

## **Diagnostic Review**

Newark Board of Education

May 2023

Newark School of Global Studies

Principal Nelson Ruiz

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Newark, New Jersey 07104

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## **1.0 Background**

Newark School of Global Studies (NSGS) is a magnet high school located in the Lower Broadway section of the North Ward of Newark. NSGS is one of three schools that opened virtually in September 2020 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. “Fluency in a second language, immersion in a foreign culture, and exchange of ideas via advanced technology” are at the core of the school’s mission (Ruiz, 2020). NSGS offers two language-affiliated career pathways: Mandarin with a focus on Global Business and Arabic with a focus on Diplomacy. Partnerships with Kean and Seton Hall Universities provide the opportunity for students to earn nine college credits through dual enrollment courses in each pathway. The school hosts national and school organizations such as the Model UN program, National Chinese Honor Society, Student Council, and Math Club. The school also features a partnership with Ambassador Attallah Shabazz, who was appointed Ambassador-at-Large representing the country of Belize internationally by the former Prime Minister of Belize in 2002.

At the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the school’s opening, Founding Principal Nelson Ruiz introduced NSGS as “New Jersey’s first and only true language immersion high school.” Superintendent Roger León indicated the school would provide each student with “a passport to see the world you were destined to lead.” Superintendent León also stated, “I truly believe you really cannot love someone or something if you do not really love and know yourself and who you are,” suggesting a responsibility to build and sustain the personal and cultural knowledge of students. Ambassador Shabazz situated Newark as globally significant, commenting during her remarks, “You cannot be in Newark and not already be a part of the world.”

Since opening in September 2022, a ninth-grade class has been added to the school each academic year. During the 2022-2023 school year, NSGS enrolled 290 students in grades nine to eleven, where 74 percent are Hispanic/Latino<sup>1</sup>, 23 percent are Black, 2 percent are white, and less than 1 percent are Asian and Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. 56 percent of NSGS’s student population are female students, and 44 are male. 82 percent of students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch.

During the November 22, 2022 Newark Board of Education (NBOE) public meeting, two Black students from NSGS, Terril Coley and David Allen (the NSGS Student Council President), and Terril Coley’s mother, Brenda Brown, provided public comments about racial incidents targeting Black students which occurred at the school during 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years. Coley stated that he had been called “smart chimpanzee” and his classmate, Akela Haynes, had been called the “n-Word” and “terrorist” by Latino classmates. He also indicated incidents were not addressed with urgency, “initially, there was no investigation, nor consequences.” Ms. Brown stated that no one from the school contacted her regarding the incident with her son, even though she had been previously contacted when similar accusations were made against him by a Latino male student. In response to these comments, Superintendent León said, “It’s unacceptable today, in the past, and tomorrow, for you to be raising an issue that adults are supposed to fix.”

Black students from NSGS gave public comments about the continuation of racial incidents at the school and their feelings of isolation at NBOE public meetings in December 2022 and January 2023. The diagnostic review process was initiated in response to these reported incidents and, therefore, centered Black students.

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<sup>1</sup> With the exception of direct quotes from stakeholders, reports, and NBOE administrative data sources, we use the “Spanish language term Latino for pragmatic ease of presentation rather than all the current alternatives of Hispanic, Hispano, Latinalo, Latin@, Latine, or Latinx” (Hernández, 2022, p. 32).

## 2.0 Recommendations

The small size of NSGS attracted students, parents, and staff alike. The staff viewed the school as an opportunity to develop close-knit relationships with students where more personalized instruction and relationships can be achieved. Another persuasive draw has been the school's mission and promise of a curriculum designed for students to develop a global perspective through second language acquisition and career pathways that emphasize international relations in business and diplomacy. The school's focus and the racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic richness of the staff and students are assets that create the opportunity for interdisciplinary, inquiry, project-based, and experiential learning, as well as multi-grade level collaboration that are situated in the histories, cultures, and lived experiences of the students. The courage and resilience of NSGS Black students, who assume leadership positions in school organizations, participate in a variety of extra-curricular activities, and are high achievers, to challenge racial discrimination brings a level of social awareness and activism to the school that is aligned with the global studies theme. The empathy which Latino students and other students of color expressed for Black students is an opportunity for greater understanding amongst students school-wide.

School stakeholders, including the principal, have acknowledged that understanding and addressing the school's racial and cultural issues requires external support. Reflection and admission of gaps in knowledge suggest an emerging readiness for professional learning opportunities that will build the school's capacity to contextualize learning as it relates to race, ethnicity, and culture. Instructional staff have displayed passion about their content areas as well as an eagerness to deepen and expand the school's execution of its mission. Students expressed excitement about the opportunity to learn a new language, engage in global issues, and travel to new countries as the motivation for them to select NSGS. There is a shared desire among some staff, students, and community stakeholders for effective leadership to strengthen the implementation of the school's mission and "lead honest conversation(s)" that facilitate constructive and brave dialogue among stakeholders about the racial incident specifically and the school generally.

The following recommendations are informed by the findings outlined throughout the report. The goal of these recommendations is to catalyze the transformation of NSGS by reversing the legacy of racism and anti-Blackness that permeates throughout the school, the city, and the global context in which it is situated so that the racial and cultural backgrounds of all stakeholders are activated as assets to student learning. Proactive implementation of these recommendations, along with consistent reflection that responds to race, ethnicity, and other social differences, will disrupt the patterns evident throughout the report.

The DRT acknowledges that the breadth and depth of findings within the report, coupled with the legacy of racism in Newark, in New Jersey, and in the United States, may feel daunting for any school or district. We remain resolute, however, in our belief that the meaningful collaboration of all community stakeholders in the implementation of these recommendations will catalyze the school's ability to support the young people who attend NSGS in realizing their full potential.

**Recommendation 1: Create and nurture a school culture where racial incidents and issues of race, culture, and other emotionally charged topics can be discussed openly and bravely and are integrated into the thematic foci, instruction, and learning of the school.**

- Communicate promptly, intentionally, and transparently about the racial issues, the diagnostic process and report, and the next steps providing specific information that encourages ongoing public engagement in the school community.

- Design a healing process that integrates practices within the school culture to address the harm caused by racial incidents and dismantle systemic racism, anti-Blackness, disparities, and marginalization.
- Cultivate a deep understanding of the racial and ethnic makeup of NSGS students and staff through continuous learning, going beyond surface-level aspects of identity and culture.
- Engage all stakeholders in an open and inclusive planning process to develop a school design plan that supports NSGS's vision of a "school without borders" where global exploration, problem-solving, and meaningful connections between students' lives, identities, languages, and cultures and the school's academic pathways are fostered.

**Recommendation 2: Commit to culturally responsive-sustaining education transformation that develops the capacity of administrators and all school staff to identify cultural gaps in their practices and builds the knowledge and skills they need to integrate students' race, ethnicity, and culture in all aspects of the environment, teaching and learning, and student supports.**

- Design and implement a professional development plan that integrates culturally responsive-sustaining education, transformation, and development into the professional learning of school leadership and school personnel and addresses topics such as Understanding Culture; Racial Identity Development; Dismantling Deficit Beliefs, and Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Practices (Leadership, Counseling, Instruction, etc.).
- Provide access to and incentives for online summer professional development opportunities that prime school staff for ongoing, job-embedded professional development and support for culturally responsive-sustaining education.
- Articulate the scope of work and evaluation criteria necessary for a Request for Proposals (RFP) that recruits expertise in culturally responsive and sustaining systems change to support school-wide transformation.
- Institutionalize community conversations about school progress as part of a school feedback cycle to monitor progress and collaborate with community stakeholders, particularly those who have historically been marginalized by the policies and procedures implemented across the district and school.

**Recommendation 3: Assess how anti-Blackness and other deficit beliefs impact existing systems, policies, procedures, and practices and replace them with those that create a culture that is intentionally racially conscious and inclusive.**

- Conduct a comprehensive systems and policy review to identify the systems, policies, and procedures that lead to social and learning processes within the school which marginalize, isolate, and psychologically and materially distress Black students and teachers and other marginalized groups.
- Establish data practices for analyzing qualitative and quantitative data sets like those captured within this report (e.g., low student application, acceptance, retention, and post-secondary enrollment and attainment) that support the creation and monitoring of one-, three-, and five-year outcomes.
- Create systems, policies, and procedures for student recruitment and enrollment and staff hiring that address disproportionality so that the school looks more like the demographics of children living in Newark as a whole.

**This report acknowledges the district's responsibility to support NSGS in the implementation of these recommendations in the following ways:**

- Create space for the school administration to be transparent with their professional and personal needs, which may include healing from any feelings of inadequacy, lack of capacity in addressing racial incidents in the school building, and how to engage community stakeholders in the planning process.
- Support NSGS’s development of a school design plan that realizes the vision of a “school without borders” where global exploration, problem-solving, and meaningful connections between students’ lives, identities, languages, and cultures, and the school’s academic pathways are fostered.
- Work in tandem with the school administration to identify expertise needed to meet the outlined areas of growth and provide the flexibility to individualize professional development over the course of the year.
- Review and revise district policies that contribute to racially marginalizing practices at the school.

**Questions This Report Raises for the District’s Consideration**

1. What is the district’s commitment to culturally responsive-sustaining education transformation?
2. How does the district assess the ways anti-Blackness and other deficit beliefs impact existing systems, policies, procedures, and practices, and replace them with those that create a culture that is intentionally racially conscious and inclusive?
3. In what ways does the district communicate its expectations about how schools respond to racist, violent, and/or bigoted incidents?
4. What policies, programs, and activities would change as a result of confronting and dismantling biases and deficit-based beliefs?
5. In what ways will the district plan for revamping policies that promote fairness and use a lens that is culturally responsive and sustaining?
6. How will the district hold itself and school leaders accountable for creating and maintaining a culturally responsive and sustaining educational ecosystem?
7. How can professional learning opportunities be designed to effectively support leadership in developing a deep understanding of 1) race, ethnicity, and culture in schools and 2) culturally responsive and sustaining instructional practices?
8. How can the district facilitate a more nuanced analysis of data disaggregated by race and ethnicity?

### 3.0 Understanding Race, Ethnicity, and Anti-Blackness in U.S. Schools

Shared understandings of race, ethnicity, and anti-Blackness are central to this diagnostic report.

**Race:** The term race assigns group belonging to people who have phenotypical similarities in inherited traits and physical characteristics such as skin color, facial features, and hair texture. Racialization is the process through which groups are designated to a racial group. In racialized societies, people and groups are ascribed different social value based on their assigned racial category and provided “differential economic, political, social, and even psychological rewards along racial lines” (Bonilla-Silva, 1997). “Racism involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices” (Race Forward, 2023). Despite their biological connotations, racial categorizations are socially constructed and change over time based on shifts in societal attitudes, advocacy by racialized groups, demographic changes, and other social mechanisms.

**Ethnicity:** Ethnicity refers to shared social, cultural, and historical experiences—often deriving from common national, colonial, or regional backgrounds—that make subgroups of a population distinct from others. The salience of race in the U.S. context makes non-European ethnic identities racialized groups. For example, Asia and Latin America each contain dozens of countries. These countries represent a multitude of spoken languages, dialects, colonial histories, and ethnic subgroups. In the U.S., the use of pan-ethnic terms such as Latinos and Asian Americans to describe people who emigrate from these large regions collapses the range of differences in these areas.

**Anti-Blackness:** Anti-Blackness is a global phenomenon and ideology entailing beliefs, attitudes, and practices that devalue, minoritize, and marginalize the full participation and humanity of Black people and those perceived to be of African descent (Dumas & Ross, 2016). The transatlantic enslavement of African people involved numerous countries and spanned across multiple centuries—as does the continual extraction and exploitation of the African continent, its resources, people, and their descendants. As such, anti-Blackness has been reinforced globally, in overt and subtle ways through industry, the media, education, and international relations. Anti-Black racism can be enacted by individuals, regardless of their racial or ethnic identities, as well as by institutions and organizations. Further, in Latin American countries, colonialism, racial classifications, and government policies (i.e., immigration) have historically demonstrated a preference for whiteness (“*mejorar la raza*” and *blanqueamiento*; Vega et al., 2022). As a result, anti-Black racism is not uncommon among Latinos in the U.S. and elsewhere (Hernández, 2022).

