, students with limited English proficiency that may need services must be referred and tested in their native languages or provided interpretation services. This is federal and state law. "All evaluations and assessments of a child and family must be conducted in the native language of the child and family members being assessed, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so" (2360.5.4 Evaluation of the Child and Assessment of the Child and Family, Section c4 Vermont Agency of Education). Providing special education testing in multiple languages can be a logistically challenging and an expensive endeavor, but it is necessary to ensure the success of multilingual students with disabilities.

The WSD leadership acknowledged that distinguishing whether a student has a true disability or simply lacks English proficiency is a complex process. As a result, the district is working to support the teaching staff during the process. Nationally, students of color and multilingual students are referred to special education services too often. "The term 'significant

disproportionality' is used to describe the widespread trend of students of certain racial and ethnic groups being identified for special education, placed in more restrictive educational settings, and disciplined at markedly higher rates than their peers"(National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2020). When students of color and multilingual students are referred to special education, they tend to be placed in the most restrictive settings and are kept in these settings or in services for longer than their White and native English-speaking peers. In addition, their academic and behavioral outcomes are often worse after entering these settings than before they entered (Klingner & Harry, 2006). In multiple matched sample studies, research shows students of color regularly are assigned to more restrictive services than their White peers, and other studies have shown that certain subgroups of students of color leave special education with lower intelligence quotients than when they entered (Garcia & Ortiz, 1988).

Teachers also noted that even referring students without language needs to special education often required burdensome amounts of paperwork. There may be provisions in Vermont Act 230 that assist with the reduction of some of this paperwork. Whether or not these provisions are already being utilized, teachers need more resources and support to better serve students with disabilities, particularly those that are multilingual. These resources and supports must be implemented thoughtfully, so the types of disability support provided to students do not further exacerbate equity gaps or cause trauma.

In a focus group, one teacher described a way in which racial differences in discipline connect to disability identification. The teacher described a White student with behavioral problems who was frequently disruptive in class. The student's parents met with the school to help develop a 504 plan. As part of the plan, it was determined that when the student needed a break or was at risk of acting out in ways that might disrupt other students, he should receive a pass to go to the library and spend some time there. It was the student's responsibility to self-monitor and ask the teacher for the pass when needed. However, the teacher reported the student would often be disruptive on multiple occasions before the teacher had to suggest that the student make use of the pass. The teacher noted that the same type of behaviors, if committed by a

student without this type of accommodation, would certainly lead to a disciplinary referral. This differential treatment is referred to as an enabling and a debilitating practice based on race that is "ignoring White children when they act out, while punishing Black children for the same behavior" (Stanford University, 2020). In conclusion, inconsistent disciplinary practices are the major contributor to equity gaps in the classroom.

The national research concerning special education referrals, the focus group findings regarding the lack of bussing, and the anecdotes from WSD about differential treatment for bad behavior all suggest it is not BIPOC students with disabilities or students with past trauma that are causing the problem. Rather, the causes are the accommodations and resources available to students that may differ by race or may differ based on the native English proficiency of the students or their families.

### **Connection to Disparities in Traffic Stops**

When referred to disciplinary action, students of color are more likely to be recommended for exclusionary discipline than their White peers (such as suspension or expulsion). This type of treatment was discussed at WSD in the context of vaping. Within a period of a few months two different students were caught vaping: one was suspended and the other was not.

Exclusionary discipline sends students the message that they are not welcome and begins the construction of a criminal identity that can have life-long impacts. Differential and exclusionary treatment at school effectively "isolates [Black] youth from participating in the life of the classroom" (Annamma, 2020).

This isolation is mirrored by the isolation that New American and other BIPOC adults in the City face in their isolation from participation in many aspects of public life. This isolation begins in school and can have devastating and long-term effects, leading to a "punishment mindset" that can expand equity gaps, cause learners to become disengaged, and begin a cycle where students act out and fall further behind academically. Students experiencing exclusionary discipline are much more likely to drop out of school and experience incarceration later in life

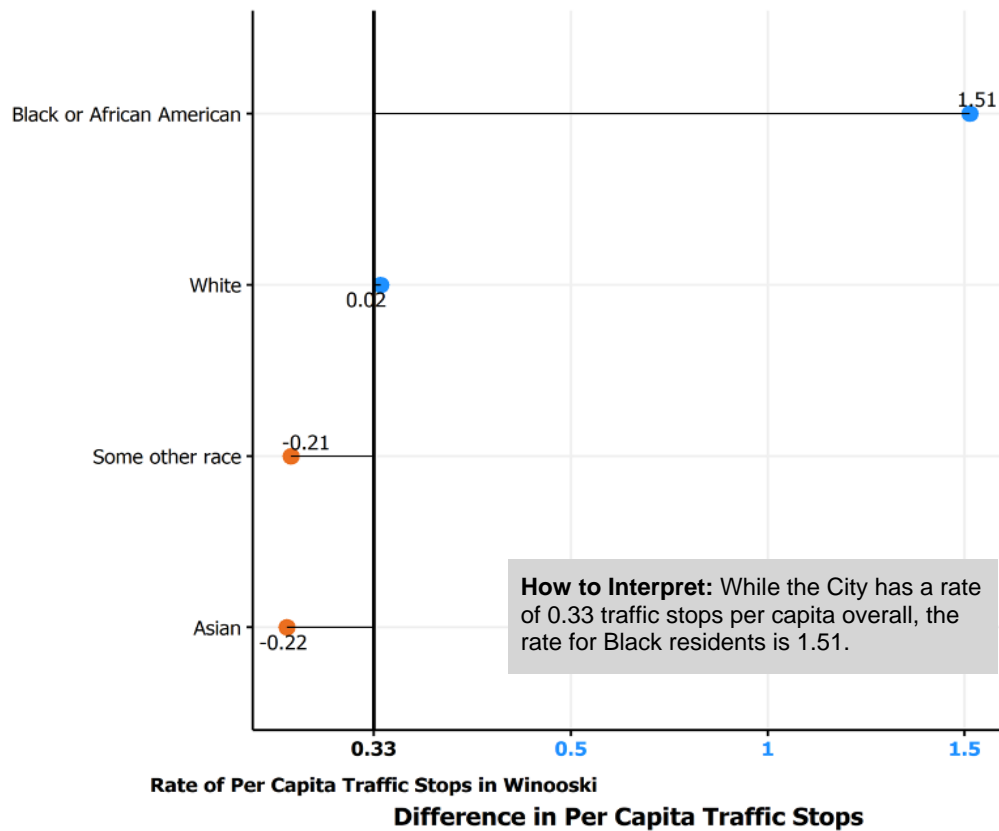
(Annamma, 2020). This process in BIPOC students at WSD creates a stereotype that lasts beyond their tenures as students.

As they are more likely to receive discipline in schools, national data shows BIPOC residents are likely to have their first interactions with police at a young age and develop a reputation as troublesome or lawbreakers, which can inform authorities' attitudes toward these individuals later in life. As a result, BIPOC individuals continue to have a greater number of encounters with law enforcement than their White peers later in life. Exhibit 10 shows police stop Black residents for routine traffic stops at exponentially higher rates than residents of other backgrounds. Random chance cannot explain such disparities; therefore, they merit a discussion about the systemic root causes that could drive them.

Exhibit 10. Disparities in Traffic Stops in Winooski



### Racial Disparities in Traffic Stops in Winooski




Source: Data Provided by Winooski City, 2019-2021.

However, the City encourages the diversification of its workforce through the successful development of processes that intentionally and strategically result in hiring police officers from different backgrounds. This could potentially help to improve these reported disparities.

## THEME 4: LACK OF DIVERSITY IN THE CITY AND WSD WORKFORCE

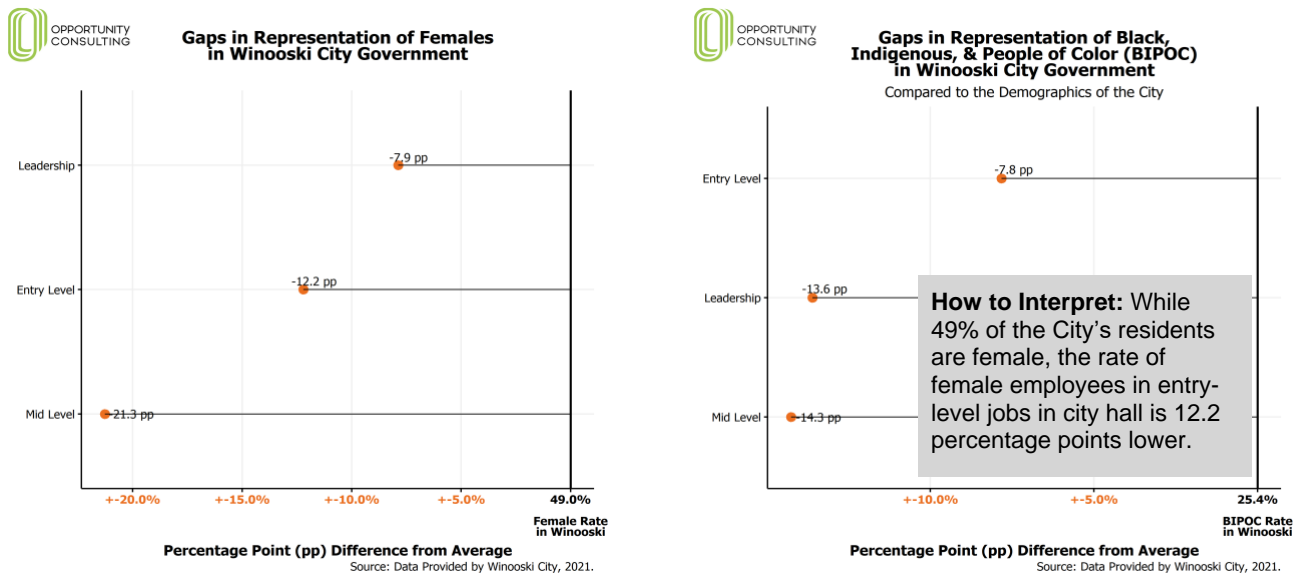
**Finding 4.A**

**Winooski's approach to recruitment, promotion, and retention prevents the City's workforce from diversifying.**



Winooski's workforce is overwhelmingly White and male. Across nearly all the City's departments, female and BIPOC residents are underrepresented significantly (see Exhibit 11). We discussed the diversity of the City's workforce through interviews with city leadership and focus groups with BIPOC residents. In general, everyone we spoke with agreed the lack of diversity within the City's workforce is an issue the City should actively address. However, the differences arose when we asked about the underlying factors driving this inequality.

Exhibit 11. Racial and Gender Disparities in City Government



## **Recruitment Strategies Are Not Targeted Sufficiently to BIPOC Applicants**

All respondents agreed the City's inability to attract and recruit female and BIPOC applicants is a significant factor in gender and racial disparities among the City's employees. However, not everyone in the City's workforce agrees on the importance of using recruitment as a tool for increasing the diversity of the workforce. Specifically, BIPOC city employees stated the City cares about improving diversity within the workforce in name only. According to one respondent, "there was very little effort being made in actually going and really putting in a lot of time and effort into making sure that these job opportunities were actually making it to everyone in Winooski." Even in situations where department heads may genuinely care about improving diversity, it may not be a priority. Some employees expressed that departments would initiate collaboration with the recently established equity director. Then, when asked about their equity efforts, they could respond by saying they are "working with the equity director." Essentially, this collaboration serves as an alternative to deeper and more intensive equity efforts.

