WAYS 2 EQUITY
PLAYBOOK

Santa Clara County Office of Education
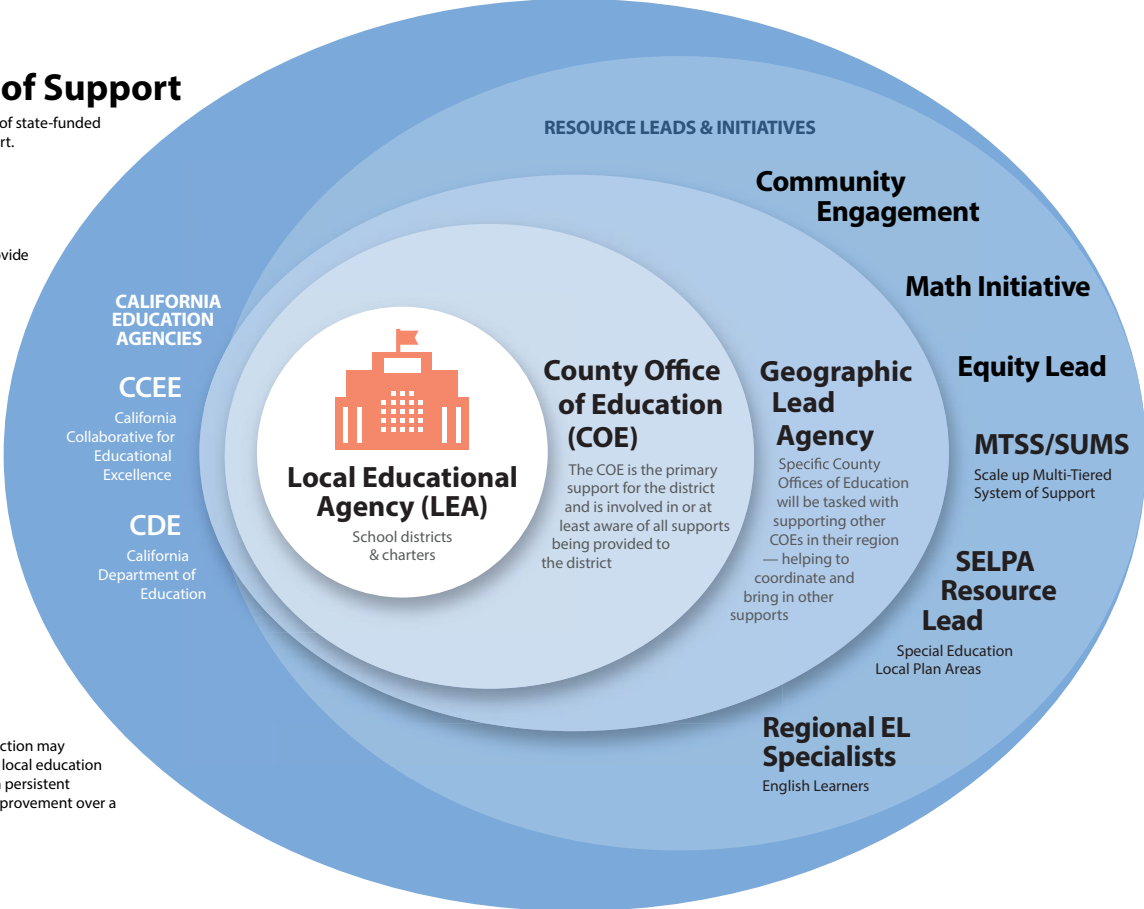
California System of Support

California System of Support

This graphic is intended to show the network of state-funded support providers under the System of Support.

LEVEL 1
SUPPORT FOR ALL

Various state and local agencies provide an array of support resources, tools, and voluntary technical assistance that all LEAs may use to improve student performance at the LEA and school level and narrow gaps in performance among student groups across the LCFF priorities.

LEVEL 2
DIFFERENTIATED ASSISTANCE

County Superintendents, the California Department of Education, and the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence provide differentiated assistance by working with school districts to address identified performance gaps among student groups.

LEVEL 3
INTENSIVE INTERVENTION

The Superintendent of Public Instruction may require more intensive supports for local education agencies (LEAs) and/or schools with persistent performance issues and a lack of improvement over a specified time period.

RESOURCE LEADS & INITIATIVES

Community Engagement

Math Initiative

Equity Lead

CALIFORNIA EDUCATION AGENCIES

CCEE
California Collaborative for Educational Excellence

CDE
California Department of Education

Local Educational Agency (LEA)
School districts & charters

County Office of Education (COE)
The COE is the primary support for the district and is involved in or at least aware of all supports being provided to the district

Geographic Lead Agency
Specific County Offices of Education will be tasked with supporting other COEs in their region — helping to coordinate and bring in other supports

MTSS/SUMS
Scale up Multi-Tiered System of Support

SELPA Resource Lead
Special Education Local Plan Areas

Regional EL Specialists
English Learners

California Equity Performance Improvement Program (CEPIP)

Under the California Statewide System of Support, the *Ways 2 Equity Playbook (W2EPB)* is the work of the California Equity Performance and Improvement Program (CEPIP) of the Inclusion Collaborative at the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE). The two year, 2.5 million dollar CEPIP grant was authorized in 2018 by Assembly Bill 99 to "support and build capacity within County Offices of Education (COEs), Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and schools to promote equity for disadvantaged student populations in California schools."

From this funding, the SCCOE Inclusion Collaborative established the California 1: Highway to Success for All (CA1). One of two state Equity Leads, the SCCOE developed the *W2EPB*, which is a guidebook for supporting hands-on equity work at the school, LEA, and COE levels with particular focus on the following three student groups:
- **Students who are African American**
- **Students who are English Learners**
- **Students with Disabilities**

Acknowledgments

Table of Contents

The electronic version of the *Ways to Equity Playbook* can be found here: http://www.inclusioncollaborative.org/cepip.aspx.

FOREWORD:
Why We Need Equity and Justