

Hidden in Plain Sight

The Opportunity to Bridge District Equity Gaps by
Fostering Collaborations with BIPOC Solution Providers

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For non-profit education organizations led by people of color who have created programs, tools, and models for districts and classrooms.

Executive Summary

The academic success of historically and systematically excluded (HSE) students, including Black, Brown, Indigenous, low-income, multilingual learners, and students with learning differences, remains impacted by social position and identity factors. Despite numerous education reform efforts, equity in education continues to be a pressing challenge in the United States. To address this issue, it is crucial to involve BIPOC communities in the design, development, and selection of education solutions that aim to mitigate inequity.

The Center for Inclusive Innovation (CII) has identified a significant disparity in opportunities for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) education solution providers¹ compared with their white counterparts. Many BIPOC solution providers possess the expertise and innovative solutions needed to meet the needs of HSE students, but they often face barriers that hinder their access to districts and education markets.

To bridge this equity gap, the Center for Inclusive Innovation has introduced two innovative approaches: *Learning Salons* and *Solution Showcases*. Our education Learning Salons create opportunities for collaboration and engagement between BIPOC solution providers and district leaders using a five-phase engagement model that allows both parties to identify and address specific challenges faced by HSE students. Solution Showcases provide a three-hour event where district leaders can learn about various undiscovered teaching and learning solutions designed by BIPOC solution providers.

This report centers on the BIPOC solution providers and district leaders that participated in our Learning Salons and Solution Showcases from 2022-2023. The data presented highlights:

1. The experiences and perspectives of BIPOC solution providers as they navigate the education solution landscape, in their own words
2. District leaders and solution providers perspectives of our education Learning Salons and Solution Showcases
3. Factors that should be considered in mitigating the barriers to partnership between districts and BIPOC solution providers

¹ Our sample included organizations that were BIPOC-led or mission-aligned with equity and had teams that meaningfully included BIPOC members.

We conclude with three key pivots that education stakeholders can make to foster greater district-provider alignment in equity-centered solution sourcing and implementation:

1. Redefine Solution Development Readiness Criteria—evaluations of solution provider readiness should include relevant and equitable criteria with a laser focus on sourcing diverse tools, curriculum, and resources that support the HSE student population with intentionality.
2. Reconceptualize expertise—consider the cultural community knowledge and lived experience necessary to inform effective solutions for HSE communities that have historically been left out of district-decision making and education R&D processes.
3. Reimagine procurement pathways—allow for consideration of lesser known education solution providers who have developed solutions that show promise for meeting the needs of HSE students, such as BIPOC and equity-centered education solution providers.

Our Why

Our Why

Despite decades of reform and reimagining efforts to level the playing field of education and support student achievement, deep-seated inequities across social position factors such as race, gender and socioeconomic status (SES) continue to stratify opportunity and achievement among students (Hussar et al., 2020). Although unequal access to fair and equitable education preceded the COVID-19 pandemic, the inequitable landscape of education was brought to the forefront of mainstream discourse during the pandemic years, magnifying the impacts and underscoring the urgent need for a fair and equitable education system. Post-pandemic, students from historically and systematically excluded (HSE; Black, Brown, and Indigenous; those experiencing poverty; multilingual learners; and students experiencing learning differences) communities have evidenced what many have evaluated as significant underachievement when compared to their counterparts from communities that have historically benefitted from inequity in education (Jones et al., 2021). For example, during the pandemic, Black and Latinx students demonstrated lower learning gains than white students from the same schools. In addition, schools with larger Black and Hispanic student populations evidenced lower growth rates (Kuhfeld, 2022).

Dominant deficit narratives of HSE students have long situated these types of discrepancies in the lower engagement and lacking motivation of students and families (Boykin & Noguera, 2011); widening the aperture through which student achievement is evaluated reveals a more nuanced story. As a whole, HSE students experience disparate access to adequate educational opportunity across student-teacher relationships, the school and classroom environment, access to learning supports, and affirming institutional and interpersonal spaces (Jones et al., 2021). Education scholars and thought leaders have termed this disparity “the opportunity gap.” All of the aforementioned factors have significant implications for HSE students’ opportunity structure for excellence in education (Milner, 2012).

Many stakeholders are searching for solutions that yield equity-centered impacts. Currently, the field offers little guidance for identifying and selecting solution providers²/solutions that are equity-centered and show promise for supporting the needs of HSE students. Past efforts to address the opportunity gap for HSE students through solution implementation have often fallen short in at least one of three specific ways: (1) efforts are predicated on problematizing the engagement and motivation of HSE students without addressing the social and cultural factors that impede engagement and motivation (i.e., deficit-based perspectives); (2) efforts are predicated on providing resources without redressing the structures (e.g., policies, resource allocation, etc.) that leave HSE students

² While “entrepreneurs” is a term that is widely recognized in the industry, we use the phrase “solution providers” to include those who do not consider themselves entrepreneurs, but provide education solutions through their work in organizations. Given the range and depth of the issues impacting HSE students, we departed from the traditional focus on entrepreneurs as product provisioners and instead use the term “solution provider” to describe anyone working to provide products, tools, models, curricula, and/or programs to support educational outcomes.

under-resourced; and (3) efforts ignore the proximal social and cultural contexts in which supports are adopted (e.g., community knowledge and sociopolitical climate). To move the needle toward equity through the use of education solutions, a paradigm shift in the traditional processes by which educational solutions are developed and sourced is needed.

Selecting solutions to implement in a district is generally challenging for myriad reasons given the dynamism of school district contexts and the ever-changing fast-paced edtech industry. In addition to limited established precedence and, more recently, the potential for sociopolitical backlash, sourcing solutions for equity can be especially challenging because doing so effectively requires a deep understanding of the landscape of inequity and the lived experiences of those navigating the challenge areas. The overwhelming majority of teachers (79%; Spiegelman, 2020) and district leadership (89%; Thomas et al., 2023) do not reflect the increasingly diverse student body and their lived experiences. As a substitute for an accurate count of BIPOC education solution providers, data from the 2020 U.S. Census Annual Business Survey reveals that merely 19.9% of U.S. businesses were classified as “minority-owned.”

Solution providers that share the lived experiences and community epistemologies of HSE students are well positioned to develop education solutions that are responsive to HSE students’ needs. BIPOC solution providers and equity-aligned organizations, through their critical lens informed by cultural knowledge and content area expertise, often offer solutions fit to the needs of HSE students, but face significant barriers (e.g capital, industry practices, sociopolitical climate, etc.) to large-scale implementation of their solutions. The barriers they must navigate in their quest to share their solutions with the world often impede their ability to establish credibility within the status quo of the education solution industry. The [*“Fostering Continued District-Provider Collaboration for Equity”*](#) section of this report provides more detailed information about this reality.

The traditional research and development (R&D) processes embedded in the ecosystem for education innovation do not typically attend to diversity and inclusion at the R&D table, including the research and design of solutions and user-testing processes. To ensure that solutions are equity-centered and responsive to HSE students’ needs, solution providers (including BIPOC providers) must rely on inclusive design practices that foster awareness of biases and blind spots amongst the R&D team, invite partnership in co-research, include contextual analysis of challenges with those closest to the challenge area, and support co-design of solutions (Lanier, 2022). Solutions informed by the lived experiences of those that navigate the challenge area are more apt to fit their needs and bridge the gap of opportunity in education and lay the foundation for effective solution sourcing and implementation.

Digital Promise's Center for Inclusive Innovation is reimagining traditional processes for solution design, development and sourcing to center equity and support the educational excellence of HSE students. Our approach is anchored in six [Core Tenets](#) that underscore the importance of collaboration across stakeholders through co-research of educational equity challenges and co-design of solutions. We center the needs of HSE students and communities by researching problems of practice *with* them at the helm and co-designing around their specific needs. We believe this approach to educational R&D can mitigate the gap in effective support for HSE students. Our Education *Learning Salons* and *Solution Showcases* are structured opportunities to bring district leaders and solution providers together to better understand equity challenges and contextualize effective solution implementation toward an equity-centered goal. By fostering district and solution provider alignment we hope to center HSE students' needs with supports that close the opportunity gap and help HSE students thrive.

Centering Equity in District-Provider Collaborations

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Fostering alignment to equity in district-provider collaborations requires revisiting the structure, process, and incentives for engagement. Collaborations should be structured to mitigate the barriers that district leaders and solution providers each experience, while also creating room for co-designing the solution development and implementation processes. After all, yielding equity-centered impacts of solutions hinges on how well a solution fits a given context, including the end-users. To refine the structure and process of district-provider collaboration, we defined criteria for baseline district and solution provider readiness and a new model for district and solution provider engagement rooted in collaboration.

Learning Salon and Solution Showcase Models

The Learning Salon model was designed to enable school districts to broaden their lens on their problems of practice in order to meet the needs of HSE students, within an environment that prioritized opportunities to discover innovative products, tools, models, curricula, and/or programs.