The City's recruitment strategies illustrate how the lack of an explicit, equity-focused lens can work to entrench existing inequalities. From our conversations with employees and leaders in the City, we found most city departments advertise open jobs through the City website, JobSeeker (an online job advertising platform), the O'Brien Community Center public bulletin board, Front Porch Forum (a free social network), and Seven Days (a free local periodical). We learned from our conversations that although there are numerous job openings for the City, there is significant underemployment of Winooski's BIPOC residents, especially in the New American community. What factors are preventing matches between the City and residents in need of employment? One city employee remarked that many of the jobs advertised in the previous mediums listed often are open for months at a time and often will only result in a single application.

From our interviews, we found some city employees generally were uncertain about why BIPOC and New American residents are not applying for the city jobs. However, BIPOC city

employees were able to cite numerous reasons why this disconnect may be occurring. First, the City needs to translate its employment application into languages spoken by the community, which is not occurring, with postings in the local paper and bulletin boards. To respond to an online application, an individual must have access to a computer and decent internet access and must know where to find city job applications. To diversify the recruitment pool, respondents suggested “to advertise job openings where everyone else is, instead of where just the city hall has access.” Methods that have proven successful thus far rely on advertising through personal networks. One city employee reported receiving several interested responses after talking about a city job opening on Snapchat, and others stated they received positive feedback from residents by going door to door to advertise job openings. Building a diverse pipeline of future candidates is just as important as diversifying the current pool of applicants. City employees and residents stressed the importance of training, professional development, and outreach about city employment to high school students, especially those from the New American community.

### **Gatekeeping Siloes BIPOC and Female Employees**

Another hurdle BIPOC individuals face is gatekeeping by existing members of the workforce. BIPOC individuals are overrepresented in the community services department, yet underrepresented in all other departments. This is a fact attributed to the perception of BIPOC individuals as “caretakers,” a stereotype also commonly applied to female workers. Gatekeeping can occur in a manner meant to be protective. One city employee remarked that she would not feel comfortable bringing a female applicant into her division, because it is “so misogynistic.” While intended to be protective, such actions serve to block opportunities to diversify the workforce.

#### **Finding 4.B**

**Lack of diversity and low pay result in high turnover for BIPOC and female city employees.**



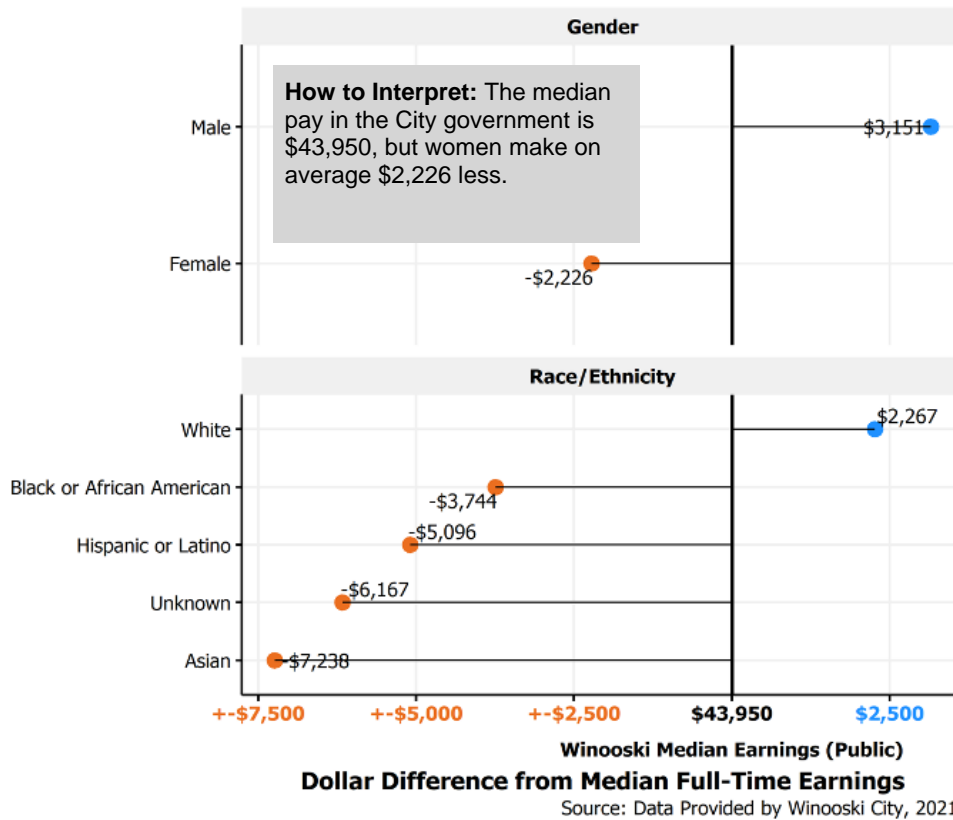


A second facet of diversifying the City's workforce is retaining employees from marginalized backgrounds. BIPOC and female employees cited several reasons that pushed workers like themselves out of the workforce or hurt recruitment efforts. This included the network-style effects of increasing diversity, pay, low turnover, and informal attitudes that funnel women and BIPOC workers into specific roles. The issue of pay is especially impactful. Exhibit 12 shows female and BIPOC city employees earn significantly less on average than their male and White counterparts, respectively. Though these disparities may be due to a complex host of factors, we can identify some of the challenges facing these groups. First, female employees expressed concern about the lack of transparency in public salaries, which prevents them from comparing their salaries to peers of comparable tenure. This hinders the ability of females to renegotiate their own pays. Second, BIPOC employees cited the fact that they disproportionately hold entry-level jobs, which generally have the lowest pay. They also face barriers to promotion due to low turnover at higher employment levels.

Exhibit 12. Racial and Gender Disparities in Pay



### Racial and Gender Disparities in Public Employee Annual Earnings in Winooski



For BIPOC employees specifically, the combination of low pay, few options for career advancement, scope creep (a phenomenon of increasing responsibility within a role without a commensurate increase in pay), and few BIPOC role models in leadership positions all act to discourage long-term employment within the City workforce. The importance of representation in the leadership cannot be overstated. BIPOC city employees remarked on the inspiration they have drawn from Yasamin Gordon, Winooski’s Director of Equity, and the benefits of the informal mentorship they have received from her.

### SPOTLIGHT: Equitable Promotions

As discussed previously, the City of Winooski uses a traditional approach to hiring candidates – responding to an online posting with a résumé and cover letter – for city government positions, which favors candidates that are familiar with this method of seeking out and applying for jobs. However, this method may not be familiar to all the City’s residents. One department head we spoke to relayed the story of a New American employee who was promoted recently to a directorship role and has thrived in this position, despite having subpar written English skills. The choice to promote this individual required the director to challenge prior notions about the importance of written English (and cover letters as a hiring mechanism). Additionally, some of the employee’s success may derive from the director’s willingness to search out an alternative, collaborative method to build up the employee’s skills, which were accomplished by creating templates and working together on writing projects. Finally, the director realized the importance of the employee’s “soft skills” – empathy, dedication, trustworthiness – which are key to successful work in public service. This example provides the beginnings of a framework for recruiting, retaining, and allowing BIPOC and New American Winooski residents to thrive in the City’s workforce.

#### Finding 4.C

**There is a lack of teacher diversity in WSD.**



School

District leadership and teachers addressed several barriers to increasing teacher diversity in WSD. One challenge they noted was a lack of structures and resources at the school that would enable them to recruit more diverse teachers. They also noted they did not have any

dedicated Human Resources staff until recently. While there are many diverse candidates connected to the district already, such as former students, parents, or liaisons, there does not seem to be a viable pipeline to becoming teachers. School staff also acknowledged there was not a strong “culture of welcome” in place to make it easier to recruit diverse candidates.

## THEME 5: INEQUITABLE RESOURCE DISTRIBUTION

### Finding 5.A

### Investments in equity are not prioritized in the City and WSD.



"Culturally responsive educational systems are grounded in the beliefs that all culturally and linguistically diverse students can excel in academic endeavors when their cultures, languages, heritages, and experiences are valued and used to facilitate their learning and development, and they are provided access to high quality teachers, programs, and resources....it is not enough to help students celebrate their own and others cultural traditions. We must ask tough questions...where and for what purposes are resources allocated?" (Klingner et al, 2005).

Investments in equity in Winooski can help build a school and city that are culturally responsive, racially inclusive, and environmentally sound for all the City’s residents. School administrators and teachers discussed the limited resources available to WSD because of a small tax base. In addition, inequalities in state funding formulas were a major challenge that prevented them from adequately resourcing certain programming, staff, and multicultural services.

Limited resources may be a barrier in WSD, which makes it more important to invest strategically and prioritize equity investments that will uplift not only marginalized populations, but also the entire community of Winooski. Additionally, higher resourced schools do not always have better outcomes (DeGrow & Hoang, 2016). While more resources may be beneficial to student success in the City context, as the previous quote says, the City must ask difficult questions about where the available resources are being allocated. This scarcity of resources should cause the City residents to be thoughtful and intentional about the usage of the resources available.

### **Teacher Professional Development**

One Winooski teacher shared her perspective regarding the resources and supports granted to teachers in WSD. “I know they have supported me in what was required.” Supported in requirements, but nothing more. Another teacher explained how she believes a simple, creative, professional development strategy can overcome some of this scarcity. The teacher explained, “I feel like one thing that we could really benefit from is more time to collaborate as teacher teams... more of a learning community where we really sit down together and we say, ‘Here's what we're doing. What's working? What's not? What could we do better? How can we support each other better to support the kids better?’”

When schools structure teacher professional development around how to best serve students from diverse backgrounds, there are benefits gained toward promoting a school culture that is inclusive, is culturally responsive, and improves student outcomes. To gain these benefits, research supports investments in the form of structured time for teacher collaboration. “Practitioners thrive and are better able to innovate, support student effort, and generate improved outcomes when their organizations support and encourage their cultural inclusivity through systems of leadership that also meet standards of culturally responsive practice. Organizational support for culturally responsive practice must, in turn, be supported by initial educator preparation and ongoing professional development” (Klingner et al, 2005). The WSD already has experience providing culturally responsive professional development trainings.

Unfortunately, one of these positive practices—professional development led by a community liaison—has been discontinued according to focus group participants.

### **Investment Priorities: Community Pool and School Bus**

Two recent examples of public funding highlight how the lack of equity and inclusion in the Winooski community manifests in public decision-making. On November 6, 2017, the Winooski City Council voted to allocate funding in the form of a \$3.9 million, 20-year bond to renovate the Myers Memorial Pool, which was an effort subsequently voted on and passed by Winooski voters (City of Winooski, n.d.-a; City of Winooski, n.d.-b).

