Students, staff, and families in MPS reported witnessing racist behavior and experiencing microaggressions.

Students of color (grades 5-12) have experienced conflicts about race. 35%
Students (grades 5-6) heard racist jokes or remarks from other students. 60%
Students (grades 7-12) heard racist jokes or remarks from other students. 75%
Students (grades 5-12) heard racist jokes or remarks from adults at school. 15%

A Latinx elementary school student reported, “In school, people started saying that I’m from Puerto Rico, none of them are dumb…”

Several Black male students reported various instances of adults yelling at them to “shut up,” and when asked what would improve their school they indicated that the biggest improvement would be if adults at school changed the tone, volume, and language they use to address students.

A middle-school Asian student shared she’s been called a “chink” and has been asked if she eats dogs.

Several Black male students reported various instances of adults yelling at them to “shut up,” and when asked what would improve their school they indicated that the biggest improvement would be if adults at school changed the tone, volume, and language they use to address students.

A Latinf elementary school student reported that “fights broke out because people want to comment on the color of your skin.”

A staff member of color described her experience of discrimination: “Indirectly, they expect me to explain certain aspects of minority culture. They ask me to speak to the ‘aggressive’ POC [people of color] parents. I don’t want to be seen as the angry Black woman,” she said. “My white co-workers can be upset, and I can’t.”

In an interview, a staff member commented, “White teachers are so scared of [students of color]… and in particular, the boys… these boys are constantly getting security called on them…”

One white female staff member who has been a part of the MPS community for over a decade talked about how fear of people of color within MPS connects to the history of Manchester.

Students, staff, and family members from marginalized groups, in particular those belonging to more than one marginalized group, do not feel safe.

Female students, including female students belonging to more than one marginalized group, reported feeling unsafe and being harassed in school.

Female students (grades 5-12) do not feel safe at school. 20%
Female students (grades 7-12) agreed that people have made unwanted sexual comments to them at school. 31%
Female students (grades 5-6) agreed that people have made unwanted sexual comments to them at school. 15%

Transgender and gender non-conforming students, in particular students of color belonging to one of these marginalized groups, reported feeling discriminated against and unsafe in their schools.

Transgender and gender non-conforming students...

agreed that discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender students is a problem at their school. 40%
agreed that discrimination against students of color were most likely to disagree that they feel safe at their school when compared to their peers. 40%
in grades 5 and 6 agreed that they have been physically hurt by another student more than once at school. 63%
in grades 7-12 agreed that they have been verbally or physically intimidated by an adult at their school. 31%
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, questioning, pansexual, and asexual (LGBQ+) students, in particular students of color belonging to one of these marginalized groups, reported feeling discriminated against and unsafe in schools.

When asked whether discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender students is a problem at their school, more than 40 percent of LGBQ+ students agreed.

LGBQ+ students (grades 7-12) agreed they have felt verbally or physically intimidated by an adult at school.

LGBQ+ students (grades 5 and 6) agreed that they have been made fun of or intimidated by other students.

LGBQ+ students (grades 7-12) agreed that they have been harassed or intimidated by other students in school and that people have made unwanted sexual comments to them.

“Look androgynous. People think I’m a boy, even though I identify as a girl. I’ve had people dare other kids to ask me if I’m a lesbian and they’ll buy them stuff if they do it. People just look at my appearance and are just like, ‘oh, she’s gay’, even though I’m bi.”

Non-Christian students and staff reported feeling stereotyped and discriminated against in school.

Christian students were more likely to agree that their religion is respected at their school than their non-Christian & non-religiously-affiliated peers.

When compared to their Christian and religiously unaffiliated colleagues, non-Christian staff were less likely to agree that their religion is respected and more likely to agree that Christian hegemony is a problem in their work environment.

A Muslim student expressed that she wants to be heard as an individual, not seen as representing all of Islam when she expresses an opinion. “I never felt unsafe but more so targeted. I realized how much people’s perception changed when I took off my hijab. I got a lot of terrorist comments [wearing it]. I had to use the faculty bathroom last year because of something happened in the bathroom—a group of girls said I was making a bomb in the bathroom and it was constant. The teachers were all nice about it but why do I have to be different?”