Specifically, the Learning Salon model created an ecosystem to:

1. Prioritize deep understanding and mapping school districts' problems of practice.
2. Create opportunities for solution providers to share their deep expertise in the context of the districts' high-priority challenge areas, showcasing their solution and impact.
3. Invite districts and solution providers to collaborate on solutions to the problems of practice.
4. Codify learnings and outcomes on the process and experience in order to iterate and scale.

Each Learning Salon achieved the above by creating hands-on experiences in which district leaders and solution providers collaborated on district problems of practice rooted in inequity. The conceptual framework of the Center for Inclusive Innovation's Learning Salons is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. The Learning Salon Conceptual Framework

Learning Salon Phase	Phase Description
Salon Prep (Pre-Work)*	<p>The salon prep served as a form of readiness for both district teams and providers. Districts were able to submit their problem statement and participate in a root-causes analysis in an effort to diagnose their named problem of practice.</p> <p>Solution providers reviewed the district’s problem statement, completed analysis, and shared a one-pager for district teams to review ahead of engaging in the salon. The analysis was intended to further diagnose and/or inquire of the root causes surrounding the district’s problem of practice.</p>
Expert Panel and Problem of Practice (Framing)	<p>The panel invited providers as experts with content and context understanding of the problem and their lived experience to share their expertise.</p>
Co-Design Part 1 (Analysis)	<p>Solution providers used the initial root cause analysis to uncover additional root causes and/or ask more questions to get a deeper level of understanding into their problem of practice.</p>
Solution Strategy Mapping**	<p>The mapping offered an opportunity for district leaders and solution providers to ideate on possible solutions to a district’s challenge outside of the scope of providers participating in the salon.</p>
Co-Design Part 2 (Exploration)	<p>In the exploration phase, district teams and providers were paired and explored opportunities for collaboration beyond the Learning Salon.</p>
Feedback	<p>Participants share out to capture feedback and reflect on learnings from the experience.</p>

Note: * = Created and embedded into the model after the first Learning Salon; ** = Exclusive to the in-person model

Three approaches were piloted with districts and solution providers:

In-Person Learning Salon Model: A 4-hour session starting with up to 5 districts framing their problem of practice, engaging in root-cause mapping with the solution providers and then moving to co-design and solution mapping followed by exploring opportunities for further collaboration (Figure 1).

Virtual Learning Salon Model: A 2-hour prep session where up to 5 districts worked on root-cause mapping of their problem of practice, followed by a 3-hour virtual session with the solution providers to engage in co-design and solution mapping, followed by exploring opportunities for further collaboration. To maximize efficiency within the Salon experience, solution mapping, which focused on more broad solutions to the named problem, was replaced with a root-cause analysis where we utilized various protocols to conduct the analysis with the district teams. This information was then shared with solution providers in their pre-work session to have a better understanding of each district’s challenge and potential root causes so the providers would have adequate context prior to engaging with each respective district team (Figure 2).

Figure 1. 5-Phase In-Person Engagement Model

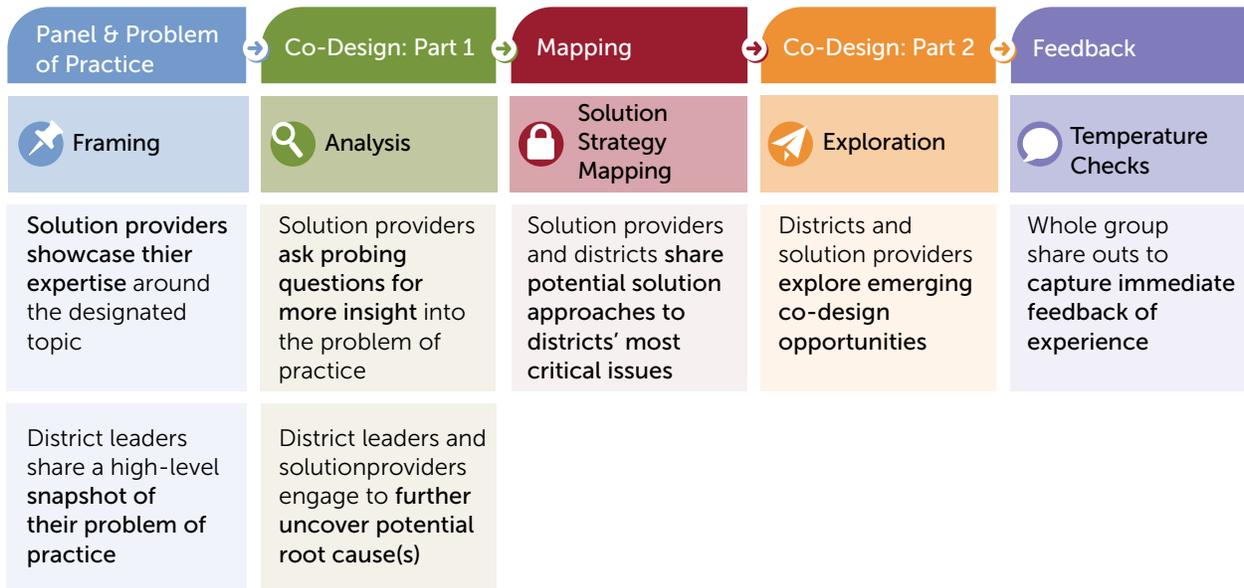
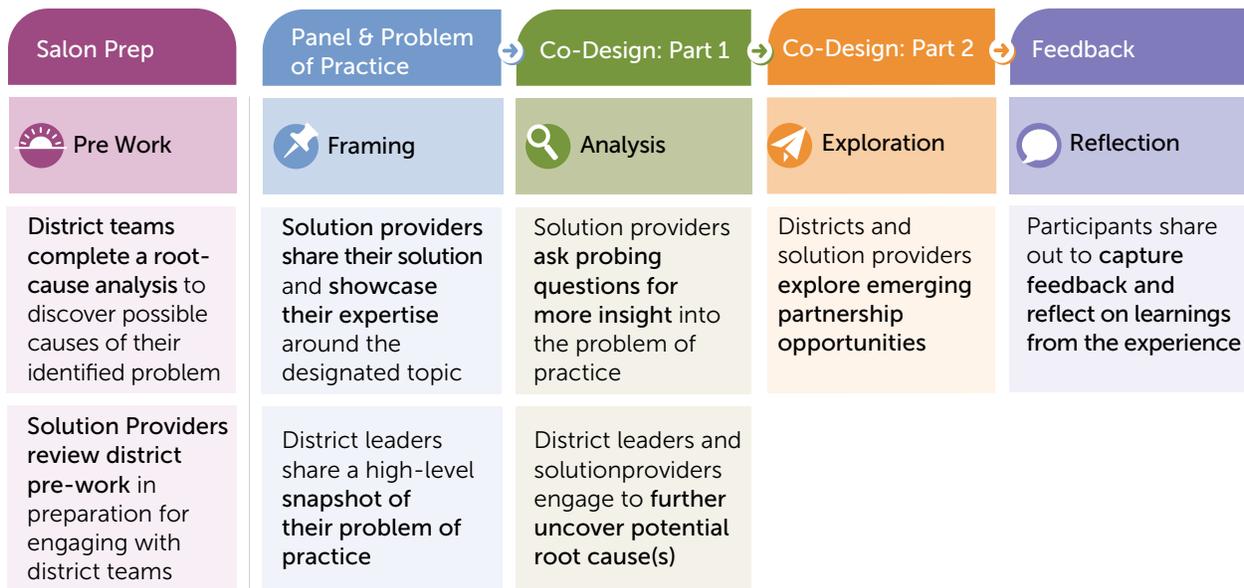


Figure 2. 5-Phase Virtual Engagement Model



Virtual Solution Showcase Model: A 3-hour public showcase was produced with the purpose of 1) expanding the number of districts and solution providers who were able to participate 2) create more exposure of the equity-centered solutions to a broader audience of districts to effect greater awareness and change. We invited districts and state education stakeholders and charter school teams (i.e., superintendents, chief academic officers, equity officers, etc.), school board members, non- and for-profit leaders, and other national organization leaders into an open environment where we created awareness of a larger number of BIPOC providers with solutions, tools, and models that meet district needs (Figure 3).

Figure 3. In-Person and Virtual Showcase Models

	Event and Audience	Types of Solution Providers	Event Format	Outcomes/ Key Takeaways
BIPOC Leaders Showcase	<p>Oct 2022 CII Convening – Los Angeles, CA</p> <p>Practitioners, researchers, district leaders, funders</p>	<p>10 BIPOC solution providers actively shaping the education landscape</p>	<p>(1) Reception-style event</p> <p>(2) Spotlight segments for each provider to highlight their solution and its impact to date</p>	<p>(1) Create Awareness of solutions not seen or heard</p> <p>(2) Amplify diverse leaders in the edtech space</p> <p>(3) Digital and hardcopy marketing materials provided</p>
Social Studies Uncut Showcase	<p>March 2023 – Virtual</p> <p>Practitioners, researchers, district leaders, funders</p> <p>Over 20 states represented</p>	<p>6 undiscovered next generation teaching and learning solution providers</p>	<p>(1) Perspectives: a Panel with Field Experts and League of Innovative Students</p> <p>(2) Why Social Studies Uncut? – A Framing</p> <p>(3) Virtual Discovery Showcase</p> <p>(4) Breakout Rooms</p>	<p>(1) Create awareness of solutions not seen or heard</p> <p>(2) Attract potential districts and discover interest in solutions</p> <p>(3) Complete doc of provider materials and resource shared by panelists and attendees</p>

The Center for Inclusive Innovation hosted five Learning Salons and Solution Showcases in 2022–2023 (Table 2).