To access the pool, residents must pay a nominal entrance fee. If underage, a parent or guardian must accompany children. BIPOC and New American residents pointed out that both policies hindered their children’s ability to access the pool. Even at a nominal fee, such a cost is more burdensome for low-income residents than it is for other residents. As a non-essential expense, it may be one of the first expenses cut from a household budget, thereby creating a barrier to entry. Additionally, BIPOC and New American residents are more likely to work jobs with non-traditional working hours, limiting the ability to accompany their children to the pool. Additionally, a far larger share of the New American residents we spoke to were not even aware that a community pool existed.

Unlike the community pool, providing a school bus for families with school-aged children and no other means of transportation is a basic service. Even though the City is a small community, walking to school is not always viable or safe. Many families do not have cars, and walking 20 or 30 minutes both ways can be untenable for students and for many working parents. Moreover, walking to school may be unduly challenging for young children or for all students during Vermont’s harsh winters.<sup>2</sup> School officials have stated that providing a bus

---

<sup>2</sup> Molly Walsh, “Winooski Students and Parents Ask for School Buses,” Seven Days, June 4, 2015, available at: <https://www.sevendaysvt.com/OffMessage/archives/2015/06/04/winooski-students-and-parents-ask-for-school-buses>. Taylor Young, “Winooski Parents Concerned about Future of School Bus Program,” WCAX, March 29, 2018, available at: <https://www.wcax.com/content/news/Winooski-parents-concerned-over-future-of-school-bus-program-478363133.html>.

was untenable given the budget limitations and inability to find drivers. To contextualize these comments, residents noted the rate offered by the City (\$21/hour) for the bus driver job was uncompetitive with the pay offered by Uber. At the same time, the City is paying \$83,000 in the first year after the renovation to operate the pool (City of Winooski, n.d.-b).

These are explicit choices around what, and by extension who, deserves funding. These choices have very real impacts on residents' lives. Without the bus, children walk more than a mile each way to school. With icy conditions in the winter, this trip becomes hazardous. A city official remarked that the City has taken this into consideration in its decision to invest in sidewalk plows, a decision that was framed explicitly as an equity initiative. Framing the provision of basic services as equity initiatives provides the rationale for the City to not take additional efforts that would promote equity. Despite the City's insistence that the icy roads issue has been resolved, walking to school in the winter clearly is still an issue facing the New American residents. One resident starkly laid out the consequences for his family. His wife walks his child to school, because he works during school hours. He worries about his child's safety, but he is especially concerned about his wife. She is currently pregnant, and he worries that if she falls on the ice, she may lose the baby.

## THEME 6: THE SILENCING OF BIPOC VOICES AND LACK OF REPRESENTATION

### Finding 6.A

**Curriculum and instruction are neither inclusive nor representative of district students.**



In teacher focus groups, the City's teachers expressed a desire for greater flexibility in curriculum and the ability to create lesson plans and activities that meet students' needs relative to their academic levels, interests, and cultural backgrounds. Teachers also expressed feelings of frustration, because the current curriculum does not allow for students' or teachers' voices to be heard and does not provide opportunities for student-driven learning and exploration. Some teachers also stated they are not sure there are safe spaces for students to express when the curriculum does not meet their needs. In student focus groups, students echoed some of these frustrations. Many students discussed their enjoyment of the iLab, which allowed them to direct their own learning, and their disappointment at the decision to eliminate funding for the iLab next school year.

### **Student-Centered Learning**

Students voiced frustration about WSD's decision to cut the iLab and described holding sit-in protests in the cafeteria in which many middle and high school students participated. Students expressed how the self-directed component of the iLab made it an especially valuable resource for multilingual learners. Furthermore, the students did not feel that WSD considered their concerns regarding the decision to cut the iLab.

The WSD leadership and teachers agreed there was some movement toward more student-centered learning before priorities shifted due to COVID-19. A parent shared one example of what she found to be a very meaningful activity that centered around student identity. Her daughter brought home a cookbook the fifth grade put together with recipes from around the



world. The assignment was to identify a meaningful recipe and explain why it is important and how it is part of her daughter's identity. This type of activity is something that many teachers did not feel they had the opportunity to incorporate into their classrooms, despite wanting to provide more inclusive and individualized learning opportunities for their students.

Student-driven learning is an approach that centers prior student knowledge and experiences and adapts to their needs. It can be beneficial not only to support students from different cultural backgrounds, but also to support any students with unique learning needs or interests (Parker et al, 2017). One teacher described the newfound excitement two of the students experienced when they were able to engage in student-driven learning by exploring technology. The teacher shared how two of the most disengaged students in the class went to the technology building and used the plasma cutter. Afterwards, the two students walked out of the building saying, "This is so much better than school," and the teacher was able to say to them, "This is school."

Student-centered learning approaches, such as the recipe book and the plasma cutter, are not only more inclusive of students from different cultural backgrounds and those who may have unique learning needs and interests, but also result in better student outcomes. Research shows student-centered learning environments produce learners who are not only more engaged, but also learners who perform higher than their peers in standardized tests, graduate at higher rates than district and state averages, and complete more required coursework for college admission relative to state averages (Stanford Center for Policy Opportunity in Education, 2014).

Despite this, WSD leadership expressed interest in implementing a more prescriptive curriculum to ensure more consistency in instruction. Prescriptive or scripted curriculum is increasing in popularity, particularly in school districts with diverse student populations and many multilingual learners. However, research shows these types of curricula can be detrimental to student learning and engagement and can widen achievement gaps (Hos and Kaplan-Wolff, 2020).

## **Literacy and Language**

Teachers and WSD leadership pointed to literacy as one of the most formidable challenges today. Many students come to WSD having spent time away from any formal schooling. Some students do not have sufficient English proficiency to read and write in English. Other students may not read or write well in their native languages, so the challenges of literacy in English become compounded.

Students in WSD also discussed literacy challenges, but their concerns were with the loss of literacy and language proficiency in their native languages. The sentiment was that students did not feel there were opportunities to use or celebrate their native languages in school. In addition, students were uncertain about their abilities to get class credit for their knowledge of languages other than English.

The WSD leadership touted a new biliteracy certificate program developed recently as one way to acknowledge students' language skills. Students with a certain level of proficiency in a language other than English would receive a certificate upon graduation from high school. The certificate would be something students could use to demonstrate proficiency to postsecondary institutions or employers. However, when asked about this certificate, most high school students were unaware of the opportunity. The biliteracy certificate is well intentioned and is a great step toward acknowledging the prior learning with which New American students arrive. However, students as early as middle school are reporting having forgotten how to read and write in their native languages. Without an opportunity to practice their native languages, students will never be eligible for this certificate. Allowing students opportunities to practice, celebrate, and share their native languages with their peers will help engage all students more deeply and will promote equitable learning outcomes.

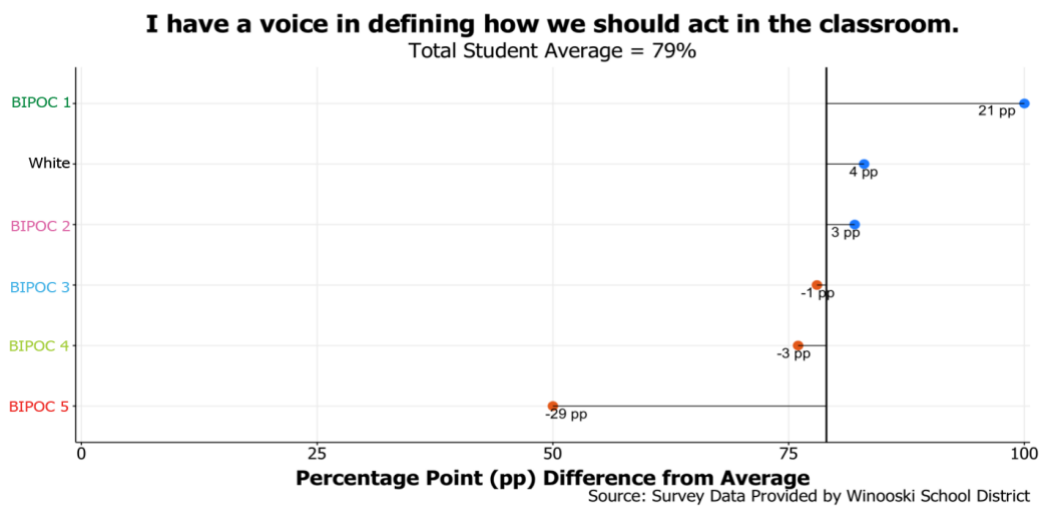
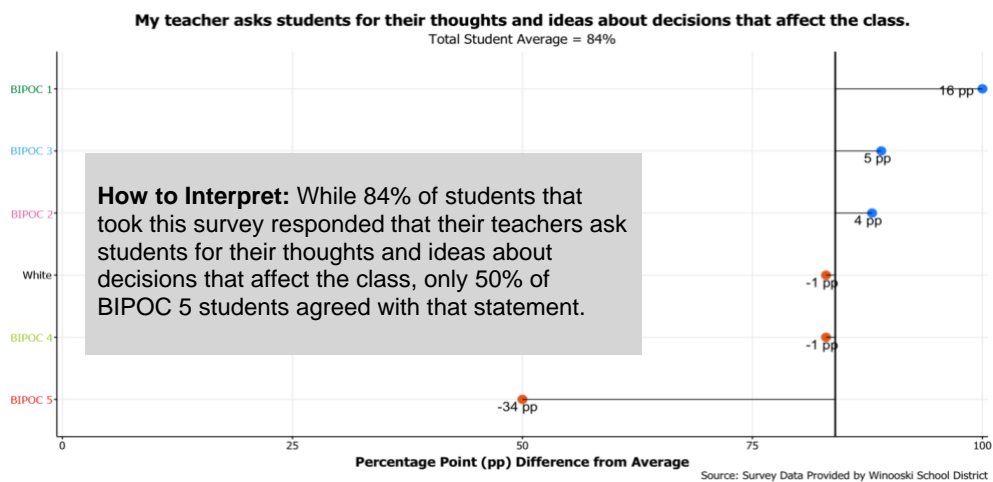
**Finding 6.B**

**BIPOC students do not feel they have a voice in decisions that impact them.**



Exhibit 13 shows 84% of WSD students that responded to the district survey believe their teachers ask for their thoughts and ideas about decisions that affect the school. Also, 79% of students believe they have a voice in defining how they should act in the classroom.

Exhibit 13. Differences in Survey Responses on Student Voice in WSD



However, the exhibit also demonstrates some disparities concerning students' racial backgrounds, suggesting different experiences for different groups of students.

For instance, a group of New American students shared experiences inside and outside the classroom in which they felt their voices were not heard or they did not feel safe raising concerns at school. The students discussed the lack of transparency when a beloved teacher was not renewed at the school. Students acknowledged that following their sit-in protest in the cafeteria, administration allowed one student per table to meet with them to discuss their concerns. However, nothing changed following the discussion. Another student gave an example of a sports game in which the opposing team made racist comments and slurs toward members of the Winooski team. Students brought their concerns to the school administration and were frustrated with what they felt was the lack of a meaningful outcome.

Students also noted that they rarely had opportunities in class to discuss current events or issues that were relevant to them. Students discussed how meaningful it was when one of their teachers took the time to discuss Black history month with them, even though it was not an official part of the curriculum. The students also noted that none of their other teachers had ever done that. One student said, "We need more teachers like that."

