# **Showcasing How Districts and Communities are Transforming Education** Digital Promise

# **Building Student-Led Professional Development to Address Mental Health and Racial Trauma**



Center for

Inclusive Innovation

District Name

Bristol Township School District

District City, State Superintendent Levittown, PA Michael Nitti

"I've been a teacher for 27 years. I've probably been to over 100 workshops/professional developments. Today's was by far the most rewarding and beneficial one I've ever been to. I literally had goosebumps listening to our amazing students' stories about the negative experiences they've endured. That was no easy undertaking, and they did a fantastic job reflecting on those unfortunate moments." Teacher who attended PD

# **Connect And Commit**

Building a Diverse Team and Identifying the Challenge

#### **Challenge Statement**

The Bristol Township School District community of students, staff, and parents need intentional opportunities to discuss, learn about, share and address issues surrounding race in order to better support the mental health of students negatively impacted by experiences and normalization of racism and the lack of its acknowledgement.

### Solution Concept

The co-leads recruited a team of students, educators, parents, and community leaders representing a variety of perspectives from the district and community. As a first step in the

#### **Implement And Sustain Students Training Teachers**

# Supporting The Team

Students prepared for their work through a series of training and design sessions that helped them gain a better understanding of the impact of racism on mental health. The training included opportunities for self-reflection and healing and prepared students to facilitate conversations with teachers about the impact racism has on student mental health. Students also partnered with the community members, who were familiar with mental health supports, to support them throughout the work. Finally, the students co-designed and facilitated teacher training, making changes with each iteration to improve their facilitation.



#### Sustaining The Work

Beyond the project's end, the community district team continued to offer the student-led professional development and are planning on continuing the Student

Leadership Team during the coming school year. There are also plans to continue to offer the student-led professional development for teachers.

process, the team created a vision to answe the guestion, "What would the school and community look and feel like if mental

- health and racial trauma were addressed?" Students would have voice & choice
- in their education Cultural responsiveness in curriculum and climate
- Increased sense of belonging and connection
- Connected family and school relationships
- Students have access to guality professional services

# Understanding The Challenge

**Inquire And Investigate** 

The team started exploring the challenge by hypothesizing and investigating root causes of students' increased mental health challenges and decrease in engagement in the district. To test their hypotheses, team members conducted focus groups with key community members and designed a survey for students to take. Participants were eager to have a space to discuss their experiences in school and how it impacts their mental health. Students spoke with current students and alumni, teachers spoke with colleagues, and parents and community members spoke with peers about their experiences.

Conducting Research to Understand the Root Causes of the the Impact of Racial Trauma on Students

#### **Identifying Goals And Outcomes**

The team created three outcomes for their design:

- 1. Students of color who have experienced racism have access and awareness of a resource (person or process) to address the mental health impacts of racism
- 2. Students of color who have experienced racism have the knowledge and training to advocate for themselves and others against racism
- 3. The community (school and beyond) is educated on the history and impacts of racism and effectively advocates against racism

**Design And Develop Creating Solutions to Address the Challenge** 

### **Creating Ideas**

Students, teachers, community members, and staff members ideated and created four different solution ideas that addressed their priority problem. The ideas included:

- Student-Led Peer Learning
- Student-Led Professional Learning
- Accessing Mental Health Resources through an App
- Equity Advisory Parents and Students

To narrow down these ideas, the team hosted six focus groups with over 46 participants.

# **Designing a Solution**

Student-led professional development for educators on mental health and racial trauma, supported by community mentors. The team will create professional development opportunities



"It was very powerful to hear of cases of racial trauma that students experienced in school. It helped bring this perspective to reality." Teacher who attended PD

for teachers, led by students, that include sharing personal experiences with racism in schools and its impact on their mental health. These training sessions will be informed by best practices, research, and professional expertise. The training will include scenarios for role playing as well as resources on how to respond. It will include a focus on cultural pride and affirmation of cultural identities of families through the curriculum.

#### digitalpromise.org/inclusive-innovation