2022

Greater Rochester Antiracist Education Conference

Conference Evaluation Report

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Preferred Citation

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Introduction

Overview

The inaugural **2022 Greater Rochester Antiracist Conference** was held virtually on Saturday, March 12, 2022, from 9am until 3pm. More than 600 people attended the event. The conference included presentations and speakers covering a broad variety of topics related to antiracist education. In total, there were two keynote speakers, a panel, a documentary, and **18** break out session workshops **during** the six-hour conference.

The conference was a community effort coordinated and led by the educators of the Antiracist Curriculum Project generously hosted by the PathStone Corporation, and the Center for Urban Education Success. The conference was supported by area Schools of Education, including SUNY Brockport School of Education, Health and Human Services; Nazareth College, School of Education; SUNY Geneseo, Ella Cline Shear School of Education; Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education, St. John Fisher College; and University of Rochester, Warner School of Education.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the overall evaluation was to determine whether the conference topics were relevant to the attendees, whether and what attendees learned, and whether and what intended actions attendees plan to take as a result of attending the conference. To this extent, the evaluation questions were as follows:

- How relevant were the conference activities to participants?
- What impact did the conference have on participants' learning?
- What do participants intend to do to promote antiracism as a result of attending this conference?

Intended Use of Evaluation Report & Audience

The primary purpose of this report is to use as reflective practice and feedback tool for the conference organizers. In line with promoting transparency, this report will be made publicly available. Findings will be shared with the Antiracist Curriculum Project Advisory Board, the Center for Education Success Advocacy Council, and the generous funders and sponsors.

Structure of the Report

The report has three parts: The first part includes the findings from the participant questionnaire, including feedback on the keynote address, the featured speaker address, and the breakout sessions followed by the respondents' demographic information. The second part discusses implications of the evaluation findings. The third part includes the evaluation framework, methodology, and data collection instrument.

Conference Evaluation

To evaluate the perception of the conference, a written questionnaire was sent out to the conference registrants. Completed questionnaires were collected and analyzed in collaboration by the Center for Professional Development and Education Reform and the Center for Urban Education Success at the Warner School of Education. Of the attendees, 223 individuals responded to the questionnaire for a response rate of 37.2%.

Findings from the analysis suggest that the conference was highly successful; most respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with the keynote speakers, breakout sessions, and panel. Open ended questions asked participants to share what they found most valuable about the conference, what they think are the greatest educational needs to create a more just, equitable, and antiracist education in our region, and what participants will commit to do to advocate for, and create a more just, equitable, and antiracist education in our region.

Keynote Address: Dr. Bettina Love

The Keynote Speaker for the conference was [Dr. Bettina Love](#), an award-winning author and the Athletic Association Endowed Professor at the University of Georgia.

Of the 228 respondents, 4 did not respond, and 11 indicated they did not attend the keynote speaker. One hundred percent of those who responded and attended indicated they were satisfied (9.4%) or very satisfied (90.6%) with the keynote address.
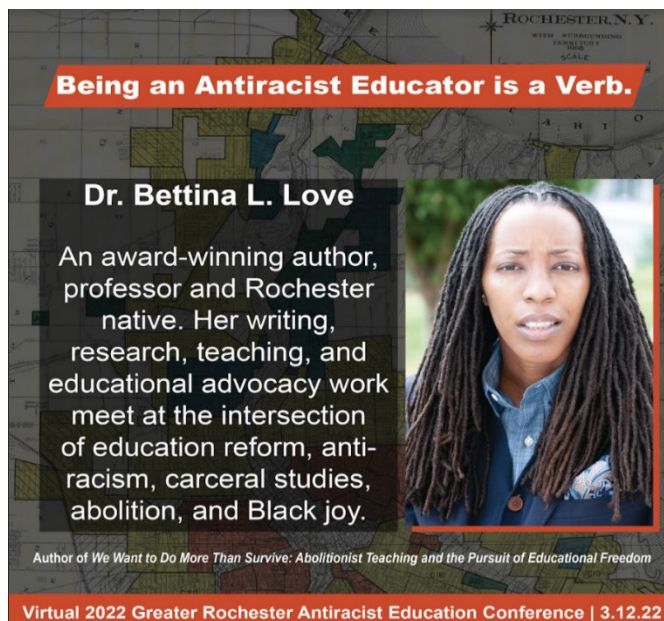
Relevance

All indicated the keynote address was relevant to them in relation to their daily thinking

- 89.6% indicated to a great extent
- 9.9% to some extent
- .5% to a lesser extent
- 0% indicated not at all

New Learning

All indicated they learned something new through this keynote address

- 74% indicated to a great extent
- 24% to some extent
- 2% to a lesser extent
- 0% indicated not at all

Intended Action

All indicated they will do something differently based on their learning

- 68% indicated to a great extent
- 29% to some extent
- 2% to a lesser extent
- 0% not at all

Figure 1 Keynote Address

Featured Speaker Address: Decoteau Irby
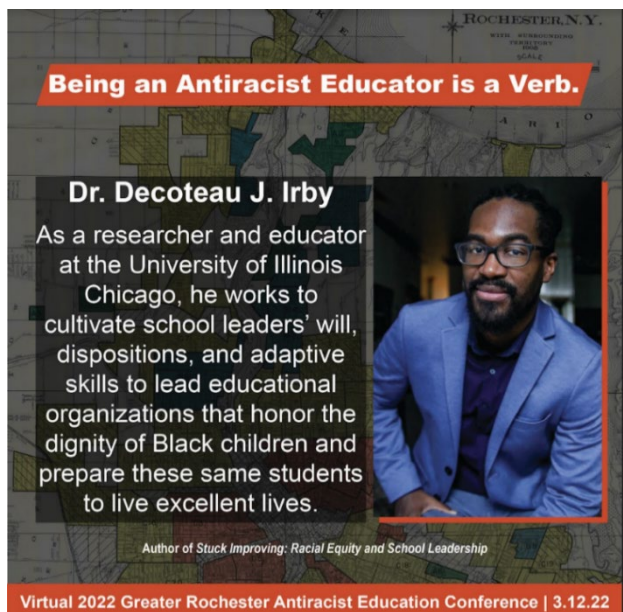
The afternoon Featured Speaker was Dr. Decoteau Irby, author of Stuck Improving: Racial Equity and School Leadership and Associate Professor at the University of Illinois Chicago.

