

Supporting the Whole Child During Pandemic Remote Learning

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**Abstract**

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The education system is like a dialectical system that holds both hope and harm in its operations. However, at the same time, the realities of the educational system have historically and continue to bring great harm to BIPOC communities and have hindered them from flourishing from the ideals of what schools have the potential to bring (Ladson-Billings, 2006). The pandemic further exacerbated racial inequities in the education system for BIPOC communities. This study conceptualized the school system as the unit of change and explored how a school system that has made institutional commitments in moving towards educational justice engaged in efforts to attend to the well-being of students and families during remote

schooling. The Whole Child (WC) approach is a framework that conceptualizes school systems as spaces that can foster the overall well-being of the whole child and extends beyond social emotional programming in schools. However, the WC approach is limited in explicitly addressing race, power, and privilege and the ways school initiatives can perpetuate harm that can negatively affect the well-being of BIPOC students and families. Critical race theory (CRT) provides a theoretical framework in understanding racial dynamics, how they persist in systems, and a way forward. Thus, this study utilized the WC approach's conceptualization of well-being and the theoretical lens of CRT to examine and build upon the WC approach's limitations.

Multiple linear regression models were run to explore the relationships between systemic practices and tenets of the WC approach. Findings from this study demonstrated that practices such as culturally responsive teaching, family engagement practices and a supportive work environment for educators were positively associated with the tenets of the WC approach. The pandemic created conditions that shifted family and engagement, brought further to the forefront the importance of fostering a supportive work environment for educators, and challenged educators to deliver instruction in innovative and culturally relevant ways. Few studies have centered school systems as units of change to foster the well-being of students while also utilizing the lens of critical race theory. The overall aim of this study was to bring forth findings that may encourage school systems to build upon practices that support the well-being of students using a critical lens and to continue to think beyond the physical confines of the school building to engage in innovative, unconventional, and culturally responsive practices that better meet the needs of BIPOC communities.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Hooks (1994) describes the classroom as the “most radical place of possibility” and encourages educators to open their minds and hearts to move past the current to “create new visions” (hooks, 1994, p. 12). In light of the detrimental effects of the pandemic on communities of color, de Royston et al.(2020), call upon a more expansive thinking of what constitutes good schooling and what it means to learn. They indicate the need for a more holistic perspective that integrates the “complexity and diversity of social, cultural, economic, and political life in the 21st century and that allows for more nuanced insights into how our schools can and should serve all of our children” (de Royston et al., 2020, p. 10).

When the United States government declared COVID-19 a national emergency in March 2020, school buildings across the country were closed and state governments mandated stay-at-home orders to curb the spread of the virus (*Notice on the Continuation of the National Emergency Concerning the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic*, 2021). Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities were disproportionately impacted and racial inequities were further exacerbated across all sectors of society. The pandemic has been a time of upheaval, pain, disruption and ongoing feelings of uncertainty about what may come next, particularly for BIPOC communities. In the midst of the pandemic, BIPOC communities were also contending with nation-wide crises -- the murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, shootings in Atlanta, GA, the rise of anti-Asian violence and broader global conflicts.

When schools abruptly shifted to remote learning, teachers and families had to quickly learn how to provide remote instruction and many were not prepared to do so; students struggled emotionally when they lost the routine of school and a natural space for peer connection. Caregivers had to take on more significant roles in providing schooling for their children. When

school buildings closed, it was apparent that schools were not only spaces of academic learning, they also provided basic needs such as food, transportation and social and emotional support and learning -- essentials that support the overall well-being of students and families. Addressing the individual needs of the student and the relationship between school and families became even more pressing.

Schools systems across the country have been engaging in a myriad of efforts to address the racial disparities in its systems (Curry-Stevens et al., 2013). The pandemic has heightened the need to attend to these issues. As school systems continue to explicitly engage in systems-level efforts to advance racial equity, understanding and accepting how the racialized nature of the education system significantly impacts students' educational trajectory and how racial inequities are held in place through the lens of critical race theory are essential considerations in designing and sustaining the work of racial equity (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Lewis & Diamond, 2015).

Educational indicators of success have typically centered academic achievement. The Whole Child (WC) approach reframes this and emphasizes the importance of focusing on the whole child (ASCD, n.d.; Marshall & Price, 2020). This comprehensive approach aspires for every child to be healthy, safe, engaged, supported and challenged in schools. In a WC approach school, students feel accepted for who they are, and they are engaged in culturally responsive instruction. Families and educators are partners, and they collaboratively work together to ensure the success of their children. In a healthy school system, educators are supported by their school community and their well-being is prioritized, and they are equipped to support the needs of their students. School systems that are moving towards integrating the whole child approach are contributing to the long-term success of their students (Wortham et al., 2020).

Systems that prioritize the whole child through an equitable approach can be a lever for educational equity. The WC approach conceptualizes the well-being of children through the five tenets of healthy, safe, challenged, engaged and supported, however its approach to addressing the broader effects of racism, power and how school systems have and continue to be a source of harm for students and families of color that affect the well-being of children and families is limited. Additionally, the WC approach does not examine how its own approach towards building and sustaining well-being in schools can be utilized as a means to perpetuate harm against BIPOC students and families. Approaches like the WC approach can function in a way that places the responsibility of change on those who are most impacted by systemic injustices. Thus, the conceptualization of well-being will be utilized as the framework in discussing overall well-being while critical race theory will be utilized as a lens to build upon, examine and address the limitations of the WC approach and to also provide a framework to better understand how inequities continue to persist in school systems and to inform considerations with systemic initiatives that facilitate the well-being of BIPOC children and families.

This study focuses on Seattle Public Schools, a school system that has prioritized educational justice, serving the whole child, and strengthening family and school relationships, particularly for students and families furthest from educational justice (Seattle Public Schools, 2019). It explores their broader sociopolitical context, organizational conditions and systemic practices through the lens of critical race theory. This study explores how a school system facilitated tenets of the WC approach at the systems-level, while also examining the limitations of that framework through the theoretical lens of critical race theory. The purpose of this study is to explore what a school system did to support the educational experiences of students and

families, specifically BIPOC students and families, during remote learning, and how they can build upon those learnings to inform future whole child initiatives.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The education system is like a dialectical system that holds both hope and harm in its operations. It can serve as a space of hope in providing access to opportunities and upward mobility. In an ideal school system, young people should learn about their brilliance – and adults should come alongside them to nurture and encourage their brilliance. Students should be fully seen. Young people should challenge and inspire growth with their peers, the adults in their lives, and the larger community. If school systems can be reimaged, all students should learn about their legacy, agency, cultural capital, and collective capacity in schools, and they encourage students to build a better world in which all flourish and thrive. However, at the same time, the realities of the educational system have historically and continue to bring great harm to BIPOC communities and have hindered them from flourishing from the ideals of what schools have the potential to bring (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Race has and continues to play a significant role in the many inequities that are present in the education system (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Critical race theory provides a theoretical framework in understanding racial dynamics, how they persist in systems, and a way forward. Scholars contend that striving for racial equality is unrealistic (Bell, 1992). They call for an acceptance of “racial realism” and to work towards racial justice from that place of acceptance. Through the tenet of interest convergence, the work of racial equity requires an understanding that those in power engage in those efforts because it also benefits them. The tenet of whiteness as property discusses how systems and structures function to sustain hierarchical racial

dynamics. Critical race theory scholars contend the centering of marginalized voices will bring forth non dominant narratives that can disrupt the current racial power dynamics.

The pandemic further exacerbated racial inequities in the education system for BIPOC communities. Families reported feeling more concerned about the social emotional health of their youth, particularly BIPOC families (Chu et al., 2021; Seattle Public Schools, 2020b). In a study conducted by Duckworth et al., (2021), they found that students in remote learning, across demographics of race, gender, grade level, English language learner status, and special education status, all reported lower levels of well-being measured by social (feeling a sense of belonging, positive relationships with adults in the school), emotional (feeling good about life) and academics during remote schooling when compared to in-person schooling. The study also found in-person learning was more accessible to White male youth, those ineligible for free/reduced lunch, and English-speaking youth (Duckworth et al., 2021). Parents reported high levels of stress juggling the responsibilities of work, parenting, and schooling their children from home. They also reported feeling worried about the health and safety of their children and how the pandemic was negatively affecting their children's mental health and education -- those sentiments were exacerbated by the pandemic for BIPOC families (Chu et al., 2021; Ishimaru et al., 2021). The Whole Child (WC) approach is a framework that conceptualizes school systems as spaces that can foster the overall well-being of the whole child. However, the WC approach is limited in explicitly addressing race, power, and privilege and the ways school initiatives can perpetuate harm that can negatively affect the well-being of BIPOC students and families.

This study conceptualized the school system as the unit of change and utilized the WC approach's conceptualization of well-being and the theoretical lens of CRT to examine and build upon the WC approach's limitations. This study aimed to explore how a school system that has

made public commitments in moving towards educational justice has been engaging in efforts to disrupt and transform inequitable practices to attend to the well-being of students and families during remote schooling; it also aimed to identify conditions and practices that school systems can build upon to shape future whole child initiatives.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

“Race does not necessarily matter less than it did in the past. It just matters differently” (Lewis & Diamond, 2015, p. 96). Race-based beliefs have formed and shaped hierarchical structures in all realms of society that have privileged certain racial groups over others. Over the years, the organization of these structures may have changed, however, the underlying racialized assumptions and beliefs have not (Lewis & Diamond, 2015). Race continues to yield power to those who are perceived to be ‘better than’ – and firmly held in place because systems were designed to sustain them (Lewis & Diamond, 2015). Critical race theory provides a lens to identify the ways in which race has been pervasive across all sectors of society and how schools are microcosms of those racialized systems (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). A closer examination of critical race theory will be discussed to provide a framing in how race and racism continue to manifest in schools and how CRT scholars theorize a means to advance educational justice. More specifically, due to the limitations of the WC approach as an equitable means towards educational equity, CRT will be first discussed and then it will be utilized as a lens to examine and build upon the WC approach.

### **Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theory (CRT), a theory that originated in the 1970s within legal scholarship, critically analyzes and interrogates the relationships between race, racism and power, while also

centering voices of communities of color as a form of knowledge and tool to disrupt systemic racial inequities (Bell, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) further theorize CRT within the field of education. They contend that the permanence of racism or the ways that racism is ingrained in all aspects of society continues to be a significant factor in educational inequities (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT examines and challenges deep-seeded racialized notions of meritocracy, achievement, and color-evasiveness within the field of education and provides a critical lens in identifying and understanding ways educational inequities continue to exist. CRT also provides a way forward in the pursuit of educational justice by centering BIPOC voices as a means to change (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT tenets of racial realism, counterstories, whiteness as property and interest convergence will be briefly discussed.

### *Tenets*

**Permanence of racism.** Bell (1992) challenges the aspiration that racial equality is possible. He argues that attempting to actualize racial equality will lead to pain and disappointment and moving forward with the work of racial justice requires accepting “racial realism” (Bell, 1992, p. 364). Historical moments of racial justice that were seemingly successful were only temporary and those moments soon became insignificant as “racial patterns adapt in ways that maintain white dominance” (Bell, 1992, p. 373). Bell (1992) further states accepting racial realism “enables us to avoid despair, and frees us to imagine and implement racial strategies that can bring fulfillment and even triumph” (p. 374). Bell (1992) calls for the redefinition of goals and to seek goals that are more realistic. Accepting racial realism acknowledges that racial justice work will likely not lead to transformative change, and may in reality perpetuate systemic injustices. However, with the acceptance of racial realism, the work

will likely not cause further harm and also serve the function of reminding those in power that there are “imaginative, unabashed risk-takers who refuse to be trampled upon” (Bell, 1992, p. 378). Bell (1992) also asserts that striving towards racial justice is not futile -- there is value and meaning in the work itself. Striving for freedom is rooted in our humanity and grows stronger when resisting oppression.

**Counter storytelling.** CRT values the inclusion of voices that have historically been unheard or not included in spaces of power (Bell, 1995; Matsuda, 1987). Bell (1995) describes counter storytelling as a demand to listen to the perspectives of people of color and a means to decentralize and deconstruct the dominant White perspective. People of color have unique perspectives due to their history and experience with oppression that those in power do not have or know, and their stories put forth narratives that broaden the perspectives of those who do not live it (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). People of color, in their suffering, have developed a “special voice to which we should listen” (Matsuda, 1987, p. 324). Furthermore, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) contend that stories or listening to voices of color serves as a path to self-preservation and a means to arm communities of color with truths against the stereotypes they have internalized. Sharing stories also builds community amongst communities of color. Seeking the perspective of those who have experienced oppression provides opportunities to make sense of what is just and unjust (Matsuda, 1987). The voices of people of color are necessary for a racial awakening, to critically examine the educational system, and to imagine new ways forward (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

**Whiteness as Property.** Additionally, CRT critically examines the notion of Whiteness as property. Exploring the intersections between race and property is a means to understanding inequities and the basis for the legal right to exclude (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate,

1995). Since the founding of the U.S., property rights and human rights have been inextricably linked (Bell, 1995). Harris (1993) contends that whiteness as property evolved from slavery and colonization -- systems of oppression that reduced humanity as property based on race.

Whiteness as a racial identity became property protected by laws and structures (Bell, 1995; Harris, 1993). It enables access to certain privileges that secures basic needs. Whiteness then becomes “treasured property” (p. 906) of benefits, privileges and resources that those in power safeguard and/or seek to attain (Bell, 1995, p. 906). However, these privileges are unseen because they have been interwoven into the structural foundation of society. Those in power expect and hold a sense of entitlement in receiving these benefits because over time these benefits have been normalized, legalized and affirmed (Bell, 1995; Harris, 1993). As such, the fear of losing whiteness is the fear of losing privileges that those in power have greatly benefited from. Morrison (2016), in describing the presidential election in 2016, aptly describes the fear of losing Whiteness as “white panic” -- for some the threat of losing whiteness is too much to bear, and they will go to great lengths to protect it (Harris, 2020; Morrison, 2016).

According to Harris (1995), the ownership of property has three functions: 1) right of possession, 2) the right to use, and 3) the right to disposition. In education, Whiteness as property affords those in power the right to use and enjoy more highly-resourced schools and high-quality curricula (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Any influence that tarnishes “Whiteness”, i.e. “Blackness”, gives reason to exclude (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). For example, admissions to honors or gifted programs in schools are typically not accessible to students of color (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Additionally, programs or schools that are predominantly non-White are not perceived as reputable. When schools or programs are no longer “white,” then the effect of “white flight” may occur in which White families exercise their right to disposition and relocate

(Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Whiteness as property has become so interwoven in policies, practices and day-to-day school routines, it has legitimized the right to exclude and continues to be a powerful means in sustaining racial inequities.

**Interest convergence.** Movement forward in racial justice is not solely motivated by good intentions. It is important to understand the dynamics of how power plays out in the work of racial justice. “The interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites” (Bell, 1995, p. 22). Bell (1995) argued that the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision was made because those in power were motivated by economic and financial gains through desegregation (Bell, 1995). The public narrative of the landmark court case conveyed a civil rights victory and advancement of racial justice, however, the court decision came at a great cost to the Black community -- schools in Black neighborhoods were closed, Black educators lost their jobs, and Black students did not have access to high-quality curricula in desegregated schools (Bell, 1995; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). The notion of interest convergence accepts the reality that the work of racial justice “is about alignment, not altruism” (Ladson-Billings, 2013, p. 13). When engaging in the work of educational justice, it is necessary to consider and understand the dynamics of how interests of those in power play out.

CRT provides a lens to identify and understand the pervasive ways that race and racism take hold in schools. It brings to light the deeply seeded racialized structures across those spaces that are difficult to identify and utilized as tools to maintain racial inequities. CRT discusses how moving towards racial justice requires an understanding of the power of White interests and how their interests influence efforts. CRT also offers ways forward -- “...in demanding attention to the specifics of the conditions and precarity of Black life, in building, in organizing around the basic

notion that Black lives matter, radical visions emerge that open up pathways to transformative change” (Harris, 2020, p. 10). CRT brings forth the voices of those who are typically unheard and values their knowledge and expertise as powerful tools to counter and decentralize dominant White narratives. Bell (1992) asserts that fighting for racial justice, though seemingly futile, is an humanistic act that is worthwhile. The act of resistance to oppression will bring forth change and new ways of thinking and doing.

