Facing Difficult *Conversations*

DEI in Action at TNTP

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PROMISE54

Contents

Introduction

You've probably seen those case studies — the ones that all too often gloss over thorny, multidimensional challenges and deeply human imperfections for the sake of a neat narrative or sales pitch.

These are not the case studies you're used to.

Since the release of "*Unrealized Impact*" — Promise54's first-of-its-kind, rigorous effort to quantify the state of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the field — we've received many requests for narratives sharing organizations' actual DEI journeys. In response, we've written this series of in-depth case studies that reflect the messy reality of the work to create thriving environments for adults so they can do their best work on behalf of students, families, and communities.

We've endeavored to create a radically human alternative to the run-of-the-mill case study. Based on hours of interviews and analyses of artifacts, staff experience survey data, and DEI plans, we strove to honestly represent the journey of each organization featured — including progress made, comparisons to sector benchmarks, missteps along the way, and the challenges that these organizations are still grappling with today.

We also recognize that the stories we share are not fully representative of the wide range of perspectives and experiences that exist within these organizations. Bias is inherent in any research endeavor, and we acknowledge that there are likely biases and dominant perspectives built into ours.

This honest and radically human representation requires an immense amount of vulnerability and bravery from the participating organizations. They have invited us into not only their moments of success but also their messiest, most difficult moments.

The organizations you'll read about here are not groups who have "arrived," and we're not holding them up as models of perfection for others to emulate. We believe perfection is an impossibility — and the

focus on it is often a manifestation of white-dominant culture in our organizations. Instead, we embrace imperfection as a part of being human.

What's more, DEI work simply can't be automated. There's no universal checklist to follow — not even in these case studies — and no one-size-fits-all formula for how to get to diverse, equitable, and inclusive. Each organization's path is highly specific to its own culture, beliefs, and challenges. DEI work within organizations is a winding process that requires maintenance, patience, and tailoring.

That's why we're shining a spotlight on organizations of different sizes, types, and geographies, and at different points in their journey. The first three featured organizations in this series model courage, candor, and vulnerability by baring their often uncomfortable truths.

And therein lies the essence of the work itself.

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For live updates and interactive field-wide data, visit casestudies.promise54.org

Understanding Our Data

How do we measure, compare, and classify organizations on diversity, equity, and inclusion?

Throughout the case studies, you will see references to Promise54's DEI surveys, our aggregate field-level DEI data, and our "Unrealized Impact" report. Here's a bit more information on how we use those tools to help organizations measure, benchmark, and classify DEI efforts.

Measure

In spite of a desire to drive progress related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, we see many organizational leaders struggle to measure and monitor their efforts over time. In our Promise54 DEI surveys and associated reports, we offer a solution: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Indices. These indices offer an aggregate look across a battery of questions on staff perspectives for each distinct DEI concept. Many organizations find the Diversity Index, Equity Index, and Inclusion Index to be powerful metrics to watch as they seek to monitor the effectiveness of their DEI work over time while using our more detailed reporting on each index to inform their plans for the future.

Compare

While each organization's DEI journey is distinct, leaders and staff alike can find it informative to understand how their organization's current state compares to those of their peers. Therefore, we continue to collect and report on aggregate field-level DEI data over time. Our repository of DEI data is always growing, but at the time of these case studies, our benchmarks include 20,000 respondents across 400 organizations, largely in the field of education. Our benchmarks span all 50 states of the U.S. and the District of Columbia, include organization sizes from no full-time staff to several thousand, and represent various types of education organizations.

Classify

As we looked across all three dimensions of diversity, equity, and inclusion for organizations that have participated in the Promise54 Staff Experience DEI Survey, we noted substantial similarities among clusters of organizations (as illustrated in the scatterplot below):
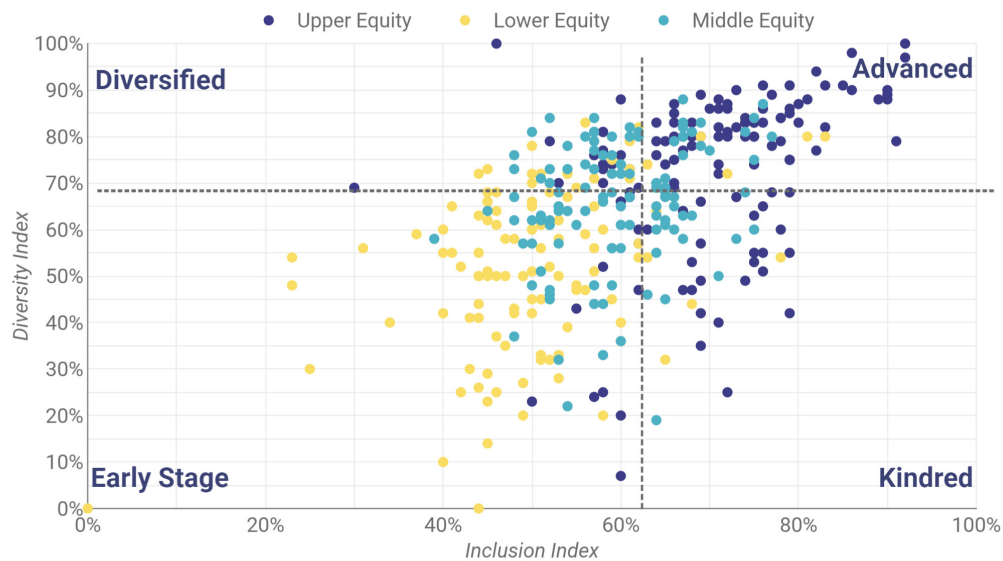
Based on these common characteristics, we created Organizational Profiles to describe organizations in a similar place in relation to DEI. Leaders often find Organizational Profiles useful to contextualize their experiences and to get a sense, across all three dimensions, of their organization's past, present, and future state/journey.

In brief, the Organizational Profiles based on Promise54 DEI Staff Experience Survey data are:
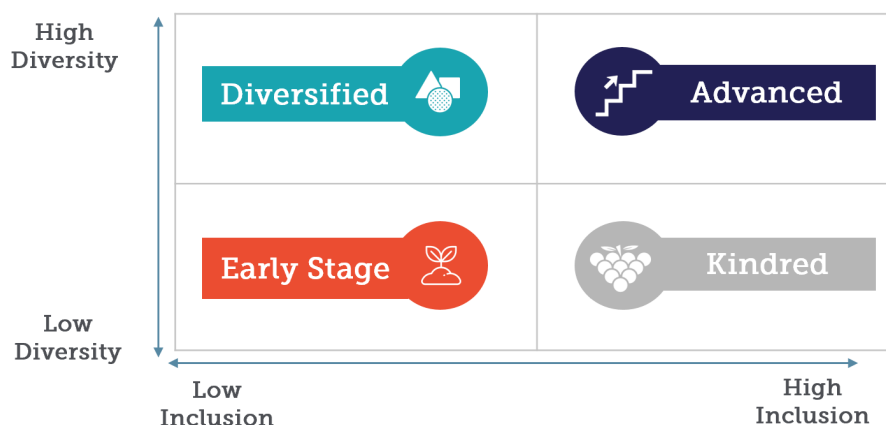
PROFILE: EARLY STAGE ORGANIZATION

Early Stage organizations typically have relatively:

- Low staff and leadership demographic diversity
- Low staff experiences of inclusion
- Low staff experiences of equity
- High reports of bias being witnessed and experienced
- Low Net Promoter Scores
- Low staff intent to stay
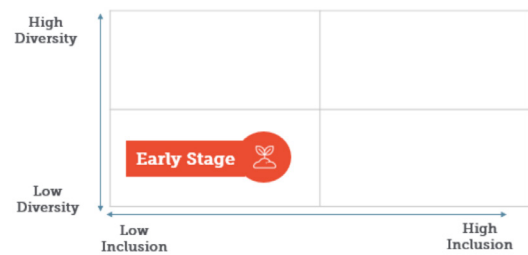
Our data indicates that this pattern could be driven by a couple of conditions (or a combination of them): 1) good intentions coupled with low or inconsistent prioritization of DEI efforts, 2) a need for a clear articulation of the link between DEI and the organization's mission, and 3) an understanding of which DEI-related strategies will prove to be high leverage within the organizational context.

