Raising the volume on advancing equity & racial justice in schools

2021-2022 Annual Report
Dear Friends, Supporters and Partners of RE-Center,

2022 brought continued change as we navigated a society still reeling from the ripping off of the Band-Aid that has been holding our Nation together through persistent inequity over hundreds of years.

As the board chair of RE-Center, I am grateful to be part of an organization that amplifies the need for the work and provides much needed support and solutions to organizations who endeavor to lean into the challenge of dismantling systemic racism. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our incredible staff, led by the dynamic Executive Director, Natalie McCabe Zwerger, as well as my fellow board colleagues for their persistence through uncertainty and their dedicated leadership.

The work of RE-Center leads the way for district, non-profit and business leaders, educators, community members and students alike in transformative ways. We create room for dialogue and engage partners to bring forth change. Our staff is made up of a talented group of individuals who are deeply committed, and this community is better for it!

As you read this annual report, I encourage you to think about what you can do in support of advancing dialogue around equity and justice in your sphere of influence. You will find that RE-Center has made an impact in multiple ways, and we would welcome you to join us as we expand our network. This work is important, and we need you all!

In Community,
Joelle A. Murchison
Dear RE-Center Community,

Amidst the weight of the ongoing pandemic, persistent inequities amplified during times of health and financial crisis, and the backdrop of an increasingly hostile landscape for this work, RE-Center has doubled-down on raising the volume of our mission, our values, and our unwavering commitment to advancing racial justice! This has manifested in more clearly defining our organizational values, deepening our partnership landscape, and hosting events and learning series in alignment with our mission and vision for growing this work at a greater level of depth in more spaces.

We raised our volume and created spaces for others to amplify their commitments in policy, practice, and relationships. We published numerous articles and tools cohering our research, knowledge, and experience for navigating this work particularly in spaces encountering pushback. We grew our full-time team and our consultant Racial Justice Strategist & Coach community. We applied for our first ever research grant and continue to invest in the development of a more robust voice for RE-Center in research and policy.

It is our sincere hope that you join us- not shying away from being vocal, invested, and standing up for equity and racial justice- but that you speak louder and more often in more spaces to advance these principles. As partners and co-conspirators, we truly believe that liberation for Black and Brown children, LGBTQIA+ children, and all children and adults from historically excluded identities, is within our reach!

Natalie McCabe Zwerger

Letter From Executive Director

Natalie McCabe Zwerger
Our Mission, Vision, & Values

✓ Our Mission
RE-Center activates youth and adults to drive transformative change towards racially just schools and communities.

✓ Our Vision
We envision an equitable and just world where all youth have what they need to grow and thrive. We envision empowered students supported by conscious, critically thinking adults and supportive and safe schools and communities. We work towards a world in which equity is institutionalized in all school systems.

✓ Our Values Statement
At RE-Center we advance justice by shifting systems & influencing policies, practices, and beliefs to cultivate the liberation, freedom, health, & well-being of Black & Brown people. We prioritize relationships that redistribute power, both identity-based & positional, & we foster opportunities for folx to be their full & whole selves. We practice love - the love of Black & Brown children, rejoicing in their sovereign humanity. We practice love of self, because feeling too small or too big has no place in justice work. We practice love so we may be curious, move from possibility, and have boundless imagination. We uphold spaces, places, & climates that honor the brilliance & joy of Black & Brown people & all historically excluded folx. We strive for community - locally & beyond - where we, as a non-profit organization, disavow white savior-ship, hoarding resources, and living histories of colonization. We seek accountability - intentionally bearing the responsibility to serve the community, be in community, and hold space with community, as an embodied value that requires time and nourishment.
Our Partnerships

Our measures of impact this year look in of services we cultivated

12 Districts
58 Schools
2 Higher Education Institutions
7 Organizations

Collective student demographics of the districts we worked with

American Indian or Alaska Native: 0.08%
Asian: 4.01%
Black: 22.12%
Latinx: 42.82%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: 0.03%
Two or More Races: 3.74%
White: 27.20%

