



Summary of Courageous Conversations about Race Professional Development Survey Results

The district monitors efficacy and increase in knowledge and skills after adult professional learning, known in the district as “checks for understanding.” The data below was obtained immediately following Courageous Conversations about Race (CCAR) sessions. The checks for understanding for these sessions included both selected response items as well as open-ended responses. The data presented below is disaggregated by the school year cohorts.

During the 2021–22 cohort, 2,525 participants completed the survey, which focused on participants’ efficacy post-session (see statements 1–3). The data indicates that participants’ efficacy related to CCAR was strong after the training.

Efficacy Statement	Percentage Agree and Strongly Agree (2,525)
1. Participants felt that they had a better understanding of engaging in conversations with others addressing race and bias within Milwaukee Public Schools.	88.1%
2. Participants indicated that they could explain the CCAR Compass to someone.	90.5%
3. Participants indicated that they understood the three tiers of <i>engage</i> , <i>sustain</i> , and <i>deepen</i> .	90.7%

The 2021–22 survey asked one open-ended question: “*One thing I am going to take away from today’s session to reflect on tomorrow is...*” The following is a summary of the themes generated from participants’ responses.

- Participants intend to continue using the compass across a variety of contexts. Specifically, they mentioned the following:
 - Wanting to use the compass with themselves (self-reflection) and/or in conversation with others
 - Utilizing the compass in their own classroom and when engaging with families (e.g., parent-teacher conferences, phone calls home, IEP meetings)
 - Working toward finding balance among the four quadrants and avoiding the “shadows” that can hold them back from making progress in their understanding of race and racism as well as engaging in courageous conversations about race
 - Focusing on intentionally moving into the acting quadrant more often (e.g., act on dismantling injustice, disrupting inequities, confronting microaggressions)



- Participants want to work on listening to others' perspectives (students, colleagues, and families) more openly and regularly to gain a deeper understanding of their lived experiences and points of view. Specific actions they often mentioned were the following:
 - Intentionally seeking out "unheard voices"
 - Incorporating more student voice in their lessons and instruction, including learning about students' experiences and struggles to better connect with them, avoiding making assumptions (e.g., about behaviors, attendance, academic performance), and adapting instructional strategies to best meet students' needs
 - Helping students become advocates for themselves and others
 - Remembering that people can experience the same situation differently depending on their identity/identities and life experiences
- Many participants stated that they would continue to reflect on issues discussed in relation to race and racism in MPS and the US more broadly. The most commonly cited topics they wanted to continue exploring were the following:
 - What is "Whiteness" and the concept of White fragility (e.g., how to get past their own fragility)
 - How racism and/or White supremacy has shaped themselves and others' experiences
 - The role that race plays in American culture
 - Race as a social construct and how that can inform their understanding of race and racism
 - The difference between anti-racism and being "not racist" and how to move toward anti-racism
 - How bias affects their responses to certain situations and how to ameliorate this effect
 - White privilege and how it emerges in interactions with colleagues, students, families, etc.
 - How race factors into power dynamics within a school environment and how to disrupt the power dynamic between teachers and students
- Less than 0.4% of participants expressed feeling offended that the presentation seemed to label all White people as racist and felt that the professional development session seemed too focused on racism and not enough on all forms of prejudice and bias.
- Several participants wanted to incorporate the four agreements into their school-based team meetings and/or into their classroom instruction. The notion of being comfortable with discomfort, accepting non-closure, and having the courage to speak their truth appeared to resonate the most with the learners.
- The Three Cs (color, culture, and consciousness):
 - Participants did not indicate that they took away learnings from the Three Cs discussion or how they would apply it in their practice and/or life.
- Participants commonly cited wanting to implement the three tiers of CCAR (*engage, sustain, and deepen*) in their classrooms and/or schools; however, the majority wanted more training and/or resources to deepen their understanding of the three tiers and how they can be applied in an educational context.