PROFILE: DIVERSIFIED ORGANIZATION

Diversified organizations typically have relatively:

- High staff and leadership demographic diversity
- Low staff experiences of inclusion
- Low staff experiences of equity
- High reports of bias being witnessed and experienced
- Low Net Promoter Scores
- Low staff intent to stay
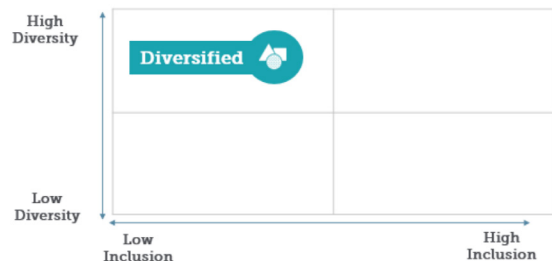
Our data indicates that this pattern could be driven by an expectation that staff and leaders of color will assimilate to preexisting culture, practices, and systems versus an organization identifying and making the necessary changes to effectively receive and support a more diverse staff so they can thrive. Alternatively, some Diversified organizations may expect, whether implicitly or explicitly, that inclusion and equity will automatically follow from diversity. The underlying assumption is that staff who "represent" the communities served will drive forward this progress, and thus they are seen as responsible for the work rather than sharing the responsibility and the burden of the work across an organization.

PROFILE: KINDRED ORGANIZATION

Kindred organizations typically have relatively:

- Low staff and leadership demographic diversity
- High staff experiences of inclusion
- High staff experiences of equity
- Low reports of bias being witnessed and experienced
- High Net Promoter Scores
- High staff intent to stay

While inclusive and equitable, these organizations are not diverse and may be experienced as inclusive or equitable because they're homogeneous. Additionally, our data indicates that these organizations may not be generating the myriad benefits that studies demonstrate result from diversity.

PROFILE: ADVANCED ORGANIZATION

Advanced organizations typically have relatively:

- High staff and leadership demographic diversity
- High staff experiences of inclusion
- High staff experiences of equity
- Low reports of bias being witnessed and experienced
- High Net Promoter Scores
- High staff intent to stay

Our data indicates that many Advanced organizations have organically integrated DEI into their fabric without articulating, documenting, or codifying their approaches, beliefs, or practices. This can expose these organizations to risks of not being able to sustain their strong DEI in periods of uncertainty or during substantial organizational inflection points.

Who They Are

Since their founding in 1997, TNTP has grown into a large, complex, and established organization. They've recently navigated challenging conversations about power and privilege, and Promise54 has worked alongside the organization throughout this journey. We're sharing an overview of the successes and challenges TNTP has faced to offer honest stories about the complexity of realizing diversity, inclusion, and equity in a large organization.

Mission

"TNTP's mission is to end the injustice of educational inequality by providing excellent teachers to the students who need them most and by advancing policies and practices that ensure effective teaching in every classroom."

Vision

"Our nation's public schools will be thriving organizations that offer all children an excellent education."

THEMES

Diversification, leadership responsiveness, challenges of white dominant culture, organization-wide conversations

ORGANIZATION SIZE

Large 400+ staff

LOCATION

National

Approach

"We focus on three areas to ensure teachers succeed and students thrive: Rigorous academics, talented people, and supportive environments."

HOW WE WORK

TNTP offers a range of support to partners, from strategic advice to multi-year execution.

ADVICE

TNTP counsels education leaders on how to approach questions of educational quality, from navigating negotiations to engaging community members to communicating a superintendent's vision.

DATA

Understanding the problem is half the battle. Our experts collect key information—from observing 1,000 classrooms to surveying 10,000 teachers—to pinpoint root causes and map a way forward.

DESIGN

Clients face many challenges without ready answers. We design new ways of working, whether we're training educators, investing in rigorous academic content, or evolving teacher pay and evaluations.
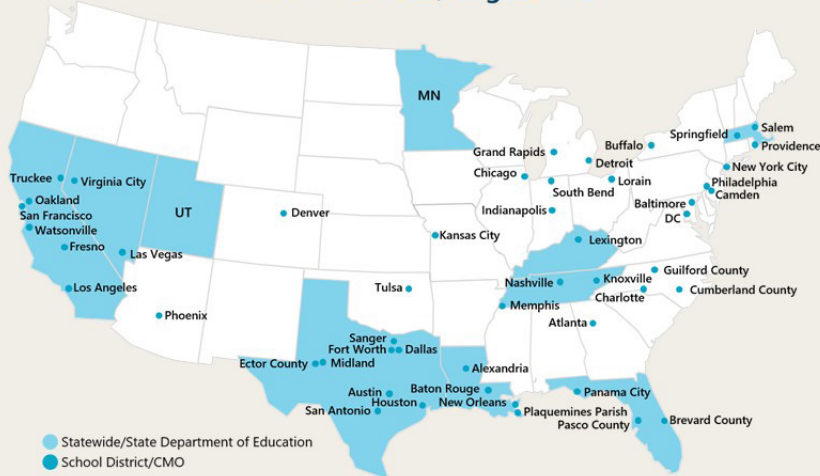
EXECUTION

We supply both vision and manpower. We work with district staff to faithfully implement good ideas, whether we're training 10,000 school leaders in a summer or recruiting 19,000 teachers over a decade.

Impact

TNTP Partners, August 2019

MN, Truckee, Virginia City, Oakland, San Francisco, Watsonville, UT, Fresno, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Denver, Kansas City, Tulsa, Sanger, Fort Worth, Dallas, Ector County, Midland, Austin, Houston, San Antonio, Baton Rouge, New Orleans, Plaquemines Parish, Pasco County, Alexandria, Nashville, Memphis, Atlanta, Indianapolis, South Bend, Chicago, Grand Rapids, Lorain, Detroit, Buffalo, Lexington, Knoxville, Charlotte, Guilford County, Cumberland County, Panama City, Brevard County, Springfield, Salem, Providence, New York City, Philadelphia, Camden, Baltimore, DC

- Statewide/State Department of Education
- School District/CMO

50 cities

117 projects

178 client partners

2.7 MILLION students reached

TNTP reimagine teaching

Timeline

1997

Founded as The New Teacher Project in 1997

Focused on getting great teachers to more students. Teaching Fellows programs prepared talented people with deep content knowledge to teach in high-need schools and subjects.

Ran programs in partnership with major urban districts, including Baltimore, New Orleans, New York City, and Washington, D.C.

2002

2003

Published first policy reports and began helping school systems hire quality teachers earlier and staff schools more efficiently.

Provided hands-on consulting in two dozen districts, including Atlanta, Austin, Chicago, Los Angeles, Memphis, Philadelphia, and San Francisco.

2008

2009

Documented the systemic indifference to teacher effectiveness in The Widget Effect — and began working on better evaluations.

Began working with state departments of education and charter management organizations.

2008

2009

Began exploring issues like school culture and leadership, and teacher retention and compensation.

Working in more than 30 cities around the country.

Today

"TNTP stands for so much more than new teachers. We are partners for change in public education, helping school systems achieve their goals for students."

Where They're Coming From

An Inflection Point

In the wake of Hurricane Maria's devastation of Puerto Rico in 2017, the island's Department of Education reached out to TNTP, seeking insight on how to rebuild its Human Resources functions in new regional offices. TNTP agreed to offer pro bono support by sending team members to the island in person.

Initially, leadership reached out to TNTP's Latinx affinity group for advice. The group had begun to recognize DEI at TNTP as largely a Black and white conversation, and voiced the need to elevate the experiences of Latinx staff. Leadership told the affinity group they'd follow up to engage the group on the plan and staffing for the Puerto Rico support initiative. But Latinx affinity group members later learned that, without the group's consultation, a Spanish-speaking white staff member had been tapped to go. Not everyone in the affinity group was upset, but many staff were — especially those who identify as Puerto Rican.

TNTP Partner and one of the organization's Latinx staff members, Leticia de la Vara, spoke up in a meeting with TNTP's management team. The decision to send someone without the Latinx affinity group's input, she told CEO Dan Weisberg, felt like disregard for cultural and historical considerations. It was a sign of the need for greater representation and inclusion of Latinx staff at TNTP.

So how did leadership respond? Dan halted the Puerto Rico project internally and externally with the client. He agreed to join the next Latinx affinity group call to listen, apologize, and figure out how to approach the situation differently. Moreover, he sent a written apology to the entire organization.