An Asian staff member commented that the district does not support their practice of culture and faith. “[We don’t] have one religion, and [my] New Year is not acknowledged [in MPS]. People think about food [from my culture] but not holidays.

Students, staff members and family members with one or more disabilities reported feeling unsafe in school.

More than a quarter of students (grades 5-12) with disabilities disagreed that they feel safe at school, and more than a quarter of students with disabilities (grades 7-12) agreed that they have been physically hurt by another student more than once. There were significant differences in the responses of students with disabilities and students without a disability to these questions about safety.

More than a quarter of staff members with disabilities agree that they have been insulted, harassed, intimidated, or targeted by another staff member—making them twice as likely to agree to this as staff without a disability.

Students experiencing food insecurity reported feeling unsafe in school.

Students who experience food insecurity (grades 5-6) agreed that an adult from their school has yelled at them in a way that scared them.

Students (grades 7-12) who experience food insecurity have felt verbally or physically intimidated by an adult (significantly more than peers).
Although Manchester Public Schools has provided a number of equity-focused workshops and trainings for staff members, these initiatives have been limited, unsystematic, and often optional.

Staff members agreed that they would like additional professional development to be able to better work with:

- 17% students or family members of color.
- 16% student or family members identifying as gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, asexual, or pansexual.
- 20% students or family members identifying as transgender, gender non-conforming, gender fluid or non-binary.
- 34% students receiving ELL services or family members whose primary language is not English.
- 52% students or family members with a history of trauma.
- 38% students or families living in poverty.

A staff member spoke passionately about feeling unprepared to support an elementary student that she perceived to be questioning their gender identity shared that she would benefit from additional training in how to support transgender and gender non-conforming students, and students questioning their gender identity. The teacher said, “She would shut down and cry and not talk like I’ve never seen before. I felt like she was a true at-risk kid and I didn’t know what to do for her... I can read up on it, but it still doesn’t equip me as a teacher.”

MPS is losing staff members of color to other school districts and is lagging in its stated recruitment goals for staff members of color.

Staff members of color were three times as likely (15 percent v. 4 percent) to agree that they have felt unwelcome in their school or office because of an aspect of their identity.

Many staff members of color talked about the challenges of being the only person of color or one of few people of color in their school or workplace. In particular, staff members of color reported feeling pressure and judgment from their colleagues and administrators at MPS.

Staff members of color reported being forced to take on the role of “spokesperson” about race and criticized for speaking up about racial issues. They recounted experiences when white colleagues failed to address how race and racism were impacting a situation. After naming or addressing a racial issue, Black staff members reported being labeled and stereotyped as “an angry Black person.”

A female staff person of color in a focus group said, “I find when I am in meetings and I say something that is related to race, it’s like, ‘Oh no, what is she going to say?’... Whenever I speak people get defensive.” When equity and inclusion are being discussed in a school setting, staff members of color reported feeling less engagement and like equity work is considered their responsibility as POC.

Many staff members of color reported feeling disproportionately called upon to leverage their relationships with students and their comfort with restorative practices to take on disciplinary and restorative work in MPS: “Kids of color who have issues with white teachers get sent to me because I will fix it,” said one staff member of color in a focus group.

Manchester Public Schools lacks a comprehensive vision for equity work including clear goals, outcomes, and channels for involvement.

Staff members talked and wrote about leadership in MPS being committed to equity, and evaluators witnessed district leadership demonstrating an ideological commitment to creating equitable environments. While equity is a priority, there is a need for a clear path toward equity with specific goals.

The organization of equity work and lack of requirements for professional learning fail to distribute the responsibility of institutionalizing equity onto all leadership.

- Administrators who had significant gaps in their awareness, knowledge, and skills around educational equity, were not being supported in finding ways to build their awareness, knowledge, and skills nor were required to work on filling these gaps.
- A small number of administrators appeared to be shouldering the vast task of institutionalizing equity in MPS.
The lack of staff members of color, particularly educators of color, employed by the district was a common concern among students, staff and families.

When surveyed, 45 percent of students of color surveyed in grades 7-12 disagreed that there are teachers at their school who have a similar life experience as them.

Staff members with one or more disabilities report lack of support from Manchester Public Schools

39% Staff members with disabilities disagreed that they are satisfied with the way their concerns are addressed by school and district leadership.

23% Staff members with disabilities disagreed that leadership at their schools or in their offices are proactive in resolving conflicts between staff members.

One staff member described how the building is “not friendly for people who cannot go far,” citing the lack of accessibility to athletic fields, band room, bathrooms, the conference room, and some entrances. While the main entrance and courtyard are accessible, this staff member described how the faculty’s one elevator is foul-smelling, inconveniently located, and too small, leading to uncomfortable and potentially unsafe situations for students and staff. “If a teacher worked here with mobility issues, it would be a nightmare,” they said.

Manchester Public Schools lacks a meaningfully multicultural curriculum.

Evaluators received reports and observed that the MPS curriculum includes minimal histories and narratives of people from marginalized groups, connection to current events, and examination of larger global justice issues.

Students, staff members and family members reported gaps in the current MPS curriculum.

White students in grades 7-12 were more likely than their peers of color to agree that they see their racial and ethnic identities reflected in the things they learn at school; read stories about people who share their racial or ethnic identity in school; and learn about the history of people from their culture at school.

One Black parent noted that the biggest challenge they faced as a parent is the “lack of cultural information in the school.” They elaborated, “Children need to be taught more things about their own culture. The education is very one-sided.”

Another Black parent responded stating that their biggest challenge is “finding better reading materials and books that relate truthfully to our history, culture and experiences” and “having more teachers of color represented in my children's schools.”

There is one person in the district that is tasked with supporting teachers in making curriculum more "culturally relevant" and "culturally responsive."

“We need cultural competence – representation of cultures throughout the curriculum and not just during Black History Month or Women's History Month. I want marginalized studies to be the focus and not the elective,” said one staff member of color in an interview. “Nowhere in any of these history books, not any class I have been to, has there ever been a lesson on the Stonewall Riots. This is so ridiculous to me for a variety of reasons. It ties into LGBT (issues), but also transgender women of color...I don't know of any Puerto Rican history (being taught) ...none. But yet our population are a majority of Puerto Rican students.”

In a focus group, a Black female student said, “White kids excel and they're seeing themselves reflected. It's not fair that we don't have that.”

One Black male student commented in an interview, “We should have more Black teachers. More teachers that actually understand the culture and understand the students. These teachers don't understand the students and what they go through. They would at least understand how it feels. I have never had a Black teacher...just a counselor or an ISS [in-school suspension] person.”

During a focus group, a Black female student said, “It’s harder to be the teacher's favorite when you are Black, no matter what you do. When I was cheating, nothing I could do could make me the favorite. I had to act more like how white people act. To get anywhere in school, I needed to act white.”

Through a survey response, a white parent of a Black child stated, “I don’t believe that anyone other than his guidance counselor has taken the time to get to know him.”

Another parent in a focus group for families of color said, “She has not had a teacher of color aside of the assistant in her classroom. However, I think children would feel a connection to their teachers of color if they had them. You’re more inclined to feel like they can do things too. The discipline is an issue too, they are more inclined to see a child as a child and not a “Black” child. They won’t associate the culture with the behavior. Things would be more fair.”

A white parent of a white child also stated in a survey response, “I worry about the cultural responsiveness training (or lack thereof) for teachers and staff. I worry that my child’s peers do not have a racially and culturally diverse group of teachers and teacher aides working with them, and this is a deficit for my daughter and her peers. Teachers and staff should better represent their classrooms racially and culturally.”

A staff member of color commented on recruitment of other staff of color in an interview, “We need teachers of color...but I do not feel like I want to ask people of color to come work in a place to struggle with us.”

46% Students of color in grades 7-12 disagreed that they see their racial and ethnic identities reflected in the things they learn at school.
Staff members fail to consistently respond to discrimination, harassment, and inequities within a school culture in which staff members are not encouraged to talk about race, class, sexuality, gender identity, and other critical equity issues – highlighting the presence of color blindness in the district.

"It's about the look of my face," said one Asian American student. "I feel like a kid from Manchester. Kids used to say 'konnichiwa' to me, but it's now stopped. Other kids continue to call me Chinese. I just want to be called my name." He added, "It would help if the teacher would tell the class that I’m from Manchester, but my family came from [name of country]."

More than a quarter of staff members surveyed disagreed that they openly talk about race and racism with their students and disagreed that they are prepared to respond to racial conflicts at their school or office.