Overall, considering the data about diversity, climate survey, and information students and teachers provided in focus groups, we find there is room to strengthen and elevate students' voices in the school and in each classroom.

#### Finding 6.C

**BIPOC residents lack access to voting, representation, and a voice in decisions that impact them.**

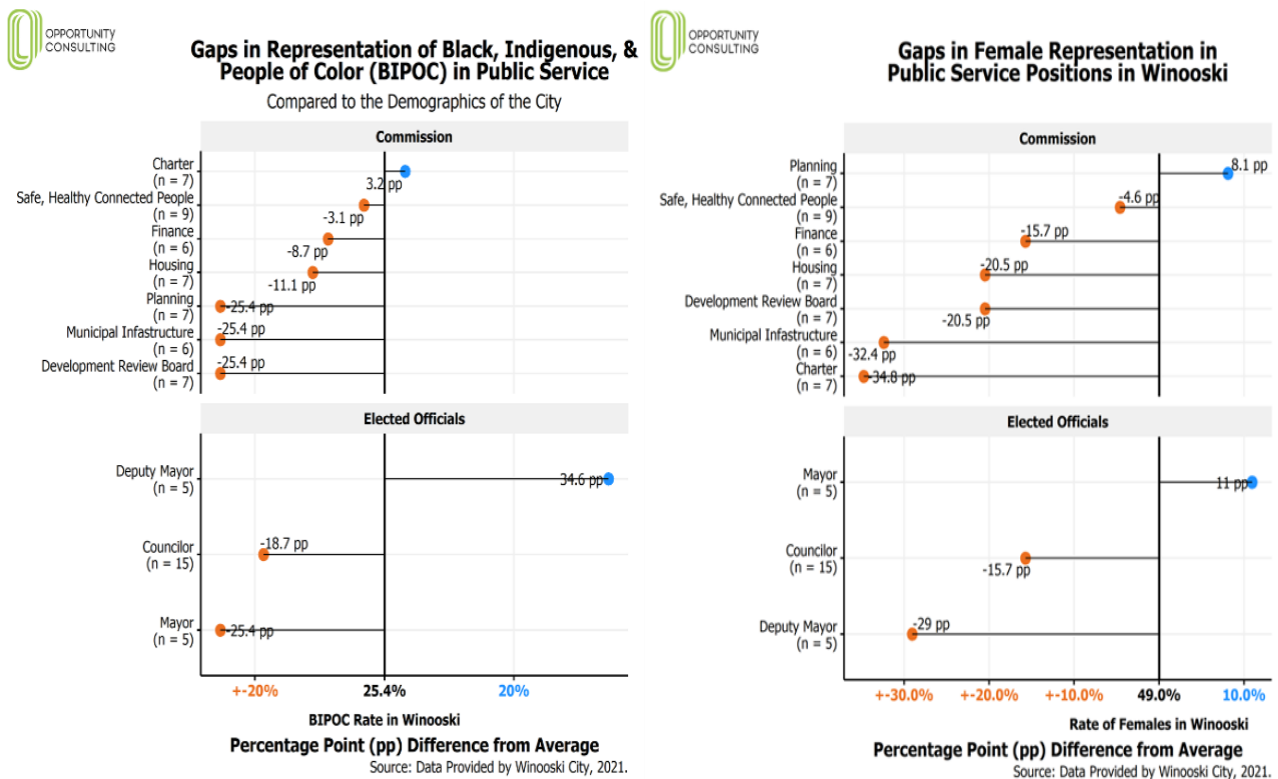


City

The loss of voice among BIPOC residents extends to the City as well. Through the course of our interviews, we found the widespread belief that the City government is not responsive to the needs faced by BIPOC and New American communities. Such a belief persists in spite of

the positive efforts made by the City to make city voting more accessible and more inclusive. For instance, the City of Winooski has translated ballots and voting materials into six languages. In addition, the City has passed legislation allowing non-citizen residents to vote in municipal elections beginning with the upcoming election cycle. In addition to efforts explicitly targeting New American communities, the City has also implemented measures to make voting generally more accessible, including mailing ballots to all residents, allowing absentee voting, and posting information publicly about candidates running for elected office.

Exhibit 14. Gender and Racial Representation Gaps in Elected Positions



However, this audit focuses on the outcomes of policies and not intentions. Those outcomes point to significant disparities regarding the questions of who is running for office, who is getting elected, and who is participating in the voting process. Exhibit 14 presents disparities in racial and gender diversity.

## Winooski s Electoral Structure

At the most basic level, people are unlikely to vote for someone unless they believe that candidate understands the issues they face and will advocate on their behalf to address such issues. We have identified the following three primary institutional factors that create the conditions in which only specific individuals from particular communities are likely to be elected officials or commission members in Winooski:

- ❖ **The City is comprised of a single district, so all elected officials represent the entire city and can campaign for signatures in any part of the City.** Given that BIPOC and New Americans make up only 28% of the City and tend to live in segregated neighborhoods, candidates do not need to campaign in their communities to be placed on the ballot or voted into office. Our conversations with BIPOC residents have verified this presumption. Not one participant in focus groups with New Americans knew their City Council Representatives, and only one resident stated a candidate had ever approached him to ask for his vote (the candidate in question was BIPOC as well).
- ❖ **Getting onto the ballot requires a significant investment of time.** To get on the ballot, a potential candidate must create a petition and collect signatures from eligible voters in the City, which is a highly labor-intensive activity.
- ❖ **The compensation to elected officials is too low.** City council members are paid \$1,500 per year, and the mayor is paid \$1,700 per year. The low pay for such elected positions combined with the time-intensive nature of the roles create barriers for many individuals who cannot afford to take time away from earning wages.

The requirements and pay of the position effectively exclude those who do not possess the money and time to invest in running and holding a low-wage, time-intensive position. The system was designed inequitably, so elected officials do not have an incentive to engage

actively with or respond to the needs of BIPOC and New American communities to secure their votes for elections or re-elections.

### **Winooski's Access to Non-English Voting Information**

Many of the factors affecting diversity within the City's workforce apply to voting as well, chief among them being access to information. As stated earlier, the City has translated ballots into six languages. However, Winooski residents speak at least 21 languages, and this policy underserves speakers of the remaining 15 languages. These residents remain effectively locked out from civic participation. There is also the question of how the City disperses information about candidates and voting to the community. Information shared in online portals and the local newspapers is less accessible for New American residents.

#### **Finding 6.D**

**Winooski has not made enough effort to identify and address the systemic barriers to voting for New Americans.**



Though not universal, Winooski's New American communities generally do not have the same experience with democracy and civic participation as their American-born neighbors. New Americans and refugees from countries where political violence is common (i.e., politics is a venue for corruption and patronage) or where there is little to no democratic tradition may not view voting as safe, let alone as a right or civic responsibility. During a focus group, one respondent remarked that refugees and New Americans may be scared to vote based on experiences prior to immigrating.

Others may not fear voting but still do not understand the purpose or potential benefits of civic engagement. Another resident told us that some members of his community are not familiar with voting in general and would need voting education to learn how to do it and why it is important. Numerous residents pointed out barriers to voting for members of their communities, such as not understanding the differences between the candidates, confusion

about how to fill out a ballot, and illiteracy. All these barriers hinder New American residents' capability to advocate for themselves and have their issues addressed through the political process.

## THEME 7: INEQUITIES IN HOUSING POLICY AND PRACTICE

### Finding 7.A

**The approach to housing management and planning generates trauma for BIPOC residents and students.**



One of the greatest issues facing New Americans in Winooski is access to affordable, quality housing. Residents, WSD leadership, and City officials all highlighted concerns with housing equity in Winooski. They commented on the City's low supply of affordable units for families, substandard housing conditions, and frameworks that funnel New American families into housing with well-known quality and safety concerns. While distinct, these factors are interrelated, mutually reinforcing, and contributing to the residential segregation present in the City. As a result, BIPOC and New American residents overwhelmingly are concentrated in the Upper Main and Flats/Elm Street neighborhoods and are generally excluded from the Downtown and Riverside areas.

Residential segregation is by no means unique to Winooski, since 70% of the largest metro areas in the U.S. would require significant resident redistribution to achieve integration (Matthew et al., 2016). Experts have identified numerous factors that lead to and reinforce residential segregation. These factors include zoning policies, which direct or steer families to certain neighborhoods, and selective acceptance of housing vouchers by landlords (Matthew et al., 2016; Cunningham et al., 2018).



During focus groups, BIPOC and New American residents described the state of their living conditions. Among the issues raised were pest infestations (i.e., rodents, cockroaches, and other pests), poor insulation and freezing temperatures (e.g., ice on interior walls), mold, and poor construction (e.g., unstable staircases). Some residents of Winooski pointed out these quality issues are not a new phenomenon. In addition, attempts to work with their landlords to remedy these issues have not proven successful. Unresponsiveness appears common place among the landlords who own the buildings in question. The stories we heard all underscored the landlords' unwillingness to address even routine maintenance and safety. Residents complained of moving into units that had not been cleaned or had no basic repairs completed. Another resident remarked that it took more than a week for management to repair the heating during the middle of winter, leaving families in freezing conditions. Even the residents with longer tenure in the City that felt comfortable pursuing repairs from their landlords still faced difficulties in having their requests answered. One such resident remarked that it took numerous contacts with the landlord over a period of months to have an apartment repainted, and the landlord never conducted any maintenance proactively.

In addition to resident complaints, city officials also expressed knowledge of ongoing quality issues with specific landlords and buildings. Both parties identified a similar set of factors correlated with the poor housing quality that New American residents can access, the low supply of appropriately sized and affordable units, the practice of "funneling" refugees and New American residents to specific buildings with known egregious issues, and the power imbalances between the renters and landlords.

### **Available New Housing Construction**

Winooski has seen significant housing development in the past few years, and some of this development has focused on affordable housing. According to the city leadership, 20% of the housing stock in Winooski is affordable housing. Yet, New American families report significant difficulty finding housing that fits their needs. New Americans are more likely to need affordable housing and multi-room apartments or homes to accommodate larger, multi-generational families. However, City officials acknowledged that most new construction

consists of studio and one-bedroom apartments or luxury buildings boasting significant amenities, such as the City Gardens building and the proposed development at 340 Main Street (Baird, 2021). According to one City official, studio and one-bedroom apartments made up 73% of new construction in Winooski during the past five years. At the same time, the amount of affordable housing constructed during the same period has not kept pace with the increasing demand. Residents cited a new Redstone building as an example of one-bedroom units renting at \$1,200 per month. One of the residents said none of the people in the community could afford this type of unit. Another resident put it more succinctly when saying, “They are not building for the community.”

For these families, the most suitable housing would be single family homes, which tend to be available for purchase rather than rent. This keeps suitable housing out of reach for BIPOC and New American families that have less wealth and access to credit for purchasing housing than their White counterparts. Conversely, the City’s housing policy and planning creates barriers for home ownership for lower income and New American residents, including those who have worked and lived in the area for years. Many research studies confirm that home ownership is still one of the biggest positive drivers of financial stability and wealth creation (2019 Survey of Consumer Finances).