Staff remarked on how Dan's response shifted the conversation:

> *"Leadership made a mistake. They communicated to the client that they were going to put the brakes on because of mistakes, and then they came back to the table and there was a messy process...leadership engaged [the Latinx affinity group] in the work, and it ended up working out. I don't expect leadership to know everything, but that impressed me."*
>
> —*Ivan Nieves*

Missteps are common in this messy, hard work to create diverse, inclusive, and equitable organizations. How we respond and what we do next is critically important.

When have there been missteps in your organization? What was the response and follow-up?

What role did leaders in your organization play? What was the impact?

Following this response, the Latinx affinity group was tasked with creating a better process for identifying staff to go to Puerto Rico, and experienced pressure to respond on a timeline the group members hadn't set. Nonetheless, they developed robust selection criteria and modeled an inclusive, transparent, and accessible decision-making process. Ultimately, two Latinx affinity group members—Ivan Nieves, a Latinx Senior Manager who had attended high school in Puerto Rico, and Stephanie Zamorano, a Senior Manager as well, were chosen to go to the island.

> *"It was a seed for people to think about more than just what hard skills are needed for a project, and to be more considerate of the context — of who's there and who's impacted."*
>
> —*Leticia de la Vara*

This was a major inflection point: It was the first time staff had heard leadership say aloud, "There are things we aren't doing right, and we could do better" — and then immediately follow that acknowledgment with commitment and action.

However, the Puerto Rico moment was neither the starting point of TNTP's DEI journey nor the first time the organization had experienced a misstep in diversity, inclusion, and equity. But this time, when members of the Latinx affinity group raised their voices, leadership was prepared to listen and respond accordingly. They weren't conducting business as usual.

> *"Puerto Rico was different in how we responded to it. I know there were other experiences before I got to TNTP or while I was [here] where... something could be perceived as a slight against another race or another ethnic group, and we just moved on...Puerto Rico was different because we stopped, we paused — we said this doesn't align with the organization that we want to be, so we have to do something different. And that came about because we had started to talk about DEI."*
>
> —*Tonya Horton*

So what made this response possible? To answer that question, we looked back to 2015, when TNTP's DEI conversations began in earnest.

What They're Learning

We found the following central themes in our conversations with TNTP, each of which illustrate strengths as well as challenges in building a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable organizational culture.

1. Taking the Lead
2. Shifting the Demographic Makeup — and Listening
3. Articulating Beliefs and a Plan
4. Engaging in Hard Conversations — and then Walking the Walk
5. Acknowledging the Persistence of White-Dominant Culture Norms

Taking the Lead

Tequilla Brownie — now Executive Vice President, Strategy, Policy, and Community Coalitions — remembers a much more homogenous organization when she joined TNTP in 2013. Of over 40 Partners at the time, she was the only African American Partner. "I started in April and went to my first Partner meeting in June. Because we're virtual and we weren't talking about race and poverty in ed reform at that time, it was my first true awareness of how 'white' the space was," Tequilla describes.

Tonya Horton, now Executive Vice President of Central Operations, had a similar experience when she first came to TNTP in 2014, and she describes how it felt to be a woman of color at a largely white organization.

INVESTMENTS IN DIVERSITY

https://casestudies.promise54.org

> *"When I went to the Partner meeting, that was the first time that I was in the room with all of the Partners in the organization, and I was expecting that there were going to be some African American Partners ...that I just hadn't met yet. And they just weren't there."*
>
> —*Tonya Horton*

At the time, the organization was separated into Performance Management — Tonya's team, run by current TNTP CEO Dan Weisberg — and New Teacher Effectiveness. The racial diversity of the two teams looked very different, and it was clear to Tonya as she started asking questions that Dan was prioritizing DEI on his team in a different way.

When Dan eventually stepped into the CEO role, he — along with other leaders that recognized the importance of DEI to TNTP's mission — demonstrated even greater intentionality around hiring a more diverse staff and setting clear goals for recruitment. Specifically, in an effort to increase diversity, leadership intentionally expanded beyond their traditional recruitment pools and networks, and decided they would not move forward with an interview unless the pool was racially diverse.

Having a white CEO who was prioritizing DEI was a big catalyst for change, but Dan was being bolstered and held accountable by those around him. Tequilla, Tonya, and many others on staff — many of them people of color at varying levels of positional authority — took the opportunity to agitate, educate, and push.

Tonya was proactive in early trainings, participating in sessions and advocating for difficult conversations that weren't always happening. She advanced from her initial Partner role to a Vice President position and, in 2018, applied proposed to Dan and her manager that she would lead TNTP's DEI work — using her past experience as a school leader and executive coach to better structure DEI initiatives. A short while later, Tonya interviewed and was selected to fill the recently vacated Executive Vice President for Talent and Culture role.

This hasn't meant Tonya is solely in charge of owning and leading the work. Dan underscores the need to have full-team buy-in and shared responsibility for DEI because he acknowledges the emotional labor and burden involved when Black and Brown leaders are alone in ensuring white leadership accountability. People of color in leadership named one clear win: they weren't alone in advocating for DEI at the senior level anymore.

> *"It can be burdensome to lead work on DEI...as a Black woman. You carry the weight of being both a leader and a staff [member] of color all the time. Having Tonya in place in her new role helped to shoulder some of that burden."*
>
> —*Tequilla Brownie*

TNTP has found that cultural shifts require deep commitment from leadership — to set an example with one's own actions and to cultivate shared responsibility across the organization.

Shifting the Demographic Makeup — and Listening

> *"We looked like a really different organization 10 years ago...we had very little diversity. Seeing changes in our staff makeup demonstrates tremendous growth…[though] we still have a ways to go."*
>
> *—Anonymous Staff Member*

An early step in TNTP making DEI an organizational imperative involved efforts to make the organization's leadership less racially homogenous and more representative of the communities served. In 2015, after finding that most racial diversity existed below senior leadership, TNTP set a two-year goal to increase diversity at the senior level.
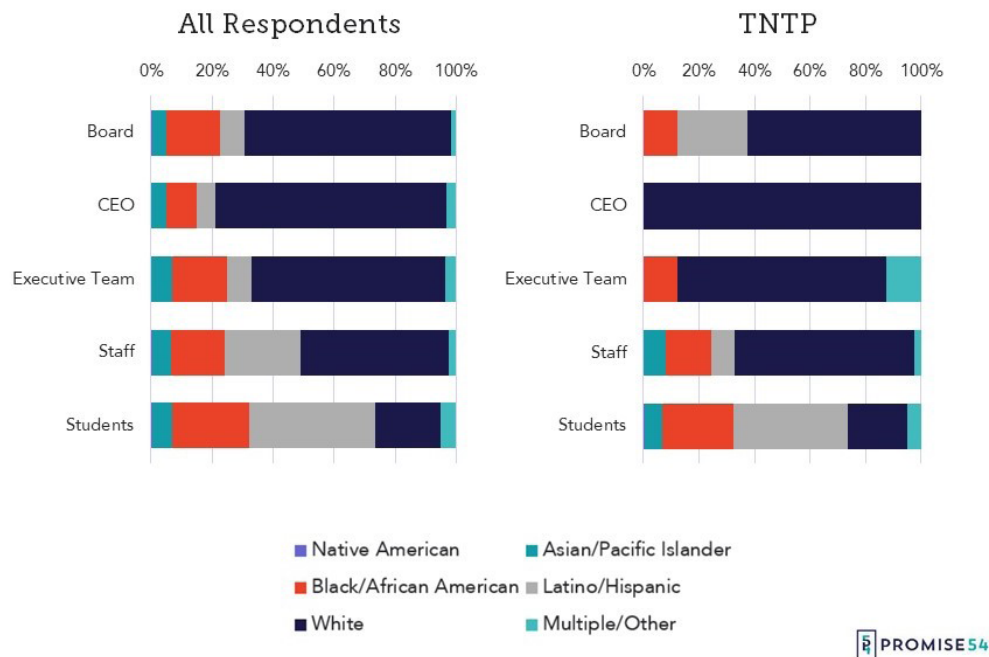
Senior Leadership Representation
FY14 – FY17

