

# Fostering Racial Equity Through Inclusive Innovation

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From the series, *Emerging Findings from Inclusive Innovation: An Equity-Centered R&D Model*

Center for  
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*Fostering racial equity through Inclusive Innovation*

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## Racial Equity and Education R&D

Education remains a significant determinant of well-being and social mobility across the lifespan. Despite the clear importance of equity in education, the education system we have today still mirrors, and in effect, reifies the persistent inequities that are evident in the broader U.S. society. A 2018 report by the U.S. Congress named race as one of the three primary axes of inequality in student academic achievement (Hussar et al., 2020). The evidence lies in the disparities in resource allocation (Houck, 2010) student discipline (Skiba et al., 2011), under-enrollment in advanced classes (Ford et al., 2021) over-enrollment in special education classes (Farkas et al., 2020), as well as teachers' differential expectations for student achievement by race (Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007), for example. As it has historically, race remains a significant factor in how students experience schooling. Many of the solutions developed to address the needs of historically and systematically excluded students target the mindsets and behaviors of students but leave intact the inequitable systems that produced the inequality.

For far too long in the field of education we have linked the disparate academic and social outcomes of students, by race, to the behaviors and mindsets of students from historically and systematically excluded communities. This perspective discounts the role of the socio-cultural context of schooling in creating a gap in the opportunities for historically and systematically excluded students to benefit from adequate educational supports (typically referred to as the opportunity gap). Though, the existence of the opportunity gap in education suggests there may be ways to create the conditions for equity in education through research and development.

## Our Commitment to Racial Equity in Education




Our commitment to racial equity in education begins with our overarching organizational goals. Digital Promise is committed to engaging in work that fosters a fair education system for historically and systematically excluded learners, including students of color. Our [strategic framework and North Star goals](#) outline our specific aims and how we engage in this work.

Within the Center for Inclusive Innovation we are committed to developing a research and development model that centers the needs of end-users furthest from opportunity in a targeted universalism approach. We define students furthest from opportunity as Black, Brown Indigenous students as well as multilingual students, students experiencing poverty and students with learning differences. We believe that supporting the needs of students furthest from opportunity is of urgent priority and benefits all learners.

Our Inclusive Innovation Core Tenets undergird the engagement model and specific aims of all of our Inclusive Innovation projects. One of the core tenets of our work explicitly calls us to engage in work that centers equity, including racial equity. In addition to upholding our commitment to equity with external partners, we abide by internal equity commitments as a team and engage in quarterly

reflection sessions to continually improve our work towards the goal of fostering equity in the districts we work with.

## Core Tenets of Inclusive Innovation

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Co-Leadership</b></p> <p>The work is co-led by stakeholders who are reflective of the diversity of communities and schools to ensure mutual benefit</p>		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Center Equity</b></p> <p>The solutions are designed to address the systemic inequities that impact students — poverty, race, language, learning differences —and their intersections</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Co-Research and Design</b></p> <p>The education challenges are co-researched and co-designed to address issues the community deems important and build on what is already working within communities and schools</p>		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Reimagine Progress</b></p> <p>Progress measures must be multi-dimensional — access, participation and benefit — in recognition of the needs of the whole child</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Honor Context</b></p> <p>Context and context expertise is prioritized to center the history, culture, and perspectives of those with lived experiences relevant to the education challenge</p>		<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Build Capacity</b></p> <p>The process resources communities to sustain the capacity for equity-centered R&amp;D into the future</p>

## The Current Project

This paper is part of the series, [Emerging Findings from Inclusive Innovation: An Equity-Centered R&D Model](#), sharing our initial learnings across four Inclusive Innovation pilot projects, as well as improvements we can make to better serve the partners we work with in meeting their equity-centered goals. In this study, we aimed to explore two primary research questions (RQs 2 and 3) about the intersection of Inclusive Innovation and racial equity. In the process, we noted a third overarching question worth exploring as well (RQ1). Questions are listed by granularity of scope starting with the most broad question:

1. How do Core team members conceptualize racial equity in education?
2. From the participants’ perspectives, how is racial equity centered throughout the Inclusive Innovation process?
3. What kind of context expertise is necessary to address issues of racial equity in schools?