Because U.S. schools are microcosms of society they exhibit the dominant societal beliefs about race, ethnicity, and culture and reproduce larger social inequalities within them (Boveda, 2019, Love, 2019; Wells, 2023). Most public schools demonstrate patterns of inequity that are indicative of these beliefs and inequities. The existence of racism in interpersonal interactions as well as in the educational policies and practices of a school should be anticipated by district and school leadership. How district and school leaders respond to acute racial incidents and design their learning environments to disrupt predictable beliefs and patterns is essential to creating school cultures where Black students feel a sense of belonging and safety. In U.S. schooling, researchers have documented how school officials engage in color-evasiveness, that is, “denial of racial differences by emphasizing sameness,” and power evasion, “denial of racism by emphasizing equal opportunities” to enact color-evasive or “color-blind” ideologies (Anamma & Jackson, 2017; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Neville et al., 2013). On the other hand, intentional planning that considers and responds to race, ethnicity, and other social differences has been shown to disrupt patterns of social and educational disparities (e.g., Tillman & Scheurich, 2013).

## **4.0 Initiation and Methods<sup>2</sup>**

On November 29, 2022, Superintendent León contacted Creed Strategies via email to connect Creed Strategies with Principal Ruiz for a discussion about Creed Strategies providing assistance to the school.

An initial proposal for a Diagnostic Review of NSGS was submitted via email to Mr. Ruiz on December 7, 2022. A final proposal, which included edits correcting the school name (which incorrectly appears in several emails and documents as Global Studies High School or GSHS), was submitted by Dr. Wells on December 9, 2022. The purpose of the diagnostic review is to develop recommendations:

- to assist NSGS in promoting positive racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious dynamics in the school culture and learning environment; and
- to build the school’s “understanding of diversity and how students, families, and colleagues have multiple sociocultural markers that intersect in nuanced and unique ways” in educational communities (Boveda & Aronson, 2019).

### **4.1 Diagnostic Review Team**

The diagnostic review team (DRT) for the data collection process was comprised of six individuals with complementary backgrounds in research, school leadership, and data analysis. The members of the DRT were representative of the school demographics and possessed extensive educational expertise. A full description of the DRT can be found in Appendix I.

### **4.2 Data Collection Methods and Analysis**

The complexity and diversity of racial, ethnic, national, linguistic, and religious groups represented in the faculty, staff, and student body of NSGS required that Creed design this study, as well as approach data collection and analyses, with the understanding that the role of race, ethnicity, and culture as embedded features of schools must be interrogated. Data was collected via student inquiry groups; 27 informal classroom observations; 21 one-on-one interviews with school stakeholders; focus meetings with school administration, public documents, and administrative data provided by the district. The Office of Policy, Planning, Evaluation, and Testing (OPPET) and the Human Resource Services Department (HRS) provided multiple student- and staff-level quantitative datasets for NSGS and three NPS comparison schools for this report. The three comparison schools included in this study were selected based on similarities to NSGS, including having newly opened within the past three years, adding a 9th-grade class each year since opening, and having magnet school status. These comparison schools are Newark School of Fashion & Design, Newark School of Data Science and Information Technology, and Newark Vocational High School.

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<sup>2</sup> For a complete discussion of the background and data collection methods employed for this report see Appendices 1 and 2.



## 5.0 Findings

The findings presented in this report reflect the social significance of race in contemporary society and the resulting racial dynamics between Blacks and Latinos in the U.S. and Newark. Anti-Black cultural beliefs and assumptions permeate the borders of schools and classrooms through both educational policies and practices and individuals that come together in the educational process. Racial epithets and slurs used against Black students and teachers are indicative of anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism. The report contains numerous examples of how Black students and teachers have been subjected to overt acts of anti-Blackness and anti-Black racism at the school. It also evinces the insufficiency of the technical punitive responses and the limits of the restorative practices employed to address the cultural dynamics in which the degradation of Black people is normalized at a broader social level.

### 5.1 Students have used and endured racist, biased, and bigoted language at NSGS.

*“But literally on the first day or that first week, I don't know, I'm hearing non-Black students say the N-word. And then when it's being reported, nothing's being done.”*

Black students and teachers made reports about being called various racial slurs and the common use of the N-word before it became public in the 2022-2023 school year. Across data sets, stakeholders shared that school and district administration and some school staff knew about the publicly reported and other incidents. While some of the staff interviewed indicated that “racism went both ways,” suggesting Latino and Black students use epithets toward one another, in our data set, there was no evidence of Black students using racial slurs against non-Black peers. Besides Black students, dark-skinned Latino and South Asian students were the only ones to share that they personally experienced racism at NSGS. We learned of several examples of students using racial slurs and behaviors against Black and Asian teachers, yet no student discussed knowledge of racism toward Latino staff. Several Latino adult interviewees discussed past experiences with racism, but not within the NSGS context.

Race and racism are topics that evoke emotional responses for all of those involved. Utterances of racial epithets and slurs are provocative and charged and have meaning beyond their immediate usage. Black students, for example, described their sense of betrayal when peers and adults used racial epithets. While most Black students felt stunned, at a loss for words, or angry when these incidents happened, a few shared they were able to correct people they considered friends. “It was like, on a one-to-one level with fellow students. If I had a friend who was non-Black and they said the N-word around me, and I would come to them and be like, ‘okay, this is how I feel...’”

In the course of data collection, various racial slurs and epithets were reported being used by Latino students against Black students and teachers. Non-Black interviewees used the n-Word while being interviewed for this report. The idea that hip-hop and the familiar use of the N-word among Blacks was referenced by many interviewees to explain the ease with which non-Blacks use the word. However, “changing the spellings, pronunciations, and contexts of the (N-word)--nigga, niggah, nigger--doesn't change the negativity of the original word” (Lester, 2014). Below are various uses racist, racialized, biased, and bigoted language identified during data collection.

Anti-Black racist epithets:

- Nigger
- Chimpanzee
- Monkey
- Black Bitch

Black vernacular terms and popular phrases of Black affirmation used in derisive and mocking ways:

- Bruh
- Wakanda Forever

Other biased, violent, and Islamophobic speech:

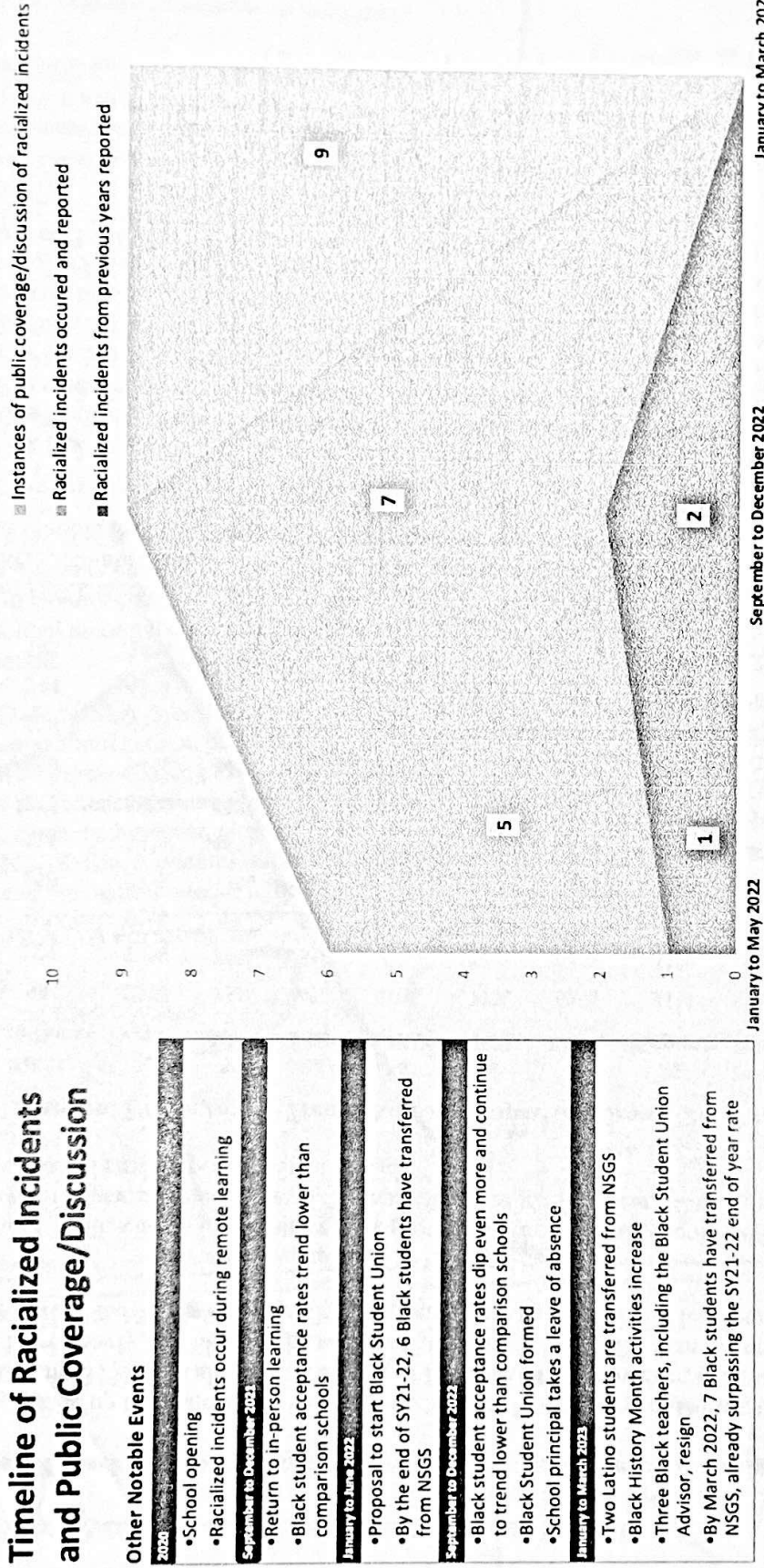
- Terrorist
- “Do you clean your house properly?” asked about South Asian students.
- Threats about “raping” girls circulated in a Discord chat.
- Threats to “take off” and “stomp on” the hijabs of Black and Arab Muslim women teachers.
- A male student being repeatedly called “faggot” in class in the presence of a teacher.

We deemed it vital to this report to explicitly name the racial and other bigoted epithets that surfaced during data collection so that this report does not diminish the impact of the harm experienced by the students and teachers against whom they were used. We do not, however, use these terms beyond this section of the report. Nor do we intend for their inclusion here to condone their use by others when discussing or explaining racism or other acts of bias and bigotry in the school or district context.

## 5.2 Timeline of Racialized Incidents and Public Coverage/Discussion

The timeline<sup>3</sup> below represents occurrences and reporting of racialized incidents and events at NSGS and the related public coverage. This course of events is intended to serve as a framework for the findings and analyses throughout the report. There is a correlation between the increase in officially reported racialized incidents and the public discourse that began in December 2022.

### Timeline of Racialized Incidents and Public Coverage/Discussion



#### Other Notable Events

- 2020
  - School opening
  - Racialized incidents occur during remote learning
- September to December 2021
  - Return to in-person learning
  - Black student acceptance rates trend lower than comparison schools
- January to June 2022
  - Proposal to start Black Student Union
  - By the end of SY21-22, 6 Black students have transferred from NSGS
- September to December 2022
  - Black student acceptance rates dip even more and continue to trend lower than comparison schools
  - Black Student Union formed
  - School principal takes a leave of absence
- January to March 2023
  - Two Latino students are transferred from NSGS
  - Black History Month activities increase
  - Three Black teachers, including the Black Student Union Advisor, resign
  - By March 2022, 7 Black students have transferred from NSGS, already surpassing the SY21-22 end of year rate

<sup>3</sup> Eleven official incident reports, which were debriefed verbally with members of the DRT, are included in this timeline. The timeline also includes racialized incidents that occurred during remote learning in the 2020-2021 school year. The data represented here was gathered from the multiple sources outlined in Appendix I, as well as press and media publications and NPS Board of Education meeting recordings. Other key events, noted on the left-hand side, provide additional context. The visual representation of the timeline begins in the winter of 2022 for ease of internalization.

## 5.3 Trends in Black Student Achievement and Enrollment

### 5.3a The enrollment of Black students at NSGS has decreased steadily since its opening year.

Latino students have made up the majority of the study body since NSGS opened. During the school’s first year, Black student enrollment (31%) was almost half of that of Latinos (64%). However, each subsequent year Black students have been increasingly less likely to be accepted and enrolled at NSGS than at comparison schools.<sup>4</sup> In the 2022-2023 school year, the number of Black students attending the school was less than one-third that of Latino students.

As student populations at all schools in this study have grown, the comparison schools have maintained a consistent percentage of Black students each year compared to NSGS. This year, Black students represented less than a quarter of the overall student population at NSGS.

**Table 1: Student Demographic Trends Across Comparison Group (20-21 to 22-23)**

School	Year	Total enrollment	% Female	% Male	% LEP	% SPED	% FRPL	% Black	% Hispanic	% White	% Asian	% American Indian	% Pacific Islander
Data Science	21-22	94	25%	75%	4%	10%	71%	62%	31%	6%	1%	0%	0%
Data Science	22-23	199	27%	73%	3%	9%	82%	63%	31%	4%	2%	1%	0%
Fashion and Design	21-22	97	91%	9%	5%	12%	90%	37%	61%	1%	0%	1%	0%
Fashion and Design	22-23	156	83%	17%	6%	14%	91%	36%	61%	2%	0%	1%	1%
<b>Global Studies</b>	<b>20-21</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Global Studies</b>	<b>21-22</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Global Studies</b>	<b>22-23</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>1%</b>
Vocational	20-21	388	48%	52%	10%	19%	69%	55%	40%	1%	1%	0%	0%
Vocational	21-22	514	49%	51%	10%	16%	82%	55%	42%	1%	1%	0%	0%
Vocational	22-23	583	54%	46%	8%	14%	85%	54%	43%	2%	1%	0%	0%

Acceptance rates of Black students increased from 2021-2022 to 2022-2023 across all comparison schools, but much less so at NSGS. Notably, acceptance rates of Black students at NSGS have trended significantly lower than at comparison schools for both years, while acceptance rates of Hispanic students were significantly higher for both years.

The number of Black students who applied to the school remained consistent for Black students but increased by 22 percent for Latino students. Black students have been significantly less likely to be accepted and enrolled at NSGS than Hispanic students, with the acceptance rate for Hispanic students in 2022 (28%) nearly double that of its acceptance rate for Black students (15%). In 2022-2023, NSGS accepted 12 percent more Black students than it did in 2021-2022, but actually enrolled 4 percent fewer Black students (representing 23% of the student population). Black student enrollment at NSGS has been disproportionate to the total enrollment of Black students in the district (39% in 2021-2022), lagging by about 16 percent. Conversely, NSGS enrolled about 20 percent more Latino students than the district overall (over 70% at NSGS compared to 51% district-wide).

<sup>4</sup> The three comparison schools included in this study were selected based on similarities to NSGS, including having newly opened within the past three years, adding a 9th-grade class each year since opening, and having magnet school status. These comparison schools are Newark School of Fashion & Design, Newark School of Data Science and Information Technology, and Newark Vocational High School.

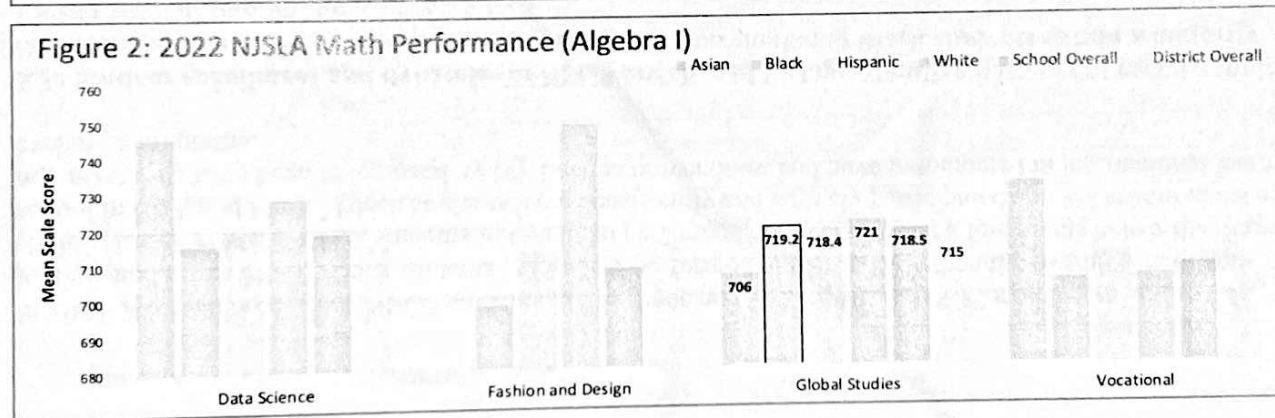
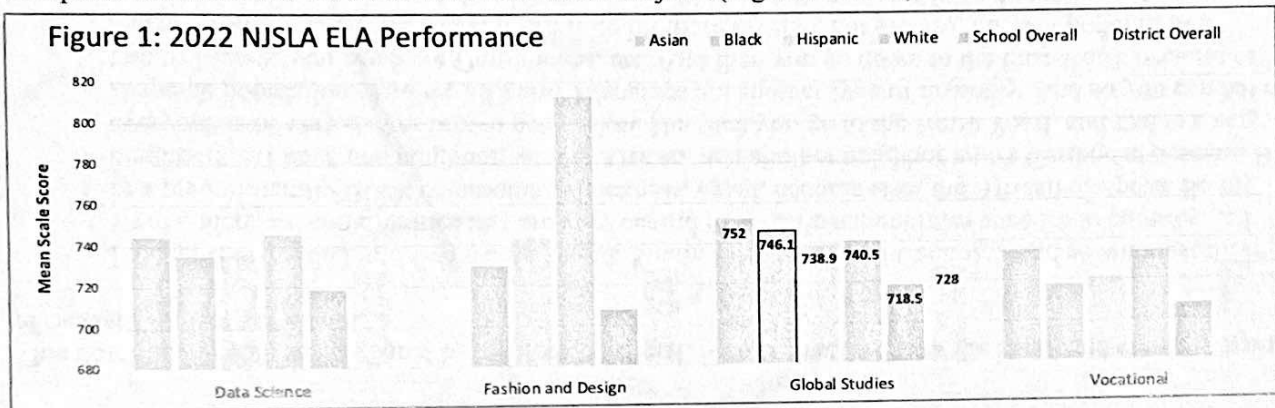
**Table 2: Acceptance and Enrollment Trends Across Comparison Group (21-22 and 22-23)**

School	Year	# Black students applied	# Black students accepted	Black student acceptance rate	% Enrolled students who are Black	# Hispanic students applied	# Hispanic students accepted	Hispanic student acceptance rate	% Enrolled students who are Hispanic
Data Science	21-22	172	17	10%	62%	138	14	10%	31%
Data Science	22-23	324	58	18%	63%	276	54	20%	31%
Fashion and Design	21-22	109	8	7%	37%	127	26	20%	61%
Fashion and Design	22-23	197	39	20%	36%	222	66	30%	61%
<b>Global Studies</b>	21-22	186	5	<b>3%</b>	<b>27%</b>	278	38	14%	71%
<b>Global Studies</b>	22-23	188	28	<b>15%</b>	<b>23%</b>	351	99	28%	74%
Vocational	21-22	457	28	6%	55%	442	48	11%	42%
Vocational	22-23	516	104	20%	54%	555	121	22%	43%

**5.3b Black Students Are an Academic Asset to NSGS.**

Black and Latino students at NSGS have performed at a high level, and higher than the district mean averages in ELA and Math. Black students outperformed their Latino peers at NSGS. A higher percentage of Black students (65%) were enrolled in Honors classes in 2022 compared to NSGS’ overall Honors participation rate (59%). NSGS was the only school among the comparison group where Black students represent a larger percentage of Honors class participation.

At the district-level, 2022 NJSLA data shows that about a quarter of all NPS students (25%) exceeded or met expectations in ELA, and about sixteen percent did so in Algebra I. NSGS students surpassed the district average in ELA, with 37 percent having exceeded or met expectations, but fell below the district average in Algebra I (13%). The proficiency percentage in both subjects for Black students at NSGS was in line with the school overall. Black students, however, outperformed NSGS overall in 2022 NJSLA school-level mean scores in ELA and Math at NSGS. Black students at the school also had higher mean scores on average than comparison schools *and* the district overall in both subjects (Figures 1 and 2).



In 2021-2022, 80% of Black NSGS students in 9th-grade and 96% of Black NSGS students in 10th-grade participated in the PSAT. Black students in Grade 9 performed higher in ELA than the overall school and slightly lower in Math. Black students in Grade 10 performed, on average, just a few points below the overall school in ELA and Math.<sup>5</sup> Black students have consistently and actively participated and led school clubs and organizations, have been recognized by Ivy League universities, and have participated in international learning exchange programs.

**5.3c Student enrollment and dynamics at NSGS are shaped by long-standing patterns of racial, ethnic, and cultural interaction in the city, minoritizing and marginalizing Black students within a majority Latino student population.**

This description of Newark, shared by an elected official, is emblematic of how the racial and ethnic dynamics of Newark impact the school.

[Newark] is divided into five wards: North, South, East, West, and Central... And so amongst these wards, there are communities that are very central to specific nationalities specific to cultures.... I live in a predominantly Black community. Blackness, again, encompasses the African diaspora. So my neighbors... I have one neighbor, who is African, and another neighbor who's Caribbean descent. But everyone is of very darker brown persuasion. But then you go to the North Ward, and that is a very Hispanic population. And we all know Hispanics are another type of diversity. And so you can have Puerto Ricans, you can have Dominicans, etc. And then you go down to the East Ward, because of recent development down there, it is a little bit more diverse, not diverse, but that population is diversifying that much more. But it's mostly Brazilians or Portuguese folks down there. And so when you look at Newark, as a whole, it's a very diverse community in comparison to the United States of America. But we still live in our silos, and I don't think there is anything wrong with that because we live amongst our comfort. At the same time, we don't necessarily always have opportunities to interact with one another on a daily basis.

Many would agree with the idea that Newark is racially and ethnically diverse compared to the rest of our predominantly white country, yet the statement also indicates the city has patterns of segregation mirroring the rest of the country. The comment exemplifies the connection between Blackness and the African Diaspora, inclusive of the Caribbean. While Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic are in the Caribbean and have a substantial percentage of people who are of "very dark brown persuasion" they are not included in the description of Blackness. Being "Hispanic" and from the North Ward is generally seen as separate from Black, regardless of African heritage. Even interviewees who self-identified as "Black and Puerto Rican" or "Black and Hispanic" discussed these identities as separate from one another. These understandings are so internalized that when discussing school enrollment, one staff member used "South Ward" as a proxy for Black, stating, "If you go to any school in Newark, you go to the East Ward, everybody's Portuguese and Brazilian and Latino, you know. You go to the South Ward and everybody, you know."

Until the reported racial incidents became public, there was a general sense of comfortability among Latinos at the schools. The school's location and the large percentage of students with familial ties to Latin America are anchors of affinity and familiarity for Latinos. Latino students felt they "fit in" ethnically and as immigrant students, "I think it's good because there's lots of Hispanics here and here in the school since there's a lot of different cultures and teachers that aren't just American, it's really easy to feel like you fit in because it's not like everybody's cultures the same." Latino staff described the school as a "family." The same sense of belonging was not prevalent among Black students, some of whom perceived negative conceptions about them, for example, "Sometimes I feel like I'm too ghetto. I'm too Black...I feel like me being Black, I love Being black, but some people just connect black and ghetto, and I just don't see it that way."