Of the 228 respondents, 10 did not respond, and 31 indicated they did not attend the featured speaker event. 99.5% of those who responded and attended indicated they were satisfied (18.7%) or very satisfied (80.7%) with the featured speaker address.

Relevance

All indicated the speaker address was relevant to them in relation to their daily thinking

- 85.4% indicated to a great extent
- 14% to some extent
- .5% to a lesser extent
- 0% indicated not at all

New Learning

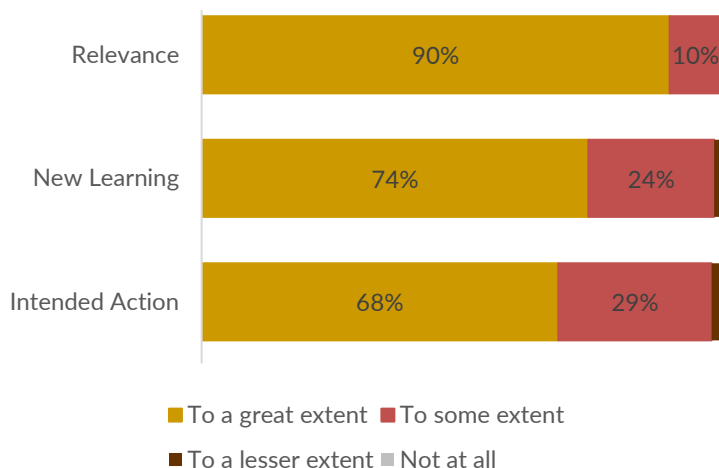All indicated they learned something new through this featured speaker address

- 84.7% indicated to a great extent
- 17.7% to some extent
- .5% to a lesser extent
- 0% indicated not at all

Intended Action

All indicated they will do something differently based on their learning

- 75% indicated to a great extent
- 23% to some extent
- 2% to a lesser extent
- 0% not at all

Figure 2 Featured Speaker Address
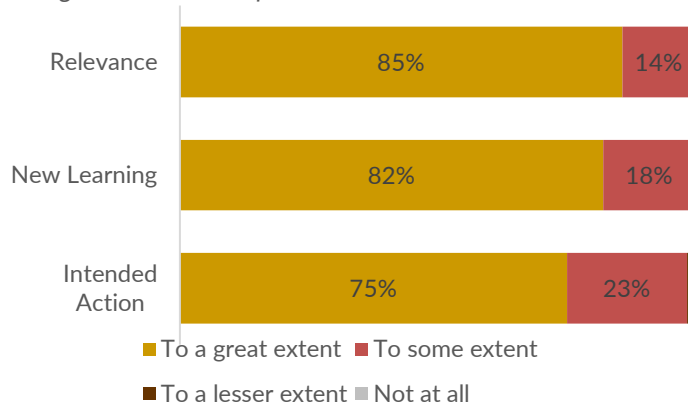
AM Breakout Sessions

There were eight breakout sessions in the morning, and ten breakout sessions in the afternoon.

The morning breakout sessions included:

- Antiracist Curriculum Project: Enslavement & Resistance in NYS (Dr. Crystal Simmons & Greg Ahlquist)

- Courageous Conversations about Race & Culture (Dr. Sumara Case & Brandin Jones)

- Creating LGBTQ+ Inclusive Spaces (Jeanette Adams-Price)

- Elevated Educator- Culturally Responsive Educational Resources (Jennifer Rees)

- Exclusionary Zoning and Housing Justice Today (Evon Mahesh & Annie Rosenow)

- History of Segregation in Rochester (Justin Murphy & Henry Badron-Morales)

- Teaching for Black Lives (Dr. Susan Sturm & Kai Strange)

- What is Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (Shawnna Sweet)

Attendance distribution varied but all were well attended. See Appendix A for Breakout Session Attendance by Respondents.

Figure3 AM Breakout Sessions
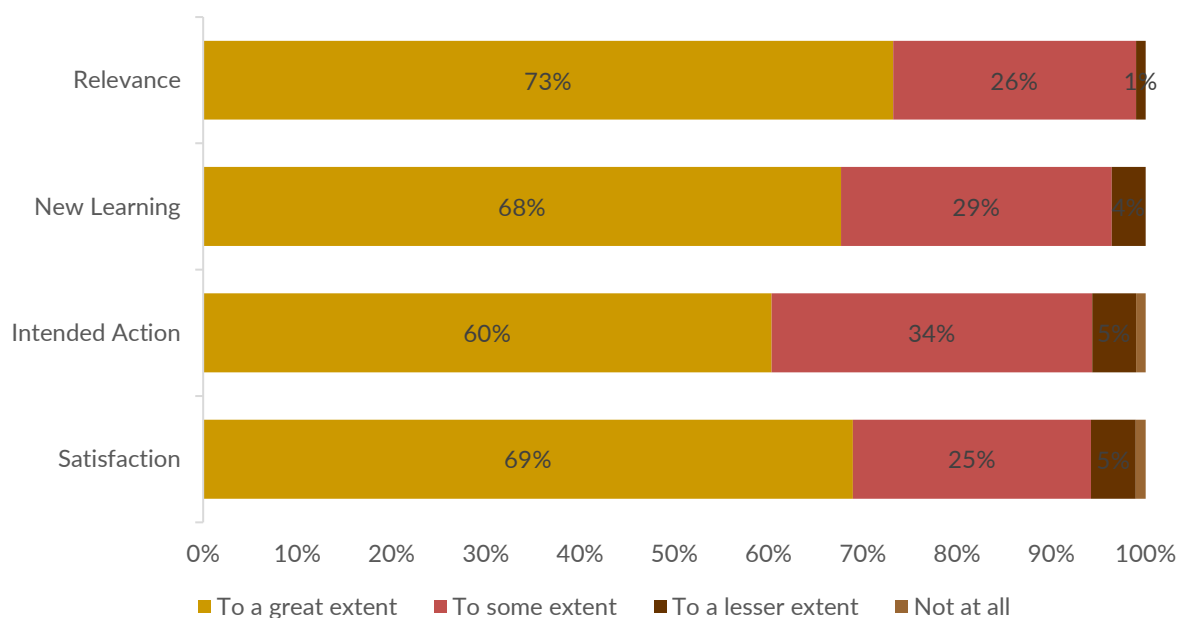
Relevance

All indicated the topic in their breakout session was relevant to them in relation to their daily thinking