### **The Whole Child Approach**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) provides a helpful theoretical framework in understanding racial dynamics in systems and conceptualizes a path forward. This study will utilize CRT as the lens in understanding and exploring the Whole Child (WC) approach. The WC approach is a framework that situates schools as spaces that can support the whole child. As of 2020, over 200 school districts across the world have adopted this model (Wortham et al., 2020). This approach is based on a systems-level model with the foundational belief that it takes a network of systems to foster the growth and development of children (see figure 1) (Marshall & Price, 2020). This model recognizes the importance of community support beyond the school building as children are shaped by their different contexts of home, school, and their larger community (Marshall & Price, 2020). A school system that prioritizes the whole child aims to meet the cognitive, behavioral, social, and emotional needs of the child through the curriculum, instruction, assessment, family engagement, school culture and climate, and staff development (ASCD, n.d.). The WC approach is a helpful tool that conceptualizes the well-being of students within the school setting, however, it also has limitations. This section will provide an overview of the WC approach and how it can be further expanded utilizing the lens of CRT.



**Figure 1: The Whole Child Approach (Marshall & Price, 2020)**

WC models typically begin with embedding social emotional learning (SEL) across the school, community, and family contexts. Healthy environments are integral towards promoting positive development of children and reducing the likelihood of psychological and behavioral issues (Benner & Garcia, 2019). Wortham et al., (2020) also discuss the importance of moving beyond academic content knowledge and vocational training to include addressing dimensions of well-being (e.g. intellectual, moral, emotional, relational) in comprehensive educational approaches. These dimensions are interconnected, build upon and depend on each other, and the WC approach attends to the interconnectedness of those dimensions. Schlund et al., (2020) also call upon a more systemic focus on SEL as a lever towards equity and excellence. They discuss systemic SEL as an approach that focuses on systems change to foster equitable learning conditions for students and families. Systemic SEL extends beyond building SEL competencies for students and strives to honor the expertise of students, families, and communities as partners

in co-constructing culturally responsive SEL approaches (Mahoney et al., 2020; Schlund et al., 2020). School systems that are moving towards comprehensive approaches in education that extend beyond the narrow scope of academics are moving in the right direction (Wortham et al., 2020).

However, the WC approach also has limitations as an equitable approach. The WC approach does not explicitly examine how its own approach can be a means towards perpetuating inequities and be utilized as a color evasive initiative that functions to protect whiteness and advance White interests. The WC approach and other social emotional learning initiatives can inadvertently place the responsibility on students to change, rather than placing the onus on the system to change. Though research has demonstrated positive gains of SEL, it has largely focused on building students' individual competencies (Durlak et al., 2011). Simmons (2021) discusses how SEL programming can be used as means towards "compliance and control" (p. 1) for BIPOC students and a tool to justify disciplinary measures for not meeting white normative standards. The WC approach is limited in addressing what CRT describes as the permanence of racism and how schooling and initiatives that are well-intentioned can function to preserve whiteness and continue to inflict harm on BIPOC students and families (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Simmons, 2021). Simmons (2021) further argues that SEL needs to address the current sociopolitical context of what BIPOC students and families face and to strive towards fighting racial injustices. Critical race theory centers the voices of marginalized communities as a means towards advancing racial justice -- though the WC approach addresses family engagement, it is limited in explicitly centering partnering with families and communities so that they are also vital partners in decision-making. To promote the well-being of BIPOC students and families, the approach also needs to explicitly address the broader sociopolitical context of how racial

dynamics play out, how they continue to negatively affect the well-being of students and families, and to conceptualize a means towards advancing racial justice in schools. Applying the CRT lens to the WC approach requires us to consider how these approaches can be utilized as a means to protect whiteness, how interest convergence plays out, and the need to authentically center the voices of BIPOC communities.

To better understand the WC approach, the five core tenets of healthy, safe, engaged, supported and challenged, will be discussed and further explored with the lens of CRT below (Marshall & Price, 2020).

### ***Healthy***

The first tenet, healthy, focuses on the physical and mental health of children and adults. When a child's physical and emotional needs are met, they are more likely to thrive in school (Marshall & Price, 2020). Schools understand that educator and student well-being are linked, and they facilitate access to health, mental health, and dental resources for students and staff. Practices that promote the health and well-being of students and staff are integrated into school activities, curriculum, and staff professional development (ASCD, 2013a; Marshall & Price, 2020). Furthermore, WC approach schools understand that culture and well-being are intricately connected, and their teaching and learning practices integrate the cultural context of their students. Schools that are mindful of the cultural context of their student body in its practices attends to the health of the whole child.

WC approach schools partner with families and the broader community to support the well-being of students. CRT values the voices of BIPOC families and conceptualizes their voices as a means towards disrupting inequities. When schools center the voices of BIPOC families, and they are part of the process in conceptualizing health and well-being, initiatives that are

subsequently implemented are based on family and community perspectives of health and well-being. Additionally, a WC approach through the lens of CRT, acknowledges that school systems are inherently racialized systems that function to protect whiteness, and the school system works towards disrupting those inequities.

### *Safe*

Physical and emotional safety is integral to a child's growth (ASCD, 2013b; Marshall & Price, 2020). In a school that feels physically and emotionally safe, children do not worry about physical harm; they feel accepted, and a sense of belonging. It is a space where students and staff of all backgrounds feel welcomed because they can be who they are (ASCD, 2013b; Marshall & Price, 2020).

To foster a safe and welcoming environment, WC approach schools prioritize initiatives that address school climate and culture. For schools to feel safe, WC schools understand the need to address the mental health challenges students are facing and to support learning and practices that promote emotional well-being (Jones & Miranda, 2020). WC schools that prioritize the physical and emotional safety of their students cultivate and foster a safe and welcoming space for all students.

Safe schools explicitly examine their own policies and practices that create an unsafe climate and culture. They explore how the CRT tenet of racial realism continues to affect the sense of safety of students, educators and families. WC schools that prioritize safety utilizing the lens of CRT focus on changing systemic practices. They understand that their practices can create an unsafe environment for BIPOC students and families and hold themselves accountable for disrupting those cycles of harm.

**Sense of Acceptance and Belonging.** Furthermore, WC schools create safe spaces by cultivating a sense of acceptance and belonging in students. Schools should be spaces where students feel emotionally safe and connected. In a safe school, students feel welcomed and included or accepted for who they are. They feel a sense of belonging and connectedness to each other and with staff. According to Goodenow (1993) students' sense of belonging is the extent to which the student feels, "personally accepted, respected, included and supported by others in the school social environment" (p. 80). Thus, a sense of acceptance is conceptualized as a construct that influences a sense of belonging. When students feel accepted, they feel a stronger sense of belongingness in their environments. Both constructs are based on the perception of the student's social context and sense of connectedness with others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Gray et al., 2018; Osterman, 2000). Feelings of acceptance and sense of belonging are interconnected and have a reciprocal relationship. Murphy & Zirkel (2015) conceptualize "experienced belonging" as the extent students feel connected and accepted by others. The literature is limited on discussing feelings of acceptance as a construct independent of sense of belonging, thus both constructs of acceptance and belongingness will be discussed.

Sense of belonging is an essential need for connectedness with others and is integral to optimal functioning across all contexts and developmental stages (Jagers et al., 2019). As students become older and more socially aware, they become more aware of the negative racial narratives held against them, which can lead to disconnection from school (Jagers et al., 2019). Furthermore, students who experience acceptance are more likely to be supportive of others -- they are more friendly, kind, helpful, and considerate of others (Osterman, 2000). Being accepted can result in a myriad of positive emotions (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Students who feel accepted by their peers and teachers are more likely to enjoy school, whereas students who do

not feel accepted may disengage (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Osterman, 2000). Research has shown that students who feel a sense of belonging and acceptance typically show increased academic engagement, motivation, and resilience (Murphy & Zirkel, 2015; Osterman, 2000).

BIPOC communities may experience schools as spaces that are “not for them” (Murphy & Zirkel, 2015). Schools can be spaces that are racially structured in a way that implicitly sends messages to BIPOC students and families that it is not their space. Students may feel a sense of “belonging uncertainty” (p. 3) in which they question their connectedness to others because they are part of a stigmatized group (Murphy & Zirkel, 2015; Walton & Cohen, 2007). Feelings of belongingness are shaped by the social representation of students’ setting and the degree to which students see themselves represented there. BIPOC students may be typically seen as “outsiders,” while White students may presume that schools are spaces “for them,” and they do not have the same level of collective concern for belongingness.

Students who face negative racial stereotypes experience acceptance and belongingness differently (Murphy & Zirkel, 2015). In Murphy and Zirkel’s (2015) study on students’ sense of belonging with peers at a predominantly African American school, the authors found that when African American students felt a sense of belonging with their peers, they aspired to higher educational goals and had higher self-efficacy in attaining those goals. They did not find the same relationship with White students who do not face similar stigmatized stereotypes of their intellectual abilities (Murphy & Zirkel, 2015). Another study conducted at a college campus by Walton & Cohen (2007) found that students from BIPOC communities who were experiencing difficulties in school questioned their sense of fit in that setting, whereas White students did not show a similar level of concern. These studies provide examples of the differences between the sense of acceptance and belonging of BIPOC and White students. Students who experience

negative racial stereotypes and face academic difficulties may negatively attribute their struggles to how they fit in that setting. Thus, when school systems promote initiatives that foster belongingness and acceptance, BIPOC students may experience schools as safe spaces that are for them.

### ***Engaged***

In WC approach schools, students are engaged in their learning, and they are connected to the school and larger community (ASCD, 2013c; Marshall & Price, 2020). They foster learning environments that are shaped by the cultural values, beliefs, and history of the students. Students see themselves represented in the curriculum (Jones & Miranda, 2020). WC approach schools do not shy away from teaching and discussing the effects of racism -- the history, the impact on policy and practices, and how it continues to harm students and families of color (Jones & Miranda, 2020). Though individual achievement has been the dominant model in education, it creates a sense of cultural dissonance for students from collectivistic cultures. In contrast, WC approach schools that are culturally responsive foster a sense of collectivism (Jones & Miranda, 2020). They offer opportunities for students to engage with the larger community, i.e. volunteer opportunities, advocacy activities, or internships (Jones & Miranda, 2020). WC approach schools facilitate learning that encourages students to engage with the larger world and to become changemakers for the world they want to see (Marshall and Price, 2020). Students learn that they are connected to one another and to the larger world, and they can play a role in making the world a better place (Marshall & Price, 2020). Students have a sense of agency that spurs them into collective action in making the world a better place.

Families and students are vital partners with the school, and they are part of the decision-making process and cultural makeup of the school. Students and families are authentic

partners in fostering learning environments that are reflective of their community. When WC approach schools prioritize authentic engagement with families, particularly BIPOC families, and value their expertise in shaping school culture and policies, they are shifting the power dynamics in schools and co-creating new ways forward.

### ***Supported***

In WC approach schools, students have access to high-quality, personalized curriculum. and educators foster positive relationships with their students and families. Schools also cultivate a positive and supportive work environment for educators. Adults encourage and support the academic and personal growth of students (Marshall & Price, 2020). Students have access to academic and social emotional supports in the school, e.g. school psychologists or counselors. Educators know their students and instruction is informed by who the students are and their needs (Marshall & Price, 2020). Authentic relationships are built between school and family that extends beyond the typical open houses, curriculum nights or parent conferences (Jones & Miranda, 2020). A WC approach school consists of educators who care deeply about the community they serve, and they strive to know their students and families in an intentional and authentic manner (Jones & Miranda, 2020).

**Ethnic and Racial Identity.** WC schools that support their students also foster students' ethnic and racial identity. An awareness of self in relation to ERI and possessing a positive sense of ethnic and racial identity can be correlated with overall well-being (Jagers et al., 2018). Research has demonstrated that schools with strong student-teacher relationships and support multiculturalism promoted exploration and clarity of the ethnic and racial identities of youth of color (Camacho et al., 2018). A sense of “communalism” in relation to ethnic and racial group membership can be an important asset for marginalized ethnic/racial groups in reducing stress

and promoting positive socioemotional behaviors (Jagers et al., 2018, p. 4). Additionally, culture-specific programs that aim to build ERI have shown promising gains. In a literature review conducted by Brittian Loyd & Williams (2017), they found that students who participated in an Africentric program endorsed Africentric values and held more positive feelings about being Black. Schools that promote culture-specific learning can foster a stronger sense of self in relation to students' ERI, thus supporting their overall well-being. School systems that promote initiatives that build a positive sense of ethnic and racial identity (ERI) can help to support the overall well-being of students.

### ***Challenged***

In WC approach schools, students are challenged academically (Marshall & Price, 2020). WC approach schools foster the learning and growth of skills such as communication, problem-solving and critical thinking through challenging curriculum to support students' postsecondary goals. Educators understand that systemic factors such as institutional racism, poverty, and violence disproportionately affect youth of color and can negatively affect their ability to learn (Diemer & Blustein, 2007; Jones & Miranda, 2020). WC approach schools challenge their students while understanding that there are other factors that affect the student's ability to engage and learn. WC approach schools that utilize the lens of CRT, understand that systems sustain oppressive systems of power that protect whiteness and aim to challenge their own practices and procedures to better meet the needs of their students and to deliver curriculum that better aligns with who their students are. They also understand the need to authentically partner with families and the larger community to ensure the healthy development of the whole child.

The WC approach emphasizes the need to attend to the overall well-being and long-term outcomes of children. Academic learning is not an isolated experience that functions on its own—it is interrelated and works in conjunction with a child’s social emotional health, sense of physical and emotional safety, relationships with others and more (Sibley et al., 2017). If a child does not feel physically or emotionally safe at school, then they may struggle with engagement with school and peers. If a school system only focuses on meeting academic standards, they are neglecting vital factors that influence student well-being. The model also aims to foster important constructs such as ethnic and racial identity and acceptance and belonging.

Schools that apply the WC approach’s five tenets through the lens of CRT understand they play a role in sustaining systems of oppression that benefit those in power, and they engage in practices aimed to disrupt those patterns. Though the intention of the WC approach is to support the whole child, crucial to promoting the well-being of students is to also critically examine historical and current practices that sustain whiteness and perpetuate harm on BIPOC students and families and to address systemic injustices to support their well-being. The WC approach can inadvertently be utilized as an approach that absolves the system from change and implicates students and families as the “issue” who bear the responsibility of change. Simmons (2021) argues that any efforts that do not explicitly address “racism, bias, and oppression can easily be used as a weapon to put BIPOC students in their place” (p.1). Furthermore, Critical race theory theorizes that a means towards advancing educational justice is to center the voices of BIPOC communities. The WC approach addresses family and school partnership, however, their approach is limited in centering the role of families and drawing upon their expertise in shaping school culture and practices. Positioning the WC approach within the theoretical

framework of CRT provides a more critical understanding of how approaches like the WC can be a means towards perpetuating harm and theorizes a way forward in advancing educational equity.

### **Pedagogical Paradigms that Integrate Culture**

A school system that attends to the whole child prioritizes integrating who the students are in their teaching and learning experiences. The WC approach emphasizes the importance of cultivating learning environments that are shaped by the cultural values, beliefs and history of their communities. They attend to the whole child tenets of engaged, challenged, supported and safe. When ethnically diverse students see themselves in their schooling experiences, learning becomes more engaging. Students are challenged to question the status quo and to work towards disrupting inequities. When school systems prioritize integrating culture, they foster a more safe and supportive learning environment for their students. School systems that are focused on the whole child provide learning experiences that are shaped by their student community.

Teaching and instruction that integrates the cultures of BIPOC students have been an area of significant research to systemically address racial inequities in education (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Gay, 2018; Howard & Terry, 2011; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). All children are brilliant and capable of learning, yet educational outcomes for BIPOC students have been “too devastating to be tolerable” (Gay, 2018, p. 1). Shifting to culturally responsive teaching that integrates the cultural background, perspectives and stories of ethnically diverse students in their schooling experience will address the whole child tenets of engaged, challenged, supported and safe in promoting their well-being (Gay, 2018).