**Positionality Statement.** As the primary researcher on this project I come to this work with my own lens informed by my lived experiences. I am a Black and Mexican cis-woman researcher who has engaged in school-based research for more than 10 years. Like most students of color, my educational journey was impacted by countless racialized experiences that often made me feel othered in school. Despite this, I have achieved the highest level of educational attainment in my field and acknowledge that doing so

and being viewed as a “good student” for most of my education afforded me privilege in my journey. My experiences as a student have fueled my interest in educational equity over the years and I come to this work both passionate and hopeful for transformation.

## Method

### Core Teams

The [Inclusive Innovation model](#) is a process by which equity challenges are co-researched and innovative equity-centered solutions that center the needs of students who have been historically and systematically excluded from opportunity are co-designed *with* district and community stakeholders. Four school districts across the U.S. partnered with Digital Promise to pilot the Inclusive Innovation model and address district challenges related to adolescent writing, racial trauma and mental health, and racial discourse in the classroom.

In collaboration with Digital Promise’s Center for Inclusive Innovation, each district assembled Community-District Core Teams of district leaders, teachers, parents, community members and students in an intentional partnership to address a challenge area in their district using the Inclusive Innovation model. Each Core team was composed of 7-10 community and district stakeholders, two of which were named Co-Leads. The Core team Co-Leads were primarily responsible for guiding the course of research and design activities, recruiting research participants, and providing access to additional resources. Core team member participation in Inclusive Innovation varied across each district.

The four district communities are in the eastern, Midwest, and southern regions of the country, ranging in enrollment from three districts with 15,000 or fewer students and one district approaching 50,000 students. The student populations across the districts are ethnically, racially, socioeconomically, and linguistically diverse (Exhibit 1).

**Exhibit 1. Student Demographic Ranges in Four Communities Piloting Inclusive Innovation Model**

Demographic	Range
Enrollment (students)	6,000 – 47,000
Free and reduced-price lunch eligible	49 – 80%
Race/ethnicity	
African-American	2 – 38%
Asian	Up to 9%
Latino	8 – 92%
Multiracial	Up to 10%
White	4 – 59%
Multilingual learners	5 – 22%

**Data Sources**

**Inclusive Innovation Materials and Outputs.** Along the Inclusive Innovation process, Core teams met at a regular cadence to build relationships, co-research challenges, and co-design solutions. The session agendas, session materials, and session outputs developed by the Core teams are all used as data in this project.

**Interviews.** As a research team, we developed a 26-item semi-structured interview protocol to explore interviewees’ perspectives of their experience with the Inclusive Innovation process. Specifically, the protocol contains questions that were intended to elucidate the extent to which factors such as student voice, context expertise, capacity-building, racial equity are central to the Inclusive Innovation process from the perspective of the interviewee. All Core team members were invited to participate in an interview; 18 were interviewed in spring 2022 (Exhibit 2). Interview respondents had participated in the Inclusive Innovation pilot projects for approximately 9 to 15 months.

## Exhibit 2. Number of Interview Respondents by Role Type

Role Type	Number of Interview Participants
District Leaders	2
Teachers	4
Community Members	6
Parents	2
Students	4

All current and former Core team members ( $N = 34$ ) were contacted via email by a Digital Promise researcher. If Core team members agreed to participate, an interview was scheduled to take place over Zoom. Before the interview began, the researcher explained that the participants' responses would remain confidential and that no data would be reported with any identifying indicators. Participants were asked for their consent to a recorded interview. All interviews took approximately one hour to complete. With the exception of one joint interview between 2 participants, all were individual interviews between Core team members and a Digital Promise researcher. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and participants were given a \$25 gift card in appreciation for their participation.