### **Available Housing for Refugees and New American Residents**

In addition to cost considerations, we discovered through our conversations that refugees and New American residents are directed toward specific housing using methods that include targeted advertising and advertising Section 8 vouchers (Cunningham et al., 2018). One long-term, BIPOC resident described the lifecycle of this process. The resident explained when searching for housing, the resident was more likely to look for ads in free sources, such as Craigslist, rather than paying for a local paper to view classifieds. Ads placed in these sources target low-income renters through specific language and incentives, such as waived credit checks. During an apartment visit, sources told us landlords would show the prospective tenant a “show unit” that was clean and in good repair. Often, renters were not allowed to view the actual unit, stating it was either being renovated or the previous tenant was in the process

of moving out. The tenant would then move in and discover the unit they rented was in greater disrepair than the show unit. If the renter chose to break the lease upon discovery of the poor quality of the unit, the renter would forfeit the security deposit, thereby increasing the difficulty of finding a better housing situation or securing counsel for legal redress.

### **SPOTLIGHT: Evictions at 300 Main**

On 2 February 2022, 24 families living at the apartment complex on 300 Main Street were handed eviction notices that directed them to vacate their homes by the end of June. The tenants—primarily low-income New American families with children in the WSD—faced the daunting prospect of locating new housing in a county where both affordable housing and multi-bedroom units are in short supply and rents are rising. The purported rationale for the evictions was to undertake renovations to address code violations identified by the City (Elder-Connors and B., Liam, 2022). However, the City officials have noted that previous code violations at the location were remedied prior to the evictions; therefore, such reasoning hints that the likely motivation was to remove Section 8 access and raise rents, displacing economically disadvantaged families.

**Finding 7.B**

**Winooski has not provided New American families with the knowledge and tools to advocate for their rights as tenants.**



The story of housing for New American families differs from the experience of BIPOC individuals born in the U.S. Housing for many immigrant and refugee families begins with the United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), a nonprofit organization that works in coordination with U.S. federal agencies to place refugees in communities like

Winooski. As part of the resettlement process, USCRI secures housing for the refugees it resettles (USCRI, n.d.). Through conversations with the City officials, we discovered USCRI maintains relationships with a select number of landlords in Winooski who are willing to take refugees and accept housing vouchers. Landlords are not required to accept vouchers, which places an additional limitation on where low-income residents can live (Cunningham et al., 2018). While such action helps refugees navigate a complex process during a stressful transition period, the partnership between USCRI and landlords removes the accountability link between the landlords and refugees. According to some of the New American residents, USCRI's assistance lasts only six months, after which they must navigate the negotiations of everyday life on their own, such as dealing with a landlord. The issue with this arrangement is that during the initial period of resettlement New Americans focus on those concerns most immediate for daily life, such as enrolling their children in school, securing employment, figuring out transportation, and locating a grocery store. More intangible concepts, such as rights and self-advocacy, were not pressing concerns until they became a necessity according to New American families who have been through the resettlement process. Even as the salience of these concerns increased, residents highlighted factors that inhibited their abilities or desires to relocate. These factors included not wanting to disrupt their children's educations or worries about not being able to find a new apartment and then having to bridge the gap with a potentially lengthy, costly hotel stay.

### **A "Hands-Tied" Mentality Toward Housing Issues**

Through our conversations with the City officials, it became clear the City government is aware of the issues in Winooski's housing market. However, officials often caveated their observations of housing issues with the constraints on the city government's power to address these issues. Such constraints included the market's preference for high-end, small apartments; an inability to mandate the type of units that developers build; restrictions attached to Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding; zoning laws; and macro-economic and demographic trends. The City has taken some action to relieve some of the strain on the housing market, such as reducing parking requirements for apartment buildings to

reduce costs and establishing and funding a housing trust. The City also conducts building inspections, and many of the buildings housing New American and BIPOC residents are subject to HUD minimum standards, which are less stringent than those adopted by the City. In summary, the City's awareness of housing issues and the actions taken to remedy these issues have not been inclusive of BIPOC's and New American's concerns and have been insufficient to affect change.

## CONCLUSION: DIVERSE BUT NOT INCLUSIVE

In the preceding sections of this report, we highlighted areas where inequalities in outcomes and experiences exist between BIPOC and White residents of Winooski in specific areas. However, our research of the City revealed a general divide between BIPOC residents and the rest of the City driven by feelings of exclusion and a disconnect from the wider community. For instance, one BIPOC resident remarked that, despite comprising a quarter of the City's population, other BIPOC community members infrequently are seen patronizing restaurants, shops, and community spaces within the downtown area. BIPOC individuals in roles of authority within the City also expressed frustration at having their perspectives and opinions dismissed or glossed over by their colleagues.

Within the New American community, this disconnect from the community of Winooski runs deep. From our conversations with school liaisons, interpreters, and nonprofit workers, we found that the New American communities generally feel excluded from the wider community. Because new arrivals lack the experience to navigate and access even the most basic services (how to open a bank account, navigate transportation, figure out their rights, etc.), their focus remains directed at solving basic issues, which reduces the available time to participate in and integrate with the community more broadly.

The City has made efforts to open decision-making to the community broadly (opening city hall meetings to the public and broadcasting them on Zoom) and to expand services to the New American community (employing school liaisons to translate city resources). The City should be commended for these efforts. However, our conversations with New American residents reveal these efforts have been insufficient. For instance, although the City has translated materials and resources, New American respondents were unaware these resources existed. They also expressed confusion over the complicated language of legal and administrative documents, which act as a barrier to those trying to learn the rules but are unfamiliar with these structures. We repeatedly heard New American residents express the belief they are

being manipulated, because they cannot speak the language or understand the procedures of their adopted home; therefore, they are unable to advocate for themselves.

This report has emphasized the discrepancies found in Winooski's experience as a community making progress toward diversity and openness to refugees, but where many barriers to full equity and inclusion remain. One city employee summarized the sentiment succinctly when stating, "If I had to emphasize anything, the thing that's always frustrated me is... we don't have relationships across cultures to speak of. We don't live together."

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WSD

### Recommendation 1: Use Effective, Early Reading Strategies Using High-Quality Instructional Materials for Multilingual Learners

Providing effective, early literacy instruction and programs is critical for the many migrant and former refugee students attending school in Winooski. However, WSD educators argue there is insufficient flexibility in the curriculum, as well as in their ability to create lesson plans and activities tailored to meet the needs of their diverse students.

For recent migrants and multilingual learners, as with all students, early literacy is critical to their experiences in school, academic success, and long-term outcomes. There are a number of strategies the City can implement to support early reading for their many students who are non-native English speakers.

The district can support the development of their native languages (Williams, 2020). Research suggests that enhancing students' abilities in their first languages helps them academically and assists them in learning English more effectively (Valentino & Reardon, 2014). Leveraging WSD's liaisons and, most importantly, engaging with students' parents and families can help with this process. Educators can encourage reading, playing, and singing in their native languages. This is particularly important as some students shared that forgetting their native languages poses barriers for them to communicate with their own parents. In short, expose young children to as much language in whatever tongue possible. This will foster the skills and letter recognition students need to learn any language, which ultimately supports English acquisition (Klass, 2017).

Schools can support these efforts directly. For example, providing books in students' native language can help engender feelings of belonging and support student learning. Libraries can also include translations of core texts, or a listening library that offers summaries of important



texts for non-native English speakers (Bajaj & Bartlett, 2017). Using culturally relevant texts throughout classroom instruction also helps (Freeman & Freeman, 2020). High-quality instructional materials designed for multilingual learners are essential (Mavrogordato et al., 2021). The Century Foundation compiled a list of online high-quality materials, lesson plans, early literacy, and other materials to support multilingual students (Williams, n.d.). Additionally, after school programs that include curricula and activities oriented to English language acquisition are effective (He et al, 2019).

The Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL) model is an evidence-based framework that provides a school-wide strategy to center and support multilingual students and their needs. The approach includes family partnerships, dual language literacy, and culturally responsive curricula (SEAL, 2021). Fresno Unified School District in California has found success supporting multilingual students by expanding their dual language programs and utilizing specific dual language learner professional development (Crolotte, 2019).

## Recommendation 2: Implement Strategies to Reduce Instances of and Inequalities in Exclusionary School Discipline

Nationally, students of color, students with disabilities, and multilingual students are disproportionately disciplined (Lose & Martinez, 2020; NCLD, 2020; Herrera & McNair, 2021; Burke, 2015; Villegas, 2021). Exclusionary discipline adversely affects students' academic and long-term outcomes (LiCalsi, Osher, & Bailey, 2021). Indeed, schools with high rates of discipline harm the education of all students, even those who are not suspended or expelled (Hinze-Pifer & Sartain, 2018).

These problems and inequalities in school discipline are present in WSD. Teachers acknowledge that non-White students are disciplined differently from White students. This is consistent with research about school discipline practices. In fact, “the evidence suggests that discipline disparities may be explained more by the behavior of adults—teachers and

principals in schools—than by student misbehavior” (Welsh & Little, n.d.). Subjective adult decisions, most often committed by teachers, are at the core of school discipline judgements and drive many of the disparities. As such, student-teacher racial mismatch, classroom management, and implicit bias can all play a role in discipline disparities (Welsh & Little, n.d.).

Teachers suggest unclear policies around discipline may contribute to discipline disparities in WSD. Clear policies are important. However, given that discipline decisions are inherently subjective, establishing policy alone will not be sufficient to address disparities in school discipline. For example, zero tolerance policies are clear, but produce wildly disparate outcomes among student groups (Advancement Project and the Civil Rights Project, 2000).

There are a variety of strategies that districts can employ to reduce disparities in discipline and to eliminate overuse of exclusionary discipline practices, such as suspensions or expulsions. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is an evidenced-based framework designed to improve practices and systems to address behavioral challenges and ultimately improve school culture and student outcomes. In fact, there is a statewide effort, Vermont PBIS (VTPBIS), to help schools systemically improve students’ social and academic outcomes (Vermont PBIS, n.d.). Another approach is to implement restorative practices to resolve conflict and heal harm in lieu of exclusionary discipline (NGLC, n.d.). When implemented well, evidence suggests these models reduce the rate of exclusionary discipline, as well as improve school culture and climate overall (McIntosh, et al., 2021; Gregory & Evans, 2020).

To reduce disparities in school discipline, the educator training program called My Teacher Partner (MTP) program has proven to reduce race-based discipline disparities (Gregory, et al., 2019; UVA Today, (2016)). MTP is a teacher training program focused on improving student-teacher interactions. The program includes a video library of best practices, a three-credit college course, and online individualized coaching. MTP-S is designed specifically for middle and high school teachers.

### Recommendation 3: Afford Students Regular and Structured Opportunities to Provide Input About Their Education

Some of Winooski's students reported that students' perspectives and experiences were under considered by school leadership. Recently, teachers were dismissed who students felt were particularly effective and whose teaching thoughtfully addressed diverse issues and topics. Many students did not understand the decision and wished there had been an opportunity for them to voice their experiences and to explain why they found these teachers to be especially effective.