- 73% indicated to a great extent
- 26% to some extent
- 1% to a lesser extent
- 0% indicated not at all

New Learning

All indicated they learned something new through this keynote address

- 68% indicated to a great extent
- 29% to some extent
- 4% to a lesser extent
- 0% indicated not at all

Intended Action

Most indicated they will do something differently based on their learning

- 60% indicated to a great extent
- 34% to some extent
- 5% to a lesser extent
- 1% not at all

Satisfaction

99% of the respondents indicated they were satisfied with the AM breakout sessions

- 69% indicated to a great extent
- 25% indicated to some extent
- 5% indicated to a lesser extent
- 1% indicated not at all

"SYSTEM CHANGE CANNOT HAPPEN IF WE ARE NOT WILLING TO FIGHT THE UNDERLYING PROBLEM THAT CREATED THE PROBLEM IN THE FIRST PLACE."

PM Breakout Sessions

- Activism in the Suburbs: Black in the Burbs (Tiffany Porter, Jordin Page)
- Antiracist Approach to Young Adult Literature (Dr. Cody Miller, Leah Araya)
- Antiracist Curriculum Project: Latinx Civil Rights in Rochester (Kimberly Brown, Kesha James)
- Black Radio Rochester (Darien Lamen, Rashida Washington, Paris Horman, De'Vonne Warren, Joan Coles Howard)
- Connecting Our Past to Our Present: Race, Class & Inequities (Dr. Tanya Wilson-Thevansan)
- Our Voices Project (Deborah Alvarez, Tyleea K. Panye-Harley, Justin Connoer, Noah Totter, Courtney Shouse)
- SNCC Digital Gateway: Learn from the Past, Organize the Future (Dr. Emile Crosby)
- Take Home: A Guide to Exploring Your Family's Housing Experience (Ray Ray Mitrano, Phil Herford)
- Teen Empowerment Youth Talkback on Black Joy as Resistance (Mekko Mongeon)
- Time to De-Center Whiteness (Regents Ruth Turner)

A total of 176 respondents answered the question about the PM Breakout Sessions.

	To a great extent	To some extent	To a lesser extent	Not at all
Relevance	78%	19%	19%	
New Learning	65%	25%	10%	
Intended Action	62%	30%	8%	
Satisfaction	71%	22%	7%	

Relevance

All indicated the topic in their breakout session was relevant to them in relation to their daily thinking

- 78% indicated to a great extent
- 19% to some extent
- 19% to a lesser extent
- 0% indicated not at all

New Learning

All indicated they learned something new through this keynote address

- 65% indicated to a great extent
- 25% to some extent
- 10% to a lesser extent
- 0% indicated not at all

Intended Action

All indicated they will do something differently based on their learning

- 62% indicated to a great extent
- 30% to some extent
- 8% to a lesser extent
- 0% not at all

Satisfaction

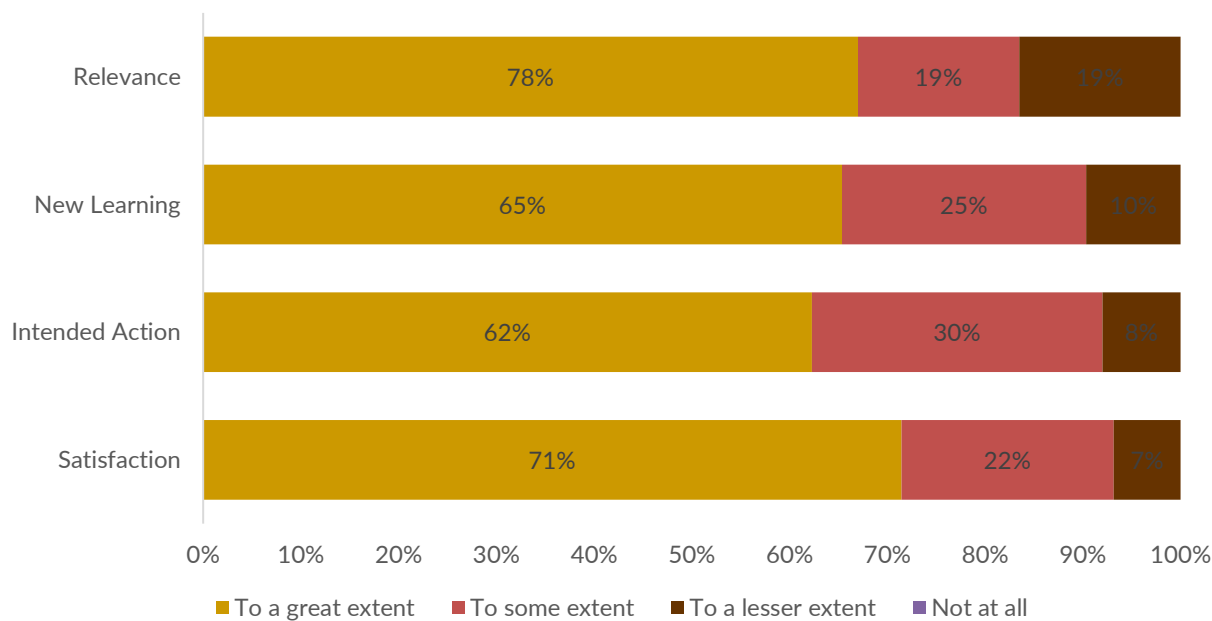100% of the respondents indicated they were satisfied with the PM breakout sessions

- 71% indicated to a great extent
- 22% indicated to some extent
- 7% indicated to a lesser extent
- 0% indicated they were not at all satisfied

"The most valuable thing I learned was when the speaker said when a student comes out to you, your response is crucial to their well-being. I will never forget that."