Table 2. Learning Salon and Solution Showcases in 2022–23

Topic	Partner	Type	# of Providers
Social and Emotional Learning and Family Engagement	 	In-person	4
Mental Health and Trauma-Informed Practices	 	Virtual	4
Real-World Learning		Virtual	4
BIPOC Leaders Showcase	 	In-person	10
Social Studies Uncut		In-person (2022) Virtual (2023)	10

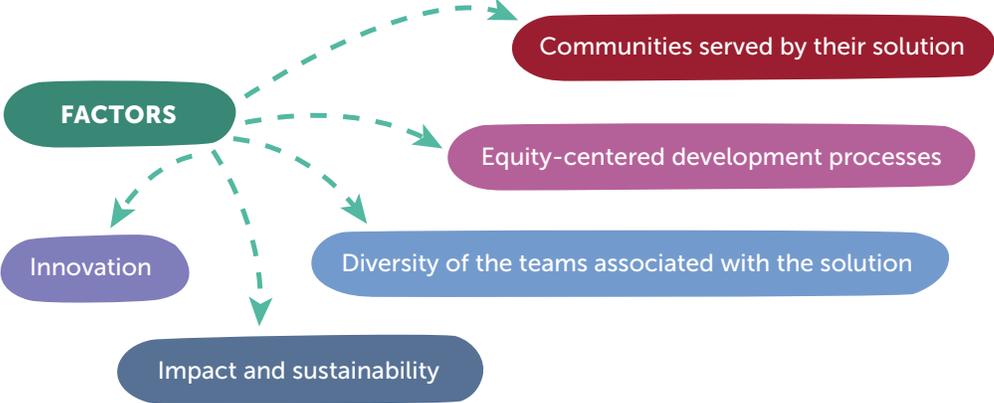
District and Solution Provider Readiness

The work of creating district-provider alignment for equity starts with confirming readiness to engage. The districts we worked with were sourced from our national network of school districts, the League of Innovative Schools, as well as districts that we became connected with through adjacent recruitment efforts. We defined district readiness based on the priority the district placed on the challenge, district leaders’ articulations of a well-defined problem of practice, and their capacity to commit the time and personnel to the journey. All districts participated voluntarily in our Education Learning Salons and Solution Showcase events, with the aim of resolving a particular problem of practice rooted in inequity through district-provider collaboration.

We collaborated with several organizations that support BIPOC solution providers (Table 2) who wholly embody equity and are relatively hidden in plain sight. These solution providers are eager to implement their education solutions, but may not have the benefit of mainstream popularity. The intention of the Education Learning Salons and Solution Showcases was to create awareness of these solutions and amplify these BIPOC leaders in the education ecosystem. We outlined baseline criteria rooted in culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000) and inclusive R&D principles (i.e. Inclusive Innovation; Angevine et al., 2019) that led us to providers with solutions designed to address equity challenges for HSE students. Specifically, we were interested in solution providers that had design/development processes and/or solutions that were:



After identifying a pool of providers that met one or more of the baseline criteria above, providers and their solutions were evaluated with our detailed Readiness Rubric that included factors such as:



The Promise: Perspectives from Districts and Solution Providers

The Promise: Perspectives from Districts and Solution Providers

The data presented in the current study were collected with the aim of evaluating and improving our models for fostering alignment in district-solution provider collaborations on equity challenges. As we were facilitating the Education Learning Salons and Solution Showcases, three questions informed our approach to each event and subsequent formative analyses:

1. How do BIPOC solution providers think about their expertise and their solutions?
2. How did district leaders and solution providers experience the learning salons/events?
3. What factors should be attended to in fostering collaboration between districts and BIPOC/other equity-aligned orgs?

The findings in this current study center on these three guiding questions.

Learning Salon and Showcase Participants

Districts. In total, we engaged with more than 30 districts across our Education Learning Salon and Solution Showcase events. Districts were primarily sourced from our [League of Innovative Schools](#) and secondarily from other adjacent CII initiatives and recruitment efforts. The districts were from different states across the U.S. and varied across a number of factors such as size, racial composition, and students qualifying for free and reduced-price lunch³.

Solution Providers. We also engaged with 29 solution providers across our Education Learning Salon and Solution Showcase events. Most of the solution providers that we worked with are members of a BIPOC community (80%). The solution providers and organizations that we worked with and the Learning Salon or Solution Showcase event they attended are outlined in Appendix Table A-2.

Organizations Supporting Solution Providers. We partnered with organizations that are mission-aligned with the Center for Inclusive Innovation's priority on HSE students and actively support the training and development of solution providers. Our partner organizations helped identify solution providers that met our readiness criteria for an Education Learning Salon or Solution Showcase. In total we worked with seven partners (see Table 2).

³ Many districts that we worked with are members of our League of Innovative Schools. Demographic information for League member districts can be viewed at <https://digitalpromise.org/initiative/league-of-innovative-schools/districts/>

Data Sources

Survey. The Learning Salon Post-Engagement Survey consisted of 15 Likert scale and open-ended items intended to surface experiences and perspectives of Learning Salon participants (district leaders and solution providers). A sample question reads, “I was able to explore high-priority teaching and learning problems of practice in supporting students furthest from opportunity (to include students who are Black, Brown and Indigenous, experiencing poverty, multilingual learners and students experiencing learning differences).” The survey was disseminated via the online survey platform, Qualtrics. Participants of the first three Learning Salons were invited to complete the survey. The fourth Learning Salon took place during the Center for Inclusive Innovation Annual Convening (2022) and survey data collection was not logistically practical.

Interviews. The Digital Promise team conducted 14 interviews in spring 2023 that lasted approximately 30–60 minutes. All participants were given an incentive of \$50 for their time as part of their final engagement in this project. Interview questions probed for their perspectives of the Learning Salon and Solution Showcases they attended, the landscape of edtech and education solutions, factors facilitating and inhibiting district-provider collaboration, and BIPOC provider experiences. All interviews were conducted via Zoom, audio recorded, and transcribed by a professional transcription service.

Solution Provider Readiness and Selection Criteria

Objectives:

1. Evaluate each solution provider against the selection criteria to identify how strongly they align with the goals of Inclusive Innovation and the Learning Salon.
2. Criteria that indicate “required” are items where the sub-criteria described must be met (non-negotiable).
3. BIPOC solution designers will be able to present supporting documentation to authenticate criteria is met.

Diverse Research and Design Alignment	Continuity of Equity	Innovation and Creativity	Impact and Sustainability Data/Evidence	Communities Served
Research and design teams are co-led by individuals who are reflective of the diversity of communities and schools.	Deeply integrated equity practices create research and design conditions to address inequities that impact students—poverty, race, language, learning differences and their intersections.	Progress is realized when community stakeholders have access to, can participate in, and benefit from the created solutions.	Intentional capacity-building purposefully sustains equity-centered research and design practices.	Challenges are co-researched and solutions are co-designed to address issues the community deems important and build on what is already working within communities and schools.

BIPOC Solution Providers: In Their Words

Lived Experience and Context Expertise. To contextualize the experiences of BIPOC solution providers navigating the education solution landscape, we first wanted to understand their lived experiences and the kind of context expertise they bring to the table. Providers started the interviews by telling us about themselves and their journeys. Most of what was shared centered on past careers and other life experiences that have informed the lens through which they view their work and their role in education.

- **Prior careers** of solution providers ranged across military, education, edtech organizations, and corporate work.
- Solution providers discussed **relevant life experiences** such as witnessing the civil unrest of 2020 in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, growing up in small rural communities, growing up in the inner city, immigrating to the U.S. and navigating ethnic-racial bias in the workforce.

The range of prior careers and lived experiences across the providers we worked with underscores the deep expertise and community contextual knowledge they bring to the table.

Motivations and Purposes. Understanding that these solution providers bring deep knowledge and expertise that can only be informed by lived experience and being in community with their target consumer, we inquired about their motivation and purpose for engaging in this work.

Many of the solution providers spoke of **general prosociality—a desire to be helpful towards some positive end in education.**

I think, in general, I really believe in the success of students and youth. I know that's probably the most impactful thing that we all can do, just to pour into our future generations, as they're going to become the leaders.

Solution providers also described particular motivations associated with **equity and social justice.**

It's honestly for all the kids who fall through the cracks in education. It's the kids who come in wanting their potential to be reached, but it's not because of how the education system is created.