Recordings and transcribed files were stored in a secure Box.com folder and deleted from all other servers and computers. The Box.com folder is only accessible to the Digital Promise Inclusive Innovation research team. Each transcript was integrated into MaxQDA (analytic software) for analysis.

The research team coded transcripts and selected artifacts with primary codes representing the following key constructs: context expertise, student voice, racial equity, capacity building, and outcomes. Researchers identified subcodes for each key construct in a second round of analysis and analyzed coded passages for convergent themes and disconfirming evidence.

### Analytic Strategy

The data for this project were analyzed using a phronetic iterative approach to thematic analysis which allows the researcher to “alternate between considering existing theory and research questions on one hand, and emergent qualitative data on the other” (Tracy, 2018). Artifacts and outputs from the Inclusive Innovation work of two Community-District Core Teams, Reynoldsburg City School District and Bristol Township School District, are used as illustrative examples of themes related to centering racial equity in education R&D.



# What does Racial Equity in Education Mean to Stakeholders?

Throughout the course of the Inclusive Innovation process, various activities and interactions surfaced glimpses into Core team members’ working definitions of what it meant to center racial equity in the work. To clarify what it meant to the Core team members to center racial equity, we inquired about their descriptions racial equity in education. Their descriptions commonly included one or more of three key elements; racial equity was described as being a modern, intersectional, and social determinant issue (Exhibit 3).

**Exhibit 3. Core Team Members’ Working Definitions of Racial Equity in Education**

	District Leaders	Teachers	Community Members	Students
Modern	2		2	3
Intersectional		1	2	2
Social Determinant		1		1

*Note.* Not all Core team members who were interviewed provided a definition of racial equity in education.

Core team members described racial equity as being an issue that has modern relevance in education. This element of their working definition of racial equity comes with little surprise considering they all self-selected to participate in an equity-centered R&D process to solve current challenges for students historically and systematically excluded from opportunity. At times, Core team members illuminated their working definitions of racial equity in education by describing how inequity shows up. One student described racial equity in education as a modern issue by pointing to the ways it has surfaced in their educational experience. Specifically, they point to a lack of cultural relevance in the curricular and instructional materials students from historically and systematically excluded groups are asked to engage with as one way racial inequity currently manifests within education.

*Because a lot of what we talk about in school, a lot of the things I feel like we critique is just that we don’t really see ourselves in the things that we’re learning. It’s very, I think, [Euro]centric, I think it’s the term. It’s just basically American history that isn’t really relevant to us. So I think also relevancy then, is something that I feel like it’s also something really important when we’re talking about, I think, racial equity.*

This student provided insight into their understanding of racial equity in education by drawing on their own observations of how curricular and instructional materials align with the cultural capital of a specific group of students to the exclusion of others. This working definition aligns with scholarship about cultural mismatch in education (Tyler et al., 2010). Cultural mismatch describes the dissonance between the norms, values, and practices of a student’s home culture and those of the dominant cultural platform of schooling (i.e. White middle-class cultural norms and values). This mismatch creates an

undue burden for students of color as they try to decode culturally and contextually situated features of their school environment while also learning academic content. Cultural mismatch has been described as a key factor underlying the opportunity gap in achievement in education.

Zooming out from the ways that racial inequity is surfaced in everyday educational experiences, one district leader stated that “racial equity means that we acknowledge that inequity has been created by policy and practice and that we take steps to address this through policy, practice and stakeholder engagement.” This district stakeholder acknowledged the modern nature of issues of racial equity by describing how it may currently be solved for.