Only 13 percent of staff members agreed that they have reported issues of discrimination to a supervisor in their school or in the district.

One white staff member reported, "Staff mindset is a big challenge because of implicit bias. Public schools are reflective of society, and our society has an issue admitting white privilege.*

Evaluators heard reports of staff concerns that discussing topics like sexuality and racism with children will only make things worse.

Staff members reported a hesitation and unwillingness by some white staff in the district to recognize race as an issue.

Another white female staff member said, "I am super frustrated...There is no talk about race, class and gender. Nothing said about the immigration and Muslim ban, and nothing from the district about what to do...Every morning I bring up privilege, Flint, other people who don’t have things we have. We have to talk about it and I feel like no one is talking about it." This staff member went on to explain that she felt district leadership should be doing more to support students from marginalized groups. She explained that she wanted the district to "stand up for your marginalized students, especially Muslim students and undocumented students and families. Tell our undocumented students that we will protect them, that we will stand with them, that they are valued. Tell our community that as well."

Students of color disagreed that teachers respond to conflicts about race in a way that makes things better.

There are significant gaps in MPS staff members’ skills needed to foster equitable learning environments.

Based on survey data and conversations with MPS staff members, evaluators found that many MPS staff members lack the knowledge, awareness, and skills to address the ways race, class, sexuality, gender identity, ability, religion, and language are impacting climate in MPS schools and workplaces. Staff members fail to consistently respond to discrimination, harassment, and inequities within a school culture in which administrators and adults are not encouraged to talk about race, class, sexuality, gender identity, and other critical equity issues. This lack of knowledge and skills among MPS staff is impacting relationships between staff and students from marginalized groups and their families.

When asked about teachers’ responses to in-school harassment, one LGBTQ+ student said,

"They don't care. They don't pay attention. I have been called a dyke a lot...

I have been told to kill myself.

I have had a teacher laugh and tell me to get back to work."

*Based on survey data and conversations with MPS staff members, evaluators found that many MPS staff members lack the knowledge, awareness, and skills to address the ways race, class, sexuality, gender identity, ability, religion, and language are impacting climate in MPS schools and workplaces.
Many students from marginalized groups reported a lack of positive relationships with educators and experiences of inequitable treatment.

| • White students (grades 5-6) were more likely than their peers of color to agree teachers think that they are a good kid. |
| Students, particularly Black and Latinx students, reported feeling categorized as a “good kid” or a “bad kid” by adults. Students reported feeling labeled as “bad kids” based on how they talk, act, dress, who they associate with, or due to a single behavioral incident and reported experiencing different treatment, and feeling labeled by adults as “bad kids” based on their appearance and behavior. |
| • Students of color (grades 5-6) were more likely than white students to agree they feel pressure from adults at school to change the way they speak, dress, or act in order to “fit in.” |
| Students, particularly female students, students of color, and students with one or more disabilities, reported feeling that teachers do not believe them. Girls, especially girls of color, reported in a number of cases, girls reported that teachers don’t believe that boys hit them or are bothering them. |
| • Female students of color (grades 7-12) were more likely to disagree that adults are supportive when they are feeling negative emotions compared to their peers. |
| Students with disabilities reported not feeling listened to, and feeling threatened by teachers: A Latina student reported, “They are getting two more cops. They don’t trust us. My mom and dad don’t trust the teachers in the school.” |
| • Students without disabilities (grades 5-6) were more likely to agree that if something bad happens to them, there is an adult who believes them and responds in a way that makes things better than peers with disabilities. |
| Black female students reported feeling treated differently than white female students by adults. They more often reported being treated as angry or disruptive when they are upset. |
| • Students without disabilities (grades 5-12) were more likely to agree that teachers understand and listen to them than their peers with disabilities. |
| “I came from being an A+/B student to almost failing,” shared a Black female student. “I felt like I couldn’t do it. Teachers ignore how you feel. If I’m sad, I have an attitude. They don’t care or ask. They expect me to be angry, but I’m sad.” |
| • Students (grades 7-12) disagreed that adults involve them in decisions to make the school better. |
| One Latina student commented that they did not feel believed about a conflict, “When I told an adult [about a conflict with a substitute teacher], they wouldn’t listen and think I lied.” |
| • Students, particularly female students, students of color, and students with one or more disabilities, reported feeling that teachers do not believe them. Girls, especially girls of color, reported in a number of cases, girls reported that teachers don’t believe that boys hit them or are bothering them. |
| According to one teacher of color. “They’re called ‘bad kids’ but they’re just making poor choices due to frustration in class, they’re not getting the attention they need so they disrupt the class or exhibit poor hallway behavior.” |