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 3

The sharp distinction between being Black and Latino in the racial dynamics of Newark seeps into the school, resulting in the types of racial incidents brought to the public attention. Latino students used racial epithets and expressed anti-Black sentiments but then deflected their significance by claiming to just be kidding, to be using the “a” spelling of the word, or to be Black. One teacher observed, “I’ve been told by other students that he will make racist jokes and all of that. Then he’ll continue to say ‘I’m Black’ at that time. But then all the [other] times he’s just ‘I’m Dominican. I ain’t Black, I’m Dominican.’” Similarly, Latino adults have made claims to Blackness when convenient. An outlier in the data is the district leader’s identification of himself as Black, which Black participants experienced as a confusing form of cultural appropriation: “I think a lot of us looked confused because it was just like, ‘Sir, you’re not Black. You’re not, you know?’ Everybody wants to claim Black, but they don’t want to claim the problems.”

## 5.4 Limited Responses to Racist Incidents

**5.4a The school did not act quickly and consistently to racist, bigoted, and biased incidents in ways that communicated the seriousness of the acts, centered impact rather than intent, and served to alleviate the suffering of those that experienced racial harm.**

*“One student gets suspended for three days. And before that, nothing. Yeah, nothing. And he's a freshman.”*

Eleven official incident reports made by teachers and administrators were verbally shared with the DRT for this report. During the debriefs, the nature of the incidents and the disciplinary actions taken were detailed. A combination of written apologies, cultural sensitivity training, mediation, removal from class, schedule changes, financial restitution, suspensions, and other disciplinary actions was issued as individual disciplinary measures. The table below shows the student consequences shared with the DRT during the incident debrief with district administration.

Student Consequences	# of Students
Suspension (Out of School)	7
Suspension (In School)	1
Detention (Class)	22
Detention (Afterschool)	3
Conflict Resolution Session	3
Mediation	6
Parent Conference	7
Verbal Apology	1
Written Apology	1

Student Consequences	# of Students
HIB Founded	2
HIB Unfounded	2
In School Counseling	1
Out of School Counseling	4
Acceptable Use Policy Review	2
Written Essay	1
Re-entry Conference	2
Restitution of an Earpod	1

Media reports identified various personnel who, by virtue of their roles, would have had prior knowledge of racial incidents occurring at NSGS based on their direct involvement in filing official reports. Interviewees indicated they learned about the incidents through their relationships with the students and the teachers involved, suggesting that second-hand knowledge of the racial incidents across the school was probable. A very small group indicated they had no knowledge of the incidents before the students' public comments. NBOE Progressive Discipline Policy was referenced by both staff responsible for handling the incidents and those who were victims of racial acts.

All staff noted the effect of the public reports and media on the school environment, using words like “chaos” and “ill feelings” to describe it. Some suggested that it was intensified by the lack of clear communication about why students were complaining and leaving the school. “I think that has made some students more like, upset, angry... Unraveled things a little bit. So that's like an unfortunate thing that it's like kind of... causing some upheaval.” Others lamented that, given the ongoing media and public comments about the incidents, the school's approaches to addressing the racialized incidents and lack of communication about them were eroding teacher morale. One teacher specifically suggested that because of the public scrutiny, administrators started to backtrack reports stated about one of the formally reported incidents that “it's not until a month later that they reported it and that's because... they felt things were going to go further because of things [BSU sponsor] was saying or all the things that were being reported back to other teachers and they felt it would blow up and needed



to cover their tracks.” Very few staff attributed the upheaval at the school to the actual racial incidents experienced by Black students and teachers.

#### **5.4b Students and teachers who experience racist, biased, and bigoted incidents must be shown support and relieved of the burden of proving they are telling the truth.**

*“I was like, oh my god, it's very exaggerated. I don't want to say, you know, that it didn't happen, right, that there was a comment made. But I felt, I almost feel like it's an exaggeration. You know, that's how I feel.”*

When asked about the racial incidents, adults responded by (a) believing students, (b) displaying defensiveness and fragility, (c) reporting they had no knowledge of racial issues until the students spoke publicly, (e) dismissing or minimizing students’ claims, (f) distancing themselves from accountability and/or (e) coming to the defense of the administration.

With one exception, Black adult interviewees (5) expressed their belief that Black students experienced racial harm at NSGS. Six out of the seven (86%) non-Black, non-Latino adults interviewed (33% of total adults interviewed) also shared that they believed the students and expressed concern about their well-being. Some indicated they were also aware of racist incidents against Black and Asian teachers in the building.

Nine interviewees suggested the Black students’ reports and media coverage were exaggerated and wanted to “set the record straight.” These adults defended their reputations, the school, and/or the principal but did not view the students’ reports as seriously. These staff struggled to separate friendly-appearing exchanges between Black and Latino students and adults from Black students’ reporting that they were hurt or felt unsafe and unsupported.

- “I want to say that when I hear these recordings about what people are saying and including the students that are in the school, to me, it feels like they're talking about another school. Because I do not see that. You know, I have not heard that” and “ So, one of the things, for example, is I feel like lately the articles that I read are kind of depicting that there's this war going on. There's rivalry between Latinos and African American students, and that's not true.”
- “One of the things I told Mr. Ruiz when he came back after he was out for a bit, I said to him, “You know, there was another article.” and I was like, “When you speak the truth, you have nothing to fear.” So... I'm doing this because I'm hoping that the truth really comes out.”
- “I disagree with the media. Like I feel like the media makes it sound like it's a turf war between the Latinos and African American students. And that's not the case. Like I see them being friends with each other and caring about one another... I feel like it was made a little bit bigger than what it was...”
- “To me, she doesn't look like a student that doesn't feel safe... And there was another [student] that stated that when she walks into the school... I guess her joy? She doesn't have the joy or something along those lines. And again, you can see her in videos and pictures having a wonderful time in the school. So you hear them say one thing, but then I don't see that in school.”

Perceptions about the validity of the students’ reports were nearly proportionate among those who believed the students and those who questioned their experiences.

#### **5.4c Restorative practices alone did not create a school culture where Black students and teachers felt psychologically safe and protected from racist incidents and other incidents of biases.**

Staff indicated they were following district policy and employing a restorative approach to discipline where the severity of discipline increased according to the number of infractions.

“Newark is a restorative district. And so, suspension, it was frowned upon. It really is still. They don't want punitive, they want restorative. So that's what initially was being done was more restorative. Let's talk about this because it's hurtful. Let's do mediations and let's talk about our feelings. But more punitive was what was being requested. It was almost made to seem like the school doesn't care because there's nothing harsh happening. There's no punishment happening. So you know, it's bad because I've seen like a turn right, and like now it's like any, you know, anybody utilizes the N-word that says it, you're gonna get suspended. I find myself like, I'm an educator. So I'm like, you know, I'm not 100 percent okay with it. We need to teach them. You know, that's our role, to teach them. But it's kind of like, I guess, administration is caught in a crossroad. Like if we, if we continue doing justice restorative, then it's gonna seem like we're not taking it seriously.”

Black students and stakeholders felt that the layering of restorative justice practices on top of the existing school culture did not address the root causes of or take seriously enough the harm they experienced. Many called for the disciplinary responses required for Levels 3 and 4 Misconduct outlined in the Progressive Discipline Policy as signals of serious misconduct. After describing a conference where restorative practices were recommended, one interviewee used The Progressive Discipline Policy to point out the seriousness of the racial comments and acts of physical violence Black students and teachers were experiencing, stating, “The administration called for a parent conference...the conclusion [of the conference] was that [the student] would have a time of reflection with the student...that is not enough for that level of incident. It's stated, in our code of ethics, level three, up to four days of suspension.”

Black students began to feel emotionally unsafe about being forced to work with students who used racist language toward them but were allowed to remain in classes and the school. “It makes me feel a little uncomfortable to come to school because I'm surrounded by people that talk... that are racists, and then you're forced to interact with them and do work with them.” During one student inquiry group, students talked specifically about how a lack of punishment contributed to the frequency of incidents occurring in the 11th-grade class, “Because they know they have been called down a million and one times about racism have been told to stop being racist. Not anything. Not a Suspension. Not an expulsion. Nobody was made an example. They're the students who are not black and who have been running rampant saying the N-word. Not even just the N-word, but saying slurs in the hallway. The person wasn't gay. But every day for months on end, we go to English class, and we hear ‘He's a... ‘f’ slur.’ And teachers would say nothing about it, I assume, because we never hear anything about that. And it's like every day was something, and nobody was ever made an example out of, nothing. When we reported, nothing would happen.” Some Black students also publicly sought punitive measures for the principal, who they held responsible for not creating a safe environment for them and addressing the racial climate of the school.

There were acknowledgements among staff about their educative role to disrupt the misconceptions underlying non-Black students' usage of racial language and terms that have historically been used to dehumanize and harm Black people. One teacher, for example, shared this analysis, “... some education for the students on the background of why some of the things they say to each other are so hurtful. I think some of the students don't even... aren't totally aware of the background behind why those words are so hurtful. You know, I think especially for recent immigrants, they come here, and they hear that kind of dialogue, and they adopt it thinking like they're gonna be proud and part of American culture and have no background for it, and don't realize that for them, it's not appropriate to talk that way.” Some stated they felt equipped to guide this learning; most admitted they did not.

The restorative approach as implemented by NSGS staff did not adequately address the persistence or saliency of the usage of racialized comments in the school, created an atmosphere where some Latino students felt they could use racist language toward Black students and teachers without consequence, and established a school

environment that made Black students and teachers feel unprotected from acts of racism. When adults described Black students' experiences and descriptions of racial incidents as exaggerated and irrational, they enacted anti-Black sentiments. These dismissive reactions created fissures in the system that not only eroded trust between students and adults but also created a climate of 'us vs. them.' Importantly, no Latino or other non-Black student denied their Black peers' experiences or accused them of exaggeration. These students in general indicated they were not surprised by the Black students' reports as this comment suggests, "Me personally, I was not very surprised because I've heard multiple complaints from different people about little things that they experienced...I've seen somebody say different racist and homophobic things multiple times. And we did report it, but all that was done was that he was written up a little bit and that was it."

#### **5.4d What is said and done when students and teachers speak out against racism can punish them and exacerbate their isolation and marginalization.**

After the Black students began speaking publicly about the racism they were experiencing, school and district administration held assemblies (or convocations). These gatherings were largely viewed by stakeholders as insufficient and ineffective. Meetings of the advisory period also increased from once a month to twice a month.

The principal held an assembly for the entire school where he told the entire school, including Black students, not to use the N-word or they would be suspended. The implementation of zero-tolerance for the N-word not only was viewed as harming victims, but it also policed the language and speaking practices of Black students.

The superintendent held an assembly specifically for the junior class where they were told, "If they don't feel comfortable [at NSGS], basically they can leave. That's when everybody was trying to leave." This was interpreted by many as "If you don't like it, you can leave." Though this announcement catalyzed the largest transfer of students to date, transferring was not made easy for the students. Students reported that the policy was not followed and that many students who tried to transfer were told by staff that they did not want the students to leave; some were prohibited from doing so. A few staff admitted trying to persuade the Black students attempting to transfer to remain at the school. Some students interpreted the reason that school staff were not facilitating requests for transfers was because of lack of communication between the Superintendent and the school, others because they did not want to lose high-achieving Black students. Several staff members noted how high-performing Black students were the first in an influx of students to attempt to transfer out and considered how that would impact the school's image.