In addition to being modern, Core team members also described racial equity as an issue that intersects with other areas of inequality rooted in social positioning and identity. One student described how racial and economic inequality intersect by describing a casual observation made from their everyday activity:

*I just recently watched a video about how the whole rent crisis is disproportionately affecting African Americans and people who come from a disadvantaged background. So I think we really have to take that into effect when we're talking about it in education because of the things that are happening at home with the student is going to directly affect them in their schoolwork. Because if they don't have a place to study when they're at home, then they're not going to do as well on the test, so they're going to be held back and stuff. So I think we really have to look at the socioeconomic viewpoint as well...*

Similarly, one community member related the intersectional nature of racial equity in education to what they have commonly observed in their own profession by saying “I would say whether it's narcotics, crime, education or anything, the lower you are in your socioeconomic standing in the country, you're probably going to be limited by your resources and your access to stuff like that...” Both stakeholders described racial equity in education as an issue that intersects with other areas of life, particularly socioeconomic status. Their descriptions point to longstanding scholarship on intersectionality of identity and the effects of having multiple identities affected by systems of inequality (Crenshaw, 1989).

Finally, Core team members also described racial equity in education as an issue that can be a social determinant for some groups of students. For example, one teacher stated “Racial equity is making sure that everyone's needs are met, not equally, but specific needs, depending on a race as a whole...So someone from an African-American group may have one challenge, but then maybe someone from another group might have another challenge as a whole.” In addition, one student illustrated the social determinism of race by saying “Even [skin] color has a big change, or ethnicity has a big change in how we get taught.” Both Core team members' comments illustrate their understanding of the ways that race functions as a social position factor that determines much about a person's lived experience.

## How is Racial Equity Surfaced through the Inclusive Innovation Model: Process or Solution?

To our knowledge, there remains a lack of clarity amongst the field of what it means to center racial equity in education R&D. Prior scholarship provides insight into what it means to center equity broadly in research and development as separate fields. Still, the significance and meaning of integrating racial equity in an inclusive R&D process targeting the needs of historically and systematically excluded groups remains unclear. As a team, we have had many internal discussions about *where* we are prioritizing the centering all forms of equity—process or solution. Although we strive to maintain a pragmatic approach that emphasizes the value of centering equity in both, there are practical trade-offs that must be made to move projects along that at times tend to emphasize centering equity in terms of the impact of the solution more than the capacity for fostering equity gained through engagement in the Inclusive Innovation process.

For this project, the Digital Promise Inclusive Innovation team deliberated on objectives for centering racial equity by phase of the Inclusive Innovation process. In addition, the team identified several tasks of the Inclusive Innovation process that have the most potential to invite efforts to center racial equity for Core team members. Exhibit 4 identifies opportunities in each phase of the Inclusive Innovation model to center equity with a specific focus on racial equity for the purpose of this project.

#### Exhibit 4. Opportunities to Center Equity by Inclusive Innovation Phase

Phase	Opportunities to Center Equity	Session Task
Connect and Commit	Establish a common understanding of the historical landscape of education, including racial and other forms of inequity, and a shared commitment to racial equity among a trusted team of stakeholders that include those from HSE racial groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a Community-District Core Team that includes members of HSE racial groups</li> <li>Read about pivotal moments in educational history</li> <li>Develop a Community-District Core Team vision statement that acknowledges racial equity</li> <li>Map existing assets and innovations within the community that address the problem</li> </ul>
Inquire and Investigate	Arrive at a priority problem statement and outcomes that center the assets and needs of HSE groups, especially at the intersection of race and poverty, using culturally responsive research methods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop user personas that are inclusive of students and teachers from HSE racial groups</li> <li>Use culturally responsive research methods to investigate the problem</li> <li>Review existing literature about how students and teachers from HSE groups experience the problem</li> <li>Name race and poverty as central factors in the problem statement</li> </ul>
Design and Develop	Design solutions that enhance educational experiences of students from HSE groups <i>with</i> members of HSE groups representing race and poverty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ideate solutions that are responsive to the needs of students and teachers from HSE groups</li> <li>Stretch solutions until they show promise for impacting racial and socioeconomic equity</li> <li>Define solution components that are responsive to the needs of students and teachers from HSE groups</li> </ul>
Implement and Iterate	Assess solutions based on how well they enhance educational experiences of HSE students and then further refine for effectiveness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop progress indicators that track progress of desired outcomes for HSE students and teachers</li> <li>Use culturally-responsive research methods to evaluate implementation and effectiveness</li> <li>Make data-driven solution improvements to enhance effectiveness of the solution for HSE students and teachers</li> </ul>
Sustain and Scale	Extend the solution to students from HSE groups in other schools/districts because the solution is sustainable without the support of Digital Promise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop pathways for the solution to continue to support HSE students and teachers in the absence of Digital Promise's support</li> <li>Prioritize scaling to districts in need of support for HSE students</li> </ul>

In our own commitment to equity we continually strive to align our priorities with those of the districts and communities we serve. To help us better understand their perspectives, we asked Community-District Core Team members what it meant to them to center racial equity in Inclusive Innovation. Their responses described the racial equity fostered by the process of Inclusive Innovation as well as racial equity fostered by the impact of the equity-centered solution.

## Process

Across all four districts, Core team members described racial equity being surfaced through Core team discussions, the facilitation of session tasks and activities, and through the lived experience or [context expertise](#) of Core team members.

When describing racial equity as being part of the Inclusive Innovation process, Core team members pointed to discussions as a time and space for them to interrogate their own assumptions and consider the needs of students and teachers from multiple historically and systematically excluded racial groups. One student stated:

*...because I remember we were talking about how—because we’re a huge Hispanic community, so how everyone would feel, how people coming in were thinking, “Would they feel comfortable with this?” You know what I mean? We were talking about Muslim people, we were talking about Blacks, we were talking about white, Mexican, everything. We were just like, “How would everyone feel about this? Would everyone agree with this?” And, of course, not everyone is always going to agree with stuff, but you always want to get the most percentage that you can. -Student*

Discussion time was built into most of the protocols Digital Promise used to facilitate the Inclusive Innovation process (Exhibit 5). Oftentimes, discussions were preceded by thought-provoking engagement with relevant concepts. For example, in the first phase of the Inclusive Innovation process across all four districts, Core team members were tasked with reading about pivotal moments for equity in education history for various historically and systematically excluded learners. Following the reading, the Core teams used various methods to share learnings with each other.

### Exhibit 5. Sample Discussion Questions Used in Inclusive Innovation

Phase	Sample Session Tasks	Sample Discussion Questions
Connect and Commit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Review of literature about pivotal moments for equity in education</li><li>● Develop Core team vision statement</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● How will equity be centered in the way our team works together?</li><li>● What specific actions or approaches can we take to ensure that equity is prioritized?</li></ul>
Inquire and Investigate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Develop user personas</li><li>● Review relevant literature</li><li>● Make inferences from data collected about the challenge area</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● What information is new to you and/or pushes you to consider a perspective that you had not considered?</li></ul>

Discussion is important for **building capacity** (e.g. mindsets, knowledge, skills etc.) for racial equity broadly. Discussions provide space for ideas and beliefs to be challenged while also gaining exposure to alternative perspectives. When discussion time is included throughout Inclusive Innovation, it may also encourage the centering of racial equity.

The second way that Core team members described racial equity being surfaced in the Inclusive Innovation process is in the facilitation of session activities co-led by Digital Promise and Community-District Co-Leads. Co-Leads were invited to shape the scope and direction of session activities based on a draft agenda provided by Digital Promise. Co-Leads were given full discretion to eliminate, alter, or add to the agenda to ensure the flow of activities met the needs of their context/stakeholders. This work of the Co-Leads may have been less clear to the other Core team members, hence the credit of facilitating sessions was attributed to the Digital Promise team.