To be clear, there may be any number of reasons that these teachers no longer work in WSD. Student support, no matter how vociferous, may not have been able to change the outcome. Nonetheless, young people and adults appreciate the opportunity to offer their opinions and to be engaged in the decision-making processes that affect them. Once a decision has been made, particularly one that affects students directly, it is important for leadership to explain the choice even if only after the fact.

There are many benefits to incorporating student voice into school operations. Giving students greater ownership over their own educations and incorporating their ideas and perspectives into their schooling can increase student engagement, improve programs, and influence school decisions (Benner, Brown, & Jeffrey, 2019; Shafer, 2016). Moreover, formal structures for students to share their perspectives can help to address inequalities in school (Fernandez, Down, & Steiner, 2021). As such, it is critical for schools and districts working to elevate student perspectives to ensure they are engaging with students from diverse backgrounds.

There are a wide range of policies and practices that schools and districts employ to gather and incorporate student input into the school. Regular student surveys can be effective tools to solicit students' views, experiences, and ideas. For example, Illinois uses the Illinois Youth

Survey to get insight into students' perspectives and experiences (Benner, Brown, & Jeffrey, 2019). A more direct and consistent approach to incorporate students' voices in school leadership is to give students an active role in decision-making committees. This model gets students' insight into decisions that affect them and gives students the opportunity to provide their perspectives (Banner, Brown, & Jeffrey, 2019). Included in school-level leadership, students can help guide schools toward more inclusive and interesting practices, policies, and instructional materials (Schmidt, 2005). There are many districts and schools that take this approach, such as the Boston Student Advisory Committee or the Montgomery County Public School Board of Education in Maryland, which includes an elected student with full voting rights (Banner, Brown, Jeffrey, 2019). Other promising practices include student government, youth participatory action research, and student journalism (Benner, Brown, & Jeffrey, 2019).

There is no perfect approach. Each strategy to engage with students in school leadership and decision-making comes with trade-offs. The City will need to identify the model that best suits leadership and student needs. Any choice, however, must be sure to solicit diverse student perspectives, have clear objectives, and build on strong relationships between students and adults.

#### **Recommendation 4: Develop a Strategy to Diversify and Localize the Educator Workforce**

The WSD should develop and implement a high-priority plan to diversify and localize its educator workforce. It is well established that a diverse teaching workforce is a significant component of effective and equitable instruction and can be a critical driver of closing achievement gaps. Research has documented that diversity can lead to improved outcomes for students of color, such as academic gains, graduation rates, and college enrollment. Without diverse teachers, these students may be overlooked, lack a role model in the classroom, and suffer from the implicit bias of their teachers (Carver-Thomas, 2018; Goldhaber & Mizrav, 2022; Villegas & Irvine, 2010).

The WSD may want to consider ways in which it can create new pipelines for teaching in the school district that capitalize on the diversity of the City and WSD while including pathways for career changers, educational paraprofessionals, and high school students in WSD. Programs that create such pathways to professions include Grow Your Own (GYO)-type programs, “2+2” partnerships between local colleges and universities, and other strategies. Such programs were proven effective in other school districts across the country not only in diversifying the teacher workforce, but also in creating a local teacher cadre that is more effective with longer retention rates as a solution for growing educator shortages (Carver-Thomas, 2018, Kimmel et. al., 2021). In WSD, as in other school districts, coupling these strategies with retention-focused strategies, such as mentoring and induction for new BIPOC teachers, will be key in maintaining any gains in workforce diversification.

## JOINT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WSD AND THE CITY

### Recommendation 5: Strengthen WSD and City Collaboration and Include the WSD Superintendent as a Member of the City Leadership

The study revealed several places where the school can help the city and vice versa, and that collaboration is critical for advancing equity. One such area pertains to the role of the WSD Superintendent. The superintendent is a key leader, not just for the school district, but for the Winooski community. For this reason, we see the importance of treating the superintendent as a member of the City leadership and having him or her join City leadership meetings to bring a critical perspective to decisions affecting the residents, many of whom are also connected to WSD.

### Recommendation 6: Expand the School Liaison Program from WSD to the City

We recommend the City fund the liaisons in full-time jobs working under the City Director of Equity instead of under WSD. In the spirit of this report and overall recommendations, a city-school collaboration would allow liaisons to maximize their contributions to the community on a range of issues. To attract and retain liaisons, Winooski can increase salaries and expand the job to a full-time position. As full-time employees, these liaisons can undertake additional services and activities within the school and the entire community. This would help the liaisons and the families they assist further integrate into the school's culture, contribute to a more positive experience, and help to raise student performance.

The community liaison program has been a success and serves as a promising practice for similar school districts. Teachers, parents, and students attest the liaisons are a critical component of the school community and provide important support. The liaisons form strong relationships with students and families, which research suggests are critical to integrating new immigrants and refugees successfully into the school and community (Dryden-Peterson, et al.,

2019; Powers, 2022). It is reasonable to expect students' experiences in the City's school to vary based on their access to a liaison who speaks their languages. The precise impact on students and families is worth further investigation.

Despite these successes, the program simply is too small. There is not a liaison for each of the languages present among WSD's students, such as Pashto. Moreover, the current liaisons are only part-time employees, which limits the positive impact they can have on students and the school. Offering liaisons only part-time employment increases the risk of turnover. This threatens the critical role they play for students as a consistent, supportive person who understands their languages and cultures and who can build meaningful relationships with them.

Community liaisons in Winooski are more than interpreters at the school, they are also community leaders. The WSD should capitalize on the liaisons' success with family engagement to provide a foundation to address other areas. For example, liaisons could encourage and support New Americans in voting. Liaisons could provide training about the voting process to residents who do not speak English. Liaisons can even facilitate a mock voting day, where parents practice the voting process and receive guidance from the liaisons. Liaisons could also support tenants in understanding their rights if the information is not available in their spoken languages.

To scale the program, WSD may also want to explore a partnership with nearby Burlington School District. Like WSD, Burlington established a liaison program to support its refugee and multilingual population. The district currently employs 11 staff members, as well as several others who are on-call to deliver services to students who speak a language that does not have a full-time liaison. The WSD may be able to develop a partnership with Burlington to provide students access to these important services and supports. This would be particularly helpful for students who speak a language that is not represented among current liaisons in WSD.

## Recommendation 7: Provide Transportation by Increasing Drivers' Pay

School transportation is a consistent challenge for many families in Winooski. Without school bus service, many students struggle with getting to school on time and are more likely to be absent from school altogether, particularly students in low-income communities and among recent arrivals to this country (Garcia & Weiss, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Without consistent, reliable public transportation to school, students are at greater risk of chronic absenteeism and tardiness, which negatively affects their achievements and experiences in school.

Bus drivers are traditionally hired by the school district and not the City. However, this report describes how transportation can be fundamental to the lived experiences of residents in the city. School transportation is a bridge between the streets, homes, and school under the responsibility of the City and WSD. As such, we believe that establishing collaboration to ensure adequate and consistent school transportation may be a key area for consideration. Failing to provide students with transportation to school has greater consequences than an inconvenient commute. It can damage students' academic and long-term outcomes. Students who miss school typically do worse academically. Indeed, the more school a student misses, the worse they perform (Garcia & Weiss, 2018). Early in students' academic careers, chronic absenteeism significantly reduces their likelihoods of reading on grade level by third grade. In turn, this increases the likelihood of dropping out of high school (Hernandez, et al., 2012). Inconsistent attendance is related to markedly higher dropout rates (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). Emerging research finds the presence of chronically absent students can also reduce outcomes for other students in the school (Gottfried, 2019).

Teachers mentioned tardiness is also a problem in WSD that is correlated with the availability of school bus service. Arriving late to school reduces a student's learning time and less time in the classroom is a problem in general. Tardiness is a problem that students who are already behind academically or who are learning English feel more acutely. Additionally, a late arrival



can mean students miss the school-provided breakfast, which also has adverse consequences on overall student wellbeing and academic performance.

Providing buses to transport students to school on a predictable, reliable schedule can help to mitigate these challenges. Recent research finds that students who take the bus to school are less likely to be chronically absent (Gottfried, 2017). Yet, finding drivers and navigating transportation costs are real concerns. There are several strategies other districts have undertaken to mitigate these issues and ensure students have safe, reliable transportation to and from school.

The bus driver shortage has been a consistent problem nationally, which the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated (Rosales, 2019). Districts have attempted to address the issue by raising wages to attract and retain bus drivers (Defoe, 2021; Associated Press, 2021; Zero, 2021). Raising pay can entice new drivers and help to retain current ones. However, even with higher pay, offering only part-time, seasonal work can make it more challenging to find and keep bus drivers. Given those challenges, coupled with the opportunity to better support student learning by providing busing, WSD should consider providing year-around bus services. This would eliminate the hiring challenges arising from offering only seasonal work. To offer full-time employment, WSD may also want to develop hybrid jobs that include bus driving and other services that would benefit the City, district, school, and students. As many as half the adults working in schools are not classroom teachers, and yet they fulfill important roles providing high-quality education to students (Loeb, 2016). Given the considerable population of new Americans settling in the City, WSD may want to pay potential candidates within these communities to get their commercial driver's licenses, to serve as bus drivers and community liaisons or to perform other roles supporting students. This way, a bus driver may have multiple duties to accommodate full-time pay.

Paying current teachers to get their commercial driver's licenses and drive a school bus is another approach districts have undertaken to address the bus driver shortage (Rosales, 2019). A rural district in North Carolina now requires newly hired, non-teaching staff to

complete bus driving training (Mitchell, 2019).<sup>3</sup> Paying existing teachers or staff to undertake the additional responsibility of driving a bus can be a more cost-effective way of providing this important service to students. It also can be a more enticing offer, since most district employees are already full-time, year-round employees that receive health and retirement benefits.

Finally, some districts adopted ride-sharing programs to meet the transportation needs of specific populations of students. For example, Los Angeles Unified School District contracted with HopSkipDrive<sup>4</sup> to provide transportation for foster youth to ensure they have access to their schools of origin even if they move to a new community (Tiano, 2019). The WSD would need to conduct a budget and community need analysis to determine whether this is a viable option for the district.

---

<sup>3</sup> Corey Mitchell, "Teacher-Drivers Keep Wheels on the Bus Going Round," Education Week, September 3, 2019, available at: <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/teacher-drivers-keep-wheels-on-the-bus-going-round/2019/09>.

<sup>4</sup> HopSkipDrive, <https://www.hopskipdrive.com/>.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CITY

### Recommendation 8: Development of Affordable Housing through Research and Action Planning

To address housing affordability and availability, the City should identify the drivers of housing inequality. Areas of research that are of particular interest include the history and impact of zoning laws and their interactions with income and wealth inequality.

The Center for American Progress summarizes the history of zoning in its 2019 report *Systemic Inequality: Displacement, Exclusion, and Segregation* (Solomon et. Al., 2019). This report details how the creation of zoning was “explicitly race-based” and how the emergence of “single-family” zoning, which barred those who could not afford single-family homes from living in the area, ties directly to this heritage. The report connects this history to its contemporary consequences. Typically, wealth and the access to loans acted as prerequisites to purchasing homes in neighborhoods zoned for single-family housing, which favored White homebuyers. The resulting neighborhoods became racially segregated without any explicit racial pretext. The history of zoning and its consequences is an important lens to assess current zoning laws. The City could research how its current zoning laws could be contributing to the residential segregation highlighted in this report.