Gay (2018) asserts that the myriad of intelligences held by ethnically diverse students have yet to be uncovered and instructional strategies that aim to tap into and recognize this will significantly improve achievement. Much literature has focused on teaching and learning that integrates the culture of diverse students and terminology differs across the literature -- this paper

will reference language as used by the authors, thus seminal work in culturally responsive teaching by Gay (2018), culturally relevant pedagogy by Ladson-Billings (1995), and culturally sustaining pedagogy by Paris (2012) will be briefly discussed.

### ***Culturally Relevant Pedagogy***

When Ladson-Billings (1995) first wrote about culturally relevant pedagogy, she wanted to bring forth a narrative of academic excellence with African American students because much research at that time held deficit-based understandings of African American students. In Ladson-Billings' (1995) early work, she discusses culturally relevant pedagogy as meeting three criteria, 1) students will experience academic success, 2) students must develop and maintain cultural competence, and 3) students must develop critical consciousness. In culturally relevant teaching, teachers expect, demand and bring forth academic achievement in their students. Culturally relevant teaching also upholds academic success without compromising cultural integrity (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Teachers integrate students' culture into their learning experiences. Lastly, culturally relevant teaching challenges students to think beyond their individual achievement to critically challenge norms, power structures and systems that create and reinforce inequities. Students learn about oppressive forces and injustices in society and endeavor to fight against them and develop a critical consciousness to build a better world (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Culturally relevant pedagogy attends to the whole child by challenging students to meet teachers' high expectations, they are engaged in learning that is connected to who they are and their broader school community, and they are supported in developing a critical consciousness in building a more just world.

### ***Culturally Responsive Teaching***

Furthermore, Gay (2018) describes culturally responsive teaching as “the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students” (Gay, 2018, p. 36). Culturally responsive teaching attends to the WC approach tenets because when students can relate to what they are learning, they feel supported and are more engaged. Gay (2018) describes culturally responsive teaching with the following eight essential elements, 1) validating, 2) comprehensive and inclusive, 3) multidimensional, 4) empowering, 5) transformative, 6) emancipatory, 7) humanistic, and 8) normative and ethical. Each element is briefly described below:

**Culturally responsive teaching is validating.** It honors the cultural background, experiences, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students so that learning experiences are better connected to who they are and more effective for them. Cultural differences are valued and students are taught to hold their cultural background and others’ background in high regard. Culturally responsive teaching builds meaningful bridges between home and school learning (Gay, 2018). Culturally responsive teaching aims to connect learning experiences between home and school and attends to the WC tenets of engaged and supported.

**Culturally Responsive Teaching is Comprehensive and Inclusive.** This method of instruction focuses on the whole child. In Rodriguez et al.’s (2004) study of a university outreach program for underrepresented high schoolers, they found that this program advanced students’ academic achievement in science and math and promoted their cultural awareness and identity development. Culturally responsive teaching extends beyond academic achievement and focuses on the intellectual, social, emotional and political. This approach supports students in developing

their identity and relationship with their ethnic group and broader community, builds a sense of community and shared responsibility, and an “ethic of success” (Gay, 2018, p. 38). Culturally responsive teaching supports the whole child by providing challenging instruction and fostering a safe and supportive environment by helping students develop their sense of ethnic/racial identity.

**Culturally responsive teaching is multidimensional.** It encompasses curricula, different learning contexts, climate, student-educator relationships, and assessments. For example, language arts, social studies, music and art teachers can collaborate together to teach the concept of protest. Culturally responsive teaching encompasses a broad range of knowledge, narratives and perspectives (Gay, 2018). Students are challenged and feel supported because learning is approached through different methods and students’ perspectives and views are expanded.

**Culturally responsive teaching is empowering.** In this teaching approach, teachers hold high expectations and students believe they have the ability to succeed and will persist in achieving mastery of skills. In Dimick’s (2012) case study of a high school science class in a diverse school, they found that students showed increased engagement working on an experiential environmental justice science project focused on preserving a local river. They also found that the students’ projects included elements of academic, social and political empowerment (Dimick, 2012). In culturally responsive teaching, students learn to be competent, confident and courageous (Gay, 2018). Culturally responsive teaching supports the whole child tenet of challenged through teachers’ high expectations of them and learning that encourages them to fight against injustices.

**Culturally responsive teaching is transformative.** It teaches students cultural consciousness -- to honor and respect their own and others’ cultures. In Epstein and Mayorga’s (2011) case study of a social studies class in a diverse school, they found that students expanded

their understanding of race and racism. They shifted their perceptions of people of color as victims to those with agency and resilience (T. Epstein & Mayorga, 2011). Students develop a critical consciousness of inequities of different ethnic groups and become actively involved in addressing those inequities (Gay, 2018). Students are supported and challenged through the teaching and learning of their culture and of others and by developing a critical consciousness of broader societal injustices.

**Culturally responsive teaching is emancipatory.** This method of teaching disrupts the hegemonic notion that there is absolute authority on what is considered truth. Students are challenged and learn that there is more than one form of truth, and it is dynamic and ever-changing. They learn to apply new learning through understanding different perspectives from diverse scholars that shape their own ways of thinking and knowing (Gay, 2018).

**Culturally responsive teaching is humanistic.** This approach values both minoritized and majority students. All students benefit from this form of teaching directly and indirectly, individually and collectively. All students learn more accurate knowledge of different cultures, lives, and experiences of diverse groups (Gay, 2018). Culturally responsive teaching attends to the whole child tenets of safe and supported through fostering a learning environment that values students' humanity.

**Culturally responsive teaching is normative and ethical.** The education system has been based on Eurocentric, White culture norms and perspectives. Schooling has marginalized and made invisible the life and experiences of ethnically diverse youth, thus, integrating cultural diversity into the learning experiences that reflects their lives is the right direction to move (Gay, 2018). Culturally responsive teaching is aligned with the WC tenet of engaged and supported because it integrates their stories in their teaching and learning experiences.

### *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy*

Paris (2012) builds upon culturally responsive teaching research and offers culturally sustaining pedagogy as a term that more closely aligns with the intent of this pedagogical paradigm. He asserts that this approach to teaching needs to move beyond responsiveness -- it needs to contribute to sustaining communities of color and their cultural and linguistic competencies while also providing them with access to dominant culture competency (Paris, 2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy centers the dynamic nature of communities and their languages, practices and expertise across learning contexts (Paris, 2012). It values intergenerational knowledge and feedback in which students, elders, and families are all collaborators in learning settings. Culturally sustaining pedagogy is also aligned with the WC tenets of engaged, supported, and healthy -- it partners and honors the expertise of families and communities to support the well-being of students. Culturally sustaining pedagogy works towards being in good relationship with the land, those of the land, and with students and communities. It also makes space to reflect and grapple with internalized oppressions, choices that sustain life or perpetuate dominant practices, and turning to ourselves to critically assess what should be sustained (Paris, 2012). This approach to learning offers a pathway to sustaining communities of color that radically shifts education settings that were designed to marginalize those communities. Culturally sustaining pedagogy aims to transform spaces "...toward what they could and should be" (Paris, 2012, p. 373).

**Positive Outcomes of Culturally Relevant Education.** Aronson & Laughter (2016) conducted a comprehensive review of studies on culturally relevant education and found that this approach produced positive outcomes across academic areas (math, science, history) and other indicators of student success including motivation, empowerment, critical discourse and agency.

They also found in their review that educators were promoting the critical consciousness and cultural competence of students by creating spaces for critical discussions. Students made connections between their academic spaces and home cultures and cultivated a sense of pride through making those connections. Additionally, their research also found educators engaging with families and the broader community to support student learning (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Howard and Terry (2011) found that a high-school program that incorporated culturally responsive elements supported the academic, emotional and cognitive development of African American students (Howard & Terry, 2011). Howard (2021) also found that programs intended to facilitate greater access to college for students of color that incorporated culturally responsive practices of building critical consciousness, providing mentorship, and partnering with community organizations showed remarkable results in academic performance, graduate rates, and college entrance rates. This pedagogical approach has demonstrated positive student outcomes in learning, engagement and postsecondary options for BIPOC students.

Gay (2018) states that culturally responsive teaching “is simply the right, necessary, and honorable thing to do” (p. 46). Culturally responsive teaching is already provided to White students, and it should be extended to all students (Gay, 2018). The positive outcomes of this approach to teaching highlights the need to continue integrating culturally responsive teaching in school systems to support the whole child and to move towards educational excellence and justice.

### **Partnering with BIPOC Families and Centering their Untapped Expertise**

The WC approach’s tenets of healthy, engaged, and supported highlight the need to build family and school relationships to attend to the whole child. The tenet of counterstories in Critical Race Theory further centers the voices of BIPOC families and theorizes it as a means

towards disrupting racial inequities. Literature on family engagement practices have emphasized that strong school and family partnerships lead to better outcomes for students academically and socially (Auerbach, 2007; Epstein et al., 2018). Family engagement has shown to positively affect student well-being and academic achievement (Barger et al., 2019). Barger et al. (2019) found a positive correlation between family involvement and academic adjustment (achievement, engagement and motivation) and their children's social and emotional adjustment, sense of self-efficacy, motivation, and emotion regulation abilities (Barger et al., 2019; Nyanamba et al., 2021).

More recent literature has indicated that authentic relationships with BIPOC families could be powerful levers of equitable change in schools (Auerbach, 2010; Barajas-López & Ishimaru, 2016). More conventional family engagement approaches such as routine parent teacher meetings, parent teacher conferences, curriculum nights, multi-cultural nights, or parent-teacher association meetings are school-centric methods of engaging families. These approaches are deficit-based perspectives that aim to “educate” families on school processes and procedures and conform to dominant norms (Auerbach, 2007; Barajas-López & Ishimaru, 2016). However, Barajas-López and Ishimaru (2016) claim a different narrative for BIPOC families -- “a narrative not only of strength and resilience but also of untapped insights, understandings, and opportunities for fundamentally reshaping how schools and school systems educate children” (p. 39).

In Barajas-López & Ishimaru's (2016) qualitative study, they highlighted the deep understanding BIPOC parents have of the inequities in the school system through their lived experiences. With their experiences and understanding of the system, BIPOC families provided powerful insights in how racial inequities play out in schools – on a micro and macro level – and

narrated how school systems are a space for BIPOC families to share this insight, particularly on issues that school systems tend to overlook or do not see. They further claim that these “insights, knowledge, and expertise” can help inform educator practices in bringing forth a more just education system (Barajas-López & Ishimaru, 2016, p. 58).

Furthermore, critical race theory decentralizes the dominant White voice and views the stories and voices of communities of color as meaningful and valuable. Yosso (2005) builds upon CRT and theorizes that communities of color hold a vast “array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts...to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression” (p. 77). The cultural wealth that communities of color hold can be utilized as a means to reform education and to embolden communities of color to make use of the resources already present in their communities (Yosso, 2005). Critical race theory uncovers structural racism and the deficit-based framing that permeates the education system and reveals the deep need to reimagine that system in ways that center the community cultural wealth that communities of color bring (Yosso, 2005).

When school systems actively partner with BIPOC families, they better understand their needs (Garces & Cruz, 2017). When schools partner with families, they also support the whole child by being aligned with the healthy, engaged and supported tenets of the WC approach. By authentically engaging with families, community partners, students, and other leaders in the community, the collective influence shifts the power structures in place. Schools that partner with families that extend beyond the typical activities (i.e. PTA meetings, multicultural nights) can build transformative partnerships. This practice is also aligned with the CRT tenet of counterstories -- when BIPOC families have agency in school processes and decision-making, it

shifts the hierarchical power of a school and can lead to policies and practices that better address their needs (Ishimaru, 2020; Toney & Rodgers, 2011).

### **Educator Well-being and Supportive Work Environment**

WC approach schools not only prioritize a supportive learning environment for students, but educators are also supported. Working in the education field can be a fulfilling and rewarding experience, and the nature of the work can be stress-inducing (Wong et al., 2017). Educators are often juggling the many demands of their roles, including instructional expectations, the social emotional needs of their students, and their own well-being. When teachers are under stress, it negatively affects their ability to provide instruction and develop positive relationships with students (Jennings & Frank, 2015). When they are not equipped to manage the emotional stressors of teaching, students can become disengaged. This in turn leads to a snowball effect of increased behavioral issues and emotional fatigue of the teacher, consequently negatively affecting classroom climate (Jennings & Frank, 2015). When educators work in a supportive environment and their well-being is valued, they are better able to meet the needs of their students.

Educator well-being is influenced by the school's culture, climate, supports provided for them at school, their social emotional health and competencies, and their own stories of trauma and harm (Browning & Romer, 2020). Student and teacher well-being and social and emotional competencies (SEC) are interconnected (Gregory & Fergus, 2017; Jennings & Frank, 2015). Educators' well-being and SEC strongly influence students' motivation to learn, the school climate and discipline (Gregory & Fergus, 2017). Their well-being and SEC affects classroom culture, student academics and behavior (Jennings & Frank, 2015). This relationship is mediated by positive student-teacher relationships, effective classroom management and teaching SEL

skills (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Classrooms characterized by strong teacher-student relationships consist of students who are engaged in their learning and are willing to take on and persist through challenging tasks (Jones & Kahn, 2017).

## **Effects of Pandemic Remote Learning on Families and Educators**

### ***Family and School Dynamics During Pandemic Remote Learning***

Remote learning shifted the dynamics of family school relationships, particularly for BIPOC families. Remote schooling further illuminated the ways schools can be places of harm for BIPOC families. For some families remote schooling was a welcome reprieve from the pain of everyday racialized assumptions and low expectations of them in schools (Ishimaru et al., 2021). During remote schooling, educators were dependent on families to provide online teaching. Families faced increased responsibilities of managing their children's day-to-day schooling, particularly if they had elementary-aged children, while balancing other responsibilities (Nyanamba et al., 2021). In a survey on remote learning conducted by Seattle Public Schools in May 2020, Black families reported spending significantly more time supporting their children's learning activities when compared to White families (Seattle Public Schools, 2020b). In a report co-authored by the researcher of this study, Black families also indicated that remote schooling exacerbated the already tenuous relationship they had with educators in their schools and remote schooling was a reprieve from the racialized trauma they were experiencing in school buildings (Ishimaru et al., 2021). Communication between educators and families was also cited as a major concern during remote schooling (Huck & Zhang, 2021). Non-English speaking Black families reported feeling disconnected from schools during remote learning and missed schools as a community space with other families (Ishimaru et al., 2021). Educators, such as instructional assistants, who served as their point of contact, were difficult to

reach. Some families relied on their children to relay messages to them as teachers preferred to communicate with their children. However, families with established relationships with teachers before the pandemic reported that those relationships continued during remote learning (Ishimaru et al., 2021). Families also found support with other families (Huck & Zhang, 2021). Remote schooling brought into the light that family and school relationships are vital in supporting the whole child.

On the positive side, Black families also reported that during remote schooling they intentionally built on what they were already doing at home to provide learning experiences based on their children's interests and strengths -- some families engaged in activism with their children by attending protests and some families held book groups or had cooking classes (Ishimaru et al., 2021). Remote learning was a challenging time for families, particularly for BIPOC families -- and despite those challenges, families expanded their home learning practices according to their children's unique gifts and interests (Ishimaru et al., 2021). Black families built on their cultural capital and drew upon their expertise to support the learning and growth of their children.

Though remote learning was challenging, families demonstrated resilience and persistence, and engaged in home learning practices that drew upon their cultural capital and strengths of their children. BIPOC families hold a vast amount of knowledge and untapped insight -- when schools authentically partner with them, it can shift processes and practices to foster more just schools. Remote schooling illuminated practices that families engaged in to support their children's schooling -- practices that schools can also integrate into their system to better meet the needs of their students.

### *Effects of Pandemic Remote Learning on Educators*

The onset of the pandemic amplified existent stressors for educators, and it has taken a detrimental toll on the educator workforce. In a literature review conducted by Huck & Zhang (2021) of remote schooling, educators cited communication challenges with families, lack of preparedness for remote teaching, and the inequities students experienced as major stressors. Many educators have chosen to leave the field during the pandemic (Diliberti et al., 2021; Walter & Fox, 2021). In addition to managing pandemic-induced stressors of the profession, educators were also contending with secondary traumatic stress and compassion fatigue while working with students and families experiencing trauma and hardships (Browning & Romer, 2020). This may have also been exacerbated by a sense of communal trauma due to the broader effects of the pandemic. Pandemic remote schooling was a challenging time for educators, and it highlighted the need for systems to prioritize their health and well-being.