One community member simply stated that there was a “very good balance in the way things were introduced and discussed” when asked how racial equity was surfaced in the Inclusive Innovation process. A student provided a bit more context by saying:

*It was all of you guys, honestly, like Digital Promise itself. We were already directed toward it, but you all really made it happen. You pushed the idea that—you were always like, “What about how they would feel?” It was just like that missing puzzle piece that we needed. It was perfect [laughter] because we were already thinking about that but you guys really pushed it to the max, and I loved it.*

As a final important factor, some Core team members served as informal advocates for racial equity by sharing their own experiences, reminding other Core team members to consider the needs and realities of HSE racial groups, and/or keeping the experiences of those furthest from opportunity in mind when engaging in the process of Inclusive Innovation.

In pilot project, for example, as Core team members were establishing working relationships and a shared commitment to equity, they invited a prominent community member, a former teacher, to engage in a discussion with them about leading effective, safe, and healthy racial discourse. In this discussion, Core team members shared their own experiences and perspectives in dialogue with the community member. One adult Core team member in particular shared a personal reflection on their past experience navigating racism as a student and why they were engaged in the project.

*I knew everything about the dominant culture, but the dominant culture didn't know anything about me. My whole being was invisible. I don't want our students to feel invisible in the classroom until they go to an HBCU. I don't want our little Black boys and girls, our children of color, to feel like they aren't King of the World.*

By sharing their experience and clarifying their intentions during the session, they gained a platform within the team to advocate for racial equity. When asked if there was anyone or anything that helped elevate racial equity in the Inclusive Innovation process, one student credited the whole team, but specifically named that community member. They said:

*...we had people from different viewpoints, obviously... I think that we had the adults who were obviously from those context experience areas and stuff. Like [Community Member], obviously. And with all of us together, we were able to keep racial equity in mind.*

To demonstrate racial equity fostered through the Inclusive Innovation process, Exhibit 3 provides illustrative examples, displaying the session tasks most primed to center racial equity (as identified by Digital Promise's Inclusive Innovation team; see Exhibit 2) that each district engaged in, as well as the amount of planned discussion time in the first two phases of their Inclusive Innovation projects, their racial equity advocates and the problem statement that they constructed to guide design and development of the solution.

It should be noted that a number of Core team members that we interviewed agreed that racial equity was centered in Inclusive Innovation, but described how it was centered in non-specific terms. This may be, in part, because the extent to which race was considered a central factor to the challenge area varied by district. In two of our more racially homogenous districts, we found more difficulty in centering racial equity in Inclusive Innovation. In these districts, concern for equity centered on other systems of inequality such as linguistic and economic oppression. For Core team members in these districts, it may have been difficult to articulate how racial equity was centered because it was not a standalone consideration in how they contextualized their challenge area. Perhaps, in districts that are more racially homogenous, Core teams may take on a nuanced intersectional approach to conceptualizing racial equity such that racialization is a common experience and how it manifests depends on other identity markers.

*But when I think about the conversations that we had, I think we talked more about the equities of our students, tied more to what they have, the households they're coming from. I don't know that we always tied it to their actual culture and that background. So I don't think that we didn't think about it. Just sometimes I think we went through the holistic [view] of all of our kids rather than the larger group [majority Latinx] of our kids, so. -District Leader*

## Solution

We also inquired about Core team members' perceptions of the *value* of centering racial equity in Inclusive Innovation. While a couple of respondents described empowering students with the pathways to express their voice and showing the district the importance of including student voice in decision-making, the majority of Core team member responses described the primary benefit as creating effective solutions that meet the needs of students.

R&D models that invite the participation of stakeholders (e.g. Inclusive Innovation) are predicated on the notion that stakeholder input increases the net value of the solution's impact. The idea is that when those who are most affected by a challenge are at the R&D table, they're able to share insights from their lived experience with the challenge that then increases the cultural and contextual relevance of

the solution and its effectiveness. This same theoretical assertion was reflected in how Core team members articulated the value of centering racial equity in Inclusive Innovation. That is, centering racial equity through Inclusive Innovation allows for the design and development of a solution that effectively addresses the challenge. As one student simply stated, “so by centering racial equity, we were centering solving the whole problem; not just a portion of it.”