Staff of Color: FY14 19%, FY15 21%, FY16 32%, FY17 32%, Goal: 30%

African-American/Latinx: FY14 15%, FY15 14%, FY16 21%, FY17 23%, Goal: 25%

Legend: FY14, FY15, FY16, FY17
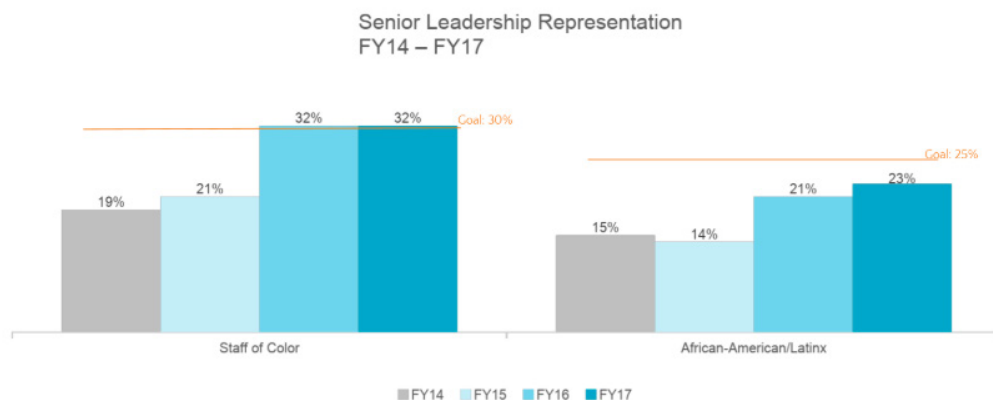
At the end of FY17, 32% of our senior leaders are staff of color and 23% are African-American or Latinx.

GRAPHIC PROVIDED BY TNTP

TNTP began by shifting their promotion process for Partners and above from one that required manager nominations to an open application process. This more accessible system yielded a more diverse set of internal candidates and a more diverse group of people being promoted. After noticing significant demographic shifts in Partner+ promotions, TNTP then expanded this process to all staff and stepped back to think critically about the requisite skills for individual leadership positions. Adjusting both the selection process and the leadership competencies meant that promotion was no longer about who was in line for a role, but about who had the skills and desire. By the end of those two years, TNTP had made progress on diversifying leadership, falling just short of their goal for African American and Latinx individuals in senior roles.

Despite overall progress on diversifying the senior team, diversity gaps have been most pronounced for Latinx staff and leadership. In 2017, one-third of TNTP's student community was Latinx, but that was not reflected on staff:

All Respondents | **TNTP**

(Legend:)
- Native American
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black/African American
- Latino/Hispanic
- White
- Multiple/Other

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Dan reflects on this gap, explicitly noting that "[our] representation numbers around Latinx staff are terrible...If you look at the demographic of kids we serve, at least one-third of kids are Latinx. We can't serve those communities well if we don't have a similar cultural makeup."

Explanations of the Latinx representation gap surfaced in interviews as some Latinx staff shared reservations about TNTP's recruitment process. An increase in staff of color representation from 28% in FY15 to 40% in FY19 felt like a marked improvement, but those overall numbers masked the unique impact of TNTP's screening standards and selection process on Latinx candidates. First, some Latinx staff believe that an overemphasis on perfect Standard American English could exclude communities for whom English is a second language.

> "Weeding someone out just based on grammar without considering potential reasons or context for that doesn't do us any favors in figuring out if someone is a good fit for a role. We want to make sure we're not dismissing someone because of a very narrow rubric that doesn't necessarily speak to the full context of their abilities and talents."
> —Leticia de la Vara

Moreover, multiple Latinx staff members shared that they personally faced socioeconomic barriers that prohibited them from going through the conventional hiring process.

"Clearly, the selection process is weeding people out...I say this having gone through [it]. It was a pretty intensive process. I went through multiple interviews, which is fine, but communities of color don't always have the opportunity to wait for two to three months. And the people that do don't always represent our community [from a socioeconomic standpoint]. This may dissuade people of color from participating, or if they want to, they can't. I quit the process because I had to take an offer quickly. I appreciate the staff who came back and apologized to me and then recruited me from there, but the experience may be different for others."

—Ivan Nieves

Latinx staff aren't alone in seeking an improved recruitment process. On the latest Promise54 DEI Staff Experience Survey in December 2018, only half of the broader team agreed that recruiting efforts are designed to yield a diverse group of candidates. Despite incremental increases in the diversity of pipelines, candidate pools, and internal promotions, staff perceive that TNTP could do better.

TNTP began iterating on their initial focus on increased diversity, surfacing new questions about how to best support the now more diverse colleagues in the organization. Inclusion, Tonya reflected, needed to follow:

"As you get more diverse as an organization, you have to have systems and processes in place to make the people who you are bringing in feel like they are a part of the organization..That has been really important for us."

Early on, TNTP began working toward inclusion by bringing in external facilitators to design and implement internal DEI trainings, then bringing on internal full-time staff to drive deeper conversations and experiences around DEI-related topics. The team also focused on developing managers across the organization to drive inclusive environments on their teams in day-to-day interactions. These early efforts to promote inclusion were well-meaning, but weren't coherent or self-sustaining yet. Challenges with inclusion persist at TNTP, and in December 2018, Latinx staff reported a disproportionately more negative experience than other racial and ethnic groups:

CONSIDER THIS

When organizations want to diversify, one assumption can be that the objective is to find people through more diverse hiring pools — like looking out a window for people of color who were not previously aware of their organization. While that's one important part of diversifying, an organization must also hold up a mirror and ask itself what in its current practices might need to shift: "What are WE doing in our culture, structure, practices, etc. that create and perpetuate this gap?"

Organizations can risk falling into a trap of all window and no mirror. But mirror work leads to real progress on creating an inclusive environment in which diverse staff experience a sense of belonging: being seen and heard, having agency, experiencing authentic, trusting relationships, psychological safety, and ultimately bringing as much of themselves as they're generously willing to bring to work.
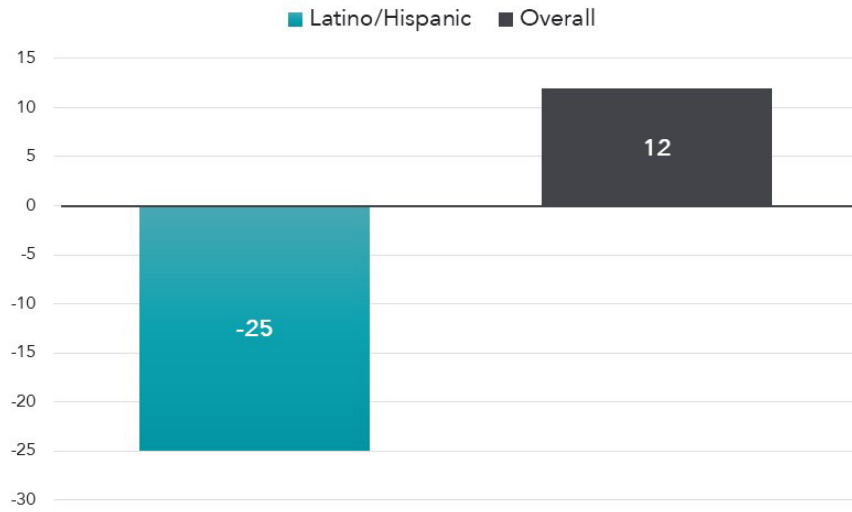
Organizations often think of pulling the lever of change from one of two poles -- senior leadership (top-down) or staff (bottom-up). However, the most important lever for deep organizational change is typically a staff member's most proximate manager. It's that person that truly sets a tone of inclusion in their department or on their team, which thereby informs the larger ethos of the organization. Simply put, managers across an organization are key.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Are there ways in which your organization's recruitment and/or processes are unintentionally excluding certain populations?
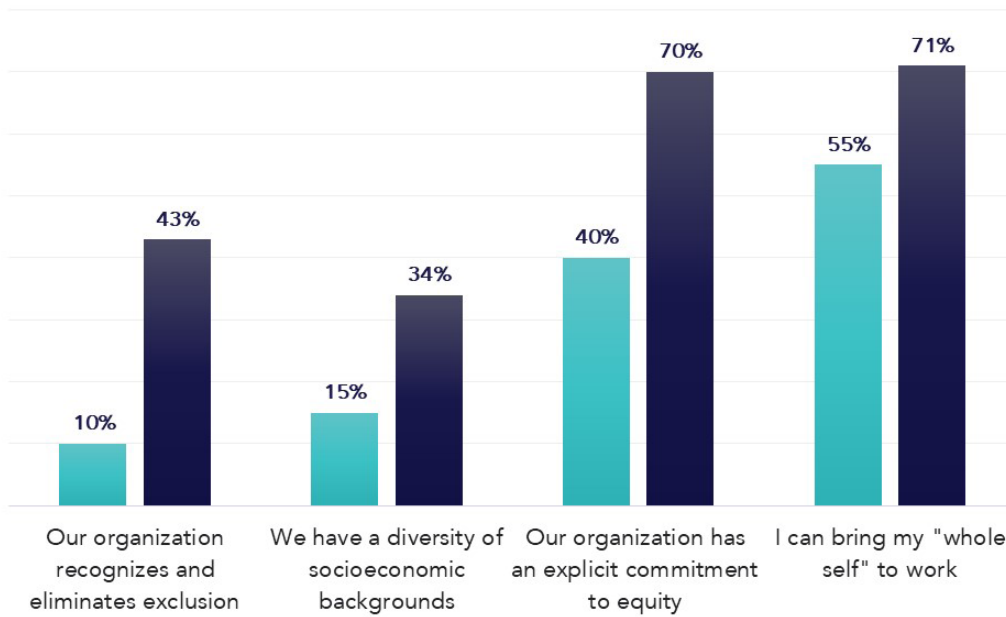
How is your organization currently equipping the most proximate managers with the language, skills, and resources to foster inclusion on their teams?