And just something didn't feel right about that to say, "Hey, **why aren't folks who are from the communities that we serve the folks who are actually building and leading these initiatives,**" right? Inherently, are we saying that they're not capable of addressing the community concerns that they have...? Because for whatever reason, we're not creating pathways for folks to actually be able to come [up with] whatever the solutions are [that best serve them].

Solution providers' responses to our inquiry about their motivations and purposes reflected a general desire to be prosocial and/or included specific references to equity. Providers' responses were not always aligned with one category; across the entire interview providers often made statements that fell into both categories.

After gaining a sense of the lived experiences of the solution providers we worked with, we then wanted to understand how they thought about the solution(s) they offered. Solutions ranged from professional development for district leaders and teachers, to youth and parent programs, to direct products such as curricula and instructional tools.

Conceptualizations of Impact. Recognizing that much of the work of fostering equity in education lies in reimagining progress in terms of those furthest from opportunity (Angevine et al., 2019), we asked solution providers how they conceptualized the impact of their solutions. Most descriptions included multiple examples of the following measures:

Traditional accountability measures and processes that are widely used in the education and business sectors.

We have KPIs (key performance indicators) that are—like we might ask a pre-question, like a survey question at the first day of school. And then six weeks later, we might re-ask that question to see, so for example, did belonging go up? Did engagement go up?

...at every workshop and presentation or session that we facilitate, we issue an evaluation. And so that is consistent even down to our staff meetings...

Reach of their solution and described impact in terms of the number of end-users they are able to access with their solution.

...we have over a 150,000 educators across the country within our network.

...our content [isn't] that expensive. It's between 5 and 10 dollars a [book] and a workbook. So buying a bunch of class sets that can be reused - it's not inaccessible. And then if need be, sometimes we do digital licensing.

Personal development of the student or teacher who uses their product.

I would be checking in on [a particular student], "Hey, how's your inventory doing? Do you need more?" And then months later, it became him c hecking with me saying, "[provider name], I'm almost out of inventory. I'm going to need this and this... I also want to evolve my product line," right?

...I really look at the faces of the teachers, at their expressions. Are they happy to be there, and do the students feel welcome? Do all students feel a sense of belonging where they are in the classroom?

Relationships and connection among students, families, teachers, and other education stakeholders.

And we are now working with the parent, the family, the caregiver, to make sure not only are we healing the ills in the house for that one child maybe in the second grade – there’s multiple children in that family. So when our focus is on parents and making sure parents have all the tools they need, then we are healing the whole family.

[Student] was creating a graphic-T line. He had a mishap with the printer he was working with and had shared with our program manager that **one of the biggest lessons he learned was how much his mom has his back** because he told his mom about the business. And she was like, “It’s okay – We’re going to figure this out together,” found him another printer, and they made it happen.

Understandably, solution providers drew on business practices and referenced traditional accountability measures and metrics such as the use of predetermined key performance indicators and number of end-users reached. At the same time, their descriptions of impact also fell outside of these typical conceptions of impact and student achievement by including youth personal and social development as legitimate markers of progress.

Alignment to Culture and Context. We inquired into solution providers’ thoughts and beliefs about the cultural and contextual alignment of their solutions to the needs of HSE students and the communities they serve. Notably, many of the solution providers who we spoke with indirectly described key features of culturally responsive pedagogy in their work in one or both of the following ways:

Situated in the end **product** such that it is reflective of diverse populations of students. This was specifically described in terms of relevance of the solution and how it is accessed, diverse representation embedded in the solution (e.g. curricula) and whether the content reflected a holistic perspective of students' lived experiences.

So I think what our platform's job is to create these amazing windows, mirrors, and sliding doors for these classrooms so teachers can be able to allow students who, like me – when I was learning, I was watching through a window and I felt like my White friends had a sliding door. They could go into that world. And they're able to dance and figure out what's actually going on...

But we'll eventually do what I call, quote-unquote, "untold white history."... So labor, class warfare, environmental issues, like, "Oh, they put this plant in Podunk, Oklahoma, and over the last hundred years, 50% of the population has some sort of cancer," right?

Situated in the **process** by which R&D happens such that those at the table reflect the diversity of those targeted by solutions.

And so when we think about our work in particular, we are consistently innovating on our lessons. We are seeking insight from community that may be directly impacted...And it's foundational to all of the various outputs of the work that we do.

...the best way to ensure [solutions are aligned to culture and context] is to make sure that we have **diversity within the team working on our solutions**...Because it's those inputs that take all of us to say, "Well, this is how this looked like for me. This is how I see it," and really have those inputs from the start to make sure that we're [intentional] about it. I think Student Voice has been super important to us to make sure that we continue to not have blind spots...

Centering equity in the R&D process as well as the end product are part and parcel of what it means to create equity-centered solutions. Solution providers' statements referenced features of culturally responsive pedagogy in both R&D processes and products.

Future Goals. With an orientation towards solution providers' journeys, we wanted to know where providers saw their solutions heading. By understanding their future goals for their solutions, we will be able to better elevate the value proposition of our Education Learning Salon and Showcase models and processes for solution providers in the future. Each solution provider articulated one or more of the following goals for the future of their solution:

Reach of their solutions and build in validation processes as a mechanism for extending reach.

Our goal is to get to [ESSA; Every Student Success Act] Tier 1 efficacy (i.e. evidence the efficacy of a solution using experimental design). I think that that's—I've kind of been setting my goals towards efficacy, because I really care about impact.

...we're going to keep making sure they're better and **reaching more people.**

Creating more **equity** in education through their solutions.

That's what I hope we can do through our work is just expand people's awareness to the fact that they [everyday people] are creative, resourceful, and whole. And because of that, right, they're able to generate possibilities, create solutions that are sustainable and that are generative rather than exploitive...

Continued **innovation** as a persistent goal in their work that will continue on in the future.

So we want to be the forerunner in using [books]...to help people learn things...so there's the culturally responsive piece...But there's a lot of interesting research in the last 10 years around how the human brain processes images and text...We kind of want to use [books] to kind of really help you learn but also from a personalized perspective.

Improve the ways their solutions bring about **relational support and connection** for the teachers and students that use them.

...we hope to continue to provide space where educators across the country can come together and advance their own practice around anti-bias education and social justice education.

Providers' articulations of their future goals for their solutions centered on traditional milestones such as extending their reach and validation as well as nontraditional milestones such as fostering equity and greater innovation and connection.

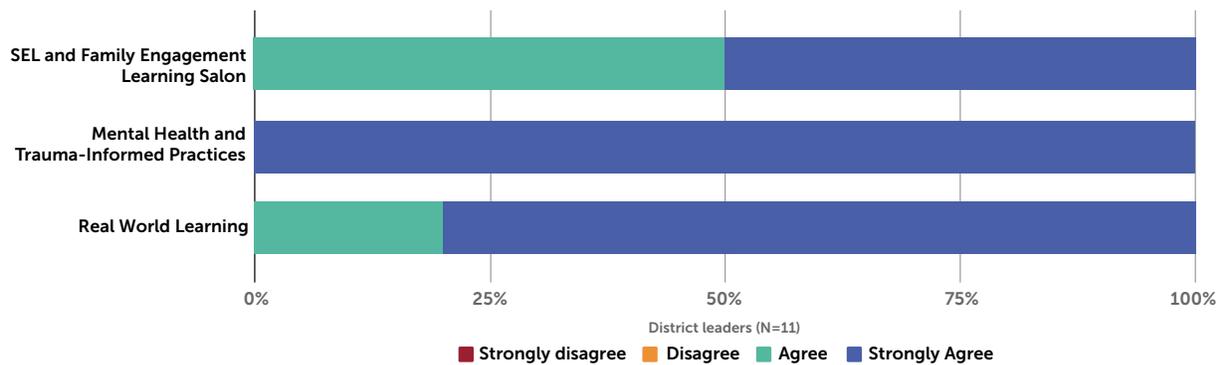
Overall, all of the BIPOC solution providers who we worked with demonstrated their commitment to centering students' needs, especially those whom they share identity and community knowledge with, in their solutions. While there may be several groups or intersections of HSE student identities that BIPOC providers do not share expertise in, it is clear that their motivations, conceptions of impact and commitment to alignment with culture and context prime them to be more likely to center HSE student needs for equity.

The Value of Learning Salons for Districts

After each Learning Salon, we administered the Learning Salon Post-Engagement Survey. In total, 14 district leaders responded to the survey. Items assessed district leaders' perspectives of how well they were able to actualize the key aims of our education Learning Salons. Figures 4–6 present the extent to which district leaders agreed with statements about key features of our education Learning Salons. See [Appendix Table 3](#) for brief descriptions of each Learning Salon topic.

Figure 4. Problem of Practice Exploration

I was able to explore high-priority teaching and learning problems of practice in supporting students furthest from opportunities (to include students who are Black, Brown and Indigenous, experiencing poverty, multilingual learners and students experiencing learning differences).