As described by Core team members, another way racial equity surfaced through Inclusive Innovation was in the potential for implementation to be more effective. One student said, “once it is implemented into the classroom, it’ll be easier for teachers to teach it and for students to understand and be comfortable with the topic.” Certainly, Core team members have a vested interest in doing the due diligence to ensure the solutions they develop are useful for their district and community.

Core team members’ descriptions of the benefits of centering racial equity in Inclusive Innovation being effective solution development and implementation are consistent with how we at Digital Promise, and the equity-centered R&D field writ large, have echoed messaging about the value of co-researching and co-designing with stakeholders. Equity-centered participatory education R&D models such as Inclusive Innovation require significant resources that are not usually afforded within traditional education R&D structures. Models like Inclusive Innovation require flexibility from partners and funders as the timeline, shape, and scope of the projects are constantly in flux with the needs of the benefitting partner and their contextual demands. Interest convergence among stakeholders in equity-centered R&D then is often bridged through the bottom line of R&D—effective solutions. Though, this strategy for stakeholder buy-in can be particularly problematic when solutions are predicated on ameliorating equity-based issues, such as racial inequity. That is, when the solution does not yield desired results (i.e. seemingly disproves the working theory of increased solution effectiveness when designing with stakeholders), the value of the process is undermined.

## Conclusion and Future Directions

The Center for Inclusive Innovation at Digital Promise is committed to a broad focus on equity for historically and systematically excluded students and communities that includes students of color, students experiencing poverty, multilingual learners and students with learning differences. With each project, topic area and district contextual factors drive our focus on particular systems of inequality. This report highlighted how racial equity was surfaced in both the process of Inclusive Innovation and the design and development of the solution, from the perspective of Core team members.

In alignment with much of the broader field, Core team members defined racial equity in education as being a current issue that impacts many aspects of a person’s lived experience and has implications for their life trajectory. The majority of the Core team members we interviewed thought achieving racial equity through Inclusive Innovation two ways: within the process and the solution. Core team members identified facilitation of session tasks, team discussion time and Core Team members that served as informal racial equity advocates as the three primary ways the Inclusive Innovation process surfaced racial equity. It is important to note that while these three aspects of Inclusive Innovation emerged as particularly helpful in centering racial equity in the process, these practices also lend themselves to how



we center other areas of inequity Inclusive Innovation. The Center for Inclusive Innovation will continue to intentionally bolster these aspects of our equity-centered R&D process, Inclusive Innovation.

When Core team members situated racial equity in the solution, it was described in terms of impact of the solution and effectiveness of implementation. Without a doubt, it is important to ensure that teams design and develop solutions that are intended to narrow the opportunity gap for students from historically and systematically excluded groups. As a Center for Inclusive Innovation team, it is important for us to reflect on how we convey the benefits of Inclusive Innovation. Solutions developed through our equity-centered R&D process may mitigate targeted local equity challenges, but it is unlikely that solutions developed from one project will completely “fix” broken systems of inequality that produce educational disparities. There is still much work to be done in the journey toward complete system transformation and we are committed to enduring the road ahead.

The learnings that emerged from this study will help us understand how, in practical terms, to center the areas of inequity most meaningful to a given Core team and their project. The findings also underscore the importance of a pragmatic approach to Inclusive Innovation that emphasizes equity in the process *and* solution. That is, in the future we may strive to convey the importance of Inclusive Innovation as both a capacity building process and model for designing solutions that positively impact students from historically and systematically excluded communities. This study is part of a series of studies investigating Inclusive Innovation. As we move forward, we will continue to examine how other areas of equity are surfaced through Inclusive Innovation.

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