Total students and adults with whom we had direct access: 1,113

Demographics
American Indian or Alaska Native: 0.1%
Asian: 4.3%
Black: 20.4%
Latinx: 38.9%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: 0.0% Two or More Races: 3.8%
White: 32.5%
Programs and Events Highlights

Beyond Black History Month Collective
In this ongoing series, Racial Justice Strategists ANYANWU and Cathleen Antoine Abiala amplified the standard Black History Month practice. This collective offers space for Black educators, activists, and organizers to focus on opportunity, connection, exploration, critical reflection and meaningful activation of liberatory pedagogy and and engagement that is youth-centered.

"The work we started last year, the community that was created, the support that came from it - it was a safe space to share, to laugh, to be pissed off, to just sit quietly with each other and just be."
-BHMC participant

"The connections and community that was built was authentic and real. As I'm moving into a new role, I know that this group will be a great space for me to process all the changes."
-BBHMC participant

Fostering + Sustaining Culturally Responsive Education Panel, March 29th, 2022
Important conversations on fostering & sustaining #CulturallyResponsiveEducation were had at this panel with Ossining UFSD Superintendent Dr. Ray Sanchez, White Plains Board President Rosemarie Eller, Founder of Leading with Hearts and Minds Paul Forbes, Elmsford Director of DEI & District Curriculum Coordinator Keturah Proctor, and Youth Equity Leader, Eleanor Wu.
Racial Affinity Groups in Partnership with SERC

RE-Center hosted affinity groups across seven Connecticut districts - Enfield, New London Elm City Montessori, New Haven, Naugatuck, Stratford, & Wethersfield - with monthly community building and coaching sessions. The intentional design created spaces for BIPOC educators and educational leaders to hold space to center joy and healing in their efforts to interrogate internalized whiteness and systems of oppression while serving children through Culturally Responsive-Sustaining and Anti-Racist Practices.

Consultant Training Institute

RE-Center convened 18 Racial Justice Strategists & Coaches for an intentional process of building community, fostering a working relationship, and sharing wisdom and expertise with each other.

All We Got is US

Gathering, Grieving and Healing Towards a More Just Future in Our Schools and Communities, December 9th, 2021 In this panel event, Racial Justice Strategists & Coaches, Cathleen Antoine-Abiala and Nakeeba Wauchope, were joined in an affinity space for Black cis and trans women and femmes with other brilliant Black panelists: Villanova First Year Student Activist, Bailey Proctor; Director of the NYC Coalition for Educational Justice, Natasha Capers; Co-Executive Director for Harlem Renaissance Education Pipeline at Abyssinian Development Corporation, Ocynthia Williams; and NY State Assembly Member, Stefani L. Zinerman.

#RaisetheVolume Twitter Chat

On November 29, 2021, our Executive Director, Natalie Zwerger, hosted a community Twitter chat on how we can individually and collectively #RaisetheVolume to advance equity and racial justice in our schools and communities. Featuring Keturah Proctor, Director of DEI + District Curriculum Coordinator, and Paul Forbes, Founder of Leading with Hearts and Minds, collective wisdom and resources were shared.
Speaking events

Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) DEI Directors Retreat
March 4th 2022 - RE-Center’s Executive Director, Natalie McCabe Zwerger, and Research and Policy Strategist, Dr. Sophia Bolt, joined a cohort of Connecticut district Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Directors to discuss the dangers and frustrations of equity work being siloed in their roles and ideating around questions such as: What capacity building do those who supervise them need in order for DEI Directors to have depth and reach in their influence and impact?

Leadership Greater Hartford Executive Orientation Program
Executive Director Natalie McCabe Zwerger spoke to the cohort of executive leaders about the work of RE-Center and the landscape for racial justice work in the Greater Hartford area.

Hispanic Health Council
Executive Director Natalie McCabe Zwerger was a guest on a webinar about the impact of COVID in schools on teaching, learning, and a specific focus on the health and well-being of young people in the Greater Hartford area.

