



Kentucky Student
Voice Team

WINBURN MIDDLE SCHOOL

STUDENT RESEARCH SNAPSHOT REPORT
STEREOTYPES STUDY

SPRING 2026 · LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY



ABOUT THIS STUDY

The Problem

As 8th graders preparing to graduate and transition to high school — and as students who have been part of the Winburn community for two and a half years — the Winburn Student Research Team brought lived experience to a persistent issue: **stereotypes at Winburn Middle School.**

The Origin

In early winter 2026, a group of 8th graders — supported by their teacher Mrs. Mitchell and funded by the **Kentucky Civic Seal grant** — launched a student-led research study to better understand stereotypes and to be part of the solution.

GUIDING RESEARCH QUESTION

"How can students challenge stereotypes at Winburn Middle School and change how students of color are viewed?"

How We Collected Data

255

Survey Responses

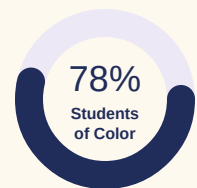
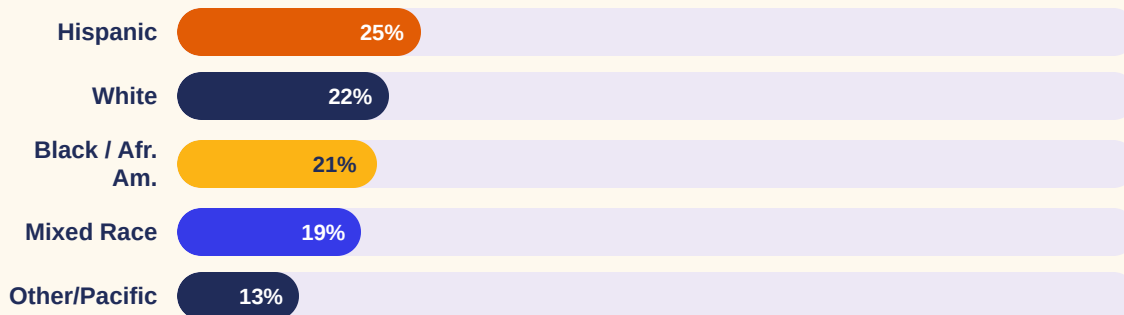
Student-designed survey completed across all three grade levels at Winburn

25

Recorded Interviews

Student-to-student interviews capturing deeper stories and experiences

Who Responded: Race/Ethnicity of Survey Takers (n=245 of 255 who identified their race/ethnicity)



Survey reviewed and refined by Dr. Daniela DiGiacomo, UK professor and senior research partner for the Kentucky Student Voice Team.



WHAT WE FOUND: SAFETY & RESPECT

Finding 1 — Feeling Safe at Winburn

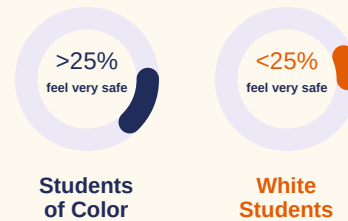
Overall, only about 1 in 4 students say they feel very safe at Winburn.



That means **3 in 4 students** do *not* feel as safe as they should at Winburn — a significant concern for the whole school community.

And yet...

White students in this study report feeling *less safe* than their peers of color — a reminder that safety concerns cut across all groups.



Finding 2 — Feeling Respected by Teachers

A large percentage of Winburn students do not feel fully respected by their teachers.

Students who do NOT feel fully respected by teachers



Students of color report feeling disrespected by teachers at a significantly higher rate than white peers

But...

"It's not okay; they're [people who stereotype] hurting people's feelings for who they are."

"I feel like people shouldn't stereotype other people because they don't know what people go through at home or just go through in general."



WHAT WE FOUND: STEREOTYPES

Finding 3 — Stereotypes Are a Major Problem



The majority of Winburn students — including those who don't feel as personally stereotyped — agree that stereotypes are a *big problem* at their school.

Even students who haven't experienced stereotyping firsthand recognize it as a serious issue affecting their school community.

But the burden is not shared equally.

How Often Students Report Feeling Stereotyped at Winburn



Students of Color

Report being stereotyped **nearly twice as often** as their white peers

VS



White Students

Report lower rates of feeling stereotyped — yet still acknowledge it as a major issue

Imagine 10 students of color at Winburn walking through the school day:



Nearly **8 in 10** report experiencing stereotyping — compared to roughly **4 in 10** white students.

"It [being stereotyped] will make you think whatever they say about you is true."

"I just keep questioning myself. Like, why am I this skin color and how I hate where I'm from..."



STUDENT VOICES

These quotes come directly from Winburn students, shared during interviews conducted by the student research team.

”

It's going to hurt you, but the more they do it, the less you feel anything because you're going to get used to it.

”

I just want Winburn to have a good attitude.