Learnings from the Conference

Respondents described increased awareness, increased knowledge, increased skills, and a call to action when talking about the impact the conference had on them. Comments demonstrated the conference impacted and reinforced individuals' thinking around how to support students through intentional actions, and feedback from the survey also showed the conference impacted attendees' affective domains- the domain that includes the feelings, emotions, and attitudes of individuals.

Supporting Students

- "I learned that it is crucial to create an environment where students can state their needs and talk about race and issues out loud together. The environment must feel inviting and accepting"
- "I have learned that we as educators need to stay educated in order to educate our students. We have to teach outside the box and show our students that there is so much they can do and learn to advance their own knowledge of what is their rights in education."
- "The most valuable thing I learned was when the speaker said when a student comes out to you, your response is crucial to their well-being. I will never forget that."
- "Giving time to young people to express what's true in their lives is the most important work"

Self-Awareness & Reflection

- "The session reaffirmed the need to be cognizant of times when whiteness is at the center and how that can affect non-white students."
- "I learned about the power of words. When speaking with a student, the words I use are crucial to their well-being. I must consider connotations of those words and how my voice can either uplift or cause trauma. It is important to be mindful of this."
- "Thank you. The conference was educational and has me self-reflecting on current practices."

Practical Skills & Applicability

- "Some excellent SEL activities and instructional strategies that are very helpful when tackling difficult topics."

- "I really like all the materials provided. We are in the middle of a diversity audit for our library. Using the info on examining my "space" helped me realize that I need to update my décor to reflection our mission."
- "I'm going to plan for how to integrate this 5th grade unit into my own Puerto Rican history course at [redacted], especially for my students who are future elementary teachers.

Importance Representation, Black Joy, & Black Excellence

- "The project is sheer genius. Any work that elevates Black student knowledge of themselves and our ancestors, and more true American History."
- "Examples of ways Latinx individuals resist/have resisted marginalization in the ROC."
- "It was incredible to hear the different perspectives from all the students. I was extremely inspired by the powerful poem that Sarah wrote. I also resonated deeply with the message that Black Joy must be included in history curriculums; although there has been extreme suffering and trauma, Black and Brown people are amazing and resilient in practicing Black Joy, from church to singing and dancing to poetry to spoken word to telling oral histories. As tell stories of struggle, we must also incorporate stories of Black Joy".

> **"I also resonated deeply with the message that Black Joy must be included in history curricula."**

Courageous Culture

- "A courageous culture promotes kindness and humility."
- "We can use Courageously Confrontational Culture to directly address conflict with conversation, practices, and policies, and make CCC an institutional norm."
- "Courage and confrontation are needed for positive change. The district & school community needs to get on board."

Commitment from Conference Participants

Recognizing the importance of action, we asked conference participants what they would be willing to commit to do, and to advocate for, to create a more just, equitable and anti-racist education in our region.

Commitments from participants were analyzed using a continuum framework that includes increased awareness (internal), individual acts (externalized), to spheres of influence, classroom level commitments, to structural and system changes.

Learning & Awareness	Individual Acts	Spheres of Influence	Classrooms	Structural Systemic
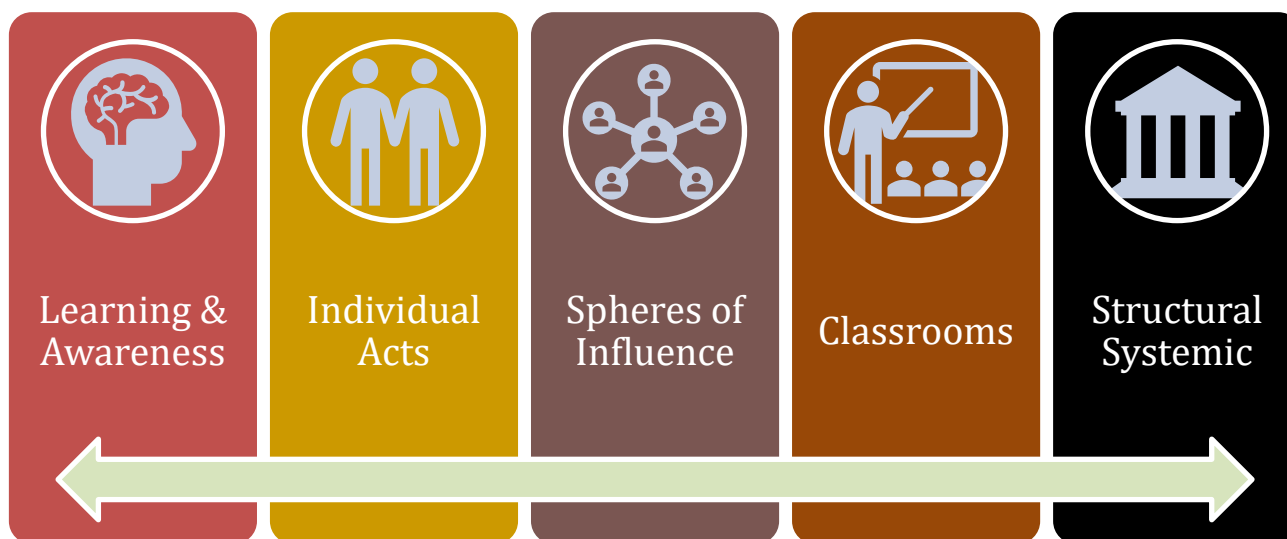
Learning & Awareness

More than half of the participants indicated they would at least commit to continuing to learn and educate oneself on issues around antiracism through listening, reading, participating in professional development opportunities and community lectures. As learning to be an antiracist educator or leader is a lifelong endeavor, this commitment is an integral part of building our capacity in this region.

Individual Acts

Individual acts were externalized general commitments. Examples of these individual acts include speaking up, share what they learned in the conference with their family and friends, have hard conversations, continue to challenge myself and those around me.

Spheres of Influence & Classroom

What differentiates intended commitments in spheres of influence from individual acts is that responses identified specific formal and informal spheres of influences, e.g. , educate fellow board members community organizations, church, PTSA, book study groups. 75% of respondents identified using their sphere of influence to engage in courageous confrontations, facilitate dialogue around antiracism. Of the teachers who participated, 88% indicated they would commit to making changes in the classroom-auditing instructional materials, intentionally collecting and curating materials that are inclusive and have strength-based representation, to adopting or adapting the Antiracist Curriculum Project modules.

