BLACK EXCELLENCE PLAN

PREPARED BY

WEST EARLY COLLEGE

PREFACE

Starting in 1969 when El Movimiento was fueled by the activism of young people at West High School to demand better educational opportunities in DPS.

As part of the West High school legacy, West Early College has tied our current work in Black Excellence to our historic connection to activism in Denver Public Schools. The social and political climate has renewed the spirit of 'The Movement' on the West Campus. WEC is de-centering school power and authority by ensuring that student and family voices are most important. Everything is grounded in serving students and families -- not our ourselves, the school, instititions, or racist systems.

WE COME FROM A HISTORY OF ADVOCACY FOR THE RIGHTS AND WELL-BEING OF OUR STUDENTS

OPERATIONALIZING CORE VALUES

EMPATHY, ACTION & ALIGNMENT

West Early College (WEC), the Northwest Region (NW), and CCS Network Improvement Cohort (NIC) partners worked to create meaningful goals oriented improving the educational outcomes and experiences of our Black students and families (WEC n= 74)* [See BE Template Linked Here]. Traditional quantitative measurements informed our intitial work. But the lack of a values based 'fit' and meaningful applications in the context of this school year mandated a measurement and process adjustment. Additionally, ongoing personal/ professional anti-racist learning dictated the need for a shift in operations.

Planning and action efforts were temporarily and intentionally interrupted. NW and NIC cycles of goal setting, progress monitoring, and collaboration led to the recognition of our participation in a normed racist white-dominant behavior of assuming Black student and family perspectives. This resulted in the failing work towards improvement without theauthentic participation and feedback of our users.
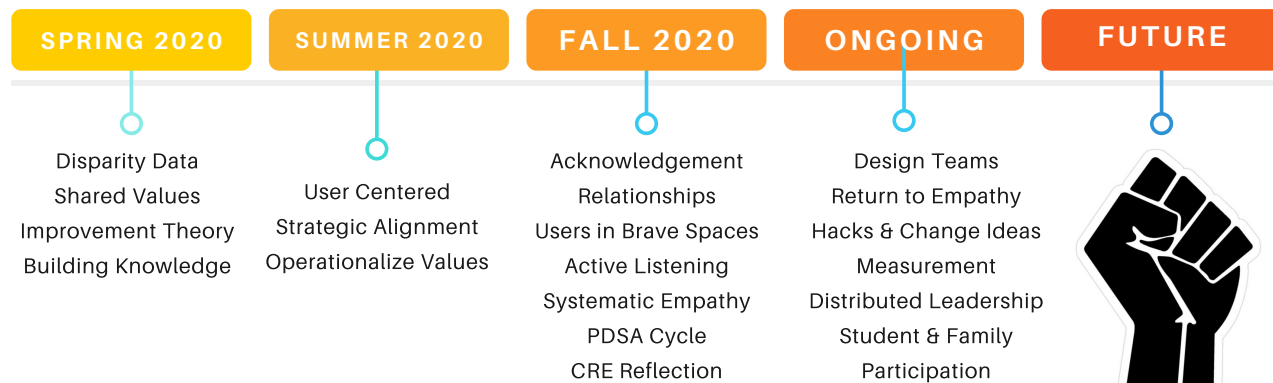
This led to four iterative Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycles oriented in the following Black Excellence Goal & Change Idea:

> **Hold meaningful conversations with Black students and families to inform school improvement efforts and create an empathy-based data collection system.**

Users, observers, participants and leaders agree to sustain, refine, and operationalize the WEC Focus Group Framework for ongoing student and family engagement efforts. The intentional and iterative involvement of school community members regardless of role, responsibility, or formal title resulted in:
1. Confirmation of School/District Goals as a result of renewed trust and relationships.
2. Critical Actionable Feedback for Long-Term Strategic Planning Adjustments
3. Opportunities for Immediate Short-Term Anti-Racist Action

Ongoing efforts to calendar values, orient ourselves in the lived experiences of our Black WEC community, and adjust, adopt, and abandon improvement actions are operationalized [See PDSA Journal Here] and a reflection of WEC's collaborative efforts thus far.

| SPRING 2020	SUMMER 2020	FALL 2020	ONGOING	FUTURE
Disparity Data		Acknowledgement	Design Teams	
Shared Values	User Centered	Relationships	Return to Empathy	
Improvement Theory	Strategic Alignment	Users in Brave Spaces	Hacks & Change Ideas	
Building Knowledge	Operationalize Values	Active Listening	Measurement	
		Systematic Empathy	Distributed Leadership	
		PDSA Cycle	Student & Family	
		CRE Reflection	Participation	

*REPORTING IS INCONSISTENT DUE TO SYSTEMIC BARRIERS THAT LIMIT THE ACCURACY OF DEMOGRAPHIC REPORTING OF TOTAL BLACK STUDENT ENROLLMENT IE. BI-RACIAL, MULTI-RACIAL, AND IDENTITY.