In Walter & Fox's (2021) study of teacher well-being during the pandemic, teachers cited three strategies that supported their well-being, 1) self-care strategies such as physical activity or therapy, 2) well-being dispositions such as a growth mindset and maintaining a positive attitude and 3) leaning on others and seeking support in their school community and families, particularly during the beginning of the pandemic (Walter & Fox, 2021). Teachers who were proactive in self-care strategies, maintained a positive disposition and actively sought others for support reported those strategies helped to alleviate the stresses of their roles, felt less isolated and maintained a more positive outlook of their situations (Walter & Fox, 2021).

When school systems align with the WC tenet of health for educators and prioritize their well-being, it can help to foster a positive school environment. Walter and Fox (2021) studied strategies at the school-level that supported teacher well-being. They synthesized the data into

three themes: 1) empathetic leadership; 2) a supportive team and 3) increased resources for teachers. Teachers who felt well supported by their leadership and felt part of their school team were cited as important variables in helping educators navigate through such challenging times, particularly navigating teaching virtually during the beginning of the pandemic. Lastly, teachers reported that having more resources for teaching and wellness were helpful (Walter & Fox, 2021). Additionally, school leaders who prioritize and build routines of adult wellness, foster a culture of open communication between staff and administrators, cultivate an environment of positive collegial relationships within the school and beyond can help to foster a healthy and supportive school environment (Browning & Romer, 2020). Teachers' overall well-being and social emotional competency affects classroom climate and culture, classroom management, relationship with students (Jennings & Frank, 2015). Teachers who reported high levels of self-efficacy indicated that their school leaders provided social emotional support and flexibility, communicated regularly, and led with a calming and professional presence (Huck & Zhang, 2021). When school systems engage in practices that support the health and well-being of educators, educators are more equipped to manage the expectations and stressors of their role.

Systemic practices that supported the health and well-being of educators helped them navigate pandemic remote learning. For example, educators who reported feeling supported by their administrators and colleagues and having resources to support their work helped to alleviate stress and navigate pandemic remote learning. Educators equipped with social emotional competencies who engaged in self-care practices, held positive dispositions and sought their community for support reported that those approaches helped to support their well-being during remote learning. School systems with empathetic leaders, a supportive work environment and

provided resources to educators helped to promote their overall health and well-being while also positively affecting student engagement and motivation.

### **Purpose of Study**

The crisis of the pandemic further illuminated the harmful effects of racism on BIPOC communities. School systems are microcosms of how racism plays out in systems. In light of the challenges and chaos that ensued when school buildings first closed, this study aimed to explore factors that supported the well-being of students and families.

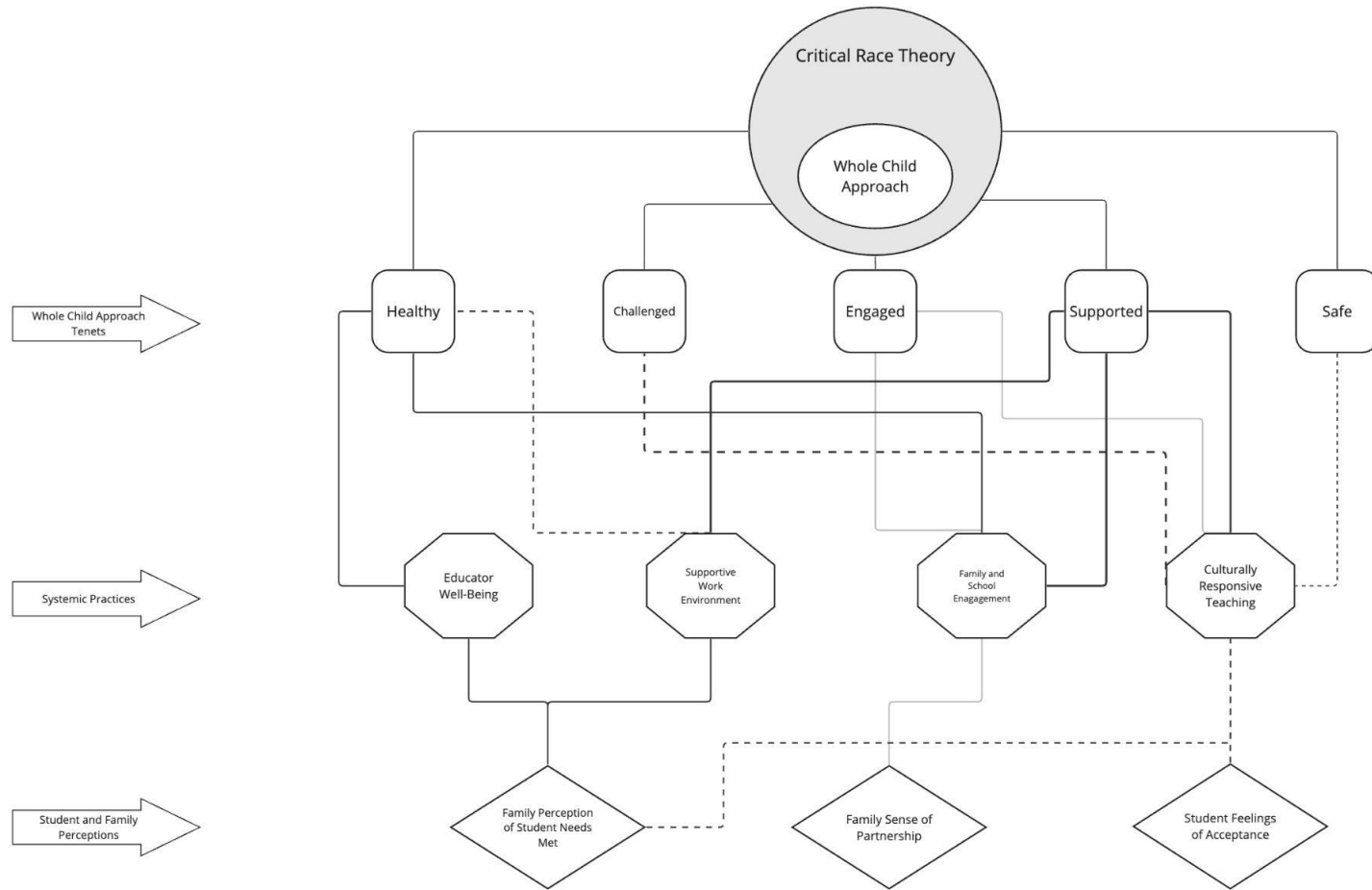
This study focused on the following indicators of an school system striving to equitably educate the whole child -- a whole child-focused school system is one where students' are engaged, challenged and supported in their learning because they see themselves reflected in their learning experiences and school community; families and educators are partners, and they collaboratively work together to ensure the success of children; educators are cared for and feel supported by their colleagues. It also explicitly acknowledges schools as systems of harm towards BIPOC communities, critically examines its own role in continuing to perpetuate harm, and works towards advancing educational justice.

The conceptual framework of this study utilized the WC approach's conceptualization of well-being (see figure 2). Due to the limitations of this approach, the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory was also utilized to examine and build upon that approach. This study explored the relationship between families' perceptions of how well student needs were met, families' sense of partnership between schools, and students' feelings of acceptance with practices that schools engaged in that aligned with the tenets of the WC approach. The practices include promoting educator well-being and providing a supportive work environment, school and family engagement, and providing culturally responsive teaching. This study aimed to examine

practices that schools engaged in that supported the well-being of students during pandemic remote learning.

**Figure 2**

*Supporting the Whole Child Conceptual Framework*



*Note.* Due to the overlapping of lines, different types of lines are utilized to differentiate between the different connections.

Seattle Public Schools have prioritized and demonstrated commitment to supporting the whole child and authentic family and school relationships. This study aimed to study factors that contributed to meeting the needs of the whole child in light of SPS' efforts to advance educational justice during such a challenging time and to explore how the school system can continue to build on those practices. Survey data from students, families and educators the SPS Remote Learning Pulse Survey from October 2020 were analyzed to address the following questions:

I. In what ways did a school district facilitate the tenets of the WC approach -- healthy, safe, engaged, supported and challenged -- to meet the needs of BIPOC students and families during pandemic remote schooling?

1. In a challenging, engaging, and supportive school system, students are engaged in challenging culturally responsive instruction. During remote learning, what was the relationship between student perceptions of culturally responsive teaching and students' feelings of acceptance?

a. What was the relationship between a student's race, culturally responsive teaching and a student's feeling of acceptance?

It was hypothesized that the delivery of culturally responsive teaching is positively associated with students' feelings of acceptance.

2. In an engaged and supportive school system, student learning is connected to their culture, who they are and their broader community, and the school strives to meet their individual needs-- how does culturally responsive teaching relate to a family's perception of how well their children's needs were met?

- a. What was the relationship between a student's race and a family's perception of how well their children's needs were met?

It was hypothesized that the provision of culturally responsive teaching is positively associated with a family's perception of how well their children's needs were met.

3. In a healthy and supportive school system, educators are supported by their school community and their well-being is prioritized. During remote learning, how did educator well-being and a supportive work environment relate to a family's perception of how well their children's needs were met?
  - a. What was the relationship between a family's report of their student's race/ethnicity, educator well-being and supportive work environment by a family's perception of how well their children's needs were met?

It was hypothesized educator well-being and a supportive work environment was positively associated with higher educator capacity to support student needs.

4. In a supportive, healthy, and engaged school system, educators and families maintain consistent communication, and educators seek feedback from families-- how did school and family engagement affect a sense of partnership with families during remote learning?
  - a. What was the relationship between a family's report of their student's race/ethnicity, family engagement practices, and a family's sense of partnership with the school?

It was hypothesized that there would be a positive correlation between educator and family communication and families' sense of partnership with educators.

## Chapter 3: Method

### Context

This study focused on Seattle Public Schools, a school district that has made public commitments in dismantling racism and has engaged in a myriad of efforts to systemically address racial inequities. In 2012 Seattle Public Schools adopted board policy 0030: Ensuring Educational and Racial Equity. This policy centered race and formalized the district's commitment to educational equity. Recognizing the need to address school climate, the policy ensures that the district fosters a welcoming and inclusive environment for students and families. Policy 0030 also prioritizes collaboration with families, community organizations, business and other entities who have "culturally specific expertise" (Seattle Public Schools, 2012, p. 12).

Additionally, in 2019, SPS adopted Seattle Excellence, their five-year strategic plan that aims to disrupt systemic racism and support students of color who are furthest from educational justice (Seattle Public Schools, 2019). In their plan, they strive to educate the whole child (students feel healthy, safe, engaged, supported and challenged) and provide high-quality culturally responsive instruction that will support the growth of students of color furthest from educational justice. They also identified inclusive and authentic engagement as their priority, signaling their commitment to authentically partner with students, families and communities who are most negatively impacted by systemic inequities (Seattle Public Schools, 2019).

Furthermore, in 2015, Seattle Public Schools, the University of Washington College of Education, and the Seattle Education Association were amongst the first in the country to enter a research practice partnership (RPP) for racial equity aimed to systemically be a catalyst for change through iterative cycles of sense-making, data collection and inquiry (University of Washington et al., 2017). The partnership initially focused on developing and implementing

racial equity teams (RETs) across the district. The focus on the RPP has more recently shifted to centering the voices of BIPOC families, more specifically, the RPP and the Office of African American Male Achievement have been partners in SPS' Early Literacy Collaborative -- this collaborative centers the expertise of Black families and their home literacy practices. The collaborative has already begun efforts in codesigning with Black families to develop critical literacy practices in schools based on their home practices. SPS has been intentional in implementing initiatives that systemically aim to “undo legacies of racism” (Seattle Public Schools, 2019, p. 1).

During pandemic remote learning SPS engaged in efforts to hear from students, families, and educators about their remote learning experiences to improve teaching and learning. They administered a survey in May 2020 to students, families, and educators about remote instruction. However, White respondents were overrepresented while students and families from Black, Latinx, Native American, and Pacific Islander communities were underrepresented (Seattle Public Schools, 2020b). The RPP engaged in strategic efforts to hear from underrepresented voices by facilitating learning circles with Black families and administered a survey with justice-focused educators to better understand their remote learning experiences. In the fall of 2020, SPS administered another survey to students, families, and educators -- the Remote Learning Pulse Survey -- to gain a “pulse” of how they were experiencing remote learning. Though patterns in respondents were similar to the survey administered in May 2020 -- with an overrepresentation of White respondents and underrepresentation of students and families furthest from educational justice (Black, Latinx, Native American, Pacific Islanders) -- the data collected from the survey provides data that can be disaggregated by race for students and families and includes data from students, families and educators with indicators of well-being

(Seattle Public Schools, 2020b). With multiple respondents for each indicator, this is an opportunity to simultaneously analyze the perspectives of the students, family, and educators.

### Participant Characteristics

Survey data were from students in grades 3-12 (n = 30,518, 65% of students enrolled), families (n = 9,507, 34% of students enrolled had one parent/guardian respond) and educators (n = 2,857, 55% of non-supervisory certificated staff) of Seattle Public Schools. Data were collected during October 2020. See table 1 for racial demographics of student and family report of student race/ethnicity.

**Table 1**

*2020 SPS Pulse Survey Respondents - Response Rates by Race/Ethnicity*

	Student Respondents		Family Respondents' Report of Student's Race/Ethnicity	
	<i>N</i>	<i>% of respondent sample</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>% of respondent sample</i>
All	30518	-	9507	-
East Asian or South Asian	3875	12	1042	11
Black	3739	12	486	5
Hispanic/Latinx	1990	7	473	5
Two or more races	5086	16	1582	17
Native Amer./Alaska Native	276	1	44	<1
Pacific Islander	375	1	42	<1
White	15177	50	5838	61

*Note.* Seattle Public Schools (2020b).

Educator respondents did not provide race/ethnicity data.

## **Data Collection**

Seattle Public Schools administered the remote learning pulse survey during fall 2020. The survey was administered to students in grades 3-12 during synchronous remote learning. Survey links were sent to all families with valid email addresses in English and the top five languages in the district. Survey links were also sent to educators. Educator respondents included non-supervisory certificated staff, paraeducators and instructional assistants. Demographic information including race, grade, and school of students were also collected as part of the survey (Seattle Public Schools, 2020a).

## **Measures**

### ***Seattle Public Schools Remote Learning Pulse Survey***

The pulse survey remote learning survey was administered during fall of 2020 to better understand how students, families, and educators were experiencing remote learning and to inform the district on how to improve efforts during the school year ([Seattle Public Schools, 2020a](#)). The selected survey items are from the culture and climate section of the survey. There were a total of 12 selected items completed across the three participant groups in this study (see Table 2). Constructs measured that were based on the survey items and the relationships between the independent and dependent variables are shown in Table 3. Families completed survey items with indicators of family engagement, culturally responsive teaching, and their perception of how well their children's needs were met. Students completed survey items with indicators of culturally responsive teaching and feeling of acceptance, and educators completed survey items with indicators of educator well-being and a supportive work environment. All survey items were rated on a scale of 1-4, with 1 as strongly disagree and 4 as strongly agree. Variables included in the analyses are discussed in the following section.

**Table 2***Selected SPS Pulse Survey Items Explored in this Study*

Rater	Survey Items
Students	1. I feel like people accept me for who I am as a person at school.
Students	2. We learn about people from diverse races and cultures in my classes.
Students	3. My teacher helps me connect what we learn to my interests and culture.
Families	4. My child learns about the experiences and contributions of people from diverse races and cultures in his/her classes.
Families	5. My child's school is interested in family feedback and ideas to improve the school.
Families	6. Communications from the district and my child's school are clear, timely and informative.
Families	7. School staff provide the individual support and attention my child needs to be successful.
Families	8. Teachers and staff treat families as equal partners in educating children.
Educators	9. School leaders are interested in educator feedback and ideas to improve the school.
Educators	10. My professional expertise is valued and respected in this school
Educators	11. There is a collaborative work culture in this school.
Educators	12. Overall, how are you feeling about managing a healthy work and home life balance so far this school year?