The current relationship of staff members as authority figures and students as subordinates does not encourage student participation or collaboration with problem-solving, decision-making, and determining consequences, and it limits the development of positive relationships.
Exclusionary discipline is a major barrier to access to educational opportunities for students of color, students with disabilities, and students experiencing food insecurity.

Students of color were:
- More likely to agree that they have been given an in-school suspension (ISS) or sent to ISS or given an office referral because of behavior.
- (Grades 7-12) More than three times as likely to agree that they have been given an out-of-school suspension—with male students of color being significantly more likely to agree that they have been given out of school suspension.
- (Grades 7-12) Four times as likely as their peers to agree that they’ve been physically restrained by an adult in school.

While students (grades 7-12) were:
- More likely to agree they are treated fairly by adults at school.
- Students with one or more disabilities (grades 5-6) were more likely to agree that they have:
  - Been removed or told to leave the classroom.
  - Received an office referral for their behavior.
  - Been put in a room by themselves for their behavior.
  - Been given an in-school suspension or sent to ISS.

Students reported that teachers frequently disciplined them by removing them from their learning environment with little to no explanation.
- “Teachers kicked me out and they don’t tell you why.”
- “They lie to parents. They like to pick on you. Period.”
- “The Teacher” kicked me out because I didn’t get a quiz and said I should’ve been paying attention.”

Staff members reported:
- A lack of clear outlined/appliced guidelines for how students enter/exit alt. placements.
- A lack of clear and consistent processes to review the progress of students in alternative placements and evaluate their readiness to return to a mainstream environment.
- “Teachers kick them out and they’re sending them to the office, and start applying them in regular Ed. When they were first opened they were meant to be a six-week placement. There are kids who haven’t left and have been there for a year-and-a-half.”

One alternative education student said, “It feels like I’m less than a student here.”

Students in alternative placements are unable to access the same social and academic opportunities as students in mainstream environments.

A high school student with a disability who is in an alternative placement explained some of the challenges he has faced throughout his educational life as a student with dyslexia. “I wish they had actually explained to me what dyslexia was. I didn’t learn about it until this year. All I knew is that I was being taken out of classes because I couldn’t read. No one ever explained to me what dyslexia was or why I was struggling. I wish they actually helped me in speech because I can’t pronounce a lot of things. I wish they would actually explain it. I asked my speech teacher why I took speech and she explained to me that it is a disability where you see things backwards or stutter, that’s why I have an IEP. I didn’t know I had an IEP until freshman year in high school. High school is when I struggled the most...and when I was getting stressed out, I felt stupid...especially in History and English. I hated being forced to read aloud...me being forced to read made me worse. I was sad.”

A white female student in the alternative education program said, “They say (this school) is the ‘island of mishfit toys,’ but I don’t feel like a mishfit.” She reports that when she tells people she is at the alternative program, they ask her: ‘who did you have to fight to get there?’ She’s very concerned about the lack of academic rigor in the program. She says that she is never given any homework assignments at the school and thinks this may impact her ability to do college level work.

Staff members commented:
- “Kids aren’t being academically prepared for college, if they don’t learn to take care of themselves, develop their character, & manage emotions, academic rigor won’t matter.”
- “The kids in the D.C.’s (District Learning Centers) say to me, ‘we are here because we don’t belong anywhere.’”
- “[These] students go to lunch last. Sometimes there is no food left for the students. [The school] doesn’t have its own identity. These are not ‘bad kids’, they have learning differences. This is not the ‘bad kids’ school. Alternative isn’t bad; it’s flexible, adaptable to learning and social-emotional needs...There need to be alternative paths for life after high school. Alternative schools need to prepare kids to be skilled and able to enter the workforce, but more resources are needed. We’re only one hallway.”
- “People over there (at the mainstream school) don’t care about us.”
Across all races, family members with one or more disabilities reported challenges accessing the same facilities, information, and opportunities available to their peers without a disability.