- The “Five Asks” was another tool that participants commonly expressed interest in using within their own classrooms. The “Five Asks” are the following:
 - Get comfortable being uncomfortable.
 - Your voice is your story. Share it.
 - Hire someone different from you on your team.
 - Create a culture of belonging on your team.
 - Make room for the unheard voice.
- Participants recognized the need to create a safe space and a culture of belonging in order to have these difficult, sensitive conversations.
- The concept of “above the line, below the line” resonated with many participants and prompted them to ask how this concept could be applied when engaging with students, families, and colleagues. Specifically, they mentioned the following needs:
 - To acknowledge what you don’t know and try to gain a better understanding of where people are coming from
 - To avoid making assumptions and approach conversations free of judgment
 - To try to learn more about people different from yourself, particularly people you may disagree with
 - To build cross-cultural relationships as well as help foster them in their classrooms
- Participants wanted to increase and deepen their reflectiveness in their work and personal life, including reflecting on and developing their own racial autobiography.
- Participants hoped to practice mindful inquiry (i.e., listen to hear, not to respond) more often in their conversations with others in order to avoid debate and move toward a deeper understanding of one another. They expressed wanting to keep an open mind when engaging with others and felt that the conversational prompts (e.g., “I heard you say...”) would help them navigate conversations on difficult topics.
- Several participants used this space to reflect on how much work the district still has to do in this area and how much more there is to learn about the topics discussed.
- Many participants expressed frustration that they did not feel they learned anything they could practically apply in their classroom immediately after the training. Specifically, they mentioned the following issues that they had with the training:
 - It did not take into account the work already being done by individual schools and/or teachers.
 - It was an overly broad, generalized training that did not allow for deep enough engagement with each other or the material.
 - They wanted more differentiated instruction based on people’s level of understanding and engagement in this kind of work prior to the session.
 - They felt that the presentation was targeted for a White audience.
- Other participants expressed a desire for more explicit connections to their practice and deeper learning about the topics discussed in the CCAR training. Participants often mentioned the following:
 - A desire for concrete, specific actions that they can take
 - More resources and strategies that are targeted for a specific school or to the context of MPS (e.g., role-play examples in trainings) as well as for creating developmentally appropriate lessons for different grade levels



- That the training felt too adult-focused, so they were uncertain how they could translate what they learned into more meaningful conversations and connections with their students
- A desire to not have the session be a “one and done” but to continue the learning so that they can integrate the strategies into their daily practice
- Wanting more information about how what they learned can help them close gaps in MPS’s data (e.g., achievement, behavior) to approach equity in student outcomes and experiences
- More resources and training on how to promote more culturally responsive pedagogy and/or curricular materials in their classrooms/schools

Cohorts in the 2022–23 and 2023–24 school years completed a different set of questions, which included efficacy and knowledge-based questions. A total of 1,703 participants completed the survey in 2022–23, and 1,943 had completed the survey as of 1/24/2024 in the 2023–24 school year. The data for subsequent cohorts indicated similar high levels of efficacy among participants.

Efficacy Statement	Percentage Agree and Strongly Agree (1,703) 2022–23 Cohort	Percentage Agree and Strongly Agree (2,208) 2023–24 Cohort
1. Participants indicated that they had an increased passion in addressing racial equity.	90.2%	88.9%
2. Participants indicated that they had greater persistence in addressing racial equity.	90.3%	88.3%
3. Participants indicated that they had greater knowledge of how to hold conversations on race.	88.5%	88.3%
4. Participants indicated that they had greater knowledge of their racial autobiography.	86.7%	84.7%
5. Participants indicated that they understood how to continue their journey.	90.4%	90.0%



Scenario Knowledge Questions Asked in the 2022–23 Cohort Sessions	Percentage Correct (1,703) 2022–23 Cohort
While watching a news story about downtown Milwaukee and the history of the Bronzeville neighborhood, you realize that you don't know anything about the area and decide to find a book to read about the historical area of Bronzeville.	58.9%
During the news, you see a story about the shooting outside Rufus King High School. You get sad about the violence that many youth of Milwaukee face on a daily basis.	88.9%
After watching the news about Amir Locke, who was shot and killed in Minneapolis during a no-knock warrant, you decide to write to your cousin who lives in Minneapolis to contact local leaders there, and you form a local group in Milwaukee to raise awareness about no-knock warrants.	84.8%

Scenario Knowledge Questions Asked in the 2023–24 Cohort Sessions	Percentage Correct (2,208) 2023–24 Cohort
While watching a news story about downtown Milwaukee and the history of the Bronzeville neighborhood, you realize that you don't know anything about the area and decide to find a book to read about the historical area of Bronzeville.	43.5%
While getting ready for parent conferences next week and talking to a colleague who mentions that many parents don't care about education, you notice your stomach going into a knot, and you get emotional and angry.	79.8%
When talking about behaviors in the classroom, you mention that students should be able to sit quietly in class, listening to the teacher.	64.6%

Knowledge Questions Asked in the 2023–24 Cohort Sessions	Percentage Correct (2,208) 2023–24 Cohort
Understand that there may not be a resolution or solution to this work and that it is ongoing.	60.4%



What is shared in this space remains in this space.	24.6%
Challenge yourself and take risks.	59.2%
Use “I” statements and speak about your experience.	76.4%
Fact-check everything said to ensure that it is true.	42.4%
Avoid distractions and continue this work after the session is over.	74.5%

The following open-response statements do not repeat sentiments previously stated on the 2021–22 survey. Rather, the data below contains additional themes and comments generated from the 2022–23 and 2023–24 cohorts.