**Table 3***The Relationships between the Independent and Dependent Variables Explored in this Study*

Construct	Rater	Construct	Rater
<i>Independent Variable</i>		<i>Dependent Variable</i>	
Culturally Responsive Teaching	Families	Students Needs Met	Families
Culturally Responsive Teaching	Students	Feelings of Acceptance	Student

Supportive Work Environment	Educators	Students Needs Met	Families
Educator Well-Being	Educators	Students Needs Met	Families
Family and School Engagement	Families	Family Partnership	Families

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### ***Outcome Variables***

**Student Feelings of Acceptance Outcome.** Students' feeling of acceptance was measured by their responses to the survey item, "I feel like people accept me for who I am as a person at school" on the SPS Remote Learning Pulse survey.

**Student Needs Met Outcome.** Family perceptions of students' needs being met was measured by their responses to the survey item, "school staff provide the individual support and attention my child needs to be successful" on the SPS Remote Learning Pulse survey.

**Family Partnership Outcome.** Family perceptions of their sense of partnership with educators was measured by their responses to the survey item, "teachers and staff treat families as equal partners in educating children" on the SPS Remote Learning Pulse survey.

### ***Predictor Variables***

**Culturally Responsive Teaching Predictor.** There were two indicators of culturally responsive teaching measured by the student and the family. For the student predictor, student perception of the provision of culturally responsive teaching was measured by two student survey items from the SPS Remote Learning Pulse survey that inquired about culturally responsive teaching. For the family indicator of culturally responsive teaching predictor, the family perception of the provision of culturally responsive teaching was measured by their responses to one item on the SPS Remote Learning Pulse survey.

**Student Race/Ethnicity Status Predictor.** Student race/ethnicity status was defined as students' racial status as reported by the student on the survey. Students' racial categories include Black/African Americans, East Asian/South Asian, Hispanic/Latiné/Latinx, Native American/Alaska Native, Pacific Islander, Two or more races, and White.

**Family Report of Student Race/Ethnicity Status Predictor.** Family report of student race/ethnicity status was defined as the reported racial/ethnicity status of the student as reported by the family member on the survey. Families' racial categories include Pacific Islanders, Asians, Black/African Americans, Hispanic//Latiné/Latinx, and Two or more races.

**School Region Predictor.** The school region predictor was defined as regional categories based on the Seattle Public Schools regional map (Seattle Public Schools, 2022). The five regions include: northeast, northwest, central, southeast, and southwest.

**Grade Level Predictor.** Grade level was defined as the students' grade level as reported by the student on the survey.

**Educator Well-being Predictor.** Educator perceptions of their well-being was measured by their responses to one survey item on the SPS Remote Learning Pulse survey.

**Supportive Work Environment Predictor.** The supporting work environment variable was measured by three items on the educator survey.

**Family and School Engagement Predictor.** The family and school engagement predictor was measured by two survey items that inquired about parent and school communication and seeking parent feedback.

## **Statistical Analysis**

Linear regression models were run to analyze the research questions. The survey items in each model were included as variables of interest while the variables of race, school region and

grade level were included as control variables. Composite measures were not generated due to the limited survey items of each research question. The Wald's F-test with robust standard error estimates was used for each regression model. This test was selected because the response choices to the survey items were on a scale of 1 to 4, thus the test of normality was untenable. The assumption of normality is not required for this test. The observations are also assumed to be independent. Additionally, demographic data (Table 1), descriptive statistics, and correlations (Tables 4-7) are provided for all variables. The analytic plan conducted for each research question is discussed below:

### ***Research Question 1***

**During remote learning, what was the relationship between student perceptions of culturally responsive instruction and students' feelings of acceptance?** This question examined the relationship between student perceptions of the delivery of culturally responsive teaching and students' sense of feeling accepted during remote schooling. Students' feelings of acceptance were analyzed as the outcome variable. Student perception of culturally responsive teaching was analyzed as the variable of interest, while student grade level, race, school region, and perception of culturally responsive teaching were analyzed as control variables. To explore the relationship between student race and students' perception of culturally responsive teaching and students' sense of acceptance, interaction terms between student race and students' perception of culturally responsive teaching were also included in the two models. Two linear regression models were employed for the two survey items that measured culturally responsive teaching because combining both variables of interest in one model could potentially blur the effects of each other.

$$\hat{Y}_{\text{Acceptance}} = b_0 + b_1 * \text{LearningCulture} + b_2 * \text{Race} + b_3 * \text{GradeLevel} + b_4 * \text{SchoolRegion} + b_5 * \text{LearningCulture} * \text{Race}$$

$$\hat{Y}_{\text{Acceptance}} = b_0 + b_1 * \text{ConnectInterests} + b_2 * \text{Race} + b_3 * \text{GradeLevel} + b_4 * \text{SchoolRegion} + b_5 * \text{ConnectInterests} * \text{Race}$$

### ***Research Question 2***

**How does culturally responsive teaching relate to a family's perception of how well their children's needs were met?** This question examined family perceptions of the delivery of culturally responsive teaching to their perceptions of how their children's needs were met.

Family ratings of how well educators supported their children were analyzed as the outcome variable. Family ratings of the delivery of culturally responsive teaching was analyzed as the variable of interest, while school region and parent report of student race/ethnicity were analyzed as control variables. To explore the relationship between family perception of culturally responsive teaching and race, an interaction term between those variables were also analyzed. One linear regression model was run to explore the relationship between family perception of culturally responsive teaching on their sense of how well educators supported their children's needs and to explore the interaction between race and culturally responsive teaching on family perception on how well their children's needs were met.

$$\hat{Y}_{\text{NeedsMet}} = b_0 + b_1 * \text{CRT-F} + b_2 * \text{Race} + b_3 * \text{SchoolRegion} + b_4 * \text{CRT-F} * \text{Race}$$

### ***Research Question 3***

**How did educator well-being and a supportive work environment relate to a family's perception of how well their children's needs were met?** This question examined the relationship between educator well-being and a supportive work environment and their capacity to meet student needs. Parent ratings of how well educators supported their children was

analyzed as the outcome variable. Educator well-being and a supportive work environment were analyzed as the variables of interest, while family report of a student's race and school regions were analyzed as the control variables. To explore the relationship between family report of a student's race/ethnicity and educator well-being and a supportive work environment on a family's perception of how their children's needs were met, interaction terms between those variables were also analyzed. Linear regression models were run for each survey item because combining the variables of interest in one model could potentially blur the effects of each other. This question utilized data from different raters -- educators and families -- thus, mean values were computed by school from educator responses to the four survey items and linear regression models were run based on the aggregated data. Multilevel modeling using fixed effects was considered because this question utilized aggregated data at the school-level, however, the purpose of this research question was to explore the relationship between educator well-being and how well student needs were met at the individual level, thus linear regression was selected as the statistical method for this question.

$$\hat{Y}_{NeedsMet} = b_0 + b_1 * EducatorFeedback + b_2 * Race + b_3 * SchoolRegion + b_4 * EducatorFeedback * Race$$

$$\hat{Y}_{NeedsMet} = b_0 + b_1 * CollaborativeWorkCulture + b_2 * Race + b_3 * SchoolRegion + b_4 * CollaborativeWorkCulture * Race$$

$$\hat{Y}_{NeedsMet} = b_0 + b_1 * ExpertiseValued + b_2 * Race + b_3 * SchoolRegion + b_4 * ExpertiseValued * Race$$

$$\hat{Y}_{NeedsMet} = b_0 + b_1 * WorkLifeBalance + b_2 * Race + b_3 * SchoolRegion + b_4 * WorkLifeBalance * Race$$

#### ***Research Question 4***

**How did school and family engagement affect a sense of partnership with families during remote learning?** This question explored the practices that educators engaged in to partner with families during remote learning. Family ratings of their sense of partnership with educators were analyzed as the outcome variable. Two survey items that inquired about family engagement practices that asked about communication between families and educators seeking family feedback were analyzed as the variables of interest, while family report of student's race, and grade level were analyzed as the control variables. To explore the relationship between family report of student's race and communication and seeking family feedback on families' sense of partnership, interaction terms between those predictors were also analyzed. Linear regression models were employed for each survey item because combining variables of interest in one model could potentially blur the effects of each other.

$$\hat{Y}_{\text{Partnership}} = b_0 + b_1 * \text{FamilyFeedback} + b_2 * \text{Race} + b_3 * \text{SchoolRegion} + b_4 * \text{FamilyFeedback} * \text{Race}$$

$$\hat{Y}_{\text{Partnership}} = b_0 + b_1 * \text{FamilyCommunication} + b_2 * \text{Race} + b_3 * \text{SchoolRegion} + b_4 * \text{FamilyCommunication} * \text{Race}$$

### **Chapter 4: Results**

Hypotheses were tested through regression models for each variable of interest. Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations are also provided for each research question. As shown in Table 4, the two predictor variables for student perceptions of culturally responsive significantly correlated with student sense of acceptance. Family perceptions of culturally responsive teaching significantly correlated with their perceptions of how well educators supported their children's needs (see Table 5). The three predictor variables that measured a

supportive work environment were significantly correlated with family perceptions of how well educators supported their children's needs, whereas the variable of interest, Work-Life Balance, did not have a significant correlation with the outcome variable (see Table 6). Lastly, as shown in Table 7, the two variables that measured family engagement practices significantly correlated with family sense of partnership.

Control variables were included in each model to explore the linear effects of those variables on the variables of interest and to provide further understanding of factors that may confound or moderate the effects of the variables of interest on the outcome variable. Furthermore, tests were run for the control variables of race, school region, and grade level and an overall *p*-value is provided. Multiple hypotheses were also tested for each control variable of race, grade level and school region, and adjustments utilizing the Bonferroni correction to account for type I errors were considered to generate an adjusted *p*-value for each hypothesis. However, utilizing the Bonferroni correction also increases the risk of type II errors and the adjusted *p*-value generated from the Bonferroni correction is dependent on the number of tests performed which may not be appropriate and relevant in interpreting findings (Perneger 1998). Rothman (1990) further discusses that making adjustments may lead to errors in interpretation. Due to the possibility of making adjustments that may lead to errors in interpretation, this study did not utilize adjustments to interpret *p*-values. Rather, the results were interpreted with traditional *p*-values of .05, .01, and .001 (Perneger, 1998; Rothman, 1990). When there were concerns about errors in statistical significance, it is noted in the specific section of this study

**Table 4***Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Student Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Teaching and Sense of Acceptance*

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.
<i>Outcome</i>																
1. Acceptance	3.12	(0.68)	--													
<i>Var. of Interest</i>																
2. Learning Cultures	2.66	(0.80)	.21 <sup>***</sup>	--												
3. Connect Interests	2.43	(0.89)	.28 <sup>***</sup>	.45 <sup>***</sup>	--											
<i>Control Var.</i>																
4. Asian	-0.42	(0.63)	-.06 <sup>***</sup>	-.06 <sup>***</sup>	.02 <sup>***</sup>	--										
5. Latinx	-0.43	(0.61)	-.60 <sup>***</sup>	-.07 <sup>***</sup>	.02 <sup>**</sup>	.81 <sup>***</sup>	--									
6. Multiracial	-0.33	(0.74)	-.05 <sup>***</sup>	-.06 <sup>***</sup>	-.01	.76 <sup>***</sup>	.78 <sup>***</sup>	--								
7. NA/AKN	-0.49	(0.52)	-.07 <sup>***</sup>	-.07 <sup>***</sup>	.02 <sup>**</sup>	.90 <sup>***</sup>	.90 <sup>***</sup>	.87 <sup>**</sup>	--							
8. PacIs	-0.49	(0.52)	-.06 <sup>***</sup>	-.08 <sup>***</sup>	.02 <sup>***</sup>	.89 <sup>***</sup>	.90 <sup>***</sup>	.86 <sup>***</sup>	.96 <sup>***</sup>	--						
9. Black	-0.37	(0.69)	-.05 <sup>***</sup>	-.09 <sup>***</sup>	.02 <sup>***</sup>	.79 <sup>***</sup>	.79 <sup>***</sup>	.72 <sup>***</sup>	.88 <sup>***</sup>	.87 <sup>***</sup>	--					
10. MS	0.23	(0.83)	-.12 <sup>*</sup>	.02 <sup>**</sup>	.01	.02 <sup>*</sup>	.01 <sup>**</sup>	.02 <sup>**</sup>	.02 <sup>**</sup>	.03 <sup>***</sup>	.03 <sup>***</sup>	--				
11. ES	0.01	(0.72)	.09 <sup>***</sup>	.27 <sup>***</sup>	.30 <sup>***</sup>	-.03 <sup>***</sup>	-.05 <sup>***</sup>	-.03 <sup>***</sup>	-.03 <sup>***</sup>	-.01	<-.01	.42 <sup>***</sup>	--			
12. NW	0.15	(0.68)	.01	-.05 <sup>***</sup>	-.06 <sup>***</sup>	-.12 <sup>***</sup>	-.11 <sup>***</sup>	-.09 <sup>***</sup>	-.13 <sup>***</sup>	-.13 <sup>***</sup>	-.15 <sup>***</sup>	-.08 <sup>***</sup>	-.10 <sup>***</sup>	--		
13. NE	<-0.01	(0.58)	.02 <sup>**</sup>	-.01	.01 <sup>*</sup>	-.03 <sup>***</sup>	-.04 <sup>***</sup>	-.04 <sup>***</sup>	-.05 <sup>***</sup>	-.05 <sup>***</sup>	-.07 <sup>***</sup>	-.01	.02 <sup>**</sup>	.43 <sup>***</sup>		

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.
14. SW	-0.02	(0.56)	-.17**	-.02***	<.01	.02**	.06***	.02***	.04***	.04***	.02***	-.10***	-.03***	.45***	.52***	
15. SE	0.03	(0.61)	-.02***	-.04***	.03***	.23***	.22***	.15***	.22***	.23***	.22***	-.06***	-.02***	.40**	.48***	.50***

*Note.*  $N = 30518$ . School regions (central region served as the reference group), grade levels (high school served as the reference group), and race/ethnicity status were effect coded (White students served as the reference group). NA/AKN = Native American or Alaskan Native; MS = Middle School; ES = Elementary School.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Table 5***Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Family Perception of Culturally Responsive Teaching on How Well Students Needs were Met*

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
<i>Outcome</i>													
1. NeedsMet	2.92	(0.79)	--										
<i>Variables of Interest</i>													
2. CRT-F	3.11	(0.72)	.35***	--									
<i>Control Variables</i>													
3. Asian	-0.50	(0.69)	.04***	-.07***	--								
4. Latinx	-0.56	(0.59)	.02*	-.07***	.82***	--							
5. Multiracial	0.45	(0.76)	.01	-.06***	.74***	.81***	--						
6. NA/AKN	-0.61	(0.50)	.02*	-.08***	.90***	.92***	.90***	--					
7. PacIslander	-0.61	(0.50)	.02	-.08***	.90***	.92***	.90***	.92***	--				
8. Black	-0.56	(0.59)	.02	-.09***	.82***	.86***	.81***	.92***	.92***	--			
9. NW	0.13	(0.68)	-.02**	-.01*	-.07***	-.05***	-.05***	-.06***	-.06***	-.07***	--		
10. NE	0.04	(0.62)	-.01	-.02	-.02	-.01	-.01	-.02	-.02*	-.02***	.40***	--	
11. SW	<-0.01	(0.59)	-.02	-.04	-.02*	.01	<-.01	-.01	-.01	-.01***	.44***	.48***	--
12. SE	-0.04	(0.56)	.02**	-.01***	.16***	.13***	.09***	.14***	.14***	.15***	.48***	.51***	.53***

Note. *N*=9507. School regions (central region served as the reference group) and race/ethnicity status were effect coded (White

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students served as the reference group). NA/AKN = Native American or Alaskan Native.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Table 6**

*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Educator Ratings of Supportive Work Environment and Well-Being and Family Ratings of How Well Students were Supported*

