

Supporting the Well Being of Students: Practices from Interdistrict Integration Programs

“...merely putting a diverse set of children into schools together is not enough to ensure that they will thrive, both academically and socially.”



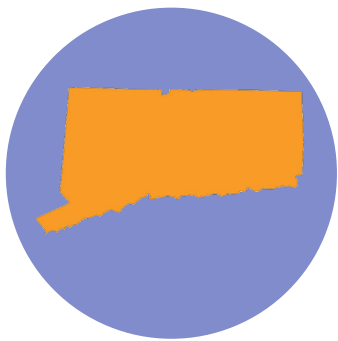
VICC

4,400 students from St. Louis, Missouri are enrolled in surrounding suburban schools



METCO

3,281 students from Boston and Springfield, Massachusetts are enrolled in close to 40 suburban schools



OPEN CHOICE

The Hartford Open Choice program serves 2,300 students who attend schools in almost 30 suburban towns and Hartford. There are also smaller Open Choice programs in Bridgeport and New Haven



URBAN-SUBURBAN

600+ students from Rochester, New York are enrolled in 15 participating districts

Most promising practices:

Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation (VICC)

Encouraging Students’ Participation in Rigorous Coursework

- *Chesterfield, MO:* Schools use the Equal Opportunities Schools system to help identify students of color who are qualified for high-level classes. Evaluations have shown that over time, increasing the percentage of minority students in AP courses helps to eliminate the stereotype that only white students achieve on high levels and belong in AP/Honors classes. It also helps to boost academic motivation and achievement, and to increase students' likelihood of going to and graduating from college.
- *Chesterfield, MO:* Schools also take part in the Spirit of Excellence Awards that recognize black students from across the district who are earning a GPA of at least 3.5.

Open Choice

Developing Students Leadership Capacities

- *Hartford, CT:* Students can engage in the Youth Empowerment Summit (YES) during April vacation. YES helps to teach students leadership and networking skills, and allows them to partake in conversations about diversity and inclusion. Through this program, students have the opportunity to celebrate their community and culture, and to be inspired by other students in the Hartford community.

Ensuring Teachers are Culturally Competent

- *Hartford, CT:* The annual Leadership Institute helps staff and administration understand implicit bias and the impact it has on student achievement. Educators learn about white privilege and restorative justice practices, and learn ways to ensure that students feel valued and included in their schools. At the end of the Institute, educators have the opportunity to devise an improvement plan for their schools related to cultural competency.

Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO)

Encouraging Students’ Participation in Rigorous Coursework

- *Bedford, MA:* The LA2 Tenacity Challenge engages students of color from across Massachusetts in scholarly competition. Students work in teams to engage in college-level research and analysis. Evaluations have shown that students are motivated by the opportunity to compete with other African-American and Latino students who are similarly engaged in rigorous studies and intellectual risk-taking.

Successfully Recruiting Teachers of Color

- *Newton, MA:* Schools make it a priority to hire teachers of color. Administrators engage in different strategies to achieve this, including: reaching out to affinity groups to recruit colleagues from their own personal networks.
- *Newton, MA:* Teachers must take part in cultural competency training through an outside provider within the first five years of being hired.

Offering Targeted Support for Girls of Color

- *Bedford, MA:* Schools have high school senior girls of color meet with middle school girls of color. These meetings offer the older girls the opportunity to share challenges and advice with the younger students.
- *Bedford, MA:* Lunch groups run by faculty members also surface students’ challenges and provide peer support to girls of color.

Collaborate to Ensure Students' Social-Emotional Well-Being

- *Brookline, MA:* METCO directors work collaboratively with local mental health clinics to provide students with a place to come together and engage in identity development work. The Brotherhood and Sisters Towards Success offer mentorship, academic advice and support from high school seniors, faculty members, and doctoral level clinicians of color to middle and high schoolers. These groups encourage students to share experiences that they are having with racism and stereotypes, and to engage in discussion about how to combat prejudice.