Family members from marginalized groups reported challenges accessing information about school policies, parental and student rights, activities, and resources to ensure their children's equitable access to educational opportunities.

Low expectations prevent students from marginalized groups from accessing academic opportunities and achieving academic success in MPS.

Cost is a barrier for participation in school activities for many students & families from marginalized groups.

Lack of access to transportation is a barrier to taking full advantage of academic and extracurricular opportunities for many students and families from marginalized groups.

Two family members with mobility issues described challenges accessing an elementary school. They described having trouble accessing parking spaces close to the building and needing to locate a staff member to use the elevator. They also described conferences being held in inaccessible locations and one instance in which they tried to attend a school event during which the handicapped accessible doors to the auditorium were not opened.

Family members without a disability were more likely to agree that they:
- Are treated with respect by teachers.
- Feel comfortable speaking with teachers.
- Are satisfied with the way school responds to concerns.
- Have been invited to volunteer at school.
- Are greeted with kindness when they call or visit.
- Know how their child is doing academically at all times.
- Receive information from the school about what their child is expected to learn during the year.

35% of non-native English-speaking students (grades 7-12) agreed that they are placed in classes that are too easy for them, making significantly more likely to agree to this question.

Family members of color, LGBTQ+ family members, family members with disabilities, and family members whose children participate in free and reduced lunch program disagreed that they have received information about Gifted and Talented instruction, acceleration/enrichment classes, AP, Honors, and/or Early-College courses.

Cost is a barrier for participation in school activities for many students & families from marginalized groups.

Students from marginalized groups were more likely to agree that they do not participate in some school activities because they cost too much money.

Family members from marginalized groups were more likely to agree that the cost of extra-curricular activities makes it difficult for their child to participate.

Families of color, LGBTQ+ family members, non-native English-speaking families, and families whose children participate in free/reduced lunch program were at least twice as likely to agree that it is challenging to attend events because of transportation. Students of color, students who do not speak English at home (grades 5-12) were significantly more likely to agree it is difficult to get to school because of transportation.

Evaluators sat in on classes to observe lessons and instruction. Evaluators found lower-level classes included less engaging material, less engaging teaching strategies, and often more behavioral disruptions. Evaluators saw an over-representation of students of color in the lower-level classes observed during the assessment and an under-representation of students of color in academically advanced classes.
There was a significant difference in reported feelings of school connectedness between heterosexual and LGBTQ+ students, in particular students of color belonging to one of these marginalized groups.

LGBTQ+ students (grades 5-12) disagreed that they feel like they belong at school, disagreed that they feel proud to be a student at school, and disagreed that they are interested in what they are learning in school.

During a focus group, an LGBTQ+ student said, "It's not a very supportive and open environment. The adults try to change things... but in my opinion nobody is really listening to the kids. The adults are doing things their own way. There's a lot of disrespect from both the kids and the adults, and not really a lot of effort to communicate what both sides think is wrong or what would help. ... I think adults in general think kids don't have valid views, like we don't experience enough to know anything." She commented to the evaluator that she's never before had a space to discuss her experiences and express how she feels as student in Manchester Public Schools.

Transgender and gender non-conforming students of color reported challenges connecting to their schools.

Female students of color and transgender and gender non-conforming students of color (grades 7-12) were less likely to agree they feel like they belong at school.

LGBTQ+ students of color (grades 5-12) were less likely to feel they belong.

Transgender and gender non-conforming students of color were less likely to agree:
- They are treated fairly by adults.
- Teachers at their school understand and listen to them.
- They are able to dress and do their hair how they want and still be respected by adults in their school.

The same queer Black male student reported that he struggled to get help when he was being physically abused at home the previous year. He said he had tried to tell the principal and social worker but was ignored. He said that often he would be late to school, and he would try to explain what was happening at home and explain why it was difficult to get to school on time. He felt that his appearance as a big, Black "man" prevented MPS adults from listening to him – he expressed the feeling that if he was a "little white girl" who was telling them "these things", the school would have acted right away. When he was out of school for a few days, his friends went to school administration to express concern for his safety. He said he had reached the point of contemplating suicide. Once his friends expressed their concern, DCF was called, an investigation was conducted, and he was removed from the home. Although he now feels safe, he also expressed that he has no faith in the adults at MPS.