Structural & Systemic Commitments

Over a third (36%) of the respondents identified commitments that speak to addressing structural and systemic inequities. For this analysis, structural and systemic commitments included advocacy for changes in policy or structures that were district-wide or systemic. These examples included begin making plans for bilingual student affinity group, building an equity action plan, advocate to include more identity work and incorporate social emotional learning and social justice standards, critically examine assessment practices, support district efforts in embedding antiracism in schools, strengthen teacher/educator pipeline, embed into teacher preparation programs, build equity into strategic plan, demand changes to build an antiracist and culturally responsive culture, review code of conduct, use equity as a lens for all decisions we make in our work and policy, provide anti-racism professional learning in district, review and critically examine district hiring practices.

Participant Information

Participant information is derived from those who completed the conference questionnaire and represents 37.2% of the total attendees (n=206).

Participants were asked about their roles, their primary setting, race/ethnicity, age range, and zip code.

Roles

The goal of the conference was to bring together the community to engage in conversation and call to action and to this extent, the hope was to bring together multiple constituents representing different sectors of the education landscape.

Figure 5 Participant Roles
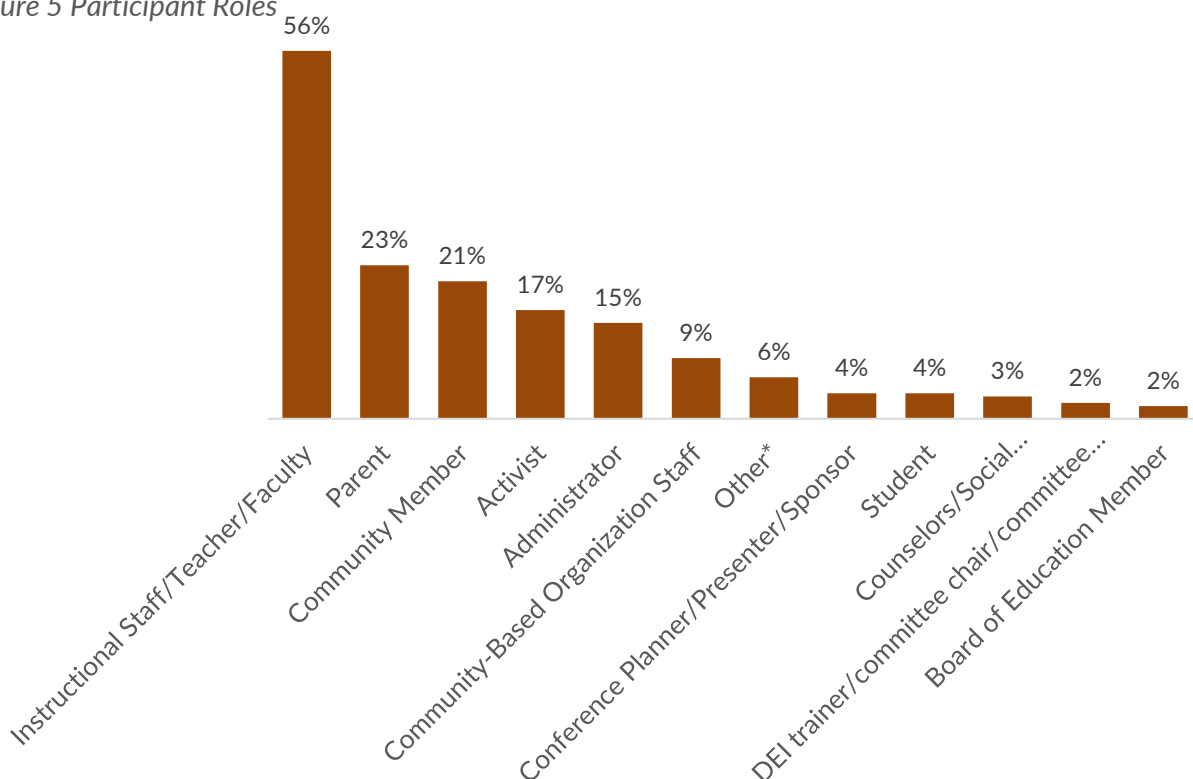
The majority of the participants identified themselves as a teacher, faculty, or instructional staff (55%). At least a fifth of the participants identified as Parents (23%) and/or Community members (21%). Sixteen percent identified as activist, and 15% identified as administrators. Students who responded represented 4%, and 4% of the respondents were either conference sponsors, conference planning committee member,

or conference workshop presenter, panelist, or speaker. Several Board of Education members were also present (2%). There were at least 13% of respondents who identified as other, of which 4% represented psychologist, social worker, therapist, or school counselors. 2% represented individuals in formal Anti-racist and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion roles including Anti-racist and DEI trainers, DEI committee chairs, coordinator, and members. The conference also drew small business owners, financial supporters of antiracist work, attorneys, librarians, retired educators, curriculum developers, staff development trainers, and educational consultants.

Primary Setting

Many participants indicated PK-12 school settings as their primary setting, and this included those who are working in central school districts and Boards of Education. Elementary School had the most representation (39%), followed by secondary school (36%). Those who work with all K-12 levels were counted in both (elementary and secondary schools). About a fifth of the participants indicated post-secondary education settings (20%), and this included 11 % at the college/undergraduate level and 9% at the graduate level. Community organizations (16%) included non-profit organizations and religious organizations. Other settings included local businesses, law offices, government & health care industry.

