

New Hope-Solebury Community Equity Survey Executive Summary

The New Hope-Solebury Equity Committee is an ongoing effort of the New Hope-Solebury School District (NHSSD) to develop and realize a vision for social equity in their schools and the community.

As part of this charge, NHSSD engaged in a survey designed to better understand the community they serve and identify primary areas of impact in their efforts to create a more equitable and inclusive community and district.

In October 2020, NHSSD launched the Community Equity Survey to capture community members' perspectives on issues of Diversity, Social Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in the NHS school district and community at large. The survey included two components: Phone interviews and a web-based survey. The survey focused on all community members (i.e. parents, teachers, students, alumni, people who live and work in the community) with the intention of assessing the community's understanding of and attitudes towards various aspects of DEI in the community and district, the role of the school in addressing inequities, and how the school should approach these issues.

Research Methodology

The New Hope-Solebury Community Equity Survey was developed in collaboration with consultants at gestaltworks LLC and the New Hope Solebury Equity Committee (NHS Equity Committee). They met from August 2020 through October 2020 to develop questions for the survey, train on interview protocol, and create strategies for promotion and outreach.

Survey data was collected via internet and mobile devices from October 1st and November 1st, and included 783 total respondents. The survey consisted of 41 multiple choice questions and 9 opportunities for open-ended responses to provide context to multiple-choice responses. The survey was incentivized by offering the chance to win one of four \$50 Amazon gift cards.

Interview data was collected via phone from October 1st and November 1st, by NHS Equity Subcommittee members, and included 50 total respondents. Interviewees were selected from a random sample of survey respondents who consented to an interview. Interview data was collected using a "semi-structured" interview method. Semi-structured interviews have a structured set of questions and thematic framework, but are open and conversational, allowing the interviewee to help guide the dialogue.

After data collection, consultants analyzed survey data and interview data separately. The results were then used to develop data narratives to help gain a deeper understanding of the community and inform next steps for the NHS Equity Committee. While the survey was rich with information, we are providing a brief summary below:

Survey Data Summary

Perceptions, Knowledge and Behavior of Community Members:

- **In general, people have positive perceptions of NHS and are very satisfied with the community.**
 - People are very satisfied with living in the NHS community (91%)
 - High levels of belonging (90%)
 - Very few people reported ever wanting to leave the NHS community (16%)
 - People generally feel safe (96%)
- **However, when asked if NHS was welcoming to all people, there is less agreement (67%). Additionally, 37% feel that other community members are impacted by inequities in their daily lives, and 68% have heard of instances of prejudice toward other community members.**
- **90% of respondents feel that it was important that the NHS community actively works to ensure the equitable treatment of all community members, and needs to improve their DEI efforts (84% agreement).**
 - These are very strong numbers, and point to a general desire to create a more equitable community for all.
- **People feel that there are inequities in America (89%), but to a lesser extent NHS (70%). That said, there is very little self-reported personal experiences of inequities (9%). This points to the overwhelmingly homogenous nature of our dataset. 91% of community members report that they experience little to no personal impact of inequities in the community and 87% say they/their children are treated equitably at school.**
 - Although only 9% of respondents reported personally experiencing inequities, that number was much higher for Black (100%) and Asian (28%) respondents.
- **Almost all respondents are willing to engage in conversations about diversity and equity, and have already worked on reducing their own biases.**
 - 95% of respondents disagree that nothing good can come from talking about diversity, and only 7% of respondents avoid having conversations about diversity and social equity.
 - Most people report investigating (94%) and working to eliminate (94%) their own biases.
 - When self-reporting how they work to investigate and eliminate biases, the answers vary widely in content and depth. The comments range from “I do not work on this because I am not biased” to “I read about and

listen to the struggles of others” to “I actively check my behavior in the moment”.

- **Although still high, people are less likely to work on eliminating bias in the community (75%) compared to working on eliminating their own biases.**
 - Among population segments, students report engaging in community work the least (60%). This points to the critical role of the district in creating opportunities for students to engage in this work inside and outside of the community.