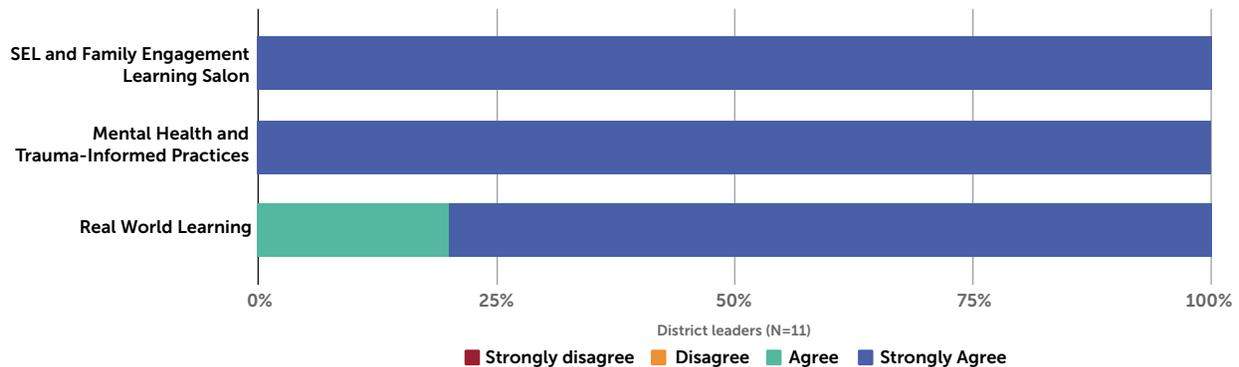


Note: Items presented were measured from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

Source: Digital Promise Learning Salon Post-Engagement Survey, 2022–23.

Figure 5. District-Provider Connection

Today's Learning Salon connected me with equity-centered expert providers to address my district's challenge area.



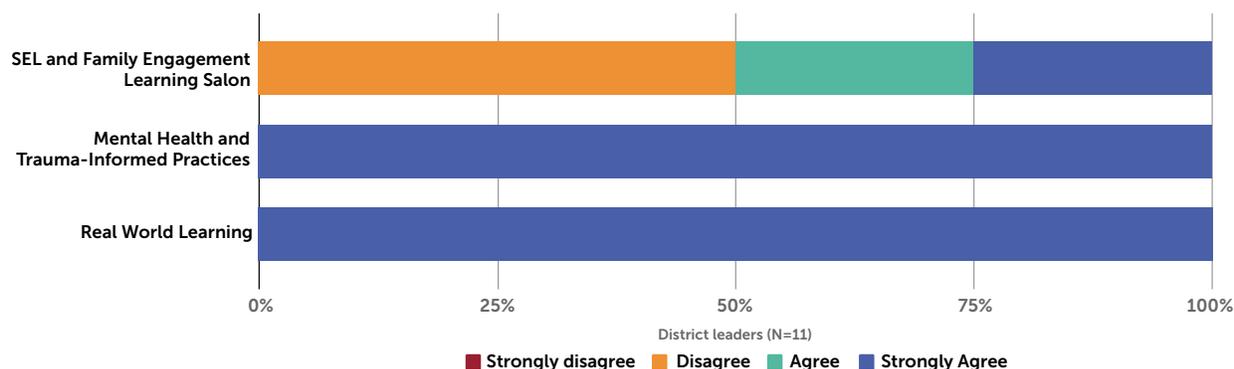
Note: Items presented were measured from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

Source: Digital Promise Learning Salon Post-Engagement Survey, 2022–23.

District leaders' responses to the above two items assessing how well they were able to explore challenges that are priority areas for HSE students with the expertise of solution providers all fell between agree and strongly agree, indicating that the Learning Salons met this key aim for district leaders.

Figure 6. Solution Provider Expertise

Providers shared their expertise without selling their products or services.



Note: Items presented were measured from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

Source: Digital Promise Learning Salon Post-Engagement Survey, 2022–23.

In the first Learning Salon, focused on SEL and Family Engagement, 50% of the district leaders that responded to the survey indicated disagreement with the notion that providers did not sell their products or services during the Salon. Initially, our intention was to foster collaborations on district problems of practice without the pressures of solution providers pitching their solution.

It is natural for these providers to ‘sell’ a little bit. Let’s face it—we are trying to see if there is a good partner to work with so if they didn’t do a little bit of selling, we wouldn’t partner with them.

-District leader

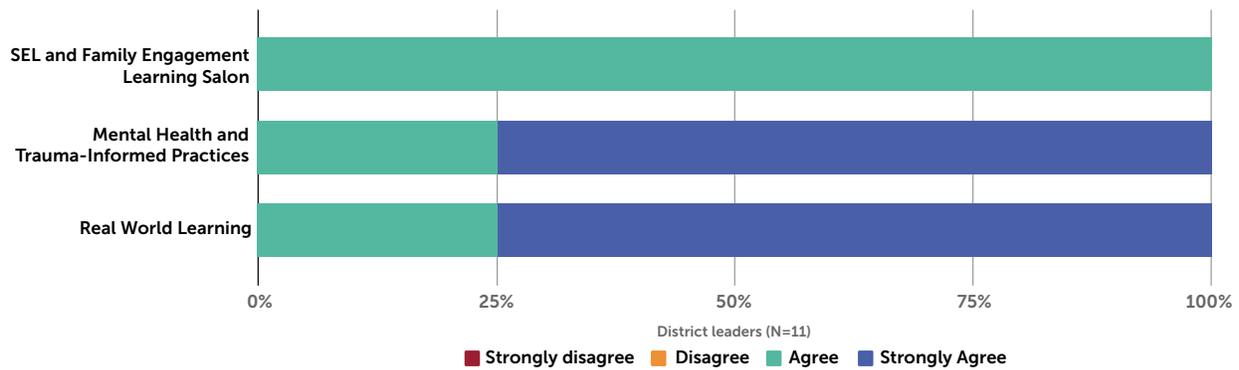
In subsequent Salons, district leaders did not have the sense that providers were selling their products. District leaders also responded to a set of items probing their satisfaction with key elements of each Learning Salon: preparedness of the facilitators, networking opportunities provided, learning from providers and their solutions, root cause analysis, co-design, and solution mapping. In total, 14 district leaders responded to the survey items measured from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 4 (very satisfied). Across all three Learning Salons, **100% of the district leaders that responded to our survey indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the key features of the Learning Salon model.**

The Value of Learning Salons for Solution Providers

Twelve solution providers responded to our Learning Salon Post-Engagement Survey assessing their perspectives of how our Learning Salons met the key aims. The percentage of solution providers that indicated the extent to which they agreed with statements about key features of the promise of our education Learning Salons are presented in Figures 7–11. See Appendix Table 3 for brief descriptions of each Learning Salon topic.

Figure 7. Problem of Practice Exploration

I was able to explore high-priority teaching and learning problems of practice in supporting students furthest from opportunity (to include students who are Black, Brown and Indigenous, experiencing poverty, multilingual learners and students experiencing learning differences).

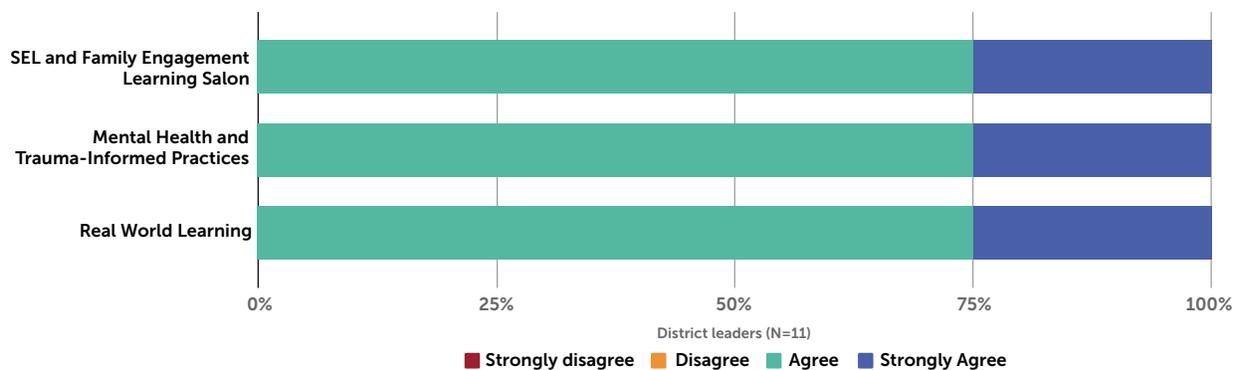


Note: Items presented were measured from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

Source: Digital Promise Learning Salon Post-Engagement Survey, 2022–23.

Figure 8. District Leader Preparedness

District leaders were prepared to discuss their district's challenge area.