- "The counselors and staff [were] basically trying to tell them not to leave, convince them not to leave"
- "One of the guidance counselors and this girl, she wanted to transfer, she was like, "Can I go to Barringer? I need an application." She was like, "No, don't leave. Don't leave, don't leave, don't leave." And then, when I asked for a transfer, and they was like, "No you're not leaving." And I'm like, "Okay. Excuse me."
- "If you're in the office as a student and you are like "I want to transfer." Not even just like, 'what about racism or being Black?' They will gaslight you and be like, 'No, you don't want to leave. Oh, we can't just issue a transfer. We can't do that."
- "I guess it was mainly because of how sudden it was and the lack of information that was given to other administration [and] other figures that were at the school that could possibly give us help."
- "When you talk about the school, you mentioned these students and suddenly [they're} leaving and then people start to question, 'well, why are they leaving?' And then you dig deeper, and you're like, "Oh, this is why they're leaving? This is this the kind of organization y'all running?"

Black students and staff were closely observed in various ways by non-Black staff after reporting racialized and racist incidents. Black students shared that it felt like they were being watched: "It was the board meeting and then the first article being written that really just amped things up, and it kind of ostracized [students] a little bit... So now everyone was like, 'oh, [they] spoke out about whatever. Oh, [they're] snitching on us...' Just

whispering things, and I felt like everybody was watching me, if that makes sense.” Students who participated in BSU meetings, in particular, stated that administrators began ‘circling,’ “Any time we were in there, they would somehow be circling around like, oh. And it wasn’t like they weren’t in the classroom, they would just keep walking around, around to see that we were in there,” and ‘checking,’ “But I think it was on Arabic language day. She came into the last meeting, and she was like, “I’m just coming in to check on you guys. How are you guys doing? And I come to all the meetings, I check on all the clubs.” And one of my peers, she was like, “No, you don’t come to other meetings. You don’t do that,” come in on BSU meetings.”

Some staff shared their actual observations of what Black students did after the incidents became public, confirming students’ belief that they were being monitored and watched, “I can tell you that... one of us [would] speak to (a) student, right from, you know, that specific group. And the moment that the student would walk out, they would go straight to that teacher’s classroom” and “You know, students, they will come to see me and then... I don’t know if she will see the kids leaving or they will just let her know that they were coming to see me, but they would go right to her office after they left my office.”

As a result of these patterns of how NSGS responded to racist and racialized incidents, interviewees reported increased emotional and psychological stress that affected attendance and self-perception, and took a toll on their ability to engage in teaching and learning. A student noted: “[The school] slowly went from being held on a pedestal, first place, ‘oh, I’m going to love it here,’ to ‘I don’t want to be here.’ I’m tired.” A staff member stated, “It’s extremely stressful... constantly reading about the school in the news is just extremely stressful... whereas I felt a sense of pride coming to this job, I now feel a sense of like shame.” Some students talked about the emotional toll of the racial incidents and their attempts to transfer, “I was really emotionally drained that day because not only did he have me crying, he had my mother crying as well.” Others conveyed a sense of loss of “friendships.”

#### **5.4e Black Students and Teachers are Being Pushed Out<sup>6</sup>**

*“And even if it wasn’t hate, ignorance. And chances to educate people, but they were never taught.”*

Black student mobility has significantly increased each year at NSGS compared to overall mobility and mobility among all other demographic subgroups. Black students have been less likely to complete an academic year at NSGS than their Black peers attending Data Science, Fashion and Design, and Vocational.

Both the estimated Black student mobility rate and overall mobility rate for SY22-23 at NSGS were significantly higher than at comparison schools. At NSGS in 2021-2022, a higher percentage of all students who had left by the end of the year were Hispanic (57%) compared to Black (43%). For 2022-2023 so far – as of March 15 – that has flipped; a higher percentage of students who left are Black (58%) compared to Hispanic (42%).

There was a sharp increase in Black student mobility at NSGS from March 2022 to June 2022. And as of March 15, 2023, the Black student mobility rate at NSGS had nearly reached the end-of-year (EOY) rate for SY21-22. Black students will be nearly twice as likely to leave NSGS by the end of this year than the overall NSGS student population.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> OPPET defines mobility rates using the number of students that left a school after October 15th of each school year (when the district captures its official fall enrollment data), as a percentage of the total student population at each school. To complement other data gathered in this report and align with the timing of the diagnostic, Creed also analyzed mid-year mobility rates using the number of students that had left the school as of March 15 of each school year as a percentage of the total student population. ‘Mobility’ here includes students transferring to other district schools, charter schools, or out-of-district, as well as those who exited high school altogether before graduation.

<sup>7</sup> \*Based on historical data, the annual average percent increase of Black students leaving after March 15 is 5%. Using that average, the anticipated 2022-2023 EOY Black student mobility rate is 15.3%. For comparison, using that same calculation, the estimated overall student mobility rate at NSGS for SY22-23 is 8.7%.

By the end of SY21-22, six Black students had left NSGS and transferred to other in-district schools. As of March 15, 2023, seven more Black students had also left NSGS and transferred to other in-district schools, already surpassing the previous end-of-year total count.

**Table 3: Student Mobility Across Comparison Group (SY20-21 through March 15, 2023)<sup>8</sup>**

School	Year	# students enrolled	# students left	# Black students that left (EOY)	Mobility rate (EOY)	Mobility rate (March 15)	Black mobility rate (EOY)	Black mobility rate (March 15)
Data Science	21-22	94	3	2	3.2%	0%	3%	0%
Data Science	22-23	199	5	2	5.7%*	2.5%	4.6%*	1.6%
Fashion and Design	21-22	97	10	6	10.2%	4.1%	13.6%	6.8%
Fashion and Design	22-23	156	1	–	6.2%*	0.6%	6.8%*	0%
Global Studies	20-21	114	6	2	5.3%	0.9%	5.6%	2.8%
Global Studies	21-22	211	14	6	<b>6.6%</b>	1.9%	<b>10.7%</b>	<b>3.6%</b>
Global Studies	22-23	290	12	–	<b>8.7%*</b>	4.1%	<b>1%*</b>	<b>10.3%</b>
Vocational	20-21	388	7	0	1.8%	1%	0%	0%
Vocational	21-22	514	26	13	5.1%	1.8%	4.6%	1.4%
Vocational	22-23	583	12	–	4.2%*	2.1%	5.4%*	2.2%

During interviews, the need for all students to have Black teachers was shared by different groups of interviewees. One remarked, “I always think it’s better to have a wider representation of different ethnic backgrounds, teachers in school. I never had a black teacher in all of my education, school, college or [graduate] school. Teacher years of school. Never.” However, from 2021-2022 into 2022-2023, NSGS had a lower rate of retention among Black teachers and administrators than comparison schools.

**Table 4: Teacher and Administrator 21-22 to 22-23 Retention Across Comparison Group<sup>9</sup>**

School	# employed in 21-22	# not retained in 22-23	Overall retention rate	% Female retained	% Male retained	% Black retained	% Hispanic retained	% White retained	% Asian retained
Data Science	11	1	91%	100%	83%	100%	–	80%	100%
Fashion and Design	8	1	88%	100%	67%	75%	100%	100%	–
Global Studies	21	6	71%	60%	82%	<b>50%</b>	<b>66%</b>	86%	75%
Vocational	61	18	70%	69%	72%	59%	44%	88%	33%

NSGS also had a lower rate of retention of Black instructional staff than comparison schools and a lower overall (and consistently declining) percentage of Black teachers.

<sup>8</sup> \*Estimated EOY Mobility rates for SY22-23 were calculated using historical averages at each school for the number of students leaving between March 15 and the end of each year.

<sup>9</sup> As previously mentioned, the staff data obtained is complex and in some cases, misaligned across data sources. In the analysis of school-level staff data in Table 5, Creed sought to present data it deemed reliable (where overall trends held true across multiple sources) and relevant to this analysis (pertaining specifically to the mobility of Black staff at NSGS).

**Table 5: Staff Demographic Trends at NSGS (20-21 to 22-23)<sup>10</sup>**

Year	Role	# Staff	% Female	% Male	% Black	% Hispanic	% White	% Asian	% American Indian
20-21	Administrator	2	50%	50%	–	50%	50%	–	–
	Teacher	9	67%	33%	33%	33%	22%	11%	–
	Non-instructional	18	67%	33%	56%	39%	–	6%	–
	Overall	29	66%	34%	45%	38%	10%	7%	–
21-22	Administrator	2	50%	50%	–	50%	50%	–	–
	Teacher	19	47%	53%	21%	26%	32%	21%	–
	Non-instructional	19	68%	32%	53%	42%	–	5%	–
	Overall	40	58%	43%	35%	35%	18%	13%	–
22-23	Administrator	4	75%	25%	25%	25%	25%	–	25%
	Teacher	24	75%	25%	17%	21%	29%	33%	–
	Non-instructional	24	63%	38%	50%	42%	8%	–	–
	Overall	52	69%	31%	33%	31%	19%	15%	2%

For Black students and parents “school choice decisions are ongoing and ever-present and no optimal school exists-no choice is the “right” choice within educational systems marked by antiBlackness” (Possey-Maddox et al., 2021). The racialized and racist incidents Black students and teachers experienced at NSGS, particularly the burst between May and December 2022, ultimately overshadowed the benefits of the opportunities that drew them to the school and affected their decision-making about leaving the school.

## 5.5 Lack of Racial and Cultural Awareness and Understanding Devalues Black And Latino Identities.

### 5.5a NSGS is missing the opportunity to represent the diversity of its students’ lived experiences and aspirations within the environment and their learning.

NSGS is a newly renovated, well-maintained, and clean school. College-related “street signs,” such as Harvard Square, Think College Street, NJIT Place, and Rutgers Road, are placed in various locations throughout the hallways. But the overall tone and environment of the school lack the spirit and vitality typical of a high school. One interviewee commented, “They have the new floors, but in terms of what it should be for learning, it was very institutionalized...the white bare walls.” During observations, classroom transitions were quiet, and student interactions and exchanges were hushed. Most classrooms were arranged to allow for collaborative learning and discussion, yet were also noticeably quiet and muted. Students spent extended periods of time sitting silently, passively engaged in teacher-centered instruction, or sitting and engaging with a laptop. Complete silence and a lack of dialogue were prevalent within many classrooms

Bulletin boards in the hallways of the newly remodeled four-story building exhibited an array of displays, including historically significant world leaders like Haile Salisea and Dr. Martin Luther King, celebrations for Black and Women’s History Month, major news headlines from 2022, Mandarin and Arabic connections with Africa, and some displays of student work. For example, one display consisted of students translating famous

<sup>10</sup> Given mismatches in the quantitative data provided by the district, quantitative data provided by the school, and the qualitative data collected, Table 2 reflects the staff breakdown at NSGS for SY22-23 as accurately as possible. This data is further complicated as all three schools have added additional grade levels each year and the size of the staff subsequently increases. From this data, we infer a sharper decrease in Black teacher representation than in other ethnic subgroups year over year at NSGS.

quotes by Martin Luther King Jr. from English into Chinese Mandarin, while several other displays consisted of famous people in history along with short biographies of what they contributed to the world. These displays, however, did not demonstrate contemporary challenges, interdisciplinary connections, or the depth of critical thinking and knowledge anticipated by students, staff, and some of the parents interviewed. One teacher indicated that when she first came to NSGS, the walls were mostly bare and that the decorated bulletin boards were in response to Black students' complaints. Black and Latino students indicated their belief that the bulletins were decorated to impress outside visitors.

Many aspects of the school environment are characteristic of elementary and middle schools. This may be a result of the majority of NSGS instructional and support staff being hired without prior high school teaching experience, a pattern which surfaced across data sets in comments like: "A lot of the teachers too are, number one, new teachers. Well, number two, they are lower like elementary, middle school teachers. So the high school experience is brand new for many of the teachers." Most classroom walls are decorated with word walls and teacher-made or commercial materials (e.g. inspirational posters/pictures). Directional arrows on hallway floors created lanes to guide students' movement between periods. Loud siren-like timers often governed the amount of time allocated for various classroom activities and tasks, creating a feeling of institutionalized control. Some teachers and all student groups shared a similar view about the tone and culture of the school. "When I was in freshman year, half of them didn't come back for sophomore year. I know a lot of kids who transferred to different schools. Most of the time, this was before all of the racist news got out. Most people were saying, 'This school was just behind.' They didn't like how it felt like a middle school." Teachers indicated that the "elementary" and "middle schools" signs posted throughout classrooms were enforced by the administrative team. Some of these patterns may also be remnants of the safety and health protocols required during the pandemic.