Net Promoter Scores

Legend: ■ Latino/Hispanic ■ Overall

Category	Value
Latino/Hispanic	-25
Overall	12

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Legend: ■ Latino/Hispanic ■ Overall

Statement	Latino/Hispanic	Overall
Our organization recognizes and eliminates exclusion	10%	43%
We have a diversity of socioeconomic backgrounds	15%	34%
Our organization has an explicit commitment to equity	40%	70%
I can bring my "whole self" to work	55%	71%

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As TNTP strives to create a more inclusive culture for Latinx staff, the experiences of other staff members of color offer additional complexity. In our conversations with TNTP staff, we heard a need to nuance conversations about staff of color by teasing apart the experience of various racial and ethnic groups when examining DEI survey results. Asian American staff at TNTP specifically describe the risk that their voices aren't heard when people of color are construed as a monolithic group. In response to the Promise54 DEI Staff Experience Survey question, "We have free and open expression of ideas, opinions and beliefs," Black and Latinx staff agreement averaged in the 70s, compared with Asian American staff at 52%. Affinity groups are one place where individuals are speaking up.

> *"I didn't speak up before when it came to DEI. Normally, I have no problem talking, and I talk a lot, but when it came to DEI conversations, I would shut down. I am half Asian, and I didn't feel like I was a part of 'black and brown' and when we would have those [conversations], I would feel like 'I can't participate because I am seen as white.' Finally, now, there's an Asian staff affinity group, and I feel comfortable being a part of these conversations there."*
>
> *—Anonymous Staff Member*

As TNTP works to create a more inclusive environment for Asian Americans and other staff of color, LGBTQ+ staff also report a greater need for equity, highlighting that the revamped career advancement processes don't yet feel accessible for all.

Only **20%** of LGBTQ+ identified employees believe career advancement is equally accessible for all, compared to **39%** for non-LGBTQ+ staff.

LGBTQ+	20%
Non-LGBTQ+	39%

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Dan reflects on his next steps to better understand how inclusion and equity are playing out for Asian American and LGBTQ+ staff in particular:

> *"Looking at our engagement data...I saw that both LGBTQ and Asian staff had really low levels of engagement, and I shared with the organization that I haven't invested in that enough to understand what might be driving the differences...One of my personal goals this year was to spend time with the LGBTQ affinity group, and with Asian American colleagues to get better insight as a leader."*

TNTP recognizes they haven't yet created the inclusive environment they're striving for, and they're learning to shift behaviors to get there. In the interim, the team is beginning to address the discomfort, trauma, and burden disproportionately impacting staff with historically marginalized identities across the organization. Specifically, TNTP has recently begun to codify a restorative process for the organization, providing clear steps for staff members to follow in the event that one staff member causes emotional harm to another.

Articulating Beliefs and a Plan

In 2018 — as Tonya took on the culture lead role — the need for definitions of diversity, inclusion, and equity emerged. TNTP's understanding of the concepts needed to evolve, beginning with diversity.

> *"When we started, the definition [of diversity] was broader and people were like, 'Really, what are you talking about?' Then we defined it based on race because that is what we are prioritizing first. It's not true that diversity is only about race, but it was our entry point."*
> —*Anonymous Staff Member*

Around this time, TNTP brought in Promise54 to assess the organization's current state of DEI, develop common language across the team, and draft a multi-year plan. After five previous years of earnest commitment, TNTP landed between Early Stage and Kindred on Promise54's DEI Staff Experience Profile.
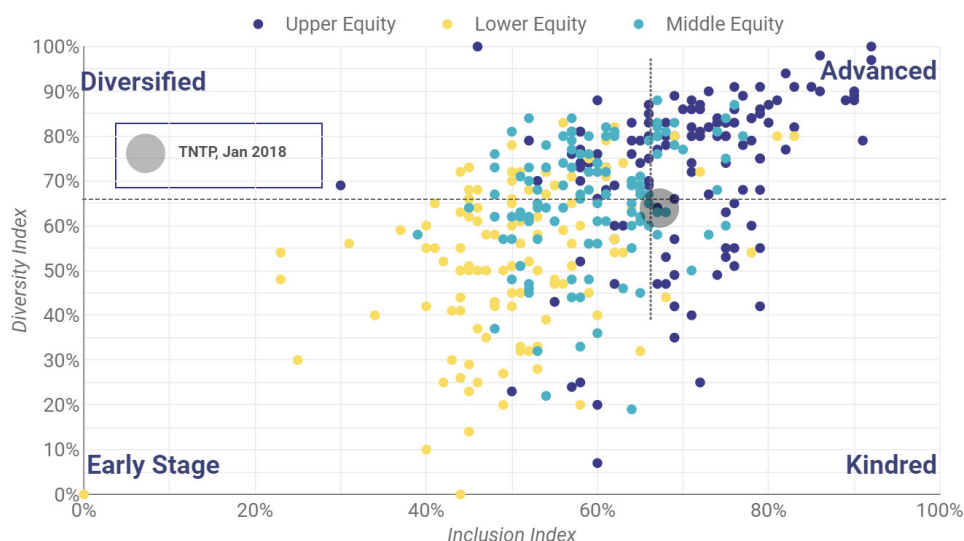
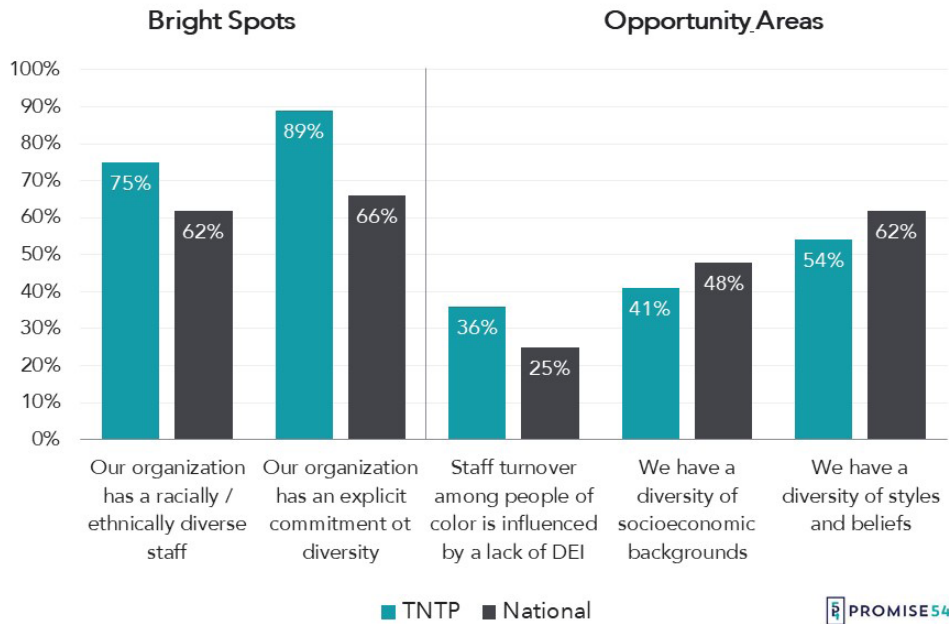Survey results highlighted both bright spots and areas for growth in TNTP's DEI work:

Perceptions on Diversity

Bright Spots   Opportunity Areas

	TNTP	National
Our organization has a racially / ethnically diverse staff	75%	62%
Our organization has an explicit commitment ot diversity	89%	66%
Staff turnover among people of color is influenced by a lack of DEI	36%	25%
We have a diversity of socioeconomic backgrounds	41%	48%
We have a diversity of styles and beliefs	54%	62%

■ TNTP ■ National

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Perceptions on Inclusion

Bright Spots   Opportunity Areas

	TNTP	National
Our culture respects individuals and values differences	86%	81%
Our organization has an explicit commitment to inclusion	87%	66%
We have free and open expression of ideas, opinions, and beliefs	74%	67%
We have frequent conversations about power & privilege	58%	42%

■ TNTP ■ National

PROMISE54

Perceptions on Equity

Bright Spots   Opportunity Areas

	TNTP	National
I see a diverse group of employees advancing	73%	53%
Compensation systems are implemented fairly	49%	51%
I believe career advancement is equally accessible for all	42%	53%

■ TNTP ■ National

PROMISE54

Following this assessment of TNTP's current state, the organization began codifying their commitment to DEI by developing a belief statement and shared definitions. To do so, TNTP formed a DEI Working Group — comprised of staff across levels, identities, and functions — to develop initial drafts, share them with leadership and all staff for feedback, refine them, and then put them into motion.

TNTP's DEI Belief Statement

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement

Historical and current systems of oppression fundamentally impact our lives and the lives of the communities we serve. Our actions have important consequences, therefore, collectively and as individuals, we will prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion as urgent and critical to our success as an organization, as these values help us better serve kids, clients, communities and ourselves. As we commit to make our mission a reality, we acknowledge that we will make mistakes; we will hold ourselves accountable as individuals and as an organization to reflect and do better.

In committing to our mission, we act on the following beliefs:

- We value diversity of ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender, religion, language, ability, and experience and exemplify this through the makeup of our team, at all levels.
- We name and actively disrupt inequitable practices and systems at TNTP and beyond.
- We value each individual, their background, and unique contributions.

TNTP reimagine teaching

Diversity

DEFINITION

The presence of different types of people (from a wide range of identities of ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, sexual identity, gender, religion, language, ability, and experience. This list is not finite, can change, and is intersectional beyond definition).

BELIEF STATEMENT

We value diversity of ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, sexual identity, gender, religion, language, ability, and experience and exemplify this through the makeup of our team, at all levels. This list is not finite, can change, and is intersectional beyond definition.

TNTP reimagine teaching

Equity

DEFINITION

The process of ensuring equally high outcomes for all and removing the predictability of success or failure in our advancement metrics or in our experiences that correlates with any current or historical racism and systems of privilege that continue to disadvantage marginalized groups and privilege others.

BELIEF STATEMENT

Current and historical racism and systems of privilege continue to disadvantage marginalized groups and privilege others. As such, we must name and actively disrupt inequitable practices and systems at TNTP and beyond. Equity means that staff members' backgrounds do not predict success or failure at TNTP, and there are no disparities in our advancement metrics or in our experiences across identities.

TNTP reimagine teaching

Inclusion

DEFINITION

The process of putting diversity into action by creating an environment of involvement, respect, and connection — we value each individual, their background, and unique contributions. We take collective responsibility for creating a caring culture, so that we can all be authentic at work and feel fully welcomed, valued, supported, and heard.

BELIEF STATEMENT

As an inclusive organization, we value each individual, their background, and unique contributions. We take collective responsibility for creating a caring culture, so that we can all be authentic at work and feel fully welcomed, valued, supported, and heard.

TNTP reimagine teaching

TNTP's articulated beliefs and defined terms serve as just one part of the organizational change effort, grounding for a clear DEI strategy. Leadership, recognizing the lingering need to improve inclusion to better serve a more diverse staff, worked with the DEI Working Group to lay out a two-year, three-pronged strategy. Now, the team has aligned around the biggest opportunity areas, identified potential strategies to address them, prioritized the strategies, and thoughtfully sequenced them into a draft multi-year plan to solicit staff input before refining. Here's a snapshot of the plan that emerged:

Our 2019-2021 Accelerating DEI Strategy will allow us to articulate the organization that we want to be and align our behaviors to this aspiration.

Our strategy has three focus areas:

1	**2**	**3**
Implement the DEI Structures that will be the frame for how we engage with each other as an organization.	Articulate the management experiences that we want all TNTPers to have and then create the opportunities that will make this a reality.	Reimagine how we grow and develop our staff through our talent systems and processes.

These focus areas will be surrounded by our organizational learning and development experiences.
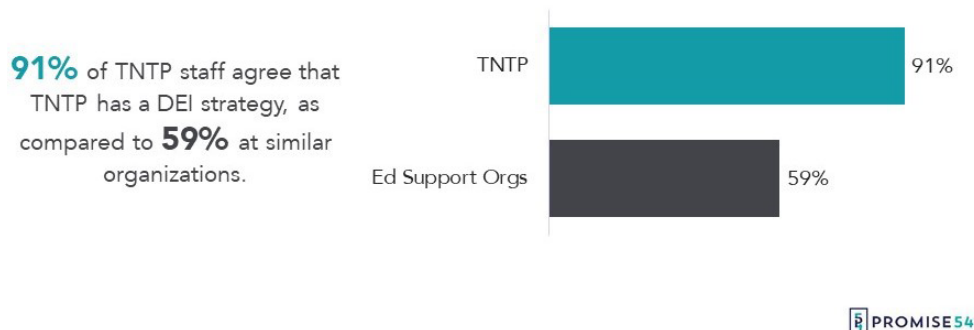
TNTP reimagine teaching

Our Accelerating DEI focus areas are broken down into priorities which vary in complexity and resource requirements.

DEI Structures	**Manager Development & Support**	**Talent Systems & Processes**
1. Finalize and communicate DEI beliefs and definitions.	2. Discover, audit, study management best practices internally and externally	3a. Revisit, refresh, and live out Core Values in alignment with DEI beliefs
1a. Update and communicate DEI strategy as part of the 2025 strategic planning process	2a. Norm on TNTP definition of "high quality management" and develop manager core competencies	3b. Revisit, update, and internalize TNTP core competencies ; codify desirable elements of TNTP way
1b. Org-wide, annual audit and share out to monitor, identify, and adjust for trends by department based on org-wide goals	2b. Execute onboarding program aligned to high quality management definition and competencies	3c. Revisit and refresh performance management systems; implement with fidelity
1c. Share DEI Plan progress via DEI dashboard (e.g., dei.tntp.org)	2c. Ongoing Development: Create a forum for managers to share mistakes, ask for resources / support	3d. Align hiring & onboarding practices to reflect commitment to diversity; implement with fidelity
1d. Develop and journey through our "Why" for DEI - as an organization and as individuals	2d. Ongoing Development: Staff experience leveraged as input in manager feedback and reflection (via 360s or other collection mechanism)	3e. Develop, clarify and codify opportunities for career growth and development
1e. MT/LT/ET members develop / share DEI goals and demonstrate follow-through and priority	2e. Ongoing Development: 2x annually, skip-level management check-ins	3f. Solidify and communicate career pathways

All staff prioritize and are engaged in DEI efforts

TNTP reimagine teaching

One important sign that the leadership team and working group have effectively invested multiple stakeholders across the organization: the overwhelming majority of staff are aware of the plan.

91% of TNTP staff agree that TNTP has a DEI strategy, as compared to **59%** at similar organizations.

TNTP	91%
Ed Support Orgs	59%

PROMISE54

Engaging in Hard Conversations — and then Walking the Walk

In 2016, TNTP hired an external organization to develop and facilitate trainings and conversations on DEI titled Conscious Inclusion. They've since further adapted the topics and materials and now facilitate these trainings internally. All new staff are required to participate in Conscious Inclusion within three months of their start date.