One Black male student who identified as queer reported being called a "fruit loop" by an upperclassman and laughed at as the upperclassman proceeded down the hallway. Other queer students agreed: "That stuff always happens, like almost every day."

Across all races, there was a significant difference in reported feelings of school connectedness between male students, female students, and transgender and gender non-conforming students.

Male students (grades 7-12) were more likely to agree that they feel like they belong at their school and feel proud to be a student at their school than female students or transgender and gender non-conforming students.

Transgender and gender nonconforming students (grades 5-6) were less likely than their male and female peers to feel proud to be a student at their school – only 65 percent of transgender and gender non-conforming students in grades 5 and 6 agreed to this question.

Black female students in elementary school, connected with one another over the way that boys mistreated and harassed them at school. One student shared, "They [boys] try to start fights and try to get us mad..." to which a second black female student responded, "Disrespectful! [Boys] Don't know how to treat a lady." A third student shared, "They [boys] say bad things about you. They say things about your family. They try to get your attention." A fourth student added, "They push you." A fifth student said, "They steal your stuff, they say the B-word and the F-word, and it makes girls really mad and want to punch them." When asked how these interactions with boys make them feel, Black female students from the same focus group responded: "It makes me mad", "It makes me feel unwanted at this school. It makes me feel like they want me to be in another state", "They make you want to cry, and they make you uncomfortable", "It makes me uncomfortable; I don't want to be over the top."
Across all races, there was a significant difference in reported feelings of school connectedness between students with one or more disabilities and students without a disability.

Students with disabilities (grades 5-12) were more likely than their peers without a disability to agree that they have been made fun of or intimidated by other students in school and that they feel pressure from adults at their schools to change the way they speak, dress or act in order to ‘fit in.’

White students without a disability and students of color (grades 7-12) without a disability were most likely to agree that they feel like they belong at their school compared to their peers.

In both student surveys, students without disabilities were significantly more likely than their peers with one or more disabilities to agree that:
- They have friends that accept them.
- They feel like belong at their school.
- Students at their school respect people who are different from them.

According to a white staff member, there is a prevailing attitude in the district about special education students – that they are not the responsibility of all staff members. She explained, “There’s an attitude of ‘we have bigger fish to fry’ and they are ‘those kids’... No! They are our kids.”

Across all races, there was a significant difference in reported feelings of school connectedness between staff with disabilities and staff without a disability.

Staff with disabilities agreed they could have had a better career or experience working in a different school, a significantly higher percentage than staff without a disability.

Staff with disabilities were more likely than staff without to agree that they feel pressure at their school or office to change the way they speak, dress, or act in order to fit in and to agree that it is difficult to get to work on time because of transportation.

Across all races, there were significant differences between non-Christian, Christian, and non-religiously-affiliated students’ experiences of school climate in MPS.

A Muslim female student shared, “I try not to be rude when people say weird stuff about my religion or something that impacts me. It's like once you say something people think you represent Islam in general.” When asked what conversations she's had about religion in her school, she described people commenting on her hijab, asking “why are you wearing that thing?” She also said that people mention terrorist groups whenever the topic of Islam comes up and explained, “Those are two separate things. You can't talk about it in the same unit.”

A second student added that discussing terrorism along with Islam would be tantamount to talking about the KKK when someone brings up Christianity.

Another non-Christian student shared, “Teachers get along with social students – they will just be like “oh cut it out.” Last year, I was the only hijab and this guy was like, “oh I really like Donald Trump,” and they didn’t even care because they were popular and knew they weren’t going to face any consequences... [They were making] anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish jokes, and no one was laughing but no one would stop them. I don’t know if the teacher didn’t hear it, but she was just writing on the board and didn’t stop it.”

A white female educator said, “[When] the countdown to Christmas begins...family issues around Christmas start to surface for the kids. Regardless of whatever religion kids might have, all you hear about from school staff is all about Christmas.”

Christian students in grades 7-12 were more likely than their non-Christian and non-religiously-affiliated peers to agree that:
- They are treated fairly by adults at their school.
- Their teachers understand and respect their families’ traditions.
- They feel optimistic about their future.
- Their teachers think they are a good person.