The lack of exploration of global topics relevant to the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity represented in the student body is evident in the student artifacts exhibited throughout the school. These displays rarely demonstrated how students grappled with topics like geographical and linguistic diversity, economic interdependence and inequality, global political institutions, and international environmental challenges. The theme of global citizenship and global studies was often tied by staff to current events, specific celebrations such as Hispanic Heritage and Black History Months, and notable figures.

- "I will say for Social Studies in the world history class, I know that they were like current events is just not like local current events that are in New York or statewide or nationwide. It will look at events that are happening globally, how it's impacting many sources from different perspectives, not like for the United States."
- "I think what we are talking about, and beyond the language, is something we did in the beginning of the year for Hispanic Heritage Month and also with I think a Black History Month as well infusing it with different content areas, so giving teachers time to sort of plan okay, how will you going to infuse this within your lesson because all of it can be viewed it doesn't have to just be in history in English. Absolutely. I mean, science and math and all of that."
- "It was in PE. The PE teachers researched different games that were played for Hispanic Heritage Month, so they did like games. And I think they did it for African American history. Want to do like research different games, sports figures and different things globally."

The lack of thorough representation of students' heritage in the curriculum and environment demonstrates how the school environment was not designed to sustain the cultural and linguistic practices of Latino students. This subtractive approach to language acquisition places Spanish below a hierarchy of English, Mandarin, and Arabic (Valenzuela, 2005). However, both Black and Latino discussed how Spanish factored into the school. Latino students talked about how they often spoke Spanish during social situations; some Black students indicated they started to learn Spanish to better connect with their Latino peers.

### **5.5b Keeping the peace and being pleasant are misinterpreted as community.**

During observations, students had seemingly positive social interactions that are age-appropriate, including episodes of reserved laughter, joking around, chattiness, and congeniality. Students' peer interactions, which often occurred based on gender or ethnicity, appeared friendly. Boys were observed sitting together during lunch or hanging in the hallway across racial/ethnic groups more frequently than girls. In many interviews, the term "popular" was used to describe Black boys. Black girls clustered together in classes, transitions, and in the parking lot during lunch periods. While there were noticeable pleasant interactions between student racial/ethnic groups, the impact of the underlying racial tension between them was also discernible. Very often, observations of amicable cross-racial student interactions led many of the school staff interviewed to question, minimize, and invalidate the incidents and racial and cultural tensions publicly shared by Black students. For example, in one classroom, a Black girl was observed and overheard communicating a racialized comment about Black people she heard before arriving at the observed class to two Latino students before instruction began. While this student was clearly expressing frustration about anti-Black comments, she also trusted her Latino peers enough to confide in them about the incident.

Staff and student perceptions of the interactions and relationships between staff and students varied. A few accounts from staff interviews suggested that there were close, more harmonious connections between students and adults, exemplified by how the adults provided support, attended to their needs, listened actively, and advocated on behalf of students. Students also highlighted the importance of staff being available, providing advice and help, and advocating for students. "For me, he's my favorite teacher. He got some vibes and everything. I always talk to him. When I went to talk to him, he was always there. He always gives me advice or something..." "And even [teacher], who I mentioned before, [teacher] is an advocate and [teacher's] a great help, but [teacher's] not black so there's only so much [teacher] can do..."

Conversely, some examples shared by students indicated a lack of trust or rapport with the adults in the school. Some students expressed their concerns about the way some staff spoke to students and their lack of professionalism with comments like, "...You can't trust them" and "Some teachers are good, but others are immature in a lot of things, or they just don't pay mind to it, and they're not as fair." Some Black students indicated the tensions between some of their relationships and the experiences of racism as this student's comments surface: "I love some of my teachers, some of my friends made it worth it. But deep down, I just was like, 'I don't really know if I want to be here.'"

The principal's lack of visibility in and around the school was raised across stakeholders. Some students and staff viewed the principal as inaccessible and present only when "there were pictures being taken" and suggested that "when he was still here, he wasn't here. He wasn't a face we would see every day." This relational dynamic impacted how Black students perceived the principal's efforts to address the racial issues in the school. When talking about a pizza party held for Black students, some students felt providing pizza was an attempt to divert their attention away from serious racial matters and not an attempt to resolve the issues. Among some staff, the significance of the visibility of school leadership was expressed in terms of accountability, experience, and support. Communicating about decision-making, instructional and leadership expertise, and following up on incident reports and other issues surface in multiple interviews as concerns are shared among staff.

### **5.5c Administrators are perceived as ignoring or scapegoating teachers.**

There was a recurring theme of the administration not supporting teachers' concerns when shared with them. For example, one staff member shared, "I can see they [administration] are not listening to teachers. They're not listening." Though many interviewees knew about the racial incidents prior to the news reports, social media posts, and/or watching school board meetings, they indicated receiving very little information directly from the school administration. The lack of information shared by the school or district leadership about the incidents and



the public comments that they precipitated surfaced repeatedly among all participants. As one stakeholder shared, "Administration was asked point blank by a teacher at one point, like, can we just have a debriefing of what's going on? And the response was pretty much like no, like, I can just give you the facts, and I can't give you any interpretation... and then someone was like, well, we're all getting our information from different places, articles, board meetings. And, they are like, oh, well, you shouldn't be watching the board meetings and reading articles." The lack of proactive communication on these very public issues created a sense of anxiety, worry, and mistrust. One staff member said, "I feel like the silence is giving up. I feel like not addressing is giving up. Even the fact that Mr. Ruiz took a leave of absence, whether it was an administrative leave or medical leave or whatever kind of leave, it was that we were left in the dark as a staff. That's not cool. Like we are a family, and we deserve to know what's happening from his second in command, you know, like all the silence is just not acceptable."

While the news articles and public conversation about the racist incidents at NSGS focused on Black and Latino youth, the presence of "Asian teachers," who represented twenty-two percent of the reported staff demographics for 2022, repeatedly came up in meetings with district and school administrators. Comments often emphasized how Asian teachers do not understand the U.S. racial dynamics and how that may have contributed to the racial tension. Students did not identify Asian teachers as particularly culpable for the school culture. Some students pointed to instances where Asian teachers were also targets of derogatory comments and behaviors, noting specifically how students mocked their physical features, "They would make fun of her eyes." One interviewee expressed concern that a Mandarin teacher was being "tokenized" in the school's marketing.

Framing Black women and girls as easily triggered and angry was repeated across interviews. For example, "She is. How do I say this? She is easily triggered. And when she's triggered, she...like, won't want to share." When discussing the BSU advisor's influence over students many interviewees suggested she was an agitator and the reason Black students are unhappy or speaking out publicly, with comments like "They're very easily moved, Very easily, you know? And I could use the word manipulated." Instead of focusing on the systemic racism that Black women and girls are speaking up against, there was a sense of defensiveness. Three Black women teachers have resigned from the school, all from the same department. Most of the Black students who spoke at different public forums about the racial incidents were Black girls.

#### **5.5d Lack of planning and preparation fosters the marginalization and pushout of Black students and teachers.**

Under routine circumstances, the challenges involved in opening a new school cannot be overstated or underestimated. Across stakeholders, findings indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges at NSGS. Planning for the school's initial opening and eventual return to in-person learning showed gaps in the design, culture, and operations of the school. The 2020-2021 strategic plan focused on academic, attendance, and enrollment goals without providing goals or actions related to new school development or establishing NSGS's culture, and for doing so within the context of virtual learning and social isolation. From students' perspectives, the limited electives and extra-curricular opportunities offered when the school opened demonstrated inadequate planning for their learning. As a result, students expressed increasing disappointment about the discrepancy between how the school was marketed and what they actually received. School personnel reflected on the difficulty of being a new school, describing the added impact of a lack of systems, structures, and procedures. As one member of the NSGS staff stated, "Systems were not put in place, and we kind of had to start from scratch." Another staff member noted, "[when I started] I wasn't left with anything... I was very surprised. There was absolutely nothing here for me. There are no files. There were no books. There were no records...I was very, very surprised."

There is little to no evidence in our findings of the school having tailored goals to meet the specific needs of young people at NSGS. For example, the strategic plans for the current school year referenced data metrics, which remain broad in the areas of achievement, attendance, and enrollment without the context of baselines

that may have informed the outcomes set. In the enrollment section of the strategic plan specifically, there was no reference to the relatively high rate of absenteeism (see Appendix, Figure 3), low acceptance and enrollment rates, (see Table 2) or rising levels of mobility (see Table 3) amongst Black students at NSGS. Further, no plans were raised to address the disproportionately high number of Black teachers who have left the school over the last two years (see Table 4).

The lesson plans reviewed as part of the observation indicated that instructional planning, which is core to student learning experiences and outcomes, was inconsistent in format, content, and quality. While most of the lesson plans followed the “NSGS Learning Template,” a weekly unit planning document, nearly 20 percent of the lesson plans received deviated from the template. The lesson plans received in the official format were not completed with a shared degree of purpose, rigor, or appreciation for the value of lesson planning to student learning. For example, some lesson plans included the same “Learning Intention” for five consecutive days of instruction. “Do Nows” did not reflect planning for student engagement and were rarely presented as “hooks” designed to draw students into a lesson. Very few lesson plans demonstrated knowledge of or planning for how to modify or differentiate lessons based on learning needs or styles. Learning activities were vague, lacked an emphasis on instructional strategies, or were missing altogether, making references such as “Learn some new vocabulary related to the lesson and write it in the notebook” and “See slide presentation/student document.”

Staff identified a pervasive sense of isolation and disconnection with each other across grade levels and outside of their content areas. This evidences a lack of planning for collaboration. Compartmentalization by grade level separated and confined students and teachers to assigned floors. Both student and teacher comments about the racial incidents and their relationships with other students and staff indicated that they generally do not know or interact with each other across grade levels. Teachers in some content areas indicated that they were unable to physically recognize students in the 11th grade who were their students in the 9th during the virtual learning of the pandemic. Others stated they had no interactions with students outside of the grade level they taught. Isolation was often communicated by staff in regard to a lack of knowledge about the racial incidents which occurred in the 11th grade, for example, “I remember when the issues came, came about, you know, I was surprised that a lot of things that were what that was being said, I was unaware of some things that actually happen because a lot of it came from the [redacted] grade, I’ve never really had many interactions with the [redacted] grade...” Black teachers who experienced and witnessed racial harm connected with one another and crossed floor-level boundaries. These activities were met with suspicion.

Planning for how the school affirms Latin American cultures did not surface beyond Hispanic Heritage Month. This lack of representation in the curriculum was not widely critiqued among Latinos. Some Latino staff and parents indicated that they were used to compartmentalizing their cultural identity from their academic and professional expectations. This compartmentalization was not only evident in interviewees’ responses but also in classroom observations. For example, in one classroom, the walls were decorated with images of white men, including, for example, George Washington, who is not historically significant to the content area of the class. Black participants critiqued the lack of Black representation within NSGS. They were critical of the sudden burst of activities around Black History Month, especially after the reports of racial tensions came out in the news and external visitors started to observe the school. Some staff acknowledged the focus on Black History Month was a reactive effort to appease students and quell the tension.

#### **5.5e Professional learning activities do not align with staff members’ needs for learning about the impacts of history and systemic racism and creating culturally responsive-sustaining learning.**

The school and district administration has not cultivated an environment that encourages staff to individually and collaboratively examine and challenge their own assumptions to address hard-to-discuss topics (e.g., deficit thinking, implicit bias, and forms of racism). The DRT observed some attempts by school administrators to address professional development through their facilitation of the book *Courageous Conversations About Race*. There was little to no evidence of contextualizing why the staff was reading this particular book or how it should

be applied in the context of the school. This prompted one faculty member to share the following sentiment from a colleague, "I don't understand why we're doing this, like why aren't we talking about the elephant in the room?" Other staff members also talked about not really reading the book nor having the time to discuss the content in depth. Our observation of a faculty meeting where chapters of the book were discussed revealed a very superficial discussion about elements of the book with limited engagement from school personnel around the content. Much of the staff interviewed indicated the discussions felt like surface-level conversations that lacked transparency and support, and limited their capacity to understand and address the issues as a school community. Professional learning communities as a forum for learning about how to address and integrate these issues into student learning or for theme-based, interdisciplinary, and vertical collaboration did not surface in our data collection.