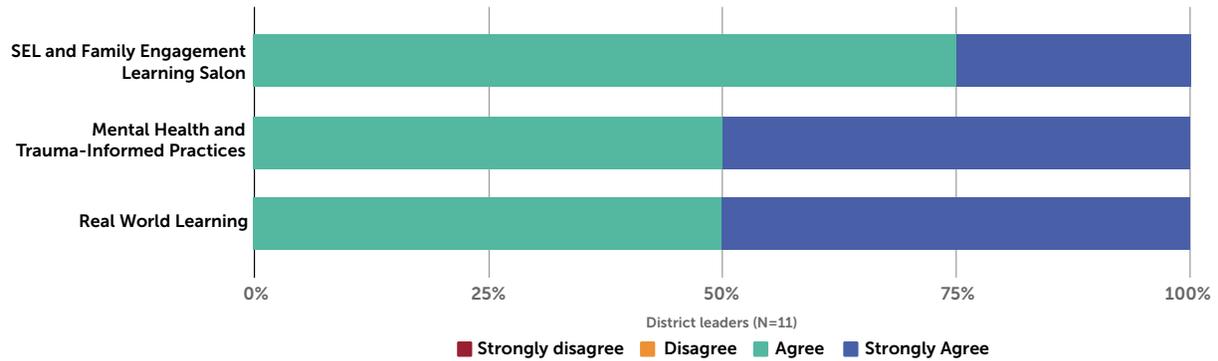


Note: Items presented were measured from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

Source: Digital Promise Learning Salon Post-Engagement Survey, 2022–23.

Figure 9. Solution Provider Expertise

I was able to share my expertise on high-priority challenge areas to provider practitioners with perspectives on methods, approaches and models for success.

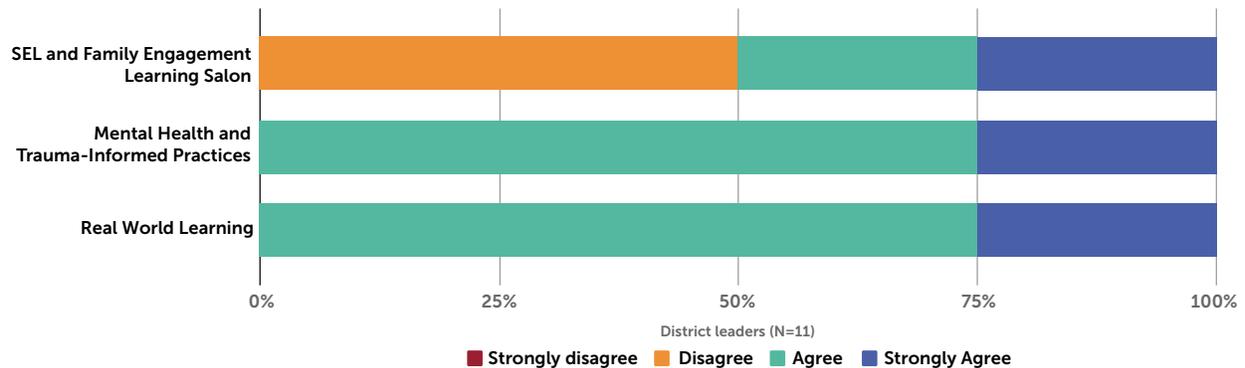


Note: Items presented were measured from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).
 Source: Digital Promise Learning Salon Post-Engagement Survey, 2022–23.

Across all three Learning Salons, solution providers were in agreement that district leaders showed up prepared and that providers were able to share their expertise on the challenge area.

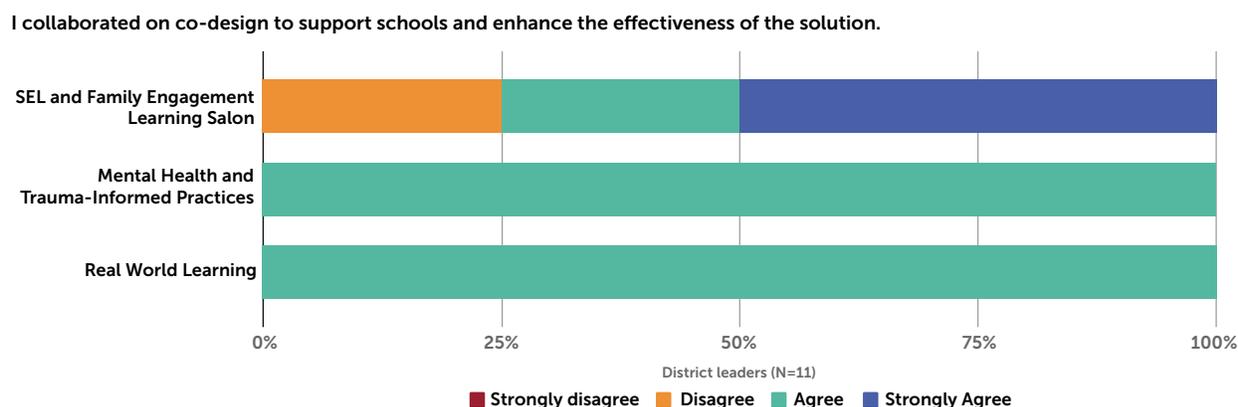
Figure 10. Provider Solution Demonstration

I was able to showcase my solution and its impact to demonstrate how the solution addresses the needs identified in the problem of practice.



Note: Items presented were measured from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).
 Source: Digital Promise Learning Salon Post-Engagement Survey, 2022–23.

Figure 11. Collaboration on Co-Design



Note: Items presented were measured from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

Source: Digital Promise Learning Salon Post-Engagement Survey, 2022–23.

The SEL and Family Engagement Learning Salon was the first Salon we hosted. We learned and adjusted the Salon format and experience based on the feedback we received. For the SEL and Family Engagement Learning Salon, we asked providers to limit the tendency to sell or pitch their solutions to district leaders to foster a cohesive co-design environment around priority challenges impacting HSE students. This approach to fostering district-provider collaboration is atypical and the idea of avoiding the promotion of solutions may have been new to the providers. Thus, it is unsurprising that 50% of providers indicated they did not feel they were able to showcase their solution’s impact during that salon. The 50% of providers who indicated they were able to showcase their solution may be reflected in the district leader responses (see Figure 6). We also made real-time adjustments in the sequence of activities as we were facilitating the SEL and Family Engagement Salon that consequently limited the extent of co-design in-session. This may explain why 25% of providers did not feel they were able to collaborate on co-design during that salon.

Like district leaders, solution providers also responded to a set of items probing their satisfaction with key elements of each Learning Salon: preparedness of the facilitators, networking opportunities provided, learning from providers and their solutions, root cause analysis, co-design, and solution mapping. In total, 17 solution providers responded to the survey items measured from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 4 (very satisfied). Across all three Learning Salons, **100% of the solution providers that responded to our survey indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the preparedness of the facilitators, networking opportunities provided, and solution mapping.** At least one solution provider indicated dissatisfaction with the Lightning Talks, Root Cause Analysis, and Co-Design. One provider stated, “Dissatisfaction was indicated only due to not having enough time for each component. I understand that it was only 3 hours, so it had to be designed with limited time. Perhaps, provide fewer sessions with more time.”

Additional Benefits

Across the first three Learning Salons, 90% of the district leaders and solution providers that responded to our Learning Salon Post-Engagement Survey indicated that they would participate in another Learning Salon, even if no changes were made. Each party reported valuable takeaways from their participation in the Learning Salons (Table 3).

Table 3. Valuable Takeaways

Learning Salon/Showcase	District Leaders	Solution Providers
SEL and Family Engagement	"Clearer sense of my own bias in framing the problem."	"Many of the districts have similar challenges. It was helpful for us to think through how we succinctly communicate our solutions to districts."
Mental Health and Trauma-Informed Practices	"I will be sharing ideas about parent outreach, creating a roadmap of services, and student voice with my team."	"Each district shared many issues, 'getting to the root' was the most effective way to engage co-designing an effective solution."
Real World Learning	"Focus on implementing financial literacy with specific learning goals and outcomes."	"1. The need for paid internships. 2. Continue to generate ways to activate youth interest and buy in."

Note. District leaders and solution providers were asked to "Describe one actionable takeaway [they] noted from [their] time participating in the [Salon topic] Learning Salon."

Beyond intended aims of fostering district-provider alignment in collaborations for equity challenges, it is clear that district leaders and providers were able to walk away with additional benefits that will continue to inform their practice.

Overall, we conclude that our Learning Salons were effective at:

- **Creating awareness** of solutions and tools that are hidden in plain sight– unknown to district leaders and decision makers.
- **Fostering collaborations** on co-design solutions that align with districts’ specific challenges or problems of practice.
- **Building relationships** between district leaders and solution providers founded on a shared commitment to an equity challenge.

Future Directions for Education Learning Salons and Solution Showcases

As part of our effort to continually improve the Education Learning Salons and Solution Showcases, we asked district leaders and solution providers to share their perspectives of how we could more effectively foster district-provider collaboration on equity challenges. Responses were categorized as improvements to our engagement model and additional support that could potentially be offered by partnering organizations.

