YOUTH TALK BACK SERIES

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Bridge to Success
Community Partnership

WATERBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Board of Education Meeting
May 16, 2019 at WAMS Atrium
MEET THE FACILITATORS

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About BTS

Engage. Empower. Inform. -- In 2010, Waterbury Bridge to Success (BTS) was established as Connecticut's first Cradle to Career youth initiative.

BTS is a cross sector partnership of over 90 community and civic leaders, educators and organizations working collectively to achieve equitable change by empowering Waterbury's youth to be successful in school, career and life.
On October 26, 2018, shortly after the official premiere, BTS organized a private screening of “The Hate U Give”. The screening was coupled with a youth panel and took place at Brass Mill Center. More than 90 youth providers and youth attended.

While we wanted the event to be fun, its main objective was to provide an opportunity for youth to learn about events that are familiar to them, and offer a platform where they can be heard.
“It was amazing. This was the most interesting class I’ve ever experienced! I want to learn more.”

African American girl, 15
Kennedy High School
87% OF YOUTH & ALL PROVIDERS THAT ATTENDED (STRONGLY) AGREED THAT THE EVENTS DEPICTED IN THE MOVIE ARE RELEVANT TO WATERBURY.

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DATA

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Survey data was collected among 49 youth and 14 providers. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of the providers identified as female and 21% as male.

Only 8% of the providers identified as Hispanic while a quarter (23%) of the youth did. Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the providers identified as Black/African American and 15% identified as White. The majority of providers (85%) identified as straight (15% as bisexual).
Nearly a quarter (23%) of all students surveyed identified as Hispanic/Latinx
Youth identified that they could most relate to the images and themes of "racism" and "speaking up for their rights" as depicted in the film.
OBJECTIVE

Provide youth with the language and knowledge they need to best articulate their realities, their histories, and current events surrounding race, racism, oppression and liberation.

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Provide a safe and equitable space where honest and transparent conversations around these topics are a key strategy in building community and youth civic engagement.
CORE VALUES & BELIEFS

YOUTH ARE CAPABLE OF HAVING CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE

EFFECTIVE EDUCATION CENTERS JOY

BALANCING SAFETY AND DISCOMFORT

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HEAL YOURSELF, HEAL THE COLLECTIVE

SPEAKING EQUITY

REIMAGINING A LIBERATED SCHOOL CULTURE & CLIMATE

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IDENTITY: RECLAIMING OUR OWN STORIES

VIOLENCE: UNDERSTANDING OPPRESSION

LIBERATION: MOVEMENT BUILDING AS A FORM OF HEALING

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Youth Talk BACK!
AT THE WOW/NRZ COMMUNITY CENTER
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During the 2nd & 3rd session, students shared experiences with racial discrimination, inequities, intentional and unintentional racism, etc. and how this contributes to the overall school culture. This conversation was broken into two separate sessions, the first focusing primarily on student experiences with administration, staff and teachers and the second on students’ peer relationships.
STUDENTS IDENTIFIED THREE KEY BARRIER A TO HEALTHY SCHOOL CULTURE

- Disengaging teaching methods
- Lack of trust between students and teachers
- Unhealthy peer relationships

THE TOP TWO RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE SCHOOL CULTURE WERE

Staff that represents the students
- Culturally responsive curricula & student engagement

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How impactful was each topic that we discussed?

- **Terms & Definitions**: 5 Neutral, 6 Impactful, 1 Very Impactful
- **School Culture Part I**: 1 Neutral, 6 Impactful, 0 Very Impactful
- **School Culture Part II**: 0 Neutral, 6 Impactful, 1 Very Impactful
- **Identity**: 5 Neutral, 5 Impactful, 2 Very Impactful
- **Violence**: 7 Neutral, 7 Impactful, 0 Very Impactful
- **Liberation**: 7 Neutral, 7 Impactful, 0 Very Impactful

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In the last part of this series, participants, parents/caregivers and district personnel gathered to learn about past and current racial justice movements and their objectives. As a final project, attendees worked in groups to imagine a racial equity campaign that would address identified disparities in Waterbury. From criminal justice reform to youth-led programming, participants visualized meaningful solutions to problems that directly affect their ability to succeed.

One workgroup attended the Board of Education meeting later that night to present their push for “Programs, not Prisons” with respects to Waterbury’s increasing rate of juvenile arrests.
“I’ve seen my son’s vocabulary improve since he started. I see an interest and a commitment from him to come to every class and learn more. He wants to be here.”

Mother of African American boy, 17, Sacred Heart High School

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Youth Talk BACK!
AT WATERBURY HOSPITAL SUMMER BRIDGE PROGRAM

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Thirty seven (37) students completed the complete series, representing different Waterbury schools and grade levels. The majority of participants identified as African-American/Black (44%). More than half (55%) of participants identified as Latinx of various racial identities. Nearly half (47%) were in 7th or 8th grades, while over a quarter (28%) were high school upperclassman in 11th and 12th grades.
52% Middle School Students

Participant Demographics

By Grade

44% Black/African American

Participant Demographics

By Race

Which topic meant the most to you?

Choose Top 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>First Choice</th>
<th>Second Choice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terms &amp; Definitions</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Culture</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Post surveys indicated that Identity was the most meaningful class to the participants. Students engaged in discussions and activities that explored the ways our understanding of race and interaction with racism impact self image. This was an opportunity for young people to both identify the origins and impacts of racial messaging and reclaim their own narratives.
“This makes me want to create a movement with my friends and family!”

Puerto Rican girl, 11th grade
Waterbury Arts Magnet School
With a slightly altered curriculum to fit the Summer Bridge Program schedule, The Series spanned over 2 months with four, 2-hour sessions to discuss the following topics:

- Racial Equity Terms & Definitions
- School Culture
- Identity
- Healing & Liberation
I am not your servant.
I am not your maid.
I am not your prisoner.
I AM my own.

I am not a robot.
I am not electronic.
I am not someone you can put in a box.
I AM change.

Cycle 2: Waterbury Hospital Summer Bridge Program, 2019
YTB! at Berkeley Heights Community Center

YTB! at Duggan & Reed School

Creation & Community Release of Official Provider's Toolkit

Train-the-trainer for providers & youth leaders

Public exhibit of students' I AM poems

NEXT STEPS

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THANK YOU