Figure 6 Primary Settings
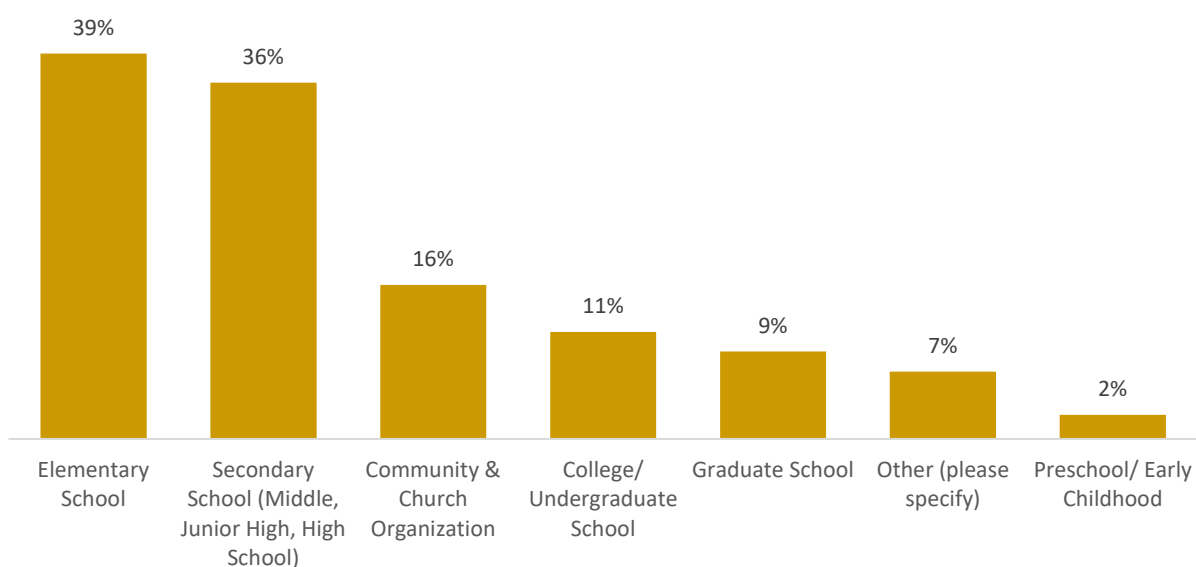
Racial & Ethnic Identification

Participants were asked about their race and ethnicity as the conference aimed to have racially diverse participation.[1]

Ethnicity

- 8.4% identified as Hispanic (91.6% left this blank)

  (Of those who identified as Hispanic, all identified as non-White)

Race

- 1% identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native
- 2.5% identified as Asian or Pacific Islander
- 20.7% identified as Black or African American
- 68% identified as White or Caucasian
- 4.4% identified as Other
  - The majority of those who checked Other also checked White/Caucasian with additional self-identifiers including (Jewish, Naturalized Citizen, 1st Generation American).
- 2% identified as Multi-Racial

Figure 7: Racial and Ethnic Identities (Conference Attendees & Regional)

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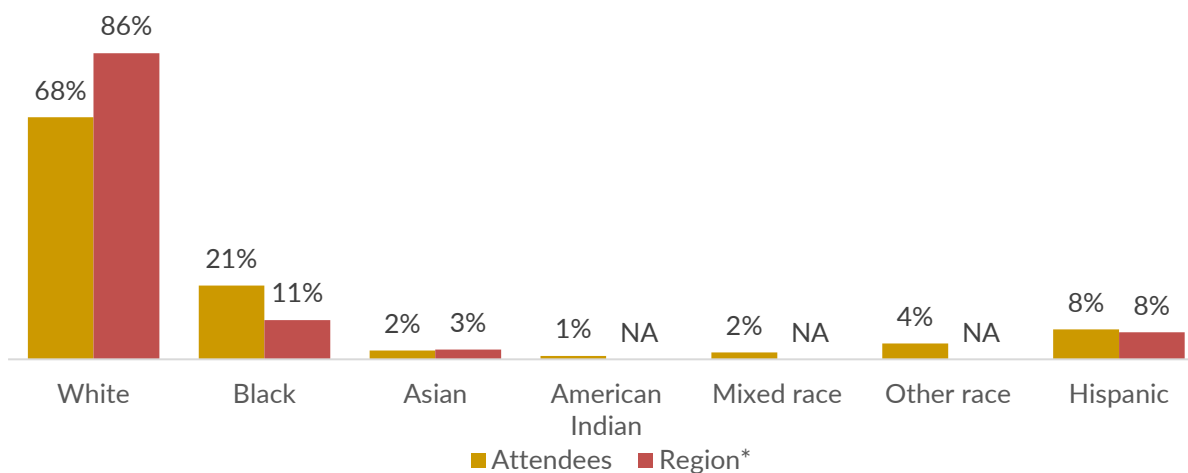
[1] Recognizing that racial categories are ascribed status (Beer, 2020), and have been described as socially constructed, and more recently described as power constructs (instead of social constructs, Kendi, 2019), racial categories have demonstrated to have real consequences. This evaluation follows the Quant Crit principles including 1.) White Supremacy's Role in Education, 2.) Numbers are not neural, 3.) Honor experiential knowledge, 4.) Focus on malleable factors, and 4.) Make explicit the role of systemic structures (Vincent-Ruz, 2020)

Age

Those who responded to the survey represented individuals who were 18 years or older.

- .5% of respondents were between the ages 18-20
- 4% between 21-29 years of age
- 21% between 30 -39 years of age
- 34% between 40-49 years of age
- 23% between 50-59 years of age
- 17% were 60 years or older

Figure 8: Age of Participants
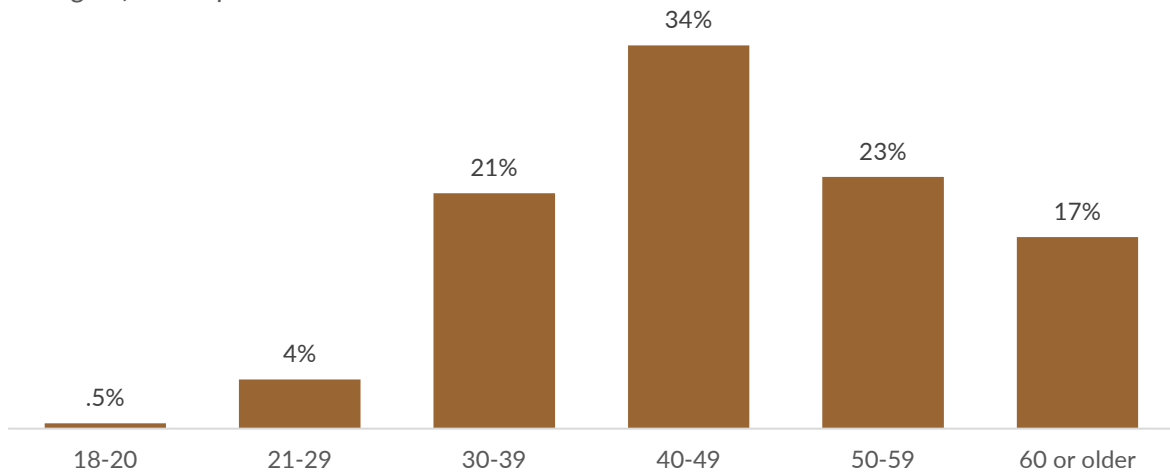
Zip Code Represented

Zip code analysis showed that participants zoomed in from across and beyond Monroe County to attend the virtual event. Figure 1 shows the heat map of attendees by zip code in the Greater Rochester Region and Figure 2 shows the heat map of attendees beyond.