Perceptions of Social Identity Impact and Exposure to Others:

- **Depending on perspective, respondents differ in their perceptions of the impact of children’s identity on development (NOTE: respondents evaluated: Socio-economic status (SES), Gender Identification, Race, Political Ideology, (Dis)ability, Religion, Sexual Orientation).**
 - Most respondents indicate that social identities impact children’s success pathways (average 71% agreement across all identities evaluated).
 - However, parents do not see these identity factors impacting how their own children are treated (average 43% agreement across all identities evaluated).
- **The majority of respondents said they interact with people who are not like them (average 79% agreement).**

Parent Questions:

- **Parents are comfortable talking to their kids about different social identities (average 94%), and think it is important to do so (average 95% agreement). However, there was greater variability in how much parents actually expose children to other social identities. This is the case with the media they show their children (average 66% agreement), as well as how much they talk to their children about different social identities (average 80% agreement).**
 - Parents report a lot of media exposure and discussion around issues of race, gender and political orientation, but significantly less so with religion, sexual orientation, gender identification and (dis)ability.
- **Although parents think it is important to discuss social identity, they felt that it was comparatively less appropriate for teachers to do so (74%).**
 - Parents were particularly concerned with teachers discussing sexual orientation, gender identification, religion and politics.
 - Interview data suggests that there is a degree of distrust in how teachers are discussing these topics, with a weariness of an “agenda” or “bias” toward

personal viewpoints. It will be important to develop ways of combatting these concerns.

- Teachers who were interviewed also express general fear of backlash from parents when they teach/address issues of DEI. This reinforces the need for training and guidelines for communicating with parents and teaching students.

School Questions:

- **A small majority believe there are inequities at NHSSD (64%), leaving a considerable segment of students, parents and teachers don't think there are inequities.**
 - This is largely driven by a huge disparity between liberal (85% agreement) and conservative (23% agreement) respondents.
 - Despite survey respondents' beliefs, Student and parent Interviews illuminated the persistent experience of prejudice among students. This ranged from self-reported incidence of racism and anti-Semitism to bullying students with mental health issues and body-shaming.
- **Two thirds of respondents believe (67%) that the NHS School district has a strong commitment to DEI.**
 - Only 60% of students agree that NHS has a strong commitment to DEI. This is the lowest level of agreement among the different population segments.
 - This was reflected in the student interviews. According to students we spoke to, DEI efforts from the school and community are seen as "performative", and could be improved in "all dimensions". Many students felt that issues of race and social equity are often "brushed over" and acute instances of inequity, bias and prejudice have been mishandled or ignored. That said, there was a recognition by both teachers and students of recent efforts to change this.
- **Most respondents disagree that NHS focuses too much on DEI issues.**
 - 83% overall disagreement that NHS puts too much emphasis on DEI efforts and 79% disagreed that it takes away valuable time from "what matters most".
- **88% agree that curriculum should reflect the increasingly diverse US population.**
- **Respondents showed overwhelming support for anti-racism education and policy.**
 - 88% agree that changing structural racism and inequities starts with teaching students the importance of anti-racist beliefs and policies.
 - 88% disagree that focusing on creating anti-racist puts NHS at risk of losing its highly ranked status. Lastly, 89% support teaching student's anti-racism policy and beliefs.
 - However, although 85% support the funding of bias and anti-racism trainings for teachers, only 40% of conservatives do so.