The school administration did not identify patterns of anti-Blackness across quantitative and qualitative data to inform professional development activities. By not paying attention to these trends across the school and proactively addressing the concerns voiced by students and school personnel, there was a missed opportunity to address the professional learning needs of instructional staff to be responsive to these issues as a part of student learning.

## **Appendix 1: Background**

### **1.1 Initiation**

On November 29, 2022, Superintendent León contacted Creed Strategies via email to connect Creed Strategies with Principal Ruiz for a discussion about Creed Strategies providing assistance to the school. On December 1, 2022, Principal Ruiz shared background on the racial incidents occurring at NSGS with Lauren Wells, the President and Founder of Creed Strategies, in a phone call that lasted approximately 40 minutes. During this phone call, Dr. Wells indicated she would like to know more about the school before providing recommendations or specific support. Dr. Wells suggested that a team from Creed conduct an assessment of the school that would gather data from various sources to understand the specific context of the racial incidents and the school. Mr. Ruiz supported this suggestion, requested a proposal, and invited Dr. Wells to attend an upcoming open house for prospective freshmen on December 3, 2022 and a faculty meeting scheduled for December 14, 2022.

### **1.2 Diagnostic Review Proposal**

An initial proposal for a Diagnostic Review of NSGS was submitted via email to Mr. Ruiz on December 7, 2022. A final proposal which included edits correcting the school name (which incorrectly appears in several emails and documents as Global Studies High School or GSHS), was submitted by Dr. Wells on December 9, 2022. The purpose of the diagnostic review is to develop recommendations:

- to assist NSGS promote positive racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious dynamics in the school culture and learning environment; and
- to build the school’s “understanding of diversity and how students, families, and colleagues have multiple sociocultural markers that intersect in nuanced and unique ways” in educational communities (Boveda, 2019).

On December 14, 2022, Deputy Superintendent, Nicole Johnson, confirmed the proposed scope of work would be conducted under a contract awarded to Creed Strategies by the NBOE for the 2022-2023 school year to provide professional development and support services in the area of equity.

On January 27, 2023, Creed Strategies received a draft Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) from the Office of Policy, Planning, Evaluation, and Testing (OPPET) to collect the data identified in the proposed Diagnostic Review. A final DSA approved by the NBOE was signed by Creed Strategies and returned to the NBOE on February 16, 2023.

### **1.3 Pre-Project and Official Project Interactions**

Dr. Wells attended the December 3, 2022 open house, at which time she briefly observed Arabic and Mandarin presentations for prospective students and their parents/guardians conducted by Arabic teacher, Dr. Khalil, and Mandarin teacher, Ms. Yin. Dr. Wells observed a short question-and-answer session in the main hallway of the school, where Mr. Ruiz interacted with prospective students and their parents. Dr. Wells met with Mr. Ruiz for 20 minutes after the open house, during which time Mr. Ruiz expressed a need for support to address the racial incidents and escalating racial tension at the school.

Dr. Wells attended an NSGS faculty meeting on December 14, 2022, at which time she shared the scope of the proposal for the Diagnostic Review with the school’s administrative and instructional staff.

Creed Strategies and school and district administration, including Superintendent Roger León, Deputy Superintendent Nicole Johnson, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Maria Ortiz, Principal Nelson Ruiz, and Assistant Principal Hoda Abdelwahab, met via Zoom on January 30, 2023. The Special Assistant to the Superintendent, Kenneth Montalbano, and Chief of Staff, Javier Nazario, were also present in the Superintendent's office. The purpose of this meeting was to introduce the members of Creed's Diagnostic Review Team (DRT), gather background information from district and school administrative teams, describe the data collection process and needs, and answer any questions for the school and district administrative teams.

Official engagement of Creed Strategies, which began on February 22, 2023, included the following in-district and school-based data collection activities.

- February 22, 2023: Dr. Wells and Mr. Comesañas met with Superintendent León and Assistant Superintendent Dr. Ortiz to review the official racial incident reports filed by the school. The official incident reports were not provided to Creed Strategies during this meeting. 11 formally reported incidents were verbally shared with the members of the DRT by district administration.
- February 23, 2023: Inquiry groups with students and an informal school walkthrough and classroom observations were conducted.
- March 8, 2023: Check-in and inquiry meeting with Assistant Principal Hoda Abdelwahab, informal observation of NSGS classrooms, and participation in NSGS faculty meeting were conducted.
- March 29, 2023: Inquiry groups with school staff were conducted.
- April 19, 2023: DRT met in-district to analyze data.

The scope of these activities is discussed in more detail in the Methods section of this report.

#### 1.4 Creed Strategies Team

The DRT for the data collection process was comprised of six individuals with complementary backgrounds in research, school leadership, and data analysis. The members of the DRT were representative of the school demographics and possessed extensive educational expertise. The table below represents the team's background characteristics.

Name	Ethnicity	Gender	Teacher	School Leader	Researcher
Nina Alstrom	W	F	No	No	Yes
Mildred Boveda, Ed.D.	L	F	Yes	No	Yes
Tonya Breland, Ed.D.	B	F	Yes	Yes	No
Mark Comesañas	L	M	Yes	Yes	No
Lauren Wells, Ph.D.	B	F	Yes	No	Yes
Mayida Zaal, Ph.D.	L	F	Yes	No	Yes

Resumes for the DRT members were provided to the district and school administration on January 27, 2023. Cumulatively, the DRT included the following expertise.

- Qualitative and quantitative research
- School and district leadership

- Muslim youth and islamophobia in Schools
- Race, ethnicity, and culture in Schools
- Intersectional identities and competencies
- Culturally responsive-sustaining education

After data collection was completed, Dr. Zaal exited the project. Data analysis and development of the report were completed by the remaining five DRT members.

## Appendix 2: Methods

The data collection process began with student inquiry groups. This was done to center the voices, perspectives, experiences, and aspirations of NSGS students in the diagnostic review process, particularly those of Black students. The data collected in the student inquiry groups guided the development of all subsequent protocols and served as an anchor in the analysis of the data gathered across data sources. The findings in this report are based on the analysis of five data sets collected between February 23, 2023, and March 29, 2023. Each data collection method is described in the following sections.

### 2.1 February 23, 2023: Student Inquiry Groups

Three inquiry groups with students were conducted. These groups represented the demographics of the school as well as the students involved in the reported incidents. A total of 23 students participated in the inquiry groups.

### 2.2 March 8: Classroom Observations and Faculty Meeting

A common observation protocol was used to conduct classroom observations. The protocol, developed with an emphasis on evidence of culturally responsive-sustaining education, includes four domains: relationships, environment, student engagement, and teaching and learning. Guiding questions for each domain are below.

- **Relationships:** What strategies are used to build relationships with students and to help them build relationships with other students?
- **Environment:** Does the environment communicate a space of affirmation, belonging, cultural affinity, collaboration, high intellectual performance, and agency for learning?
- **Student Engagement:** How are students shown a belief in their genius and the genius of their community? How is this belief nurtured in the classroom, school, and district?
- **Teaching and Learning:** Do all students have access to - and are actively and meaningfully engaged in - rigorous instruction through the use of culturally, linguistically, historically, and socially-emotionally responsive curricular materials, instruction, and support?

The DRT members observed instruction in twenty-two classrooms beginning with the morning Advisory Period and throughout the duration of the school day. Seventeen of these classrooms were observed twice by two different DRT members. DRT members documented direct observations in each classroom in each domain. During this school visit, DRT members also attended an after-school faculty meeting.

### 2.3 March 13 to March 25: One-on-one Interviews

Twenty-one one-on-one interviews were conducted between March 13 and March 31. 19 interviews were conducted by Black and Latin@ interviewer teams. Two interviews were conducted by individual interviewers, one Black and one Afro-Latina. 20 interviews were conducted over Zoom and one in person. Verbal consent for each interview was recorded at the beginning of each interview. A total of 25 hours of interviews and 300 pages of transcriptions resulted from the one-on-one interviews.

The interviewee sample includes current and former school staff, parents, elected officials, and community leaders. The table below provides the demographic breakdown of interviewees.

Race/Ethnicity				Gender	
Black	Latin@	White	Other	Female	Male
6	9	4	2	15	6

Because of the small size of the school, a breakdown of interviewees by role, professional descriptors, or stakeholder group would compromise participant anonymity and confidentiality. However, the following characteristics were represented among interview participants:

- Raised in Newark
- Attended Newark Public Schools for elementary and/or high school
- Current residents and non-residents of Newark
- New to the school or district
- Part of the NSGS school community since its inception

All interviews followed a protocol that included questions in each of the following areas:

- Background and relationship to NSGS
- Knowledge of NSGS
- Experiences with NSGS
- Knowledge of racial incidents/issues at NSGS
- Responses to racial incidents/issues at NSGS
- NSGS's relationship with the community
- Uses of the data collected by the DRT
- Motivations for participating in a one-on-one interview

#### 2.4 March 29: Focus Meetings

Focus Meetings were conducted with department chairs and school support staff. The focus meetings were conducted using customized protocols that emphasized instruction and student supports as distinct areas of inquiry related to the racial incidents/issues at the school. Each focus meeting lasted approximately one hour.

#### 2.5 Quantitative Data Analysis

OPPET and HRS provided multiple student- and staff-level quantitative datasets for NSGS and three NPS comparison schools for this report. The three comparison schools included in this study were selected based on similarities to NSGS, including having newly opened within the past three years, adding a 9th-grade class each year since opening, and having magnet school status. These comparison schools are Newark School of Fashion & Design, Newark School of Data Science and Information Technology, and Newark Vocational High School. These data are used throughout this report to contextualize analyses and support qualitative findings.

#### 2.6 Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed through an inductive and iterative process which allowed for relationships to emerge within and between the content of all five of the data sets. Content analysis of the data collected was conducted to identify trends, patterns, and themes. Thematic coding was utilized to develop key insights into the data and quantify occurrences within themes. The findings in this report are organized based on the themes that emerged through the triangulation of data across the data sets. Triangulation involves the use of different methods and the collection of multiple data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon (Bhattacharya, 2017). Triangulation can also serve to enhance the trustworthiness of findings through the convergence of multiple sources.



## **Appendix 3:**

### **Newark School of Global Studies: Student Inquiry Protocol**

#### **Introductions:**

We are researchers from Creed Strategies, LLC, who have been asked by the Newark Board of Education (NBOE) to assess the culture and climate of the Newark School of Global Studies. The purpose of this study is to help Global Studies promote positive racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious dynamics in the school culture and learning environment.

You have been invited to participate in this research because you are/were a student at Global Studies.

Before we begin, do you have any questions you would like us to answer?

#### **Questions:**

1. Begin with an identity map. Draw an image that represents all the ways you identify. You can use images, symbols, and words to create your map.
2. Tell us what it's like for you to be a student at Global Studies.
  - a. How does your identity shape your experiences at Global Studies?
3. What do you know about the issues occurring between students at Global Studies?
  - a. Why do you think these incidents are occurring?
  - b. How have the incidents impacted you?
  - c. What role does social media play in the issues occurring between students?
4. What are Black students' experiences at Global Studies?
5. From your perspective, what has happened to address these issues?
  - a. What do you think should happen?
6. How do you think we can use the information we will learn to help the school?
7. Who else do you think we should talk with?

#### **Closing:**

8. Is there anything you would like us to know about Global Studies that we didn't ask you?

# Newark School of Global Studies: Interview Protocol

## Introductions:

We are researchers from Creed Strategies who have been asked by the Newark Board of Education (NBOE) to assess the culture and climate of the Newark School of Global Studies. The purpose of this study is to help Global Studies promote positive racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious dynamics in the school culture and learning environment.

