

Strengthening Partnerships Between Durham Public Schools and Local Universities

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Background

Through a collaboration between Duke and North Carolina Central University (NCCU) students, staff, and faculty, we have worked with Durham Public Schools (DPS) to advance the university-assisted community schools model. This year, we have identified three main areas where universities can partner with schools to address community needs: data visualization, health services, and anti-racist curriculum.

Research Questions

- Q1 How do we build a robust online dashboard that prepares undergraduate students, DPS teachers, and DPS parents to understand their neighborhoods through an asset-based perspective?
- Q2 Can community schools serve as hubs for broad health services that meet the needs of community members inside and outside public school buildings?
- Q3 How do we best prepare undergraduate students and volunteers to enter Durham Public School classrooms with a critical lens for race, class, and the history of Durham?

Data+ Dashboard pinpointing DPS schools, zones, and beneficial community resources



SCAN ME

Figure of DPS reduced lunch rates and distances from health centers *Glenn Elementary highlighted



SCAN ME

Video preview depicting an outline and walk-through of the Anti-Racism Curriculum



SCAN ME

Q1: Data Team

Goal: Develop a public online dashboard that fosters an asset-based understanding of DPS neighborhoods

Methods

1. Identified key data points to include such as priority schools, school zones, community resources, etc.
2. Researched other dashboards and community school models
3. Hosted focus group with principals for feedback
4. Utilized R and R Shiny to create the final dashboard

Findings

The data plus team found that there was a need for our dashboard to be sustainable and more language inclusive so that Spanish speakers would be able to access the information as well. We also found that DPS principals want the information to be easy to digest and be utilized by parents and community members.

Q2: Health Team

Goal: Determine the need for community schools in Durham to serve as health service hubs

Methods

1. Identified which Durham Public Schools served high percentages of free and reduced lunches *and* had limited access to health clinics
2. Contacted the 11 Durham Public Schools that met both criteria
3. Created flyers to be passed out in person at schools
4. Delivered flyers to administrators in each school
5. Reached out to Parent Teacher Association
6. Conducted participant-engaged focus group for parents at Glenn Elementary School led by a Glenn parent

Findings

The health team found that the 2020 Durham County Health prioritizes Affordable Housing, Access to Healthcare and Insurance, Poverty, Mental Health, and Obesity, Diabetes and Food Access. Also, 11 Durham Public Schools have over 80% of students on free reduced lunch AND are situated >1 mile from a health center (7 elementary, 1 high, 2 middle, 1 secondary).

Q3: Curriculum Team

Goal: Develop a culturally responsive curriculum that helps prepare university students to volunteer in DPS

Methods

1. Defined Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT analysis) for developing an anti-racism curriculum
2. Analyzed data from Year 1 and Year 2 to determine what to include in the curriculum
3. Created curriculum objectives
4. Organized topics into modules
5. Gathered resources and activities for each curriculum module

Findings

The curriculum team found that P-12 teachers, university faculty, and undergraduate students all felt the need for more volunteer preparation regarding anti-racism practices, knowledge of the history of Durham and DPS, and strategies for engaging specifically with the students and families from Durham communities; from that, the curriculum was developed.



Site Visits

Four groups of team leads and students visited Binghamton University, UCLA, University of Central Florida, and University of Pennsylvania Netter Center to interview community schools' faculty and partners about their school/partnership structures, development, and experiences.

Challenges

The health care team faced a significant obstacle in conducting parent-led focus groups because Durham Public Schools has a new policy restricting undergraduate research in schools so that staff can focus on teaching and learning.