ACTION FROM EMPATHY
WEC BLACK EXCELLENCE DESIGN TEAMS

CHANGE IDEA 3.1   **End the N word**
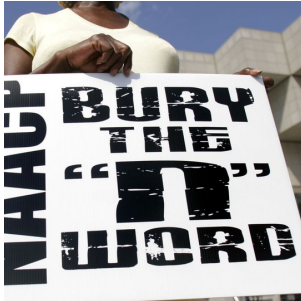
DRIVER: SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

"...experienced students calling her N**** and teacher hears it. Responds and kicks her out of class". "Some people have gone to the office and told about stuff and then they haven't seen anything happen," A teacher stood up for us because there was someone throwing racial slurs around the room. "Everyone uses it because they thing its cool but there is so much history behind it. I think the "N" word is used way too much in the school and I have a big problem with that." "No one should say it, not Black, not Latino, no one should say it". "Kids should have some kind of counseling or learning session where they are taught or shown what the proper vocabulary words are used between friends."

CHANGE IDEA 3.2   **CRE Course Offerings (Social Studies)**

DRIVER: INSTRUCTION – COURSE OFFERINGS & CURRICULUM

"Being the only black person in a class when we talked about rascism ...getting looked at the wrong way." A lot of Black people don't know black history, it's hard to say hey you need to teach this but we don't know it ourselves." "We need to teach it to ourselves first. The true meaning of black history." I don't think it should be just February for black history. And people should be shown all of the contributions that Black people have had." "...Very difficult for a student to just watch a video in the month of February and you're like 'hey it's black history month. It's hard for them to see a video of a slave ship to ownership basically, you have to show them where it starts."

CHANGE IDEA 3.3   **Positive Math Identity: Leveraging Lived Experiences**

DRIVER: INSTRUCTION – MATH

"It is about the process it is not just about the answer" "They don't take it into consideration, things that really matter...like banking account, geometry." "we cannot teach what we do not know", "They can improve is by slowing down." "...would be great for them to come out of school and know how to use a $100 bill and how to apply with applications, real applications for jobs and to have goals set for themselves." "I wish they would just slow down and tell me why I am learning it."

SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT   **Focus Group – Family Engagement**

DRIVER: EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

"like this format so you can get the opinions of other parents. With a survey you have to write it and you may forget to submit" "You can hear other aspects and take in other information and use that information to answer the questions yourself....this gets your mind working and it gets you involved. You're also able to see other people" "I am not a talkative person in settings. I have learned so much." " I like to hear from other parents, get their feedback in order to know that I am not alone...to see that there is support" "I like that I get to speak my truth"

EMPATHY DATA

I LIKE THAT I GET TO SPEAK MY TRUTH

I FEEL LIKE I DON'T GET LISTENED TO UNLESS I GET ANGRY

I LIKE TO HEAR FROM OTHER PARENTS, GET THEIR FEEDBACK, IN ORDER TO KNOW THAT I AM NOT ALONE...TO SEE THAT THERE IS SUPPORT

ONGOING IMPROVEMENT
FUTURE

After four months of learning, development, and empathy work the WEc Black Excellence team is building capacity and taking action. Three separate design teams which include Black students, Black family members, educators, and DPS partners are enacting our theory of improvement. Additional short and long term improvement cycles (PDSA) are ongoing and will inform the anti-racist actions we take to dismantle racist systems, eliminate racist policy, and change racist behavior. The change ideas and systems development named in previous sections is the foundation of our efforts. Each change idea is grounded in each of Zaretta Hammond's *Distinctions of Equity* – multicultural, social justice, and culturally responsive education. The resources, values, structure, and development of our next steps can be viewed in this living document [WEC Black Excellence PDSA Journal Cycle 3.3].

User-centered design means working with your users all throughout the project.

BUILDING CAPACITY & COLLABORATIVE ACTION IN USER CENTERED DESIGN TEAMS

SUSTAIN AND OPERATIONALIZE FOCUS GROUP SYSTEM FOR 360 COMMUNICATION WITH BLACK STUDENTS & FAMILIES

IMPLEMENT SOCIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE TO ELIMINATE N-WORD USAGE AT WEST EARLY COLLEGE

PROVIDE MULTICULTURAL COURSEWORK & CONTENT ALIGNED TO BLACK STUDENT EXPERIENCES.

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING ALIGNED TO CRE AND MATH

Act
•What changes are to be made?
•Next cycle?

Plan
•Questions & predictions (why?)
•Plan to carry out the cycle

Check/Study
•Complete data analysis
•Compare data to predictions
•Summarize what was learned

Do
•Carry out the plan
•Document problems and observations
•Begin data analysis