Measure	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.
<i>Outcome</i>															
1. NeedsMet	2.92 (0.79)	--													
<i>Variables of Interest</i>															
2. EdFeedback	3.00 (0.31)	.08***	--												
3. ExpValued	3.12 (0.25)	.08***	.83***	--											
4. CollabCulture	3.15 (0.28)	.08***	.87***	.85***	--										
5. WorkLifeBal.	2.37 (0.28)	<-.01	.31***	.22***	.27***	--									
<i>Control Variables</i>															
6. Asian	-0.50 (0.69)	.04***	.07***	.02*	.04***	<-.01	--								
7. Latinx	-0.56 (0.59)	.02*	.06***	.01	.03*	.01	.82***	--							
8. Multiracial	-0.45 (0.76)	.01	.05***	.02	.02	-.02*	.74***	.81***	--						
9. NA/AKN	-0.61 (0.50)	.02	.06***	.01	.03*	<-.01	.90***	.92***	.90***	--					
10. PacIslander	-0.61 (0.50)	.02	.06***	.02	.03*	<-.01	.90***	.93***	.90***	.98***	--				
11. Black	-0.56 (0.59)	.02	.06***	.01	.02	.01	.82***	.86***	.81***	.92***	.92***	--			
12. NW	0.13 (0.68)	-.02**	-.12***	-.19***	-.05***	.07***	-.07***	-.05***	-.05***	-.06***	-.06***	-.07***	--		
13. NE	0.04 (0.62)	-.01	-.07***	-.11***	.03**	.06***	-.02	-.01	-.01	-.02	-.02	-.02*	.40***	--	

14. SW	<-0.01 (0.59)	-.02	-.20 ***	-.30 ***	-.13 ***	.03 **	-.02	.01	<-.01	-.01	-.01	-.01	.44 ***	.48 ***	--
15. SE	-0.04 (0.56)	.03 **	-.06 ***	-.18 ***	.01	.05 ***	.16 ***	.13 ***	.09 ***	.14 ***	.14 ***	.15 ***	.48 ***	.51 ***	.53 ***

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*Note.*  $N=9507$ . School regions (central region served as the reference group) and race/ethnicity status (White students served as the reference group) were effect coded. NA/AKN = Native American or Alaskan Native.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

**Table 7**

*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Family Ratings of Family and School Engagement Practices and their Sense of Partnership*

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
<i>Outcome</i>														
1. Partnership	3.08	(-0.73)	--											
<i>Var. of Interest</i>														
2. Feedback	3.10	(-0.74)	.60 ***											
3. Communication	2.98	(-0.74)	.48 ***	.53 ***										
<i>Control Var.</i>														
4. Asian	-0.50	(-0.69)	.03 **	.00	.04 ***									
5. Latinx	-0.56	(-0.59)	.02	.01	.02 *	.82 ***								
6. Multiracial	-0.45	(-0.76)	.01	.00	.00	.74 ***	.81 ***							
7. NA/AKN	-0.62	(-0.50)	.01	.00	.02	.90 ***	.92 ***	.90 ***						
8. PacIslander	-0.60	(-0.50)	.02	.00	.02	.90 ***	.93 ***	.90 ***	.98 ***					
9. Black	-0.56	(-0.59)	.01	.00	.02 *	.82 ***	.86 ***	.81 ***	.92 ***	.92 ***				
10. NW	0.13	(-0.68)	.00	.02 *	.02	-.07 ***	-.05 ***	-.05 ***	-.06 ***	-.06 ***	-.07 ***			
11. NE	0.04	(-0.62)	.02	.01	.01	-.02	-.01	-.01	-.02	-.02	-.02 *	.40 ***		
12. SW	<-0.01	(-0.59)	.00	.00	.00	-.02 **	.01	.00	-.01	.42	.25	.44 ***	.48 ***	
13. SE	-0.04	(-0.56)	.04 ***	-.04 ***	.03 ***	.16 ***	.13 ***	.09 ***	.14 ***	.14 ***	.15 ***	.48 ***	.51 ***	.53 ***

*Note.*  $N = 9507$ . School regions (central region served as the reference group) and race/ethnicity status were effect coded

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(Black/African American served as the reference group). NA/AKN = Native American or Alaskan Native.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

### **Research Question 1: Culturally Responsive Teaching and Student Sense of Acceptance**

Linear regression was used to test whether student perceptions of culturally responsive teaching predicted a student's sense of acceptance. Individual student perceptions of culturally responsive teaching were measured by two survey items, and they are described below.

#### ***Learning About Diverse Races and Cultures***

In the survey item: “we learn about the experiences and contributions of people from diverse races and cultures” (*Learning Culture*), the overall regression model was statistically significant ( $R^2 = 0.05$ ,  $F(19, 30498) = 77.47$ ,  $p < .00001$ ). It was found that *Learning Culture* significantly correlated with a student's sense of acceptance ( $\beta = 0.17$ , 95% CIs [0.15, 0.18],  $p < .00005$ ). More specifically, a one unit higher perception in student ratings of *Learning Culture* was associated with 0.17 higher in *sense of acceptance*, when controlling for the effects of student race, school region and grade level (see Table 8).

Overall significant relationships were found between the control variables of race, school region and grade level on students' *sense of acceptance*. As shown in Table 8, the control variable of race showed that there was an overall significant relationship between race and *sense of acceptance* ( $p = 0.019$ ). Significant relationships were found between Black or African American ( $\beta = -0.10$ ,  $p < 0.029$ ) and Multiracial students ( $\beta = -0.09$ ,  $p < 0.029$ ). In the control variable of grade levels, significant relationships were also found ( $p < 0.0005$ ). Both middle school ( $\beta = -0.08$ ,  $p < 0.0005$ ) and high school students ( $\beta = -0.06$ ,  $p < 0.0005$ ) had significant relationships with *sense of acceptance*, when compared to elementary school students. This indicates that the average *acceptance* ratings for middle school students were 0.08 less than elementary students. The average *acceptance* ratings for high schools were 0.06 less than

elementary students. For the control variable of school regions,, significant effects between school regions and *sense of acceptance* were found ( $p < 0.0005$ ). The northeast ( $\beta = 0.02, p = 0.008$ ), northwest ( $\beta = 0.03, p = 0.021$ ) and southwest ( $\beta = -0.03, p = 0.016$ ) regions had significant relationships with *sense of acceptance*. However, multiple hypotheses were tested for each control variable of race, grade level, and school region, and adjustments to interpreting  $p$ -values were not made to account for type I errors, thus, significant relationships should be interpreted with caution.

As shown in Table 8, multiple linear regression was used to test the interaction effects of *Learning Culture* and a student's race on a student's *sense of acceptance*. The overall interaction effect between race and *Learning Culture* had a significant relationship with *sense of acceptance* ( $p = .041$ ). There was a significant relationship between Latinx students and *Learning Culture* on *sense of acceptance* ( $\beta = -0.04, p = 0.05$ ).

**Table 8**

*Multiple Linear Regression of Learning Culture on Sense of Acceptance with Interaction Effects of Race*

	<i>N</i>	$R^2_{\text{total}}$	$R^2_{\text{adjusted}}$	<i>b</i>	( <i>SE</i> )	<i>Wald F</i>	<i>ndf</i>	<i>ddf</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Acceptance</i>	30518	0.05	0.05			77.47	19	30498	<0.00001 ***
Intercept				2.75	(0.03)				<0.00005 ***
Learning Culture	30518			0.17	<0.01				<0.00005 ***
Race									0.019 *
Asian	3875			-0.03	(0.05)				0.473
Black/African American	3739			-0.10	(0.05)				0.029 *
Hispanic/Latinx	1990			0.07	(0.06)				0.177
Multiracial	5086			-0.09	(0.04)				0.029 *
NatAm/AKNat	276			-0.29	(0.19)				0.119
Pacific Islander	375			-0.11	(0.13)				0.387
Grade Level									<0.00005 ***
6th-8th grade	14882			-0.08	(0.01)				<0.00005 ***
9th-12th grade	7666			-0.06	(0.01)				<0.00005 ***
School Region									<0.00005 ***
Northwest	9585			0.03	(0.01)				0.021 *
Northeast	5114			0.02	(0.01)				0.008 *
Southeast	6173			-0.01	(0.01)				0.297
Southwest	4509			-0.03	(0.01)				0.016 *

Race*LearningCulture			0.041 *
Asian*LearningCulture	-0.01	(0.02)	0.485
Black*LearningCulture	0.03	(0.02)	0.074
Latinx*LearningCulture	-0.04	(0.02)	0.052
Multi*LearningCulture	0.02	(0.02)	0.247
NatAm/AKNat*LearningCulture	0.01	(0.06)	0.842
PacIs*LearningCulture	-0.08	(0.05)	0.115

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*Note.* White students served as the reference group for race/ethnicity status (White students  $N = 15177$ ).

Central region served as the reference group with school regions (Central region  $N = 5137$ ); high school served as the reference group for grade level (High school students  $N = 7666$ ).

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

### ***Connecting Learning to Interests, Experiences or Cultural Background***

In the model that explored the survey item, “my teachers help me connect what we learn to my interests, experiences or cultural background” (*Connect Interests*) -- the overall regression was statistically significant ( $R^2 = 0.09$ ,  $F(19, 30498) = 136.9$ ,  $p < .00001$ ). It was found that *Connect Interests* significantly correlated with a student’s *sense of acceptance* ( $\beta = 0.21$ , 95% CIs [0.20, 0.22],  $p < .00005$ ). Thus, one unit higher in student ratings of *Connect Interests* was associated with 0.21 higher in *sense of acceptance*, when controlling for the effects of student race, school region and grade level (see Table 9).

As shown in Table 9, in the *Connect Interests* model, significant relationships were also found with the control variables of race, grade level and school region. Overall, race significantly predicted *sense of acceptance* ( $p < 0.001$ ). There were significant relationships between Black/African American ( $\beta = -0.18$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ) and Native American or Alaska Native ( $\beta = -0.60$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ), where *sense of acceptance* was lower when compared to White students. For example, the average *acceptance* ratings for Native American or Alaska Native students were 0.60 less than White students. Similarly, there was an overall significant relationship between grade level ( $p = 0.003$ ) and *sense of acceptance*. Middle school students ( $\beta = -0.03$ ,  $p = .0073$ ) had a significant relationship with *acceptance*, when compared to elementary students. Finally, school regions overall had a significant relationship with *sense of acceptance* ( $p < .00005$ ). Southeast ( $\beta = -0.03$ ,  $p < 0.009$ ), northwest ( $\beta = 0.02$ ,  $p = 0.033$ ) and southwest ( $\beta = -0.04$ ,  $p < 0.002$ ) regions had significant effects on *acceptance*. However, multiple hypotheses were tested for each control variable of race, grade level, and school region, and adjustments to interpreting  $p$ -values were not made to account for type I errors, thus, significant relationships should be interpreted with caution.

As shown in Table 9, multiple linear regression was used to test the interaction effects of *Connect Interests* and a student's race on student *sense of acceptance*, however, no significant interactions were found between *Connect Interests*, race, and *sense of acceptance* ( $p = 0.24$ ).

**Table 9***Multiple Linear Regression of Connect Interests on Sense of Acceptance with Interaction Effects of Race*

	N	$R^2_{total}$	$R^2_{adjusted}$	$b$ (SE)	Wald F	ndf	ddf	p
<i>Acceptance</i>	30518	0.09	0.09		136.90	19	30498	<0.00001 ***
Intercept				2.66 (0.03)				<0.00005 ***
ConnectInterests	30518			0.21 <0.01				<0.00005 ***
Race								<0.001 ***
Asian	3875			-0.07 (0.04)				0.057
Black/African American	3739			-0.18 (0.04)				0.002 **
Hispanic/Latinx	1990			-0.09 (0.05)				0.061
Multiracial	5086			-0.05 (0.03)				0.956
NatAmer/AKNat	276			-0.60 (0.16)				0.000 *
Pacific Islander	375			-0.11 (0.11)				0.237
Grade Level								0.003 **
Middle School	14882			-0.03 (0.01)				0.007 **
High School	7666			<-0.01 (0.01)				0.771
School Region								<0.00005 ***
Northwest	9585			0.02 (0.01)				0.033 *
Northeast	5114			0.02 (0.01)				0.116
Southeast	6173			-0.03 (0.01)				0.009 **
Southwest	4509			-0.04 (0.01)				0.002 **

Race*ConInt		0.243
Asian*ConInt	<0.01 (0.01)	0.662
Black*ConInt	-0.02 (0.01)	0.127
Latinx*ContInt	0.01 (0.02)	0.509
Multiracial*ContInt	<0.01 (0.01)	0.879
NatAm/AKNat*ConInt	0.12 (0.06)	0.029
Pac Isl*ConnInt	-0.01 (0.04)	0.737

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*Note.* White students served as the reference group for race/ethnicity status (White students  $N = 15177$ ). Central region served as the reference group with school regions (Central region  $N = 5137$ ); high school served as the reference group for grade level (High school students  $N = 7666$ ).

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

## Research Question 2: Culturally Responsive Teaching and Family Perceptions

Linear regression was used to test whether family perceptions of the provision of culturally responsive teaching significantly correlated with their ratings of how well their children's needs were met. The overall regression was statistically significant ( $R^2 = 0.13$ ,  $F(17, 9489) = 70.09$ ,  $p < .00001$ ). It was found that *culturally responsive teaching* significantly correlated with family perceptions of how well their children's *needs were met* ( $\beta = 0.39$ , 95% CIs [0.36, 0.42],  $p < .00005$ ). More specifically, one unit higher in family ratings of *culturally responsive teaching* was associated with 0.39 higher perceptions of how well their children's *needs were met*, when controlling for the effects of student race and school region (see Table 10).

Similar to other research questions, control variables of school regions and race were included in this model. There was no significant relationship between race and family perceptions of how well educators supported their children's needs ( $p = 0.363$ ). However, there was an overall significant relationship between school regions on family perceptions of how well educators supported their children's *needs* ( $p = .04$ ). More specifically, significant relationships were found with the southeast region ( $\beta = 0.05$ ,  $p < 0.045$ ) and northwest region ( $\beta = -0.02$ ,  $p < 0.038$ ). However, testing multiple hypotheses increases the risk of type I errors, thus the significant relationships found in the southeast and northwest regions should be interpreted with caution.

Lastly, as shown in Table 10, multiple linear regression was used to test whether family perceptions of culturally responsive teaching and a student's race predicted family perceptions of how well their children's needs were met. However, no significant interaction effects were found between race and culturally responsive teaching on family perceptions of how well educators supported their children's needs ( $p = 0.26$ ).



Asian*CRT-F	-0.02 (0.04)	0.686
Black*CRT-F	0.07 (0.05)	0.186
Latinx*CRT-F	0.10 (0.05)	0.059
Multiracial*CRT-F	-0.02 (0.03)	0.391
NatAm/AKNat*CRT-F	-0.10 (0.13)	0.436
Pacific Islander*CRT-F	0.04 (0.23)	0.857

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*Note.* CRT-F = Culturally responsive teaching - family ratings. White students served as the reference group for race/ethnicity status (White students  $N = 5838$ ). Central region served as the reference group with school regions (Central region  $N = 1655$ ).

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

### Research Question 3: Supportive Work Environment and Educator Well-Being

#### *Supportive Work Environment*

Linear regression was used to test whether educator perceptions of a supportive work environment predicted family perceptions of how well their children's needs were met. Supportive work environment was measured by three survey items, and they are described below.

**Educator Feedback.** The first item was, "school leaders are interested in educator feedback and ideas to improve the school" (*Educator Feedback*). As shown in Table 11, the overall regression was statistically significant ( $R^2 = 0.01$ ,  $F(17, 9489) = 6.45$ ,  $p < .00001$ ). It was found that educator feedback significantly correlated with family perceptions of how well their children's needs were met ( $\beta = 0.18$ , 95% CIs [0.11, 0.24],  $p < .00005$ ). One unit higher in family ratings of *Educator Feedback* corresponds to 0.18 higher in family perceptions of how well their children's needs were met, when controlling for the effects of student race and school region.

Similar to other research questions, control variables of race and school regions were included in this model. There were no significant effects between race and *needs met* ( $p = 0.82$ ). However, there was an overall significant relationship between school regions and family perceptions on how well educators met their children's needs ( $p = 0.016$ ). More specifically, a significant relationship was found with the southeast region ( $\beta = -0.01$ ,  $p = 0.015$ ). However, testing multiple hypotheses increases the risk of type I errors, thus the significant relationship found with the southeast region should be interpreted with caution.

Lastly, as shown in Table 11, multiple linear regression was used to test whether Educator Feedback and a student's race predicted family perceptions of how well their children's needs were met, however, no significant interaction effects were found between race and *Educator*

*Feedback* on family perceptions of how well educators supported their children's *needs* ( $p = 0.96$ ).