You have been invited to participate in this research because you are/were a:

- Staff Member of NSGS
- Parent of a Student at NSGS
- Member of the Newark Board of Education (NBOE)
- Newark Board of Education (NBOE) Administrator
- Community Member Associated with NSGS

Before we begin, do you have any questions you would like us to answer?

## Questions:

1. Tell us a little bit about yourself...What is your relationship to the Newark School of Global Studies?
  - a. **All:** What is your racial and ethnic background? What languages do you speak at home?
2. Based on your knowledge of NSGS, what can you tell us about the school in general? For example, what is its mission? How is it similar to or different from other Newark Public Schools?
3. Experiences with the school:
  - a. **Staff:** What is it like to work at NSGS?
  - b. **Staff:** What were your expectations of the school when you started working?
  - c. **Parent:** What has your child shared with you about being a student at NSGS?
  - d. **Parent:** What has your experience as a parent of an NSGS student been?
  - e. **Parent:** What were your expectations of the school when you enrolled your child?
  - f. **Board Member:** What have your experiences as a Board member been with NSGS?
4. What do you know about the issues occurring between students at Global Studies?
  - a. **All:** What issues do you have knowledge of?
  - b. **All:** When did you become aware of these issues?
  - c. **All:** How did you learn about the issues occurring at NSGS?
  - d. **All:** Why do you think these issues are occurring?
  - e. **Staff:** What are Black students' experiences at NSGS?
  - f. **Staff:** How have students been impacted by these issues?
    - i. How have Black students been impacted by these issues?
    - ii. How have Latino/a students' been impacted by these issues?
  - g. **Staff:** How have you been impacted by these incidents? Your classes? Your interactions at the school?
  - h. **Board Member:** What were your interactions with NSGS before the incidents at NSGS became public? What have your interactions been since?
  - i. **Board Member:** What do you think the role of the Board is in addressing these issues?
  - j. **Parent:** How has your child been impacted by these issues?
  - k. **Parent:** Have you talked to your child about these issues? If so, would you mind sharing how you talked to them?
5. From your perspective, what has happened to address these issues?

- a. *All:* How do you think issues such as these should be addressed?
- b. *All:* What should the school do?
- c. *All:* What should the district do?
- d. *All:* What do you think students should learn in school about race, ethnicity, and culture?
  - i. *Teachers:* Probe around content and instruction
  - ii. *Administrators:* Probe around instructional support
- e. *All:* What support does the school need to address these and other issues like them?
6. How would you describe the school's relationship with the community?
  - a. *All:* Based on your knowledge, how is the school perceived by the community?
  - b. *All:* Based on your knowledge what organizations, businesses, neighborhoods, and community members does the school have relationships with?
    - i. What other organizations might the school partner with?
  - c. *All:* What role does the community have in addressing issues such as these?
7. *All:* How do you think we can use the information we will learn to help the school?
8. *All:* Why did you want to do this interview with us?
9. *All:* Who else do you think we should talk with

**Closing:**

10. *All:* Is there anything you would like us to know about NSGS that we didn't ask you?

## Department Chair: Focus Meeting Questions

We are researchers from Creed Strategies who have been asked by the Newark Board of Education (NBOE) to assess the culture and climate of the Newark School of Global Studies. The purpose of this study is to help Global Studies promote positive racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious dynamics in the school culture and learning environment.

You have been invited to participate in this research because you are/were a:

- Staff Member of NSGS
- Parent of a Student at NSGS
- Member of the Newark Board of Education (NBOE)
- Newark Board of Education (NBOE) Administrator
- Community Member Associated with NSGS

Before we begin, do you have any questions you would like us to answer?

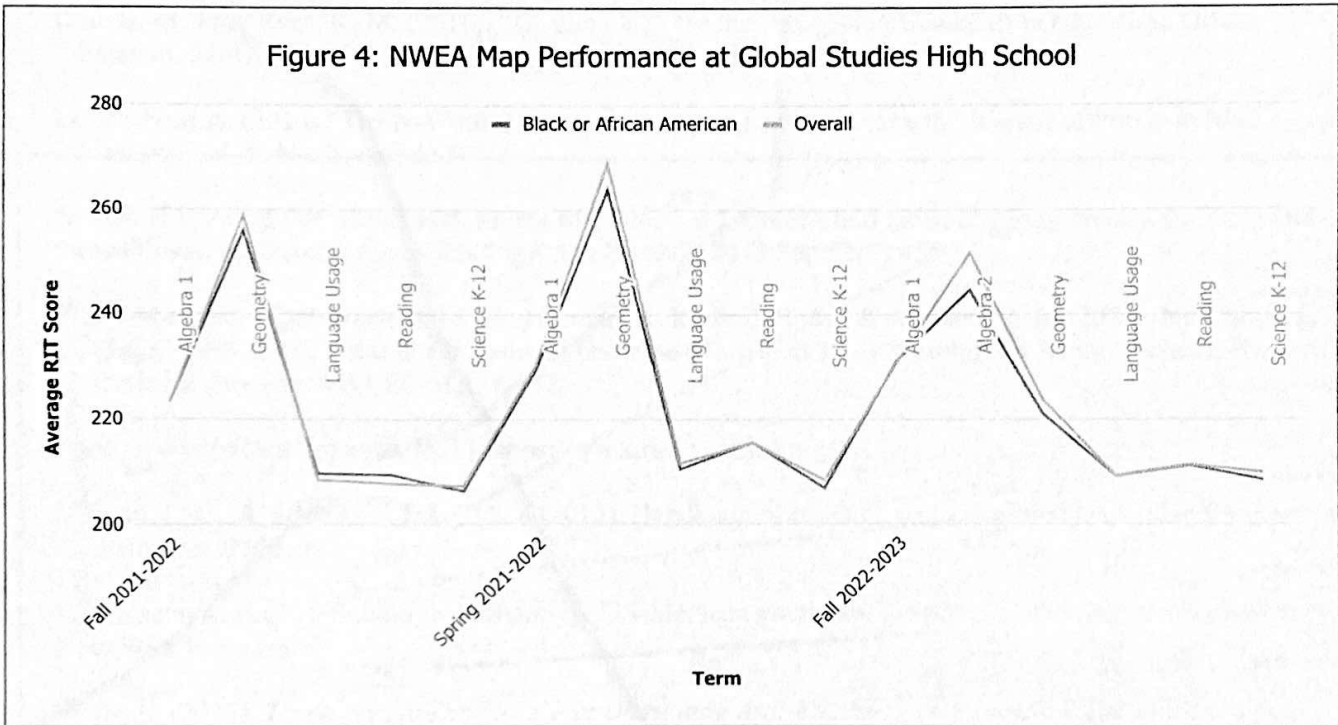
1. Given where the school is today, what do you think the school might have done differently?
2. When opening or joining the leadership team at Global Studies, what were your expectations for district support?
3. How would you characterize your teaching staff?
4. What experience do you think is essential to being a teacher, counselor etc., at Global Studies?
5. What should instruction look like at a school like global studies?
6. How do you know or measure instruction that represents the mission of global studies?
7. What strategies do teachers use to build relationships with students and to help them build relationships with other students?
8. Environment (Does the environment communicate a space of affirmation, belonging, cultural affinity, collaboration, high intellectual performance, etc.?)
9. How is the belief in students and the genius of their community demonstrated in the curriculum? Instruction? How is this belief nurtured in the classroom and school?
10. How does the curriculum culturally, linguistically, and historically reflect the students, their communities, and Newark? How does it make connections between students' lived experiences and the world?
11. How do race, culture, and ethnicity factor into the culture and climate of Global Studies?
12. In what ways are you equipped to deal with issues of race, culture, and ethnicity?
13. What kinds of data do you collect?

## Appendix 4: Academic Achievement and Student Data

**Table 6: 2022 PSAT Participation and Mean Scores at NSGS**

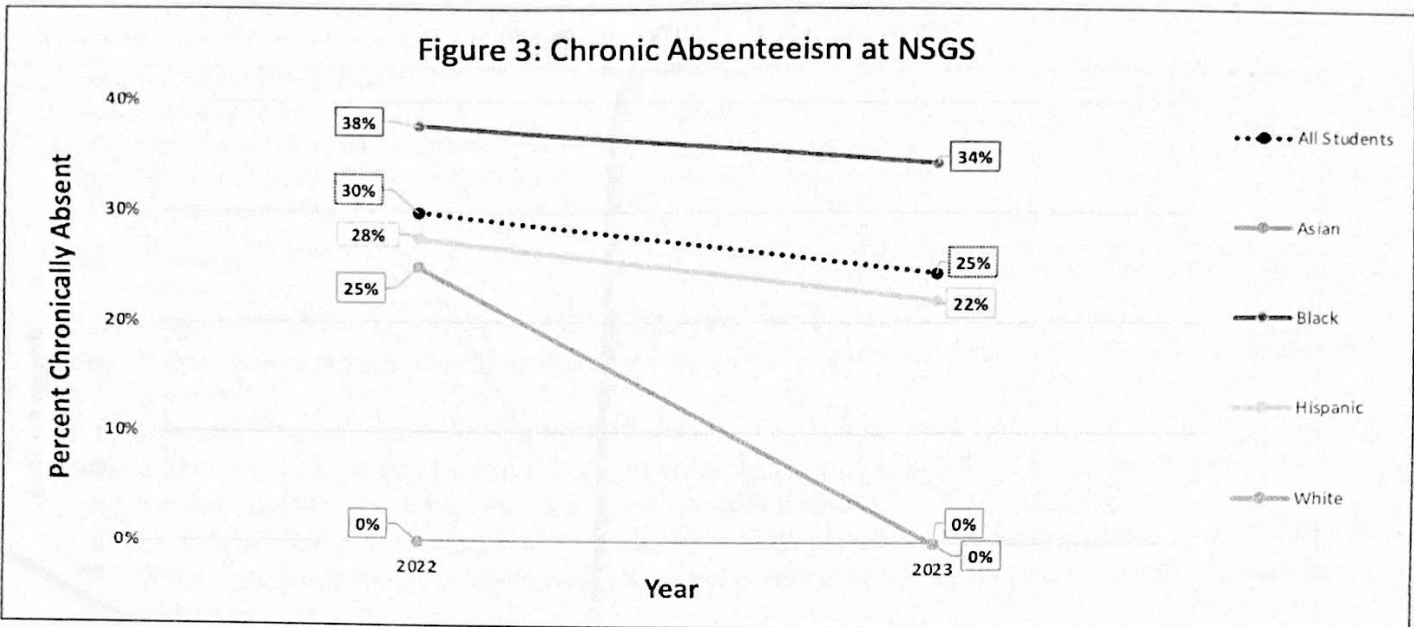
Metric	Grade	Overall (n=203)	Black Students (n=53)	Hispanic Students (n=145)	White Students (n=4)	Asian Students (n=1)
<b>Participation Rate</b>	9	87%	80%	91%	100%	100%
	10	89%	96%	86%	100%	–
<b>Mean Total Score</b>	9	769	772	766	820	820
	10	831	820	838	750	–
<b>Mean EBRW Score</b>	9	390	405	383	445	390
	10	408	405	410	400	–
<b>Mean Math Score</b>	9	379	367	383	445	440
	10	422	415	428	350	–

**Figure 4: NWEA Map Performance at Global Studies High School**



NSGS's 2022-2023 Strategic Plan states, "Research shows that there is a direct correlation between consistent attendance to school and student achievement. Therefore our focus is to maintain a high attendance rate." Despite this priority and the creation of metrics and strategies to address chronic absenteeism, data shows that while the one significantly larger school in the comparison group had higher chronic absenteeism rates overall, the rates at NSGS have consistently been two to three times greater than in the other two comparison schools in this study. Most notably, a higher percentage of Black students (38% in 2021-2022 and 34% in 2022-2023) have been chronically absent compared to other subgroups and the school overall.

Figure 3: Chronic Absenteeism at NSGS



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