- This is consistent with prior results from conservative interviewees who express concerns that trainings could lead to biased viewpoints.
 - Multiple interviewees addressed their lack of support for teacher training, saying that teachers should be able to teach all students equally, and thus should not need training.
- **A majority of respondents feel that NHS is not a diverse learning environment (70%), but believe that it is safe and welcoming to all students (78%). However, only half of the respondents (50%) felt that all students are treated EQUALLY.**
 - Interviewees regularly mentioned that a failure to expose NHS students to more diverse people/content/perspectives can hinder the growth of individuals as they leave New Hope (see citation 3 above). This is an increasingly desirable trait in the corporate and non-profit spaces, and could impact career trajectory.
- **36% of respondents have reported either experiencing prejudice or their children experiencing prejudice at school.**
 - This number is high and is supported by many of the interviews with students.
 - In addition to explicit experiences of prejudice, interviews of students also revealed their experience of “invisibility” (i.e. the feeling that one’s personality, identity and self-worth are ignored or discounted because of prejudice towards them or their identity).
- **Most believe that multicultural history and DEI issues can and should be taught starting as early as elementary school (77%).**
 - This was echoed in the interviews as well. Regardless of political affiliation or position in the community, people were very supportive of teaching multicultural history and DEI issues as early as kindergarten.
- **Any NHS equity work is going to need to include benchmarking and measurement.**
 - This was a primary theme of the interviews. Accountability is very important and can only be achieved through ongoing performance objectives and measurements. This can be at the student, teacher, school and district level. More measurement means more accountability and effectiveness.
- ****It is important to note that a majority of our respondents self-identified as liberal (56%), compared to conservative (26%) or moderate (18%).**
 - Results show significant and consistent differences across ideological groups. Although we did not focus on ideology in the report-- with most of the reported data reflecting overall results-- it is important to note that overall results could have changed at least slightly with more evenly distributed data.

Demographics

- **Age**
 - Under 18– 15%
 - 18-24- 7%
 - 25-34- 8%
 - 35-44- 19%
 - 45-54- 29%
 - 55-64- 10%
 - 65+- 9%
 - Prefer not to answer- 3%

- **Gender**
 - Female- 70%
 - Male- 27%
 - Prefer not to answer/self-identify- 3%

- **Race / Ethnicity**
 - White or Caucasian- 83%
 - Black or African American- 1%
 - Latin-X, Hispanic or Mexican- 3%
 - Asian, Asian-American or Pacific Islander- 7%
 - Mixed-Race- 3%
 - Other- 3%

- **Sexual Orientation**
 - Heterosexual or straight- 84%
 - Gay/Lesbian- 3%
 - Queer- 2%
 - Questioning- 1%
 - Asexual- 1%
 - Bisexual- 5%
 - Prefer not to answer- 4%

- **Household Income**
 - Less than 30 thousand- 3%
 - 30 thousand to less than 50- 4%
 - 50 thousand to less than 75- 5%
 - 75 thousand to less than 100- 8%
 - 100 thousand to less than 150- 13%
 - 150 thousand or more- 44%
 - Don't know/Prefer not to answer- 23%

- **Political ideology**
 - Liberal- 56%
 - Moderate- 26%
 - Conservative- 18%

- **Religious Background**
 - Christian- 45%
 - Jewish- 10%
 - Muslim- 0% (0 respondents)
 - Sikh- 0% (1 respondent)
 - Hindu- 1%
 - Buddhist- 1%
 - Atheist- 10%
 - Agnostic- 9%
 - Nothing in particular- 12%
 - Don't Know/Other- 12%

- **(Dis)ability**
 - Yes- 5%
 - No- 90%
 - Prefer not to answer- 5%

- **Parents Education**
 - Less than High School- 3%
 - High School- 14%
 - Some College- 15%
 - College Graduate- 30%
 - Masters/MBA/Law Degree- 22%
 - PhD or MD- 11%
 - Prefer not to answer- 5%

- **Your Education**
 - Less than High School- 15%
 - High School- 3%
 - Some College- 9%
 - College Graduate- 34%
 - Masters/MBA/Law Degree- 29%
 - PhD or MD- 7%
 - Prefer not to answer- 3%

- **Do you work on New Hope or Solebury?**
 - Yes- 31%
 - No- 66%

- Prefer not to answer- 3%
- **Community relationship breakdown**
 - Current student- 131
 - Parent of current student - 302
 - Teacher / staff - 81
 - Alumni- 104
 - Parent of former student - 122
 - Community Member - 248
 - Local business owner – 22