Asian*EdFeedback	1042	-0.03	(0.07)	0.631
Black*EdFeedback	486	<-0.01	(0.12)	0.999
Latinx*EdFeedback	473	0.08	(0.13)	0.902
Multiracial*EdFeedback	1582	-0.02	(0.07)	0.995
NatAm/AKNat*EdFeedback	44	-1.70	(0.42)	0.279
Pacific Islander*EdFeedback	42	-0.32	(0.51)	0.900

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*Note.* White students served as the reference group for race/ethnicity status (White students  $N = 5838$ ). Central region served as the reference group with school regions (Central region  $N = 1655$ ). Educator responses were aggregated at the school level and there were 101 unique values.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

**Collaborative Work Culture.** As shown in Table 12, the regression model that analyzed the item, “there is a collaborative work culture in this school” (*Collaborative Work Culture*), the overall regression was statistically significant ( $R^2 = 0.01$ ,  $F(17, 9489) = 6.98$ ,  $p < .00001$ ). It was found that *Collaborative Work Culture* significantly correlated with family perceptions of how well educators supported their children ( $\beta = 0.21$ , 95% CIs [0.14, 0.28],  $p < 0.0005$ ). More specifically, one unit higher in educator ratings of *Collaborative Work Culture* corresponds to 0.21 higher in family perceptions of how well their children’s needs were met, when controlling for the effects of student race and school region.

Similar to other research questions, control variables of race and school regions were included in this model. There were no significant effects between race and *needs met* ( $p = 0.41$ ). However, there was an overall significant relationship between school regions and family perceptions on how well educators met their children’s needs ( $p = 0.009$ ). More specifically, a significant relationship was found with the southeast region ( $\beta = 0.06$ ,  $p = 0.035$ ). However, testing multiple hypotheses increases the risk of type I errors, thus the significant relationship found with the southeast region should be interpreted with caution.

Lastly, as shown in Table 12, multiple linear regression was used to test whether *Collaborative Work Culture* and a student’s race predicted family perceptions of how well their children’s needs were met, however, no significant interaction effects were found between race and *Collaborative Work Culture* on family perceptions of how well educators supported their children’s needs ( $p = 0.65$ ).



Asian*CollabCulture	1042	-0.13 (0.08)	0.083
Black*CollabCulture	486	0.04 (0.14)	0.742
Latinx*CollabCulture	473	0.01 (0.14)	0.939
Multiracial*CollabCulture	1582	-0.02 (0.08)	0.797
NatAm/AKNat*CollabCulture	44	0.27 (0.40)	0.495
Pacific Islander*CollabCulture	42	-0.30 (0.55)	0.582

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*Note.* White students served as the reference group for race/ethnicity status (White students  $N = 5838$ ).

Central region served as the reference group with school regions (Central region  $N = 1655$ ). Educator responses were aggregated at the school level and there were 101 unique values.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

**Expertise Valued.** As shown in Table 13, on the third survey item (rated by educators) regarding having a supportive work environment, “my professional expertise is valued and respected in this school” (*Expertise Valued*), the overall regression was statistically significant ( $R^2 = 0.01$ ,  $F(17, 9489) = 6.98$ ,  $p < .00001$ ). *Expertise Valued* significantly correlated with family perceptions of how well educators supported their children’s needs ( $\beta = 0.25$ , 95% CIs [0.17, 0.33],  $p < 0.0005$ ). More specifically, one unit higher in *Expertise Valued* was associated with 0.25 higher in family perceptions of how well their children’s *needs were met*, when controlling for the effects of student race and school region.

Similar to other research questions, control variables of school regions and race were also included in this model. There were no significant effects between race and *needs met* ( $p = 0.60$ ), however, there was an overall significant relationship between school regions and family perceptions on how well educators met their children’s needs ( $p = 0.003$ ). More specifically, a significant relationship was found with the southeast region ( $\beta = 0.10$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). However, testing multiple hypotheses increases the risk of type I errors, thus the significant relationship found with the southeast region should be interpreted with caution.

Lastly, as shown in Table 13, multiple linear regression was used to test whether *Expertise Valued* and a student’s race predicted family perceptions of how well their children’s needs were met. No significant interaction effects were found between race and *Expertise Valued* on family perceptions of how well educators supported their children’s needs ( $p = 0.80$ ).



Asian*ExpValued	1042	-0.12 (0.08)	0.196
Black*ExpValued	486	0.03 (0.14)	0.823
Latinx*ExpValued	473	<-0.01 (0.14)	0.915
Multi*ExpValued	1582	-0.19 (0.08)	0.485
NatAm/AKNat*ExpValued	44	-1.20 (0.40)	0.482
PacIs*ExpValued	42	0.77 (0.55)	0.674

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*Note.* White students served as the reference group for race/ethnicity status (White students  $N = 5838$ ). Central region served as the reference group with school regions (Central region  $N = 1655$ ). Educator responses were aggregated at the school level and there were 101 unique values.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

### ***Educator Work-Life Balance***

Linear regression was also used to test whether educator perceptions of *Work-Life Balance* significantly correlated with family perceptions of how well their children's needs were met (see Table 14). The results indicated that there was no significant relationship between *Work-Life Balance* and family perceptions of how well their children's needs were met ( $p = 0.92$ ), thus an interaction effect for this model was not tested.

**Table 14**

*Multiple Linear Regression of Educator Work-Life Balance on Family Perception of How Well Their Children's Needs Were Met*

	<i>N</i>	$R^2_{total}$	$R^2_{adjusted}$	<i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>Wald F</i>	<i>ndf</i>	<i>ddf</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>NeedsMet</i>	9507	0.01	0.00		5.42	11	9495	<0.00005***
Intercept	9507			2.93 (0.07)				<0.00005***
WorkLife Balance	9507			<-0.01 (0.03)				0.950
Race								<0.00005***
Asian	1042			0.10 (0.02)				<0.00005
Black/African American	486			-0.02 (0.04)				0.471
Hispanic/Latinx	473			0.04 (0.03)				0.301
Multiracial	1582			-0.02 (0.02)				0.408
NatAm/AKNat	44			-0.32 (0.13)				0.016*
Pacific Islander	42			-0.12 (0.13)				0.347
School Region								0.001***
Northwest	2874			-0.04 (0.02)				0.0893
Northeast	2028			-0.01 (0.03)				0.481
Southeast	1302			0.06 (0.03)				0.328
Southwest	1648			-0.04 (0.03)				0.078

*Note.* White students served as the reference group for race/ethnicity status (White students  $N = 5838$ ).

Central region served as the reference group with school regions (Central region  $N = 1655$ ). Educator responses were aggregated at the school level and there were 101 unique values.

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\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

#### **Research Question 4: Family Engagement Practices**

Linear regression was used to test whether family perceptions of family engagement practices predicted their *sense of partnership* with schools. Family engagement practices were measured by two survey items: Seeking Family Feedback and Family Communication

##### ***Seeking Family Feedback***

The overall regression for the survey item, “my child’s school is interested in family feedback and ideas to improve the school” (Family Feedback) was statistically significant ( $R^2 = 0.36$ ,  $F(17, 9489) = 193.5$ ,  $p < .00001$ ). It was found that Family Feedback significantly correlated with a family’s sense of partnership ( $\beta = 0.59$ , 95% CIs [0.56, 0.61],  $p < .00005$ ). One unit higher in family ratings of Family Feedback was associated with 0.59 higher in sense of partnership, when controlling for the effects of student race and school region (see Table 15).

Similar to previous research questions, control variables of race and school regions were included in each model. There were no significant effects between race and sense of partnership ( $p = 0.82$ ). There was an overall significant relationship between school regions and family sense of partnership ( $p = 0.017$ ). More specifically, a significant relationship was found with the southeast region ( $\beta = 0.04$ ,  $p = 0.022$ ). However, testing multiple hypotheses increases the risk of type I errors, thus the significant relationship found with the southeast region should be interpreted with caution.

As shown in Table 15, multiple linear regression was used to test whether *Family Feedback* and a student's race predicted a family's *sense of partnership*, however, no significant interaction effects were found between race and Family Feedback on family sense of partnership ( $p = 0.98$ ).

**Table 15**

*Multiple Linear Regression of Family Feedback on Family Sense of Partnership with Interaction Effects of Race*

	<i>N</i>	$R^2_{\text{total}}$	$R^2_{\text{adjusted}}$	<i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>Wald F</i>	<i>ndf</i>	<i>ddf</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Partnership</i>	9507	0.36	0.36		193.50	17	9489	<0.00001***
Intercept	9507			1.26 (0.04)				<0.00005***
FamilyFeedback	9507			0.59 (0.01)				<0.00005***
Race								0.940
Asian	1042			0.05 (0.11)				0.631
Black/African American	486			-0.17 (0.16)				0.281
Hispanic/Latinx	473			-0.07 (0.17)				0.654
Multiracial	1582			<-0.01 (0.10)				0.966
NatAm/AKNat	44			0.06 (0.55)				0.909
Pacific Islander	42			-0.11 (0.43)				0.791
School Region								0.017*
Northwest	2874			-0.01 (0.02)				0.424
Northeast	2028			0.01 (0.02)				0.311
Southeast	1302			0.04 (0.02)				0.022*
Southwest	1648			<0.01 (0.02)				0.635
Race*FamilyFeedback								0.980
Asian*FamilyFeedback				<0.01 (0.04)				0.930
Black*FamilyFeedback				0.05 (0.05)				0.391

Latinx*FamilyFeedback	0.02 (0.05)	0.618
Multiracial*FamilyFeedback	<0.01 (0.03)	0.868
NatAm/AKNat*FamilyFeedback	-0.07 (0.19)	0.725
PacIs*FamilyFeedback	0.03 (0.13)	0.793

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*Note.* White students served as the reference group for race/ethnicity status (White students  $N = 5838$ ).

Central region served as the reference group with school regions (Central region  $N = 1655$ )

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

### ***Communication Between Schools and Families***

The overall regression for the survey item, “communications from the district and my child’s school are clear, timely, and informative” (*Family Communication*) was statistically significant ( $R^2 = 0.23$ ,  $F(17, 9489) = 105$ ,  $p < .00001$ ). It was found that *Family Communication* significantly correlated with a family’s *sense of partnership* ( $\beta = 0.46$ , 95% CIs [0.43, 0.49],  $p < .00005$ ). One unit higher in family ratings of *Family Communication* was associated with 0.46 higher ratings in *sense of partnership*, when controlling for the effects of student race and school region (see Table 15).

Similar to previous research questions, control variables of school regions and race were included in each model. There were no significant effects between race and a family’s *sense of partnership* ( $p = 0.442$ ). There was an overall significant relationship between school regions and family *sense of partnership* ( $p < 0.001$ ). More specifically, a significant relationship was found with the southeast region ( $\beta = 0.08$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). However, testing multiple hypotheses increases the risk of type I errors, thus the significant relationship found with the southeast region should be interpreted with caution.

As shown in Table 15, multiple linear regression was used to test whether *Family Communication* and a student’s race predicted a family’s *sense of partnership*, however, no significant interaction effects were found between race and *Family Communication* on family *sense of partnership* ( $p = 0.64$ ).

**Table 16**

*Multiple Linear Regression of Communication on Family Sense of Partnership with Interaction Effects of Race*

	<i>N</i>	$R^2_{\text{total}}$	$R^2_{\text{adjusted}}$	<i>b</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	<i>Wald F</i>	<i>ndf</i>	<i>ddf</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Partnership</i>	9507	0.23	0.23		105.00	17	9489	<0.00005 ***
Intercept	9507			1.68 (0.04)				<0.00005 ***
Communication	9507			0.46 (0.01)				<0.00005 ***
Race								0.442
Asian	1042			-0.14 (0.13)				0.265
Black/African American	486			-0.26 (0.16)				0.108
Hispanic/Latinx	473			-0.12 (0.17)				0.480
Multiracial	1582			0.10 (0.10)				0.324
NatAm/AKNat	44			-0.05 (0.46)				0.899
Pacific Islander	42			0.12 (0.54)				0.823
School Region								0.000 ***
Northwest	2874			<-0.01 (0.02)				0.930
Northeast	2028			0.02 (0.02)				0.171
Southeast	1302			0.08 (0.02)				0.000 ***
Southwest	1648			<0.01 (0.02)				0.893
Race*Communication								0.637
Asian*Communication				0.04 (0.04)				0.225
Black*Communication				0.05 (0.05)				0.270

Latinx*Communication	0.04 (0.05)	0.477
Multiracial*Communication	<0.01 (0.03)	0.448
NatAm/AKNat*Communication	-0.02 (0.15)	0.935
PacIs*Communication	-0.08 (0.17)	0.640

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*Note.* White students served as the reference group for race/ethnicity status (White students  $N = 5838$ ). Central region served as the reference group with school regions (Central region  $N = 1655$ ).

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to explore factors that contributed to student well-being during pandemic remote learning utilizing data from the Pulse Survey administered by Seattle Public Schools from the fall of 2020. This study aimed to explore the relationships between variables such as family engagement practices and culturally responsive teaching on indicators of student and family well-being -- the primary focus was *not* to determine model fit and how well the variables predicted the outcomes. Results indicated that culturally responsive teaching, a supportive work environment for educators, and implementing family engagement practices contributed to the tenets of supporting the whole child. Specifically, the provision of culturally responsive teaching, fostering a supportive work environment for educators, and implementing family engagement practices were positively associated with student sense of acceptance, family perceptions of how well their children's needs were met, and the family sense of partnership with schools. These findings are further explored below.

### **The Positive Effects of Culturally Responsive Teaching**

The purpose of the first two inquiries was to explore the effects of culturally responsive teaching. The first inquiry examined the relationship between the student perceptions of the provision of culturally responsive teaching and the student's sense of acceptance during pandemic remote learning. This question also explored whether students' feelings of acceptance differed among racial groups when provided with culturally responsive teaching. It was hypothesized that the provision of culturally responsive teaching would have a positive relationship with student sense of acceptance. Based on the two indicators of culturally responsive teaching, students who reported that they were learning about diverse races and

cultures in their classes and that their teachers helped them connect what they learn to their interests and culture positively were more likely to feel a higher sense of acceptance. Culturally responsive teaching is comprehensive and inclusive -- it extends beyond academics and supports the whole child, and these findings are in alignment with this essential element of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018).

The purpose of the second inquiry was to examine the relationship between family perceptions of the provision of culturally responsive teaching and their ratings of how well educators met their children's needs. This question also explored whether the effect of culturally responsive teaching differed by race on their perception of how well educators met their children's needs. It was hypothesized that there would be a positive correlation between culturally responsive teaching and how well educators met student needs based on family perceptions. Findings indicated that culturally responsive teaching was positively associated with their perception of how well educators supported their children's needs. However, no differential effects of race were found with culturally responsive teaching and family perceptions of how well educators met their children's needs. When educators provide teaching and learning experiences that reflect students' cultural values and beliefs, learning becomes more relevant and better meets student needs (Gay, 2018).

Findings from these analyses demonstrated that experiencing an environment that includes culturally responsive teaching positively correlated with overall well-being of youth. When schools integrate students' cultures in their teaching and learning experiences, they attend to the whole child (Gay, 2018). When students see themselves and other non-dominant cultures reflected in their learning, it is associated with feeling a higher level of acceptance, and students feel safe and connected (Marshall & Price, 2020). Furthermore, family perceptions of culturally

responsive teaching is related to an increased perception of their children being supported. The findings from this study also demonstrated that some racial/ethnic groups reported a lower sense of acceptance than White students -- this finding supports the research that BIPOC students may not experience schools as “their” space (Murphy & Zirkel, 2015). Findings also indicated that the relationship between race and culturally responsive teaching did not have a meaningful difference among the different racial/ethnic groups, thus the provision of culturally responsive teaching had positive correlations with student sense of acceptance for all racial groups. This finding is in alignment with elements of culturally responsive teaching that indicate this pedagogical approach benefits all students, not only minoritized students (Gay, 2018).

These findings are situated within the context of Seattle Public Schools; thus, it is also important to consider the context of SPS in relation to these findings. School systems have and continue to be spaces that do not serve BIPOC communities well. In a survey that SPS administered in May 2020, BIPOC families reported higher levels of concern about the social emotional health of their children when compared to White families (Seattle Public Schools, 2020b). During the onset of the pandemic, the majority of families overall reported feeling a high level of concern about their students’ learning -- American Indian and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander families reported the highest rates of concerns (Seattle Public Schools, 2020b). American Indian and Black/African American families reported spending more time than White families supporting student learning. The pandemic further illuminated SPS’ ongoing challenges in supporting the needs of BIPOC families.