Zoning laws typically are viewed as restrictions on what type of units can be built in specific areas. However, coupled with income and wealth disparities, zoning laws can exacerbate residential segregation. The Brookings Institution identified this combination as a “major obstacle for racial integration and economic mobility” (Schultz, 2020). This report has demonstrated that income gaps exist between White and BIPOC city employees in Winooski. White public employees (the only group to earn greater than the median salary on average) made just over \$6,000 more per year than the highest earning BIPOC group and almost \$9,500 more than the lowest earning BIOC group. In another piece, Brookings states, “When

there are wide economic gaps by race, as we have in the U.S., exclusionary land-use policies based on families 'economic circumstances entrench racial segregation" (Matthew et. al., 2016). Researching the interaction between racial economic disparities and Winooski's zoning laws will be an important first step in developing an action plan that effectively and equitably addresses the housing affordability crisis in the City.

Reforming zoning laws will not be sufficient to address the housing affordability crisis in Winooski. In addition, the City should evaluate its current housing stock and develop a pipeline that accounts for the community's housing needs. Recent reporting shows a significant amount of development has occurred in the City over the past decade. However, our interviews with City officials and residents revealed the type of units being built in the City do not fit the needs of the community's most vulnerable members. For instance, apartments with three or more bedrooms, which would fit the needs of New American families, have been ignored in favor of luxury studio and one-bedroom apartments. Identifying how existing policy may be creating unintentional barriers to providing housing that fits the community's needs is the first step to formulating an action plan to rectify these policies.

## Recommendation 9: Educate and Train Landlords and Renters

From our conversations with community members, we found that Winooski's New American residents generally are not aware of their rights as tenants. When asked about their rights, most individuals stated the information they have about renting relates to their responsibilities as tenants, such as paying rent. Thus, a gap exists in the City concerning information about housing rights, where the information exists, and the BIPOC community members' knowledge of this information. The City should work to bridge this information gap. Making information accessible on the City's website would not be sufficient. The City should consider more proactive measures to ensure renters know their rights. This could include the use of the community liaisons in an expanded capacity as discussed in Recommendation 6.

Renters in Winooski need easy access to information about housing rights and resources. Pennsylvania's Housing Equality Center is a great example of how to inform residents of their housing rights and resources (2022). This organization offers several comprehensive fair housing guides broken down by type of reader (i.e., consumer, local government, etc.) with information about the Fair Housing Act, as well as relevant local fair housing information offered digitally and physically. To increase the dissemination of housing information, Winooski may consider the Pennsylvania example by developing its own fair housing guide. Such a resource, if developed in print and digital formats, could serve as a key mechanism for transmitting fair housing information, guidelines, and resources from HUD, the State of Vermont, and the City of Winooski to residents. Given that the City's New American residents do not have experience with U.S. housing upon their arrivals here, it is especially important for the City to take the initiative to provide them with fair housing information, as they may not be exposed to it without assistance. Renters may be unsure which resources exist, where they can access the information, if the resources are available in their native languages, and whose responsibility it is to acquire this information. The City can create a single resource available in all languages spoken in Winooski that renters receive upon moving in.

Another option to improve access to housing information could be improving the fair housing resource accessibility. A good example would be Pennsylvania's Housing Equality Center Resource webpage (2022). This resource contains links to information for consumers and landlords, HUD resources, a guide for local governments, and more. Importantly, the website is extensive, clear, and accessible. The links lead straight to easy-to-read, well-organized documents, rather than redirecting to a separate webpage. Adopting this format would be beneficial for individuals needing access to this information who do not have as much technological experience. Clicking through a series of links and webpages to find information can discourage and confuse information seekers.

Mandatory fair housing training can accompany education. Numerous residents spoke of their inability to hold landlords accountable, citing poor living conditions and even routine

maintenance that would go unaddressed for extended periods of time. Training landlords on their responsibilities to their tenants can help make landlords more effective. Such training could also extend beyond landlords to include elected officials and zoning board members (Pennsylvania's Housing Equality Center, 2020). Vermont's housing resource webpage includes a Fair Housing Law classroom module that discusses fair housing and protections in the Vermont context. This webpage also includes a discussion of anti-discriminatory advertising and best non-discriminatory practices for landlords (State of Vermont, Agency of Commerce and Community Development, 2022).

## **Recommendation 10: Change Advertising and Recruitment Practices to Ones that Are More Effective at Diversifying the Workforce**

Current and former city employees expressed concern that recruitment methods used to recruit new talent do not reach BIPOC residents. These employees also expressed the City does not give enough consideration to advertising and recruiting techniques that would reach BIPOC applicants. The analysis in this report highlights the disparities in BIPOC and female representation in Winooski public employment. Former employees suggested the City change its advertising practices to more modern methods, such as posting job listings on social media. Additionally, former employees suggested the City should leave job postings up for longer periods to gather a more diverse set of people interested in applying before closing off the availability of the job. Solutions should be part of an intentional, strategic plan to diversify the City workforce.

An intentional, strategic plan could also include practices, such as:

- Adopting an affirmative diversity policy or statement included in job advertisements or on the City government website
- Performing an internal demographic assessment of City government departments and determining affirmative diversity goals

- Partnering with WSD and institutions serving BIPOC residents in the area to develop recruitment plans or advertising partnerships
- Creating a diverse recruitment or hiring team

## Recommendation 11: Develop Strategies to Increase Civic Participation among BIPOC Residents

The City can approach increasing civic participation among BIPOC residents through two avenues:

- Play a larger role in educating New Americans about the democratic process and opportunities.
- Improve efforts to engage the broader BIPOC communities in the democratic process.

The Center for American Progress (2018) identifies feelings of alienation from the government as a potential cause of low voter participation. The City can invest in explaining why voting is important for the community, how voters can benefit from civic participation, and why voting is safe for everyone.

The City could also invest in training New Americans before election day. Sample ballots could be provided to residents to familiarize potential voters with the process ahead of time to avoid complications at the polls (especially for individuals that have no experience with ballots).

Grassroots efforts have been effective at increasing voter participation (Dale & Straus, 2009). Grassroots efforts can also build communities through one-on-one, personal interactions between residents and the canvassers. The responsibility of canvassers can include physically registering residents to vote; providing information about candidates; and informing residents of how, where, and when to vote (Center for American Progress, 2018). In Recommendation 5, we expanded on the vital role that community liaisons can play in this effort.

## REFERENCES

- Advanced Project and the Civil Rights Project (2000). Opportunities Suspended: The devastating consequences of zero tolerance and school discipline. National Summit on Zero Tolerance. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/school-discipline/opportunities-suspended-the-devastating-consequences-of-zero-tolerance-and-school-discipline-policies/crp-opportunities-suspended-zero-tolerance-2000.pdf>
- Associated Press. (2021). WSD Offers Raises, Bonuses to Attract Bus Drivers. U.S. News. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/virginia/articles/2021-08-30/school-system-offers-raises-bonuses-to-attract-bus-drivers>
- Apgar, W. C., & Calder, A. (2005). The dual mortgage market: The persistence of discrimination in mortgage lending.
- Bajaj, M., Bartlett, L. (2017). Critical Transnational Curriculum for Immigrant and Refugee Students. Curriculum Inquiry. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f6bf2323f8cfc2564497b87/t/60486934cd6aa951fd1bc91e/1615358260901/2017.+Bajaj-Bartlett+Critical+Transnational+Curric.pdf>
- Benner, M., Brown, C., Jeffrey, A. (2019). Elevating Student Voice in Education. Center for American Progress. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/elevating-student-voice-education/>
- Burke, A. (2015). Suspension, Expulsion, and Achievement of English Learner Students in Six Oregon Districts. Education Northwest; National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED558158.pdf>
- Center for American Progress (2018). Increasing Voter Participation in America: Policies to Drive Participation and Make Voting More Convenient. Retrieved on April 2022 from: [https://diversity.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/recruiting\\_a\\_more\\_diverse\\_workforce\\_uhs.pdf](https://diversity.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/recruiting_a_more_diverse_workforce_uhs.pdf)
- Crolotte, C. (2019, April 26). Fresno Unified's Efforts to Support Dual Language Learners. Early Edge California. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://earlyedgecalifornia.org/fresno-unifieds-efforts-to-support-dual-language-learners/>



Dale, A., & Strauss, A. (2009). Don't forget to vote: Text message reminders as a mobilization tool. *American Journal of Political Science*, 53(4), 787-804.

DeGrow, B., & Hoang, E. C. (2016). School spending and Student Achievement in Michigan: What's the Relationship? Mackinac Center for Public Policy

DeVoe, J. (2021). APS UPS Bus Driver Salaries Amid Calls for Raises, Better Work Environment. ARL Now. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www.arlnow.com/2021/12/16/aps-ups-bus-driver-salaries-amid-calls-for-raises-better-work-environment/>

Dryden-Peterson, S., et al. (2019). The Purposes of Refugee Education: Policy and Practice of Including refugees in National Education Systems.

Elementary School Students. Oregon Research Institute. 178-195

eXtension Foundation (2022), Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Retrieved from <https://dei.extension.org>.

Fernandez, M., Doan, S., Steiner, E. (2021). Use, Capture, and Value of Student Voice in Schools. Rand Corporation. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA827-4.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA827-4.html)

Freeman, D., & Freeman, Y. (2020, May 18). Culturally relevant books in The multilingual classroom. Colorín Colorado. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/culturally-relevant-books-ell-classroom>

Garcia, B. Shernaz & Ortiz A. Alba, (1988). Preventing Inappropriate Referrals of Language Minority Students to Special Education. *The National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education*. No. 5. 1-19

Garcia, E., Weiss, E. (2018). Student Absenteeism. Economic Policy Institute. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www.epi.org/publication/student-absenteeism-who-misses-school-and-how-missing-school-matters-for-performance/>

Gottfried, M. (2017). Linking Getting to School with Going to School. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*.

Gottfried, M. (2019). Chronic Absenteeism in the Classroom Context: Effects on Achievement. Urban Education.

Gregory, A., et al. (2019). Closing the Racial Discipline Gaps in Classrooms by Changing Teacher Practices. School Psychology Review.

Gregory, A., Evans, K. (2020). The Starts and Stumbles of Restorative Justice in Education: Where do we go from here?. National Education Policy Center. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/restorative-justice>

He, Y. et al. (2019). Working with English Learners Using a Two-Generation Approach. School Community Journal. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1236595.pdf>

Hernandez, D., et al. (2012). Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation. The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-DoubleJeopardy-2012-Full.pdf>

Herrera, L., McNair, R. (2021). Restorative and Community-Building Practices as Social Justice for English Learners. TESOL J. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/tesj.523>

Hinze-Pifer, R., Sartain, L. (2018). Rethinking Universal Suspension for Severe Student Behavior. Peabody Journal of Education.

