

# START WITH US

## Black Youth in South King County & South Seattle

Much attention is given to the need for improving educational outcomes for Black students, but rarely does research start by talking to students themselves. *Start With Us* is driven by what Black high schoolers in South King County and South Seattle say they need from the education system serving them. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods to incorporate youth voice, this report does not look at traditional measures such as graduation rates or test scores, but the systemic issues that affect the educational experience for Black youth.

*Start With Us* begins by offering deeper insight into the identities of Black youth in the local public school systems—a remarkably diverse set of students who speak 82 primary languages and are from 79 countries. The report goes on to explore how Black youth may use their racial identity as a buffer against racial bias, and unpacks how a school's environment can help or hurt student success.

While many systems are responsible for students, *Start With Us* focuses on Black student success from high school to college. Rounding out the report is an examination of how access to resources in high school impacts persistence in college.

Download the report: [www.roadmapproject.org/StartWithUs](http://www.roadmapproject.org/StartWithUs)

### ABOUT THE ROAD MAP PROJECT

The Road Map Project is a collective impact initiative to improve student achievement from cradle through college and career in South King County and South Seattle. Through multisector collaboration with more than 200 partners and individuals, the Road Map Project aims to increase equitable policies and practices in education systems to close opportunity gaps, and for 70 percent of its youth to earn a college or career credential by 2030.

**Without Black student success, there is no Road Map Project success.**



## WHAT BLACK STUDENTS NEED TO SUCCEED

Black high school students described their ideal school during focus groups called Listening Sessions. Here are the most common themes from their responses.

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### TEACHERS WHO CAN IDENTIFY WITH US

"I like how [my ideal school] has Black teachers that understand where we're coming from and where we grew up. But at my real school, none of that really happens."

▶ 15-year-old African-American Young Man, Kent School District

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### AN ENVIRONMENT THAT VALUES AUTONOMY AND EMPHASIZES LEARNING

"I like that the school I created was tailored to the students. And differences of interests are celebrated plus having an overall understanding of the importance of learning and gaining knowledge."

▶ 16-year-old African-American Young Man, Kent School District

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### PREPARATION FOR LIFE BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL

"The school I created makes me feel like I can pass high school and go to college and become successful in whatever I do. It's different from [my current school] because I don't think I can pass and need more work."

▶ 17-year-old African-American Young Man, Kent School District

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### CULTURALLY RELEVANT LESSONS, INCLUDING ON PAN-AFRICAN HISTORY

"I like how we are learning more about our history—Black history. At my real school, we don't get taught about our history and [there are] no resources."

▶ 15-year-old African-American and Japanese Young Woman, Seattle Public Schools