Of the 200 who answered this question, 52 unique zip codes were represented. Most zip codes n=40) were represented by one to five respondents. Nine zip codes had six to ten respondents. The zip code most represented included 14609 (11%, City of Rochester, n=22), 14534 (10%, Town of Pittsford, n=20), and 14617 (5.5%, City of Rochester, n=11).

Figure 9: Heat map by Zip Code Attendance

LEGEND		
Color	Min.	Max.
	1	5
	6	10
	11	15
	16	20
	20	25

Several participants joined from beyond the Finger Lakes Region as seen below.
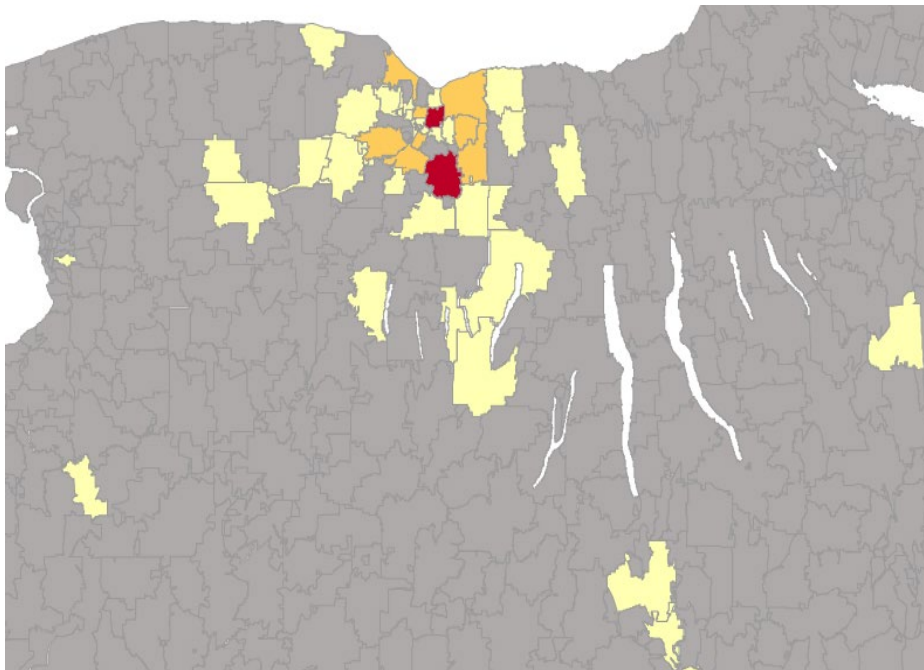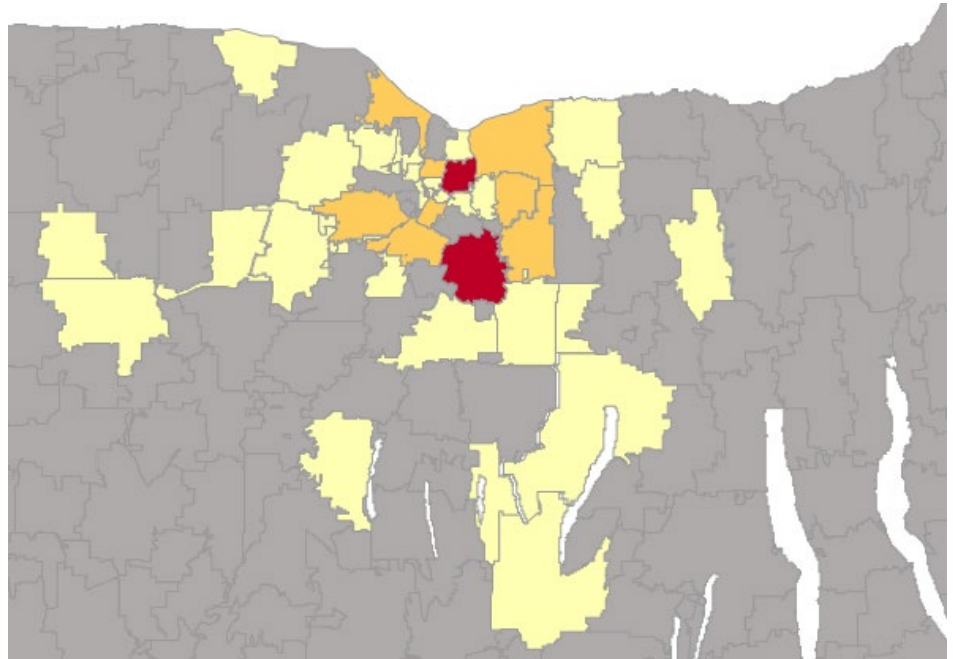
Implications and Considerations

Based on the responses from the conference questionnaire, the comments that were made during the conference, and the direct feedback received since the conference, this conference not only exceeded expectations but met a critical need in the Rochester community. Attendance and engagement were higher than anticipated and drew from a wide range of community members. Age ranges above 18 years old were widely represented, and compared to the regional racial demographic, the conference drew more people of color, in particularly community members who identified as Black and African American.

Overall, the speakers and the workshop were relevant to the attendees, stimulated their cognitive and affective domains where they learned something new, and because of the conference, attendees indicated they would engage in or advocate for antiracist education (including those who have already been deeply committed to this work). The conference attendees indicated that the speakers were powerful, the resources shared throughout the day were relevant and useful and being at this conference with hundreds of others around the region who are deeply committed to antiracist education was healing, inspiring, invigorating, and encouraging. Attendees also indicated that they recognize that courage and humility are both fundamental components in engaging in this work.

