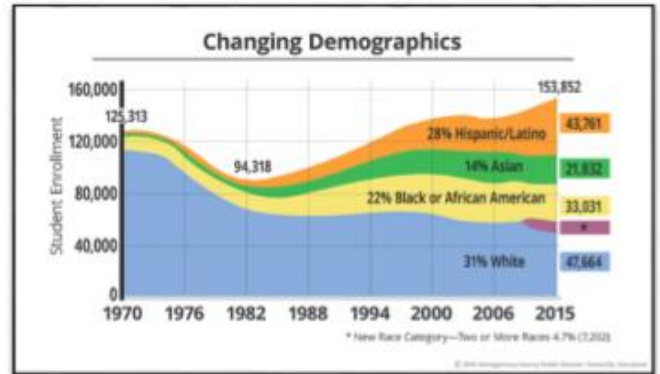


## Supporting School and Office Leadership Teams to Create a Culture in Which the Achievement Gap can be Closed

### Why work with Study Circles?

According to the Montgomery County Public Schools 2014 Annual Report, “The gap in performance among racial subgroups persists and, in some cases, has grown... There is a sense of urgency to closing the gap and that urgency becomes even greater as MCPS becomes a more diverse school district.”



However, school leaders have shared that turning the urgency into action is challenging. For example:

- **77%** of leadership team members say they do not have the trust to discuss race with their fellow leaders.
- **72%** of leaders say they do not have the skills to lead their staff in conversations about race.
- **91%** of leaders say they do not have the collective skills and confidence to support teachers who struggle to effectively teach African American and Latino students.

*Responses reflect 20 school leadership teams prior to working with the Study Circles Program.*

The Study Circles Programs supports leaders to become high-functioning teams that have the trust, structures, and confidence to close the achievement gap and ensure that all students are successful.

### Commitment:

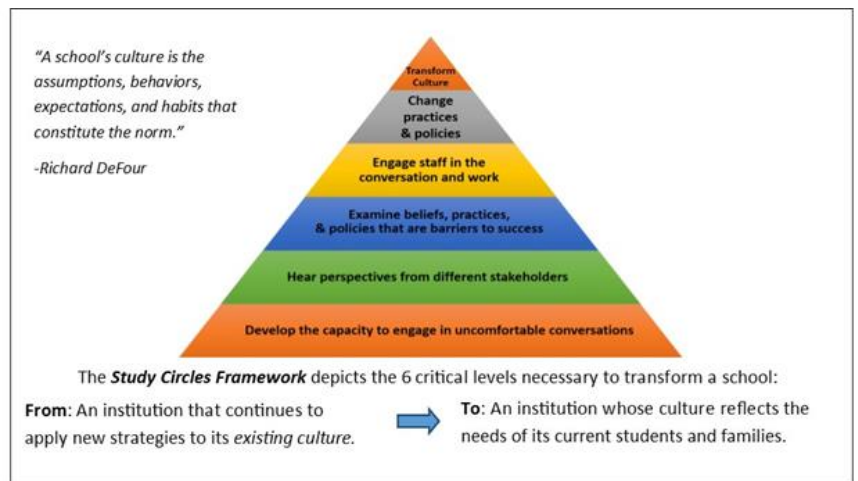
Schools commit to a year-long program that begins with two retreats and continues with coaching throughout the year.

### Theory of Change:

The Achievement Gap will begin to close when schools develop a culture in which staff and administration consistently use a racially conscious and culturally proficient lens in all interactions, decisions, planning, practices, and policies.

To achieve this culture, school and office leaders need to:

- Develop the capacity to engage in uncomfortable conversations about race and achievement
- Hear perspectives from different stakeholders
- Examine beliefs, practices, and policies that are barriers to success
- Engage the entire staff in the conversation and work
- Change practices and policies that were identified as barriers



## Year-long Plan

We have a plan for all sessions. However, we meet with the administration between sessions to plan and adapt to meet the needs of the team.

<b>Retreats (Full days within a month of each other)</b>	
Retreat Session 1	Build the foundation to engage in uncomfortable conversations about race and education. Outcomes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New trust and empathy among team members</li> <li>• An understanding of how communication styles impact effective dialogue</li> </ul>
Retreat Session 2	Develop the skills and confidence to discuss racial barriers to student achievement among ILT members. Outcomes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An awareness of the different racial experiences and perspectives among the leadership team</li> <li>• Practice having uncomfortable conversations about race and education</li> <li>• Identification of beliefs, practices, and policies that are barriers to closing the achievement gap</li> </ul>
<b>Coaching (Usually every other month during regularly scheduled Leadership meetings)</b>	
Coaching Session 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be given tools and structures to ensure ILT meetings will be conducted with a racially/culturally proficient lens</li> <li>• Begin to develop action steps to address identified racial barriers</li> </ul>
Coaching Session 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a letter to staff that explains the need for racially conscious and culturally proficient practices and policies</li> </ul>
Coaching Session 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create plan to engage the rest of the staff in conversations about race</li> </ul>
Coaching Session 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify what a racially conscious culture looks like for your school or office</li> </ul>
Coaching Session 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate changes in school culture since the start of Study Circles</li> <li>• Identify practices and policies that need to be included in the upcoming year’s Equity and School Improvement Plans</li> </ul>

### Additional Study Circle Formats

*When the school is ready to engage other stakeholders, we offer additional Study Circle formats including:*

- Student/staff Study Circles – to hear how students experience the school and provide their voice in planning.
- Spanish-language Study Circles – to engage Spanish-speaking parents in helping to close the achievement gap. These circles are facilitated in Spanish and interpreted to English for English-speaking staff and administration.
- Principal Advisory Committees/Community Engagement Teams– to have one group of parents, students, and staff that reflects the school’s diversity and has the trust and structures to review practices and policies with a racially conscious and culturally proficient lens.