YWCA Hartford Region Stand Against Racism event
Executive Director Natalie McCabe Zwerger and other local leaders offered a video message about advancing racial justice in education.
Partnership highlights

Higher Education Institutions

Connecticut State Colleges and Universities
This year with CSCU we conducted stakeholder meetings at the Manchester Community College campus to gather a picture of the equity ecosystem.
SUNY Cortland
We offered capacity building to all campus leadership and a group of dedicated campus advocates that included faculty, staff, and administrators.
The partnership supported advancing equity, inclusivity, and racial justice in policy, practice, and relationships.

“I am learning to ask different questions regarding my own role in leading REI efforts on our campus.”
- SUNY Cortland Campus Leader

“I learned through self-reflection and from the other participants about some of the barriers to being an REI leader, about the need to take action and be a co-conspirator rather than just an ally, and about how my identities influence how I perceive and prioritize.”
- SUNY Cortland Campus Leader

K12

Vernon Public Schools
Working with their Youth Equity Squad, we explored in depth levels of power and the way power manifests within Vernon High School. We also worked with youth to identify what anti-racist values were important to them individually and as a collective.
Brighton Central Schools
Our work this year in Brighton schools involved staff professional development, building the capacity of the district hiring team, and coaching district leaders.

“This work has reinforced my notion that anti-racism means action and the importance of having all stakeholders at the table to learn from their experience and perspectives.”
- All Staff Professional Development Participant

Organizations

Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut
We used a model of capacity building for equity in action. We offered coaching, consultation, and responsive real-time support on advancing racial justice in policy, practice, and relationships.

“That was one of the best run programs I have experienced on Zoom. You gave us a lot to think about and there was a nice mixture of presentation and DOING.”
- UHCF team member

“Today I’m taking with me the idea that to be a co-conspirator for equity and racial justice one must be open to being corrected, self-reflection, and imperfection as it is a continuous learning process. At the same time, one must take actions to challenge racism and discrimination.”
- UHCF team member

Our Piece of the Pie
In this multi-year partnership with a local Hartford non-profit organization, we worked closely with their executive team to operationalize their commitment to equity and supported policy and practice review.

“The overall approach is something that can be shared with staff and will help our organization grow.”
- OPP Executive Team member
Financial Statements

FY22 (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022)

REVENUE

- Contributions: $473,764
- Government: $100,000
- Program Fees: $389,502
- Other: $50

Total Revenue: $963,316

EXPENSE

- Program Services: $552,229
- Admin & General: $250,541
- Fundraising: $130,941

Total Expense: $933,711

Net: $29,606
Staff

Board members
Joelle Murchison, Board Chair
Michelle D. McKnight, Board Secretary
Wendy Brown Helmkamp, Chair of the Mission and Measurement Committee
Kathryn Mullin, Esq., Board Member
Cheryl Hilton, BS, Realtor, PSCS, AHWD, Board Member
Sean Mosley, Board Member
Karen Senteio, Board Member
Stephanie Lockhart, Ed.D, Board Member
Elsie Gonzalez, Board Member
Digna A. Marte, Board Member

Full-Time Staff
Natalie McCabe Zwerg, Executive Director
Shaniqua Rudd, Senior Development Strategist
Suri Semour, Racial Justice Strategist & Coach
Cristher Estrada, Program Evaluations Strategist
Dr. Sophia Bolt, Research & Policy Strategist
Yvette Houlihan, Finance & Operations Strategist

Strategists, Coaches, & Consultants
ANYANWU
Cathleen Antoine Abiala
Erin Dunlevy
Ana Catalina Duque
Derek Hall
Jillian McRae
Keturah Proctor
Chas Rodriguez
Régine Romain
Roberto “Tito” Soto-Carrión
Luis Alejandro Tapia
Nakeeba A. Wauchope
A sincere note of gratitude to all of our funding partners, supporters, amplifiers, and co-conspirators. Without you, this work cannot manifest fully. We thank you & challenge you to continue to locate a commitment to equity and racial justice in yourself and others.