2022–23

“One thing I am going to take away from our time together is...”

- Participants wanted to utilize the strategies and information learned in order to improve their school’s culture and climate. Specifically, they wanted the following:
 - To center race in Tier 1 and Tier 2 school climate efforts
 - To ensure that students feel that they belong and see themselves reflected in course materials and classroom decor and
 - To build empathy for their students by practicing seeing students like the participants are the students’ mom
- Participants expressed the need for persistence for the district as a whole to move this work forward and see gradual improvements made.
- Participants seemed to grasp that racism is learned and can be unlearned. There were fewer comments about feeling “attacked” as being racist if they identified as White than in previous years (0.25%).
- Participants recognized the applicability of the compass and three tiers to many more different domains and across a variety of topics other than race.
- Participants felt more confident in their ability to have effective and productive conversations about race and racism because of the language and tools they learned in the session.
- Participants mentioned the importance of extending grace and kindness to others when entering these conversations.

In addition, the 2022–23 survey asked participants to provide additional comments/next steps/ideas. The major themes pulled from these additional comments are below.

“Any other comments/next steps/ideas”

- Some felt that there was too much focus on Black vs. White and not enough on other racial identities. A few mentioned wanting to incorporate more about the experiences of immigrant students and families into these conversations moving forward.
- Participants wanted to have access to a “menu of options,” centrally located and easily accessible for all staff, to plan for their next steps.



- Many participants wanted to have more sessions like this that are school-based so that the content can be tailored to the specific school community as well as help build relationships and trust among staff at the individual school level. Some recommendations included shorter sessions spread throughout the year that would focus on digging deeper into a specific topic or sessions specifically focused on classroom-based strategies.
- Several people mentioned that they would have preferred a training of this nature to be in person rather than virtual.
- Many participants expressed wanting to make changes to the breakout sessions. Specifically, they often mentioned the following:
 - Longer breakout sessions with clearer instructions
 - Breakout rooms with the same group of people throughout to develop more comfort with each other in the space and
 - An attempt to make the groupings racially diverse
- Several participants felt that the training did not go far enough in pushing participants to deeply engage and get uncomfortable. They felt that the training material and questions asked were too accommodating to White participants (e.g., avoided offending them or pushing them to reflect on their own biases).

2023–24

“One thing I am going to take away from our time together is...”

- In the 2023–24 survey, participants explicitly mentioned wanting to integrate the compass’s four quadrants into the restorative practices at their school.
- Many participants wanted to work on becoming more self-aware as it relates to their own biases, beliefs, and how their words and actions affect others.
- Several participants made plans to model how to approach difficult conversations for their students by using the tools provided (e.g., the compass).
- The concept of intent vs. impact and how it applies to their students and families resonated deeply with the participants in the 2023–24 cohort. Specifically, they cited the following:
 - Wanting more training and/or discussions on how educators’ beliefs connect to the way they teach/act/ behave toward students of color in order to disrupt inequities
 - Wanting a session focused on “What do we believe about students, and how do our actions demonstrate those beliefs?”
- Participants in the 2023–24 cohort expressed having more courage to ask questions, admit what they don’t know or understand, and seek more information than prior cohorts did.
- Participants expressed wanting to have more “productive conversations” with people who say offensive and/or racist things to try and understand where they are coming from and avoid getting angry or upset.
- Participants made more explicit how they would center students’ voices and experiences in their curricular content (e.g., creating art projects that allow them to communicate their identities, cultures, and/or communities).
- Participants stated several times how this session reinforced the importance of always thinking before speaking and/or acting.



- The systemic nature of racism and White privilege seemed to resonate with this group more than prior cohorts.

The 2023–24 survey again asked participants to provide additional comments/next steps/ideas. The major themes (not already stated in the above sections) pulled from these additional comments are below.

“Any other comments/next steps/ideas”

- Participants would like a dedicated person at each school to continue this work and to host continual trainings at the school level, particularly to help staff apply the strategies, tools, and knowledge to their classroom practices.
- Many participants expressed wanting to see more non-White trainers for these sessions.

Data through 2-23-2024