> *"This provides all staff with a foundation and common language on DEI, and it's also an opportunity for us to share our story and our own DEI journey, and reflect on the importance and value of naming things when we see them."*
>
> *—Tonya Horton*

This common language has facilitated an increase in conversations on difficult topics around race, identity, and privilege among staff members, reaching well beyond the Conscious Inclusion training.

> *"It's less likely to be an agenda item and now more rooted in conversations about teamwork, and we want this. There is way more comfort in bringing forward our gaffes. People are much more honest now."*
>
> *—Dan Weisberg*

These open conversations are taking place far more frequently among TNTP staff than at similar organizations.

80% of TNTP staff report frequent conversations about race/ethnicity, compared to **46%** at similar organizations.

TNTP	80%
Ed Support Orgs	46%

PROMISE54
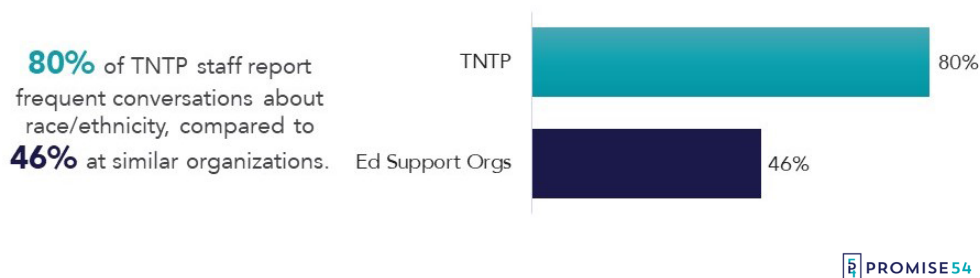
Further, as TNTP staff discuss power, privilege, and explicit commitments to inclusion and equity, individual staff members describe their shifting behaviors and worldview:

> *"I came from the business world and slid right in with no problem at TNTP — I felt comfortable because I have that personality. What I think may have changed is that we have more opportunity for all staff to participate in the conversation...I would have said that I was aware before and there have been times when I said, '[Wow], I live in a bubble,' but now, I am developing a new awareness and this makes me think about how I react, how I think about things, how I talk to my team, and there are opportunities now to be vocal."*
>
> *—Anonymous Staff Member*

At the same time, we heard individuals on the Diversity Leadership Council express frustration that DEI work stays on the level of conversation and doesn't go further, particularly around microaggressions:

> *"If something happens to me, and I speak to someone about it, they say, 'OK, let's work with them and try to get them to be better' — and I say, 'Oh, well, this happened again,' and they say, 'Okay, well, I'll talk to them again.' So at what point are we going to stop saying 'It's okay that this happened to me' and make change? There are no real visible consequences outside of a conversation that happens when people have negative experiences."*
>
> *—Kimberlee Logan*

Staff beyond the Diversity Leadership Council expressed similar frustration, rating TNTP lower in response to the Promise54 DEI Staff Experience Survey question "Our organization recognizes and eliminates exclusion" relative to other inclusion index measures:

Our organization recognizes and eliminates exclusion

TNTP 40%

National 45%

PROMISE54

TNTP leadership rallied around this difference as an area for growth, noting that the question emphasizes recognition and elimination of exclusion. To begin moving from talk into action, leadership examined the feedback together at a leadership retreat, and decided to anchor in the mission to "walk the walk" of creating their desired inclusive culture.
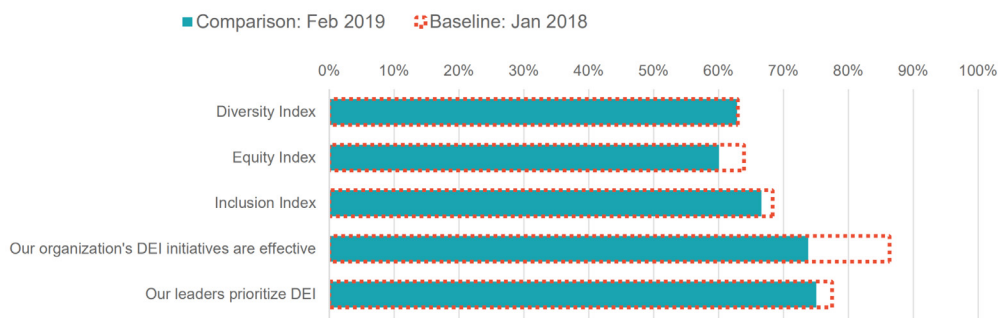
As DEI conversations have increased in depth and frequency, and as the leadership team has explicitly committed to walking the walk, TNTP staff have increased their awareness and fluency around surfacing and resolving DEI issues. Now more than ever, staff are primed to notice and acknowledge gaps in diversity, inclusion, and equity at TNTP, and their standards and expectations for TNTP's DEI work have thus risen. TNTP saw what they believe is evidence of this as staff's perception of DEI initiative effectiveness and leadership's prioritization of DEI dropped from 2018 to 2019.

Staff Experience Survey Highlights

■ Comparison: Feb 2019   ⋮⋮ Baseline: Jan 2018

| | 0% | 10% | 20% | 30% | 40% | 50% | 60% | 70% | 80% | 90% | 100% |

Diversity Index
Equity Index
Inclusion Index
Our organization's DEI initiatives are effective
Our leaders prioritize DEI

> "As we have gotten our staff engagement surveys, we are seeing an uptick in people who see issues of race and bias...People are internalizing it, and that's growth. It means that we have to keep at it for a while, and it's a process."
>
> —Leticia de la Vara

One key positive sign is that staff see leadership's willingness to recognize and prioritize their own growth:

> "Leadership has been transparent in recognizing their place in DEI... and they're willing to try to challenge [status quo] — they don't know what it means, but [they're] going to go in head-first. [It's] ever-evolving, [and there's] a commitment to listening."
>
> —Ivan Nieves

Acknowledging the Persistence of White-Dominant Culture Norms

While TNTP has successfully identified and developed strategies to tackle some big challenges around representation, inclusion, and shared beliefs, one of their biggest barriers to true culture change has been what staff frequently referred to as "The TNTP Way." Staff described it as shorthand for white-dominant culture norms, including background, skillset, work style, and ways of communicating.

"We still have a long road to get to where we want to be as an organization. Part of it is that we are very steeped in white-dominant culture norms. That is how we function as an organization, so trying to disrupt that takes time and it takes constant effort. And I don't believe that it's ever going to completely go away, but we have to build up our facility to interrupt it when we see it happen."

—Tonya Horton

Tonya was first introduced to the concept of white-dominant culture norms while attending Promise54's DEI Accelerator convening in spring 2017. For her, these concepts resonated deeply with much of what she saw and experienced at TNTP, and Tonya felt it was critical to bring this concept to the organization. These norms were shared as a pre-read and then served as the foundation for a Leadership Team retreat discussion. The concepts resonated so deeply there that they were subsequently shared with all staff, and many could see "The TNTP Way" reflected in these norms.

"It went 'viral.' There wasn't really a strategy here on how to share these — everyone just got it; people felt like they finally had the language to name what this is. It was very much a 'yes, that's what we do; it doesn't feel good but it's true.'"

—Tonya Horton

Many staff believe that following "The TNTP Way" includes a worship of the written word, including the degree to which slide decks are still prioritized as proof of one's knowledge and as the preferred way to disseminate information.

"When I joined the org...we had a very particular way of doing things...these crazy docs that had to be this way. 'This is the TNTP way to do it' has stuck with us for a long time, and we are just starting to scratch the surface of how to rid ourselves of that. We are talking about white [dominant] culture norms." — Emily Appel

Perfectionism and urgency were also elevated as elements of "The TNTP Way."

"We also have a very proving-oriented culture — so we want to be perfect, we want to be right, we want to be sure that the deck looks a certain way, and all of those things have their benefits...and there are ways to still do high-quality work while we are allowing people to be their whole self, their authentic self. And it's figuring out that balance for us."

—Tonya Horton

"Anything related to DEI is complex. Sometimes people underestimate the complexity and...they want to move too quickly and they want to do this right externally, but it's like, no, we have to get it right internally first."