Reflection with Conference Organizers

As part of the evaluation process, the evaluation survey results were shared with the conference lead organizers. After reviewing, reflective dialogue included what they take away from the feedback, why they thought the conference was so well-received, and what are some areas that could be improved or should be changed in the future. Their reflection echoed the feedback from the participants and further articulated the importance of having youth voice, multiple options for breakout rooms, wide ranges of speakers' networks, speakers with credible reputation in the community, Dr. Bettina Love and having the virtual platform for increased access.

Considerations for Improvement

Simultaneously, the conference organizers also recognized that there are lessons to be learned from this inaugural conference, and feedback from attendees helped identify areas for consideration that would provide even greater access, make the conference

organizing efforts more sustainable, and continue the momentum that was built from the conference day.

Area: Technology

Technology was by far the most frequently sited area that could have improved people's experience. The organizers were very well aware of the challenges that started with the initial registration link needing to be changed, and some attendees never receiving an updated access link. Some attendees were also unfamiliar with zoom events platform and/or did not have zoom installed.

Considerations:
- Create an orientation video to demonstrate how to set up zoom prior to the conference
- Have dedicated technical support/help-line assigned
- Record breakout sessions for later viewing, especially if attendees want to attend sessions scheduled at the same time

Area: Expand Engagement

Several respondents indicated how they had not planned to stay for the full conference but were so engaged in each part of the day that they ended up attending for the full six hours. Though most of the conference were presentation style, the majority of respondents felt engaged throughout the day. Because of the stimulation and inspiration from these presentations and breakout rooms, there were additional suggestions provided for further engagement by the audience

Considerations:
- Breakout rooms that engage participants in discussions, potentially problem of practice, considerations of how to implement concepts keynote speakers discussed
- Collaboration and creative problem solving that could be individual or group oriented
- Allow more time for Q&A and facilitation of dialogue with attendees during breakout sessions.
- Recruit and include intersectional topics including antiracist disability studies, antiracist immigration and refugee topics
- Consider ways to engage community members for whom English is not their native, primary language
- Engage colleges beyond support and sponsorship to potentially collaborate on panel or collaborative conversations around teacher preparation pipelines
- Engage colleges to encourage education students to attend

Area: Momentum from the Conference

Participants were eager to continue the conversation and collective effort and expressed desire to continue to stay connected as a network.

> **Considerations:**
> - Provide a sign-up list for participants to get involved with specific tasks, goals, and objectives promoted during the conference
> - Create differentiated action groups and learning communities with monthly check-ins
> - Connect teachers across districts and county by grade level and/or content and create support network
> - Create support networks for teachers in rural areas and school buildings where they are one of few individuals advocating for antiracist education

Area: Logistics

Promotion of the conference was clearly successful by the number of individuals who registered and also attended the conference. Social media campaign starting in January on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and highlighting local civil rights activists engaged audience and built momentum towards conference. The selection and lining up of speakers and breakout rooms made it very clear to attendees that the planning was thorough, intentional, and thoughtful. A few suggestions were made along the accolades of a well-planned conference.

> **Considerations:**
> - Share agenda of the conference prior to start of conference to help attendees choose/plan breakout rooms
> - Provide learning outcomes or goals of each session and more description in addition to breakout session title so attendees can select ones that are relevant
> - If ever considering an in-person conference, to provide child care
> - Ensure plenty of planning time blocked prior to conference and post-conference to prevent burnout if possible
> - Consider increasing additional staff to maintain facilitating professional development workshops with districts during planning time

Further Implications

The number of individuals who attended the conference, the feedback we received throughout the event and the surveys show that there is a critical mass developing in the

Rochester region however, connections need to be fostered and strengthened to increase the collective impact to address racial inequities and injustice in our community.

More than 60% of respondents filled out the optional open-ended question at the end to thank the conference organizers and presenters for their time and effort to bring people together for a successful virtual conference. In these comments, many requested that the conference become an annual event, and indicated interest in further consultation and professional development in their districts and learning communities. Comments also included that these workshops were needed for institutional communities including banks, religious institutions, community agencies, school boards, and superintendents. The demand for this work in various networks and spheres of influence is exciting.

An ongoing study with the Antiracist Curriculum Project demonstrates what we notice in other EDI work: There is an unwavering commitment to counter implicit bias, racist acts, and structural racism. Yet this work is not only time consuming, but there is a significant cost in the form of psychological and emotional labor to those who organize, facilitate, lead, and counter resistance. If conference organizers are to incorporate the feedback from the community, it will be imperative that organizers will have the resources and support necessary to expand engagement, and to use the momentum of the conference for further facilitate community education and connection.

Summary

The 2022 Greater Rochester Antiracist Education conference brought together more than 600 attendees to participate in the virtual event held on March 12, 2022. The participant found the conference to be relevant, thought-provoking, and inspired attendees to commit to action.

Satisfaction levels were high across all parts of the conference and highlighted keynote speakers, breakout sessions, Clarissa Uprooted (lunch & movie), and the concluding panel. Attendees left the day feeling they have new ways of thinking and resources to support students, engage in courageously confrontational conversations, and expanded their perspective of their own hometown through learning about community organizations and from community partners. Seeing the many antiracist educators and community leaders was affirming, inspiring, and re-energizing and attendees demanded more opportunities like this to learn and to connect.

Learnings from the conference varied, which was intentional through the differentiation in the various breakout room offerings, and included increased self-awareness and reflection, practical skills to apply in the classroom, recentering and supporting the whole student, importance of representation & Black Joy, and engaging in courageous conversation to create an inclusive culture.

Commitment from Conference Participants included continued learning and (un)learning, commitment to listening and learning, to speaking up with love and courage, to using their position and power of influence to advocate for structural and systemic changes.

Feedback from participants included gratitude to the conference organizers and all those who made it possible for the conference to be offered for free and requested that opportunities such as these will continue and the conference become an annual event.

Reflection with conference organizers and suggestions for improvement show that there are opportunities for increased engagement, and ways that the momentum of the conference can continue to disrupt current inequitable and racist practices and embed antiracist education in formal and informal learning environments.