The suggestions for future improvement to our **engagement model were primarily focused on increasing the amount of time allotted for each event, changing the structure of events to allow for more collaboration and providing participants with a better understanding of the overall process.**

... because we were dependent on Digital Promise to follow up, it took a long while before we were able to get back into the groove and almost forgot about some of the stuff we did at the Learning Salon.

-District leader

So overall, I think the vision of what the Showcase was intended to do has a lot of value. And so I would just offer where there are opportunities to get towards [being able to really share or get to a personal connection] would be really awesome.

-Solution provider

District leaders and solution providers also named **additional support** factors such as coaching for districts and solution providers around their respective needs for this work and creating support communities or networks.

...especially for the large number of white guys as superintendents
... I think a fair number of us are open to seeing that we should be doing things differently... I'd love to see how [the Center for Inclusive Innovation] can continue to push some of us, encourage some of us to recognize that that's an important thing to be considering [when] looking for solutions.

– *District Leader*

I would say one avenue would be funding and then the second one would be community. I think those two things are always some of the most important things.

–*Solution provider*

Fostering Continued District-Provider Collaboration for Equity

Fostering Continued District-Provider Collaboration for Equity

Partnership Criteria

To better understand how to bridge relationships between districts and BIPOC solution providers in the future, we asked both parties to describe what they look for in a partner. In addition, we asked solution providers to describe what makes them an ideal partner to work with. The following factors were surfaced across both parties:

District leaders and solution providers also named **additional support** factors such as coaching for districts and solution providers around their respective needs for this work and creating support communities or networks.

One of them, [Solution Provider], was so expensive compared to what we currently use that I wasn't aware...I loved the product, and then when I handed it off to my director of instruction, he comes back and says, **"This is twice the price of what we're paying." ... And the cost benefit wasn't there.**

-District leader

District leaders also described partnership processes that centered **relationships and integrity** such that they wanted solution providers that were honest and responsive.

So I always look at people who are very immersed in understanding what product they're rolling out or they're delivering. **They understand the ins and outs, and they're very transparent in terms of the shortcomings of things that it may not allow us to be able to do.** Those things are very helpful for me ...

-District leader

A key partnership factor for both solution providers and district leaders was evidence of intentionality around **diversity and ensuring diverse representation**.

So I base this on the presumption that they know the population we serve, and their solution is targeted to the population we serve. Which makes it important. **Our demographic is constantly changing, and we're less and less white. So we want solutions that are going to be embraced by our kids.**

-District leader

So a district that has some sort of culturally responsive or equity mandate in their strategic plan. So that's one. A district that serves [a population of] 30% people of color or more.

-Solution provider

District leaders and solution providers alike both described ideal partners that are **student- and community-centered**, both in terms design and development process and how the product, service, tool, or program resonates with students and communities.

...one of the things I found that many of the BIPOC organizations in tech spaces do, they really focus on the needs of the community. So they actually tap into some of the social issues that we're experiencing within our school setting.

-District leader

...strong leadership, where they know their objectives, and they're open to innovation, and one that has a strong connection with their community. We do see the districts that already have great parental involvement. They're more readily able to take advantage of our solution, to make it more impactful...

-Solution provider

Both parties described looking for partners who are centered around **innovation and action orientation** such that they are looking for new creative ways of meeting students' needs and are ready to take action to implement.

...one of the really cool things that I experienced in Learning Salons is these entrepreneurs, more so than some of the larger corporations that we typically meet at a [large] event [with] big money behind them [and] a lot of rigidity and inertia...these entrepreneurs [at Learning Salons], they're eager to get your attention and business and work with you.

-District leader

... centering the young people in their communities, and giving them the skills they need to take ownership of their future, and also willing to do it in unconventional ways, right?...I really look to partners who are looking for something completely different, because they see that whatever has been done isn't working.

-Solution provider

Facilitating and Inhibiting Factors

In their interviews, district leaders and solution providers revealed key factors impacting their ability to align in partnership with one another.

Both parties identified **social and cultural barriers rooted in bias and the sociopolitical climate related to equity in education as inhibitory to district-provider partnerships for equity challenges.**

All too often, folks are unfortunately programmed to have a certain look of where we should be getting services from or credibility based on a certain look or ethnicity. I just think that when you remove that—for me, you remove the barrier...

-District leader

...I did start in a situation where I was a subject matter expert in the education technology field and attended some meetings where the assumption was made that I was there to serve coffee. And my colleagues would go, "Okay. Would you bring me a cup of coffee?" And I'm like, "No." [laughter] Just an assumption by my look, my presence, my being that did not associate me directly with the level of expertise that I brought to the room.

-Solution provider

The biggest barrier right now is political...We have educators who have been informed that they can't use our resources. And if they use our resources, there's a penalty or a fine or loss of jobs...

-District leader

...trusting youth and giving them power. There's definitely a lot of **adults who don't believe that that should be the case.** So that's really challenging.

-Solution provider

...the second piece is this **stigma around [solution]** being this thing for struggling readers.

-Solution provider

They also described ways **social and cultural supports** such as reliance on **multicultural perspectives, awareness of bias/intention to mitigate bias and the sociopolitical climate of support for equity following racial unrest** have helped them.

If you give me five proposals, I'm always looking for, "Okay, let me give somebody a fair shot to be in the conversation. Let's evaluate." And that's an easy trick right there...I'm also looking at the little guys whose pricing might be a little ambitious...giving them an opportunity to be in the shot of the conversation.

-District leader

I think the initial supporting factors was the **racial reckoning after George Floyd**, and there was a lot of—there was a lot of excitement around equity stuff.

-Solution provider

And one thing that **I think we found in the BIPOC special populations...that's our niche. We know it inside out.** ...two of our competitors have tried to [pilot their solution], but they failed and they haven't done the sort of deep layers of engagement that they promised because they don't have...the multicultural perspective.

-Solution provider

District Leaders and solution providers also identified human, financial and social capital barriers.

But it's unfortunate that you have to move on to the next vendor [if providers are unprepared for the business side of education], or sometimes it just delays the process [because folks] just **don't understand the business side of education.**

-District leader

...I think our last [test of the solution] that we launched was just us sitting there and killing bugs...And we [weren't] able to actually go on the offensive so we [could] actually start to build new features and build new ways for people to actually interact with our platform... But when you trace that, **I think it, again, goes back to the resources that I had and what I could do with what I had.**

-Solution provider

There's not as much funding coming to edtech industry. And even when there is funding, a lot of times, it's very late stage.

-Solution provider

I was born in a rural community, you know what I mean?...**There was no, "Hey, mom, dad, can y'all connect me with such and such or a friend or anything like that?"** So it required me to put myself out there a lot more than I see some of my counterparts do.

-Solution provider

In addition to the barriers, solution providers identified human, financial and social capital supports.

...I mean, we still have to worry about fundraising, but because **we've had a number of funders who've been very generous towards our work**, we've haven't had to stress over funding.

-Solution provider

And we come together, and we talk about. "How can we further the common cause? How can we bring social-emotional learning to the forefront? How can we make sure that this is included?" We believe it's important. **And even though we have different solutions, it's in the benefit of all to work together.**

-Solution provider

Other factors identified by district leaders and solution providers **industry and practice barriers** such as district problem of practice selection, procurement procedures (including partnership criteria), and the pace of iteration and innovation in the field.

...in our district, for our students, **we don't do enough of a focus on partners**, entrepreneurs in the district when we're going out looking for solutions.

-District leader

...**[Partnering with BIPOC providers]** should be a priority for us, but **it's not**. We're looking for the provider that can provide us with the right product at the right price, so that really is not something that we intentionally ask when we're going out and looking for providers.

-District leader

A lot of districts don't like startups, don't like small companies... they want big companies that are vetted a hundred times for their solution. And I think that's where it starts. **So if you're not, if you're not receptive to startups, you're already going to eliminate a ton of people [right] away.**

-District leader

One of the challenges has been that an educator finds a lesson and then passes that same document on to other educators and maybe somewhere down the line in the last four or five years, **a lesson has been updated, but an educator is using an outdated lesson.**

-Solution provider

Districts described **industry and practice supports** in their locus of control, such as district procurement procedures.

And even some of our RFPs that we've written most recently are focused on **removing some of the barriers in RFP process** so that some of these proposals that we're putting out there don't exclude some of our lower tier vendors who have the ability to offer the same type of service, but may not have the years of experience [in the] workforce as many of the larger groups have.

-Solution provider

District leaders and solution providers named several social-, cultural- and practice-related factors that support or impede their ability to collaborate and align on equity challenges. Many of the factors identified are within the locus of control of district leaders and solution providers both. The following section highlights ways that we can begin to put these learnings into practice.

Reimagining the Future

Reimagining the Future

The BIPOC solution providers that we worked with over the course of our Education Learning Salons and Solution Showcases shared evidence that supports our presupposition that their lived experiences complement their formal expertise and inform their path to providing equity-centered solutions. Their motivations, conceptualizations of impact, equity lens in product and process, and future goals for their solutions primarily aligned with key components of culturally responsive pedagogy and the ways that we, at Digital Promise, think of equity-centered R&D through Inclusive Innovation.