”

I just keep questioning myself. Like, why am I this skin color and how I hate where I'm from...

”

I mean, yeah, absolutely some people judge a book by its cover.

”

Since I'm Chinese, some people think that I'm just naturally smart, so then that kind of makes me work harder.

”

I've tried being friends with the opposite race of me or Hispanic people, but they push me away.

”

Some of the students feel misunderstood that stereotypes have to be this type of way when they're not.





SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Winburn Student Research Team understands that the issue of stereotypes is complex and deeply rooted — not something solved overnight. But they are committed to being part of the solution. Here are their concrete recommendations:



Build Awareness School-Wide

Create dedicated learning opportunities for teachers and students to understand what stereotypes are, why they are harmful, and how they affect students' learning and well-being.



Create More Cross-Group Social Opportunities

Co-design routine, meaningful events where all students can come together across racial and social groups — not just once, but consistently throughout the school year.



Recruit, Hire & Retain Teachers and Administrators of Color

Purposefully diversify faculty and school leadership so students see themselves reflected in the adults who teach and lead them, while building empathy across all racial groups.



Strengthen Relationships Between Admin & Students

Create more regular, informal touchpoints between administrators and students. Relational trust is built over time through small moments — not just formal meetings or discipline interactions.

Let's Talk: Discussion Starters

- 1 When you hear the word "stereotype," what comes to mind? Have you ever been stereotyped at Winburn, or seen it happen to someone else?
- 2 Only about 1 in 4 students feel very safe here. What does "safety" mean to you — and what would make you feel safer at Winburn?
- 3 Students of color in our study reported feeling stereotyped nearly twice as often as other groups. What can we, as a school community, do about this?
- 4 Which of the four student recommendations resonates most with you? What would it take to make it happen at Winburn?



IN THEIR OWN WORDS: RESEARCHER REFLECTIONS

||

I felt like I was making a difference instead of just sitting and watching things happen. Like, I could do something that could actively change both my and others' outlook.

— ANGELUS PEDROZA

||

It feels welcoming, and I feel seen, and I get to talk about my ideas without getting shamed since most of my friends are here, and most that aren't make me feel very heard. I like being on the team because I like doing things to change how people think of the school or the stereotype.

— ARIANA ZAMORA ALVARADO

||

I felt very lucky and honored to be a part of the Winburn Youth Research Team because not every school or class has this opportunity.

— ELISSA VALDEZ BECERRA

||

I felt really honored to be a part of the Winburn Youth Research Team. This is not something you can do every day or out of nowhere, and I feel good to be able to help out other people.

— HAPPINESS BAHATI

||

Being a part of the Winburn Youth Research Team is a really big and amazing opportunity that I didn't think I'd be able to get, considering it could change the lives and views of the people around me.

— JAMARI WHITE

||

Being part of the Winburn Youth Research Team is really a good opportunity to learn how people from different backgrounds feel and what experiences they had in the past or still have, and to teach future students not to stereotype people because they also have feelings.

— ARIANA GARCIA

||

Being a part of the Winburn Youth Research Team made me feel very important. Knowing I was going to be a part of something to make a change at my school was very humbling. We know this was an issue, and being able to make a difference was so important.

— LEAH DAVIS

||

Being part of the Youth Participatory Action Research Team was an exciting experience because I got to learn about stereotypes and how people feel about stereotypes or being stereotyped.

— OZIL VILLEDA PAZ

||

Being a part of the Winburn Youth Research Team felt very welcoming, and it was a very fun experience to be a part of a class you feel welcome in, and I will miss this class so much!!

— ISABELLA PEREZ

||

Being a part of the Winburn research team was a mind-opening experience of being able to see how other people in my community feel about the issue of stereotypes and helping find ways to resolve the issue that affects so many of us.

— KAYLA NGONDY

||

It feels great to be a part of the Winburn Youth Research Team! It was fun interacting with my classmates and expressing my opinions or thoughts on something without feeling uncomfortable or judged. My classmates were very welcoming, and I got to learn more about stereotypes and how they affect not only one individual but a whole lot of others.

— MAKENZIE JONES

||

To be part of the Winburn Youth Research Team really inspires me to solve more problems that are occurring in the real world and in the youth. It also boosts my self-esteem because I know I'm working with other people to solve important issues and inspire others with our works.

— JEMIMAH NGILU

The Winburn Student Research Team

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Advised by Mrs. Mitchell · Research partnership with Dr. Daniela DiGiacomo, University of Kentucky · Supported by the Kentucky Civic Seal Grant



The Kentucky Student Voice Team (KSVT) is an independent, statewide, 501(c)(3) organization co-founded in 2012 by a group of Kentucky high school students. As a collective of young people, KSVT is on a mission to co-create more just, democratic Kentucky schools and communities as research, policy-advocacy & storytelling partners.

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