—Tamecca Chester

We also heard perceived either/or tensions between quality and diversity:

> *"Five years ago, I sat in an HR meeting where recruiting staff spoke about the need to hire more diverse staff (specifically Black staff) and to widen the recruitment field. While discussing how our initial filtering of applicants based on resumes and intro calls was ruling out too many candidates of color, one staff interjected with concern, 'But we don't want to lower our standards.' No one commented on that or pushed back, but I felt it was very revealing, and it has stuck with me all of these years; that is, the mindset of the gatekeepers of hiring — changing our standards to something broader was 'lowering.'"*
>
> —Karon Saulter

Finally, staff named the protection of white comfort as another illustration of "The TNTP Way." In a training, a Black facilitator did not tiptoe around the concept of white fragility. The trainer was well-received by many Black staff members who found the approach refreshing, direct, authentic, and honest. While Black staff members applauded the way in which white comfort was not shielded, some white staff members responded critically to the trainer's approach. At the sign of some initial rumblings in the session, Partner Christina Brown stood up and addressed the need to sit with discomfort internally in order to handle it when working in the field with clients.

> *"We can't only work with people who think we are the greatest thing ever and have similar branding to what we do. We need to get into the practice of working with people who are different than us, not just for people who use the 'right' words internally, but think more broadly, expansively."*
>
> —Christina Brown

While Christina — a woman of color — spoke up in the moment, other staff describe that white colleagues, in particular, need to embrace discomfort in order to truly dismantle dominant cultural norms and oppressive systems.

> *"White people get to be comfortable almost all of the time, and this has not changed in the organization...We have documentation as an organization that we want to dismantle white supremacy. That's a bold statement, but when I hear it, I hear 'blow stuff up, start from scratch.' But really we dismantle in a way that still protects white comfort."*
>
> —Shanequa Yates

Transforming ingrained cultural norms like the ones TNTP staff named as being part of "The TNTP Way" doesn't happen overnight. The team has committed to the long-term work of transforming white-dominant culture norms through engagement, through having difficult and necessary conversations, and through holding themselves and one another accountable to interrupting and shifting behaviors in real time. As TNTP continues to work on this transformation, they've folded the topic of white-dominant culture norms into Conscious Inclusion training, leadership team retreats, and all-staff discussions.

Where They're Headed

TNTP leadership characterize their DEI journey as being "one of perpetual learning and growth," and as they've leaned into conversations on inclusion and equity over the past few years, the team aims to match talk with action. Ultimately, TNTP wants to ensure that the organization is not replicating the very dynamics and systems of power they're trying to interrupt for students and teachers across the country. This work is critical to their mission.

During FY20, TNTP will continue evolving by tackling the following projects through the lens of their shared DEI beliefs:

- Leverage shared DEI definitions and beliefs as the lens through which to continue their DEI Strategy implementation
    - » Launch Manager development and onboarding
    - » Implement a new Performance Management System
    - » Develop and maintain a manager wiki space
    - » Update onboarding and hiring processes
- Release their 2025 Strategic Plan, grounded in DEI beliefs and findings of TNTP's most recent national report, "The Opportunity Myth."
- Restructuring the organization so that they're best positioned to implement their 2025 strategy by:
    - » Creating more aggressive diversity representation goals: Measuring against the student population, the organization is aiming for 30% of staff identifying as Latinx, 60% of staff identifying as staff of color, and 60% of leadership identifying as staff of color by 2025.
        - › By the end of FY19, both TNTP's leadership group and the organization as a whole will be 45% staff of color.
    - » Establishing a new approach to management that will allow for a more consistent staff experience
    - » Developing a new division that is focused on building coalitions with communities

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

https://casestudies.promise54.org
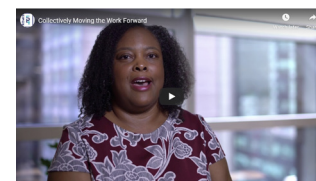
"We have sincerely, all across the organization, approached the work with a desire to learn and get better as individuals and as an organization. This doesn't mean we did it well, but this is a prerequisite for making progress. People didn't come in with the attitude that this was something to fix. People have approached the work in an impressive way, understanding that it requires a lot of reflection and soul searching, and many different ways of interaction. People know it's not going to be an initiative that just Tonya owns, and people have approached it with lots of humility and openness, and have been willing to have some uncomfortable conversations and find a different way to interact.... We all continue to feel responsible for the work."

—Dan Weisberg

Glossary

When we support organizations to work on their priorities around diversity, inclusion, and equity, we encourage an intentional, inclusive process to define these critical terms in context. This is especially important because, while ~50% of education organizations believe DEI is related to their vision, mission, and/or values, less than ~20% have defined the terms for their own organizational context. This can lead to substantially different ideas of what an organization is working toward, how to best get there, or what individuals can expect from their day-to-day experiences. For a set of common, starting definitions applicable across each of our case study organizations, we use the following:

Diversity

Variation; the presence of different types of people (from a wide range of identities and with different perspectives, experiences, etc.).

When we partner with organizations to support their DEI work, some of the critical considerations we surface as they work to tailor their definition of diversity are:

- Whether they're intentionally placing a disproportionate emphasis on race and ethnicity in defining diversity, and why they would or would not do so
- Whether they are intentionally focusing on any other aspects of diversity, and why or why not; and
- What the ideal demographic makeup of their staff would be if they thought about their staff representation goals from a diversity standpoint.

Inclusion

Embracing diversity by creating an environment of involvement, respect, and connection — where the richness of ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives are harnessed to create value.

When we partner with organizations to support their DEI work, some of the critical considerations we surface as they tailor their definition of inclusion are:

- What indicators various identity groups may experience today related to sense of belonging, connectedness, agency, voice, and psychological safety as well as whether, how, and why those indicators differ by identity groups; and
- Whether and how those varied experiences need to change in the future.

Equity

Ensuring equally high outcomes for all and removing the predictability of success or failure that currently correlates with any identity marker.

When we partner with organizations to support their DEI work, some of the critical considerations we surface as they tailor their definition of equity are:

- The distinction between equity and equality. Equity ensures that everyone has what they need to be successful, taking into account different starting points and institutionalized biases. Equality means everyone receives the same resources and support, no matter their starting point. While equality may aim to promote fairness, it assumes that everyone starts from the same place and faces the same institutional barriers along the way toward outcomes; and
- To what degree the organizationintends to be focused on liberation (freeing ourselves and those that we aim to serve from the oppressive structures around us) versus equity (supporting those that we aim to serve to be successful within oppressive structures) and how those answers should impact an organization's specific definition of equity.

Net Promoter Score

We created a promoter index comprised of a high score on intent to stay and/or willingness to recommend the organization to a friend.

Intent to Stay

This measure in our Staff Experience Survey looks at a staff member's self-reported likelihood of working in the same organization in three years.

White Dominant Culture

The norms, values, beliefs, ways of thinking, behaving, and decision-making that are more familiar to and come more naturally to those from a white, Western tradition. These are the dominant, unquestioned standards of behavior and ways of functioning that are embedded and often unintentionally reproduced in our national culture by the vast majority of institutions in the United States. White-dominant culture results in a less inclusive environment, and is rooted in each person's interest in maintaining their own access to power and/or resources. These norms can be upheld by both white people and people of color.

Kenneth Jones and Dr. Tema Okun worked to define the white-dominant culture norms listed below, naming that these characteristics are "damaging because they are used as norms and standards without being proactively named or chosen by the group." In addition, they promote white supremacy thinking, or the idea that white people and the ideas, beliefs, and values of white people are superior to people of color and their ideas, beliefs, and values.

Defensiveness & Denial	Either/Or Thinking	Fear of Open Conflict
I'm The Only One	Individualism	Objectivity
One Right Way	Paternalism	Perfectionism
Power Hoarding	Progress is Bigger, More	Quantity Over Quality
Right to Comfort	Sense of Urgency	Worship of the Written Word

Psychological Safety

An individual's perception of the consequences they face in taking an interpersonal risk; the belief that a team is safe for risk-taking.

In a team with high psychological safety, individuals feel safe to take risks around their team members. They feel confident that no one on the team will embarrass or punish them or anyone else for admitting a mistake, asking a question, or offering a new idea.

Acknowledgements

Promise54's mission is to help adults thrive so they can better serve kids, families, and communities. We envision a day when organizations committed to educational equity can have maximum impact because they have:

- The right people excelling in the right roles;
- Teams that include perspectives, identities, and experiences of the communities served;
- Cultures of belonging, trust, and connection; and
- Equitable internal structures, systems, and behaviors.