Positioning HSE students to thrive in education requires that all stakeholders think about doing things differently and fitting solutions to students' needs. The districts we worked with were eager to discover solutions that would enable them to better support their students. All of the solution providers we worked with demonstrated deep expertise and provided solutions that were:

- centered in belonging and identity,
- natively-designed (i.e. culturally responsive) to meet the needs of HSE students,
- reflective of the culture, languages and experiences of BIPOC students, and/or,
- inclusive of the voice and input of diverse communities in the design and development process.

Tapping into the wealth of BIPOC solution providers' talent, creativity, and solutions—which has been overlooked for far too long—provides district leaders a promising avenue to embrace and address the needs of their BIPOC student populations. Breaking down these barriers makes room for solutions that are reflective of the growing diversity of the student body.

Our Education Learnings Salons and Solution Showcases were well-received by district leaders and solution providers. Districts and providers were able to collaborate on problems of practice and explore ways to best fit solutions to district needs via co-design. Overall, our Learning Salons and Solution Showcases benefitted district leaders and solution providers by:

- **Creating awareness** of solutions and tools that are hidden in plain sight—unknown to district leaders and decision makers.
- **Fostering collaborations** on co-design solutions that align with districts' specific challenges or problems of practice.
- **Building relationships** between district leaders and solution providers founded on a shared commitment to an equity challenge

Ultimately, our goal is for our Learning Salons and Solution Showcases to move beyond fostering collaboration to solidifying partnerships between districts and solution providers. As part of our

continuous improvement process, we are working to identify strategies to support partnership growth between districts and those well positioned to develop solutions for equity challenges—BIPOC solution providers with both content expertise and lived experiences with the communities they aim to serve.

Based on the insights gained from this study and the learnings of our project team, we have identified three practical recommendations to support a reimagining of district-provider alignment for equity.

Three Practical Recommendations for Change

1. Redefine Solution Development Readiness Criteria—evaluations of solution provider readiness should include relevant and equitable criteria with a laser focus on sourcing diverse tools, curriculum, and resources that support the HSE student population with intentionality.
2. Reconceptualize expertise—consider the cultural community knowledge and lived experience necessary to inform effective solutions for HSE communities that have historically been left out of district-decision making and education R&D processes.
3. Reimagine procurement pathways—allow for consideration of lesser known education solution providers who have developed solutions that show promise for meeting the needs of HSE students, such as BIPOC and equity-centered education solution providers.

These three small pivots in practice will take a meaningful step towards creating an education system where all students can learn, grow, and thrive as their authentic selves with the support and resources they need. Breaking down the barriers makes room for solutions that are reflective of the growing diversity of the student body.

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Appendix

Appendix

Table A-1. Participating School Districts

Learning Salon Topic	Participating School District	Type	Date
Social and Emotional Learning and Family Engagement	Districts were represented from the following states: California Ohio New York (2 districts)	In-person	February 2022
Mental Health and Trauma-Informed Practices	Districts were represented from the following states: Florida Pennsylvania New York (2 districts)	Virtual	June 2022
Real-World Learning	Districts were represented from the following states: California Missouri New Jersey	Virtual	July 2022
Social Studies Uncut <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Salon session hosted at the League of Innovative Fall 2022 convening (in-person) • Learning Salon Showcase (virtual) 	Various school district leaders represented (in-person) States Represented Include (virtual): Illinois Kansas Louisiana Maryland DOE Massachusetts DOE Minnesota DOE Nevada DOE Pennsylvania DOE South Carolina Texas Virginia Other	In-person Virtual	October 2022 March 2023

Table A-2. Participating Solution Providers

Learning Salon Solution Provider Engagement 2022–23			
Learning Salon Topic	Solution Provider	Type	Date
Social and Emotional Learning and Family Engagement	 designEDengagement™ SYSTEMS. RELATIONSHIPS. OUTCOMES.	In-person	February 2022
Social and Emotional Learning and Family Engagement	 FLTI FUTURE LEADERS INCLUSION	In-person	February 2022
Social and Emotional Learning and Family Engagement	 EduKonekti	In-person	February 2022
Social and Emotional Learning and Family Engagement	 THE OAKLAND REACH	In-person	February 2022
Mental Health and Trauma-Informed Practices	 7 MINDSETS	Virtual	June 2022
Mental Health and Trauma-Informed Practices	 care/solace.	Virtual	June 2022
Mental Health and Trauma-Informed Practices	 COOK CENTER FOR HUMAN CONNECTION	Virtual	June 2022
Mental Health and Trauma-Informed Practices	 HEY KIDDO	Virtual	June 2022
Real-World Learning	 B Unbound	Virtual	July 2022
Real-World Learning	 Enlightapp	Virtual	July 2022
Real-World Learning	 SocialPRENEUR LAB	Virtual	July 2022

Learning Salon Solution Provider Engagement 2022–23

Learning Salon Topic	Solution Provider	Type	Date
Real-World Learning		Virtual	July 2022
BIPOC Leaders Showcase		In-person	October 2022
BIPOC Leaders Showcase	 	In-person	October 2022
BIPOC Leaders Showcase		In-person	October 2022
BIPOC Leaders Showcase		In-person	October 2022
BIPOC Leaders Showcase		In-person	October 2022
BIPOC Leaders Showcase		In-person	October 2022
BIPOC Leaders Showcase		In-person	October 2022
BIPOC Leaders Showcase		In-person	October 2022

Learning Salon Solution Provider Engagement 2022–23

Learning Salon Topic	Solution Provider	Type	Date
BIPOC Leaders Showcase		In-person	October 2022
BIPOC Leaders Showcase		In-person	October 2022
Social Studies Uncut • Learning Salon • Showcase		In person Virtual	October 2022 March 2023
Social Studies Uncut • Showcase		Virtual	March 2023
Social Studies Uncut • Learning Salon		In-person	October 2022
Social Studies Uncut • Showcase		Virtual	March 2023
Social Studies Uncut • Learning Salon • Showcase		In person Virtual	October 2022 March 2023
Social Studies Uncut • Showcase		In person Virtual	March 2023
Social Studies Uncut • Learning Salon • Showcase		In person Virtual	October 2022 March 2023

Table A-3. 2022-2023 Learning Salon Topics

Learning Salon Topic	Definition
Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Family Engagement	Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) focuses on developing students’ abilities to understand and manage their emotions, establish positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. This approach recognizes that emotional well-being is crucial for effective learning and personal development. Family engagement involves actively involving parents and families in a student’s educational journey. Collaborating with families helps create a supportive and holistic environment that enhances students’ social, emotional, and academic growth.
Mental Health and Trauma-Informed Practices	Mental health in education encompasses tending to students’ emotional well-being. This involves identifying indicators of emotional struggle, extending essential support, and nurturing mental wellness. Trauma-Informed Practices take into account the influence of past traumatic experiences on students’ behavior and learning. Educators utilize empathetic and considerate methods that establish secure environments, preventing the retriggering of trauma. This approach cultivates an atmosphere conducive to personal development and growth.
Real-World Learning	Real-World Learning (RWL) integrates theoretical knowledge with practical applications. It emphasizes the importance of connecting classroom learning to real-life contexts. This approach enables students to see the relevance of their education in practical scenarios. Real-world learning methods can include project-based learning, where students tackle authentic challenges, and experiential learning, which involves hands-on experiences that bridge the gap between theory and practice.
Social Studies Uncut	Social studies is essential for students’ understanding of history, geography, and civic engagement. It equips them with the knowledge to understand societal dynamics, cultural diversity, and the foundations of democracy. By fostering critical thinking, empathy, and informed citizenship, social studies prepares students to navigate a complex global landscape and actively contribute to their communities. “Social Studies Uncut” spotlighted innovative approaches to social studies education.

About Digital Promise and the Center for Inclusive Innovation

Digital Promise is a global nonprofit working to expand opportunity for every learner. We work with educators, researchers, technology leaders, and communities to design, investigate, and scale innovations that support learners, especially those who have been historically and systematically excluded.

Our mission is to shape the future of learning and advance equitable education systems by bringing together solutions across research, practice, and technology.

Guided by three Impact Goals, we are working to ensure the following by 2031:

1. 75% of historically and systematically excluded learners in America are learning in education systems with the knowledge and tools to create the conditions for them to succeed.
2. 30 million historically and systematically excluded learners have sustained and meaningful experiences of Powerful Learning, putting them on a path to postsecondary completion.
3. 30 million historically and systematically excluded learners are enabled to achieve postsecondary credentials that offer economic security, well-being, and agency.

The Center of Inclusive Innovation at Digital Promise reimagines education R&D by resourcing the creative ingenuity of communities to create liberatory education innovations rooted in self-determination for students furthest from opportunity. This brings together developers, entrepreneurs, researchers, educators, and also students, families, and community members to define challenges and build solutions.

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