Hos, R., Kaplan-Wolff, B., (2020). On and Off Script: A Teacher s Adaptation of Mandated Curriculum for Refugee Newcomers in an Era of Standardization. Journal of Curriculum and Teaching Vol. 9 No. 1. 40-54

Housing Equality Center of Pennsylvania. (2020). Fair Housing Guide for Local Governments. Housing Equality Center of Pennsylvania. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www.equalhousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Fair-Housing-Guide-for-Local-Governments.pdf>

Housing Equality Center of Pennsylvania. (n.d.). Resources. Housing Equality Center of Pennsylvania. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www.equalhousing.org/resources/>

Klass, P. (2017, July 10). Raising a truly bilingual child. The New York Times. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/10/well/family/raising-a-truly-bilingual-child.html>

Klingner, J. K. ., Artiles, A. J. ., Kozleski, E., Harry, B., Zion, S., Tate, W., Zamora Durán, G., & Riley, D. (2005). Addressing the Disproportionate Representation of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students in Special Education through Culturally Responsive Educational Systems. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 13, 38.

Klingner, J. K., & Harry, B. (2006). The special education referral and decision-making process for English Language Learners: Child study team meetings and staffings. *Teachers College Record* 108, 2247-2281.

Ladson Billings, G. (2011). Boyz to Men? Teaching to Restore Black Boys' Childhood. *Race, Ethnicity and Education* Vol 14 No. 1. 7-15

LiCalsi, C., Osher, D., Bailey, P. (2021). An Empirical Examination of the Effects of Suspension and Suspension Severity on Behavioral and Academic Outcomes. American Institute for Research. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/NYC-Suspension-Effects-Behavioral-Academic-Outcomes-August-2021.pdf>

Loeb, S. (2016). Half the People Working in Schools Aren't Classroom Teachers – So What?. Brookings Institute. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www.brookings.edu/research/half-the-people-working-in-schools-arent-classroom-teachers-so-what/>

Losen, D. J., & Martinez, P. (2020). Lost opportunities: How disparate school discipline continues to drive differences in the opportunity to learn. Palo Alto, CA/Los Angeles, CA: Learning Policy Institute; Center for Civil Rights Remedies at the Civil Rights Project, UCLA.

Maier, A, Niebuhr, D (2021) California Community Schools Partnership Program: A Transformational Opportunity for Whole Child Education. Learning Policy Institute. Retrieved from: <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/ca-community-schools-partnership-brief>

Matthew, D., Rodrigue, E., Reeves, R. (2016). Time for Justice: Tackling Race Inequalities in Health and Housing. Brookings Institution. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/time-for-justice-tackling-race-inequalities-in-health-and-housing/>

Mavrogordato, M. et al. (2021). Supports for Students Who Are English Learners. EdResearch for Recovery. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from

[https://annenberg.brown.edu/sites/default/files/EdResearch\\_for\\_Recovery\\_Brief\\_15.pdf](https://annenberg.brown.edu/sites/default/files/EdResearch_for_Recovery_Brief_15.pdf)

McIntosh, et al. (2021). Effects of an Equity-Focused PBIS Approach to School Improvement on Exclusionary Discipline and School Climate. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from

<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1306763>

McShane, B. B., Gal, D., Gelman, A., Robert, C., & Tackett, J. L. (2019). Abandon statistical significance. *The American Statistician*, 73(sup1), 235-245.

Mitchell, C. (2019). Teacher-Drivers Keep Wheels on the Bus Going Round. *Education Week*.

Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/teacher-drivers-keep-wheels-on-the-bus-going-round/2019/09>

Mizrav, E. (2021). Segregate, Discriminate, Signal: A Model for Understanding Policy Drivers of Educational Inequality. *Educational Policy*, 08959048211029026.

National Center for Learning Disabilities. (2020) Significant disproportionality in special education: Current Trends and Actions for Impact. Retrieved March 21, 2022, from [https://www.nclld.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020-NCLD-Disproportionality\\_-English-Learners\\_EL\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.nclld.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020-NCLD-Disproportionality_-English-Learners_EL_FINAL.pdf)

National Center for Learning Disabilities. (2020). Significant Disproportionality in Special Education: Current trends and actions for impact. National Center for Learning Disabilities. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from [https://www.nclld.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020-NCLD-Disproportionality\\_Trends-and-Actions-for-Impact\\_FINAL-1.pdf](https://www.nclld.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020-NCLD-Disproportionality_Trends-and-Actions-for-Impact_FINAL-1.pdf)

Next-Gen Learning. (n.d.). Restorative practices in schools: Building Better Communities. NGLC. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www.nextgenlearning.org/equity-toolkit/school-culture>

- O Day, J. A. and M. S. Smith (2016). Quality and equality in American education: Systemic problems, systemic solutions. *The dynamics of opportunity in America*, Springer, Cham: 297-358.
- Pareja, A., et al. (2013). *Preschool Attendance in Chicago Public Schools: Relationships with Learning Outcomes and Reasons for Absences*. UChicago Consortium on School Research. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://consortium.uchicago.edu/publications/preschool-attendance-chicago-public-schools-relationships-learning-outcomes-and-reasons>
- Parker, F., Novak, B., & Bartell, T. (2017). To engage students, give them meaningful choices in the classroom. *Phi Delta Kappan Journal*
- Perry, A (2017) Don't ever conflate disaster recovery with education reform. The Brookings Institution. Retrieved from: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2017/09/13/dont-ever-conflate-disaster-recovery-with-education-reform/>
- Pierson, E., Simoiu, C., Overgoor, J., Corbett-Davies, S., Jenson, D., Shoemaker, A., ... & Goel, S. (2020). A large-scale analysis of racial disparities in police stops across the United States. *Nature human behaviour*, 4(7), 736-745.
- Powers, K. (2022). *Bullying, Culture Shock and US Schools: Refugee Students Face Huge Lift to Integrate*. USA Today Network. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www.ydr.com/in-depth/life/2022/02/22/church-world-service-lancaster-pa-schools-afghan-refugees-resettlement/9107458002/>
- Pryor, C. (2001). *New Immigrants and Refugees in American Schools: Multiple Voices*. Childhood Education.
- Rosales, J. (2019). *School District Looks to Teachers to Fill Bus Driver Shortage*. National Education Association. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/school-district-looks-teachers-fill-bus-driver-shortage>
- Schmidt, P. (2005). *Culturally Responsive Instruction: Promoting Literacy in Secondary Content Areas*. Learning Points Associates. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED489509.pdf>

Schuetz, J. (2020). Exclusive Communities Deepen Inequality in Every Metro Area. Brookings Institution. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/07/16/exclusive-communities-deepen-inequality-in-every-metro-area/>

Shafer, L. (2016). Giving Students a Voice: Five ways to welcome student input and bolster your school's success. Harvard Graduate School of Education. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/16/08/giving-students-voice>

Skiba, R. J., Michael, R. S., Nardo, A. C., & Peterson, R. L. (2002). The Color of Discipline: Sources of Racial and Gender Disproportionality in School Punishment. *The Urban Review*, Vol. 34 No. 4.

Smeeding, T. M. (2005). Public policy, economic inequality, and poverty: The United States in comparative perspective. *Social Science Quarterly*, 86, 955-983.

Smolkowski, K. (2016). Vulnerable Decision Points for Disproportionate Office Discipline Referrals: Comparisons of Discipline for African American and White

Sobrato Early Academic Language (2021). SEAL. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://seal.org/the-seal-approach/#tsamodel>

Solomon, D., Maxwell, C., & Castro, A. (2019). Systemic inequality: Displacement, exclusion, and segregation. Center for American Progress, 7.

Solomon, D., Maxwell, C., Castro, A. (2019). Systemic Inequality: Displacement, Exclusion, and Segregation. Center for American Progress. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/systemic-inequality-displacement-exclusion-segregation/>

Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education. (2014). Student Centered Learning: How Four Schools are Closing the Opportunity Gap. <https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/>

Stanford University. (2020, June 18). How WSDs make criminals of Black youth. Stanford News. <https://news.stanford.edu/2020/06/18/school-systems-make-criminals-black-youth/>

State of Vermont, Agency of Commerce and Community Development (2022). Landlord Tenant Education Materials. Retrieved on April 2022 from: <https://accd.vermont.gov/housing/resources-rules/renters-landlords/education-materials>

The Housing Equality Center of Pennsylvania (2020), Fair Housing Guide for Local Governments Retrieved on April 2022 from: <https://www.equalhousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Fair-Housing-Guide-for-Local-Governments.pdf>

The Housing Equality Center of Pennsylvania (2022), Resources. Retrieved on April 2022 from: <https://www.equalhousing.org/resources/>

Tiano, S. (2019). Los Angeles Leaned Hard on Rideshare to Keep Foster Youths in School of Origin. The Imprint. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://imprintnews.org/news-2/los-angeles-leaned-hard-on-rideshare-to-keep-foster-youths-in-school-of-origin/37108>

U.S. Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System. Changes in U.S. Family Finances from 2016 to 2019: Evidence from the Survey of Consumer Finances. September 2020 (Vol 106, No 5). Retrieved on April 11, 2022, from <https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/files/scf20.pdf>.

U.S. Department of Education. (2019). Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation s Schools. U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www2.ed.gov/datastory/chronicabsenteeism.html#one>

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2022). Housing Choice Vouchers Fact Sheet. Retrieved on April 2022 from: [https://www.hud.gov/topics/housing\\_choice\\_voucher\\_program\\_section\\_8#hcv08](https://www.hud.gov/topics/housing_choice_voucher_program_section_8#hcv08)

University of Virginia Today. (2016). Curry's MyTeachingPartner Research Helps Close Racial Discipline Gaps. UVA Today. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://education.virginia.edu/news/currys-myteachingpartner-research-helps-close-racial-discipline-gaps>

Valentino, R., Reardon, S. (2014). Effectiveness of Four Instructional Programs Designed to Serve English Language Learners. Stanford University Graduate School of Education. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from [https://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Valentino\\_Reardon\\_EL%20Programs\\_14\\_0319.pdf](https://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Valentino_Reardon_EL%20Programs_14_0319.pdf)

Vermont PBIS. (n.d.) Getting Started. Vermont PBIS. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www.pbisvermont.org/helpful-information/getting-started/>

Villegas, L. (2021). English Learners Were at High Risk of Being Suspended Before the Pandemic, Restorative Practices May Offer Much Needed Relief. New America. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/english-learners-were-at-a-high-risk-of-being-suspended-before-the-pandemic-restorative-practices-may-offer-much-needed-relief/>

Welsh, R., Little, S. (2021). Want to Address School Discipline Disparities? Don't Ignore Racial and Cultural Differences in the Classroom. American Educational Research Association. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://www.aera.net/Newsroom/Want-to-Address-School-Discipline-Disparities-Dont-Ignore-Racial-and-Cultural-Differences-in-the-Classroom>

Williams, C. (n.d.). Online Resources for ELS. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1sfQUGXU2SDvzWe3uneDtL8ZF-BY-T2hNNVHfL4jhiNE/edit#gid=0>

Williams, C. W. (2020, May 12). English learners are home with their home languages, and that's okay. The Century Foundation. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://tcf.org/content/commentary/english-learners-home-home-languages-thats-okay/>

Zerez, M. (2021). Increased Pay Could Help Resolve Shortage of School Bus Drivers. WSKG. Retrieved April 7, 2022, from <https://wskg.org/bus-driver-shortage/>