SPS has made public commitments and has implemented systemic initiatives to address inequities and to better support the needs of BIPOC communities. -- Prior to the pandemic, SPS already began engaging in efforts to address systemic inequities through culturally responsive

teaching. The district priorities include engaging in active efforts to develop a more diverse and culturally responsive workforce (Seattle Public Schools, 2019). Some initiatives within this priority were providing a series of foundational coursework in culturally responsive/ anti-racist teaching and to providing ongoing professional development in cultural competency (Seattle Public Schools, 2021). As of 2021, the district had provided professional development in cultural competency to 76% of first year teachers, and 1,355 educators across the district attended trainings in racial equity literacy (Seattle Public Schools, 2021). A subset of social justice-focused educators surveyed during the pandemic reported that they were intentionally connecting instruction to relevant content such as the pandemic, anti-racism and systemic racial inequities (Ishimaru et al., 2021). Some educators shaped instruction based on student voice, their interests and used multiple methods to engage with students. Though determining if these practices are in direct correlation with SPS' initiatives are outside of the scope of this study, it is evident that SPS has made efforts in promoting culturally responsive teaching and in fostering a work environment in which these practices are encouraged.

The findings from this study demonstrate that culturally responsive teaching is positively related to student well-being. Though public schools have returned to business-as-usual, Ladson-Billings (2021) calls for a reimagining of schools that is meaningful and reflective of students' lives and culture. Schooling has been the source of racial disparities, and returning to "normal" will continue to exacerbate harm on BIPOC communities (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Furthermore, findings from this study are aligned with the research that indicates BIPOC students may not perceive schools as spaces that are safe and welcoming towards them (Murphy & Zirkel, 2015). Ladson-Billings (2021) calls for a centering of Black student ideas, ways of thinking, and cultural practices and the decentering of White norms. Critical race theory scholars

contend that centering the voices of the marginalized is necessary and a means towards racial justice. When the thoughts, ideas, and practices of BIPOC communities are integrated and help to shape teaching and learning experiences, student needs are better met, and it can be a powerful means towards advancing educational justice.

### **Supportive Work Environment for Educators**

A supportive work environment helped to mitigate the challenges of the pandemic. When educators feel supported, it can contribute towards a more positive learning environment for students. The purpose of this analysis was exploratory in nature. The aim was to examine the relationship between educator sense of well-being and educator perceptions of a supportive work environment along with family perceptions of how well educators supported their children. This question also explored whether there was a relationship between student race and educator perceptions of a supportive work environment and work-life balance on families' perceptions of how well their children's needs were met. It was hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship between educator well-being and a supportive work environment to family perceptions of how well educators supported their children. Findings indicated that a supportive work environment for educators is positively correlated to how well families perceived their children's needs were met at school. However, findings did not show a strong relationship between educator work-life balance and family perceptions of how well educators supported their children's needs. This finding could be explained by how this analysis was conducted. The relationship between two separate perspectives were analyzed with families and educators on constructs that were not connected between the two raters. Race also did not have a strong relationship with the effects of a supportive work environment on family perception of educators supporting their children. This finding can also be explained by how this analysis was conducted

-- perspectives from different raters were analyzed, thus generating findings between student race and the variables that measured a supportive work environment were limited.

On the other hand, a supportive work environment helped to moderate the effects of the pandemic on educators, and in turn, educators were able to support and facilitate learning for their students (Kraft et. al, 2021). Kraft et. al, (2021) conducted a study of teachers' working conditions during the pandemic and found that the shift to remote learning was challenging for many teachers, and some experienced a decline in their "sense of success," which they describe as a teacher's sense of efficacy or their sense of how successful they were with students (Kraft et al., 2021, p. 729). Teachers who worked in supportive work environments were not as likely to experience a decline in their sense of success instead, they were more likely to sustain a sense of success (Kraft et al., 2021, p. 729). Supportive work conditions that included strong communication between school staff, fair expectations, recognition of effort from higher level staff, relevant professional development, and a collaborative work culture helped to reduce the likelihood of educators feeling a decline in their sense of success (Kraft et al., 2021). In a survey administered by Seattle Public School during the 2019-2020 school year to educators, findings indicated that an influential retention factor for teachers was supportive school administrators (Seattle Public Schools & University of Washington Education Policy Analytics Lab, 2020). They also found that teachers are drawn to schools with higher average ratings of working conditions. Teachers with high retention rates reported better working conditions and also received higher work performance ratings from their evaluators (Seattle Public Schools & University of Washington Education Policy Analytics Lab, 2020). Prioritizing practices that foster a positive working environment can contribute to educators' sense of success, and in turn, their capacity to teach.

Findings from this study support the importance of fostering a supportive work environment for educators. When school systems foster a positive and supportive work environment for educators, they are in alignment with the Whole Child tenet of supported for educators. When educators feel supported and cared for, they are better able to meet the needs of their students. By prioritizing a supportive work environment, school systems could potentially be better equipped to handle organizational changes and to weather more storms (Kraft et al., 2021).

### **Partnership Between Families and Educators**

The purpose of this final inquiry was to examine the relationship between family perceptions of family engagement practices and their sense of partnership with schools. This question also explored whether the effect of those practices differed by race on their sense of partnership with schools. It was hypothesized that there would be a positive correlation between family engagement practices and families' sense of partnership. Findings indicated that family engagement practices of seeking feedback from families and maintaining consistent communication with families were positively correlated to their sense of partnership with schools during pandemic remote schooling. This analysis also generated the highest effect sizes compared to the other inquiries in this study. No differential effects of race were found with family engagement practices and family sense of partnership which suggests that family engagement practices had a positive correlation amongst all racial groups on their sense of partnership with schools. This indicates that prioritizing family engagement practices is associated with a higher sense of partnership for all families.

The pandemic created conditions that shifted the power dynamics between families and educators. Educators had to engage with families differently than before because they were more

dependent on families to facilitate schooling for their children (Wilinski et al., 2022). The higher effect size of this inquiry could potentially be explained by this dynamic. For example, some educators in SPS prioritized building relationships with families and honored them as the “first teachers” and sought their expertise when schools shifted to remote learning (Ishimaru et al., 2021). They aimed to better understand their needs so that instruction would be better suited to their needs (Ishimaru et al., 2021; Sun et al., 2020). Some educators understood that personal contact was important to building trust and partnership, and they reached families through texting and calling rather than emailing. Some educators sought to meet families where they were at by utilizing different modes of communication and being flexible with instructional format and times (Ishimaru et al., 2021; Sun et al., 2020; Wilinski et al., 2022). The pandemic opened up opportunities for educators and families to engage with each other differently, and for some, it helped to strengthen their relationships (Wilinski et al., 2022). Families and educators were dependent on each other to navigate the unknowns of remote learning and the uncertainty of how long it would be, and for some, to some degree, they partnered together to co-construct what schooling looked like during the pandemic.

Findings from this study are situated within Seattle Public Schools, thus it is also important to understand the context of that setting in relation to these findings. SPS have prioritized inclusive and authentic family engagement as part of their strategic plan as a means towards achieving educational equity (Seattle Public Schools, 2019). The research-practice partnership (RPP) was initially formed as a partnership between Seattle Public Schools, University of Washington, and the Seattle Education Association that aims to advance racial equity. The researcher of this study was previously involved in research activities with the RPP and had the opportunity to co-write a report with the RPP -- findings from the report indicated

that families experienced major challenges during pandemic remote schooling (Ishimaru et al., 2021). Some Black families reported that remote learning exacerbated existing racial tensions between educators and the families. Some reported that their children were happier and safer at home because they were no longer experiencing the racial trauma they faced in schools. Black families also provided learning experiences that were challenging and tailored to their children's interests (Ishimaru et al., 2021). Black families engaged in expansive learning experiences with their children through learning about activism by participating in rallies and marches, engaging in hands-on learning experiences by joining their parents at work, and having book groups or cooking classes (Ishimaru et al., 2021). Black families built upon their home learning practices and drew upon their expertise to facilitate learning for their children. Learnings from this report and other ongoing initiatives with the district and RPP that highlighted the ongoing tensions and complexities between Black families and the school system, helped to shift the focus of the RPP towards honoring and bringing forth the voices of BIPOC communities to shape schooling practices. The partnership has most recently evolved into a research community practice partnership (RCPP) that is currently engaging in efforts to center the expertise of Black families to codesign literacy practices to reimagine schooling. Understanding the need to engage in partnerships with BIPOC families, prior to the pandemic, SPS had already been engaging in efforts to authentically partner with families. More recently there has been movement forward in centering the voices of BIPOC families to reimagine schooling. Findings from this study further contribute to the importance of district initiatives that prioritize building partnerships with families.

Schools that prioritize building relationships with families promote the Whole Child approach tenets of healthy, supported, and engaged. Findings from this study further highlight

the need to build and sustain relationships with families and to attend to the existing tensions and complexities when partnering with families. These findings indicate that in a time of uncertainty and unpredictability, when educators engaged in practices that prioritized building relationships with families, educators and families were able to work through a very challenging time together.

## **Implications for Research and Practice**

### ***Research Implications***

Currently conceptualizations of well-being are limited in relation to exploring student well-being in schools. The WC approach was selected as the framework for this study because it discusses the whole child in relation to the context of school. Findings from this study support the WC tenets of promoting student well-being, however, the WC approach is limited as an equitable approach. It does not examine how its own approach can be utilized as a means towards perpetuating inequities and sustaining whiteness. The approach is also limited in seeking nondominant voices in conceptualizing well-being. Critical Race Theory served as the theoretical underpinnings of this study due to the limitations of the WC approach. Though findings from this study indicated that practices that schools engaged are associated with student well-being based on the WC tenets, it would be important to further examine and expand upon different conceptualizations of overall well-being, in particular centering nondominant voices in providing a richer and more nuanced understanding of well-being.

### ***School-Based Practice Implications***

Promoting the well-being of students in schools is typically associated with social and emotional learning (SEL), however, a more expansive understanding of well-being is necessary for practitioners. SEL initiatives in schools have become increasingly popular as a means to promote the academic, social and emotional growth of students, and SEL programming typically

focuses on building individual student competencies. However, SEL has been criticized as a means towards perpetuating inequities and sustaining whiteness (Simmons, 2021; Williams & Jagers, 2022). Researchers have reconceptualized SEL as Transformative SEL as a means towards utilizing SEL as a lever towards equity in schools and as a response to the critiques of SEL (Williams & Jager, 2022). Yet, teaching children SEL skills without attending to the broader sociopolitical and racial context perpetuates an unending cycle of protecting whiteness and can be used as a tool to continue to further marginalize BIPOC students (Simmons 2021).

Findings from this study demonstrated that promoting student well-being is also associated with the provision of culturally responsive teaching, a supportive work environment for educators, and family engagement practices. As there is increasing pressure to support the social emotional health of students due to the effects of the pandemic, practitioners should critically examine SEL initiatives and its potential impact on BIPOC students and hold a more expansive view of what contributes to well-being.

Furthermore, during the pandemic Ladson-Billings (2021) discussed that returning to “normal” is the wrong direction, instead, she calls for a “hard re-set” (p. 68) in rethinking schooling. Ladson-Billings (2021) indicated that the three elements of culturally relevant pedagogy -- student learning, cultural competence, and socio-political consciousness -- need to be incorporated into post pandemic schools. Ladson-Billings (2021) also calls for the rethinking of the purpose of education in which schooling is relevant and reflective of students’ lives and cultures. Doing so will require re-thinking curriculum and assessment, addressing the social emotional needs of students, families taking on a central role in shaping their children’s teaching and learning experiences, educators expanding their own worldviews, and inviting and honoring students’ into the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 2021).

## **Limitations**

### ***Measures***

Due to the nature of secondary data analysis, the survey items selected in this study were not intended to measure constructs of well-being. The purpose of the Pulse survey was to better understand how to better support students and families during pandemic remote learning. Thus, the measures used may potentially be limited in measuring the constructs of this study.

Furthermore, there were also limitations in the analyses that studied the relationship between educator well-being and supportive work environment with family perceptions of how well their children's needs were met. The survey data were collected from a family and an educator survey, thus data were aggregated by school from the educator survey responses to analyze the relationship between family and educator perceptions. Due to the nature of aggregated data, the educator response data may not be as sensitive. An alternative approach could have been to simplify the approach and to only utilize data from one rater. Another approach could have been to use multilevel modeling at the school-level to generate findings. Additionally, due to the limitations of the dataset and the scope of the study, a few indicators of well-being were selected to measure well-being, however, well-being encompasses more than what was explored in this study. Future research could bring forth more robust measures of well-being within the context of school.

### ***Limitations in Respondents***

Furthermore, the purpose of this study was to highlight the experiences of BIPOC students and families, however, White respondents were disproportionately overrepresented as respondents to the pulse survey. White students make-up 46% of the student population, however, White family respondents made up 62% of the family respondents, whereas African

American/Black family respondents were 5% of the survey respondents and are 15% of the student population (Seattle Public Schools, n.d.). The overrepresentation of White respondents may have skewed the data to portray an experience that is more aligned with White respondents. Utilizing qualitative data from other methods would have likely generated a richer and more nuanced understanding of the experiences of BIPOC students and families and is in further alignment with centering the stories of BIPOC communities.

### **Conclusion and Future Directions**

School building closures during the pandemic significantly impacted students and families, particularly BIPOC communities. In such a tumultuous time, students, families, and educators struggled to adjust to such an abrupt transition. As many schools have resumed in-person instruction and taken on a business-as-usual approach, the underlying inequities that have plagued schools continue to produce similar disparate outcomes for BIPOC communities. Students, families, educators continue to grapple with the effects of the pandemic on their overall well-being.

This study centers change at the systems level as a means towards advancing educational equity. It focused on exploring systemic practices that supported the well-being of students during such a challenging time. More specifically, this study identified Seattle Public Schools as a school system that has acknowledged its role in perpetuating racial inequities and are making efforts to address those injustices. Within this systemic context, this study aimed to explore factors that contributed to student well-being. Findings indicated that practices such as providing culturally responsive education, maintaining connection with families, and providing a supportive work environment helped to promote student well-being. The overall findings of this study also indicated that there were no significant differential effects by race of these practices

on indicators of well-being. Furthermore, practices explored within this study are a subset of practices within a complex system that has historically and continues to not attend well to the needs of BIPOC communities. The pandemic further highlighted the ongoing tensions and mistrust that BIPOC communities hold of the school system, and it will require intentional systemic efforts in building trusting relationships with families.

In light of the ongoing racial complexities and tensions within the school system, this study demonstrated that a subset of practices the SPS is engaged in supported the needs of BIPOC students. Despite the challenges of shifting to remote learning, some educators were able to provide culturally responsive teaching on content relevant to the sociopolitical context. They also sought family feedback and remained connected with families. Educators engaged in practices that supported the well-being of students and families and facilitated tenets of the WC approach. The pandemic pushed educators, students, and families to “do” school differently. They did not have a playbook on how to do it, but they worked together to navigate those uncertainties. The pandemic created conditions that pushed them to rethink schooling together. Families engaged in practices with their children that addressed the sociopolitical climate as part of their education; educators prioritized building relationships with families; schools made efforts to take care of their educators. These practices contributed to supporting students, families, and educators during a very challenging time.

An overall aim of this study was to bring forth findings that may encourage school systems to build upon practices that support the well-being of students using a critical lens and to continue to think beyond the physical confines of the school building to engage in innovative, unconventional practices that better meet the needs of BIPOC communities. Families and educators partnered together in a manner that was different than before during the pandemic

because there was no playbook on how to navigate schooling during a pandemic. Culturally responsive teaching, family engagement practices, and a supportive work environment for educators can continue to be collectively built and shaped by students, families, and educators to contribute towards their well-being and to move school systems towards educational equity. Ladson-Billings (2021) calls for a hard re-set instead of a return to normal -- a means towards re-setting is for BIPOC communities and educators to co-construct schooling that seeks the collective expertise, ideas, and dreams of BIPOC communities rather than returning to business-as-usual. Bell (1992) contends that even though racial equality is unattainable, striving towards racial justice is meaningful -- there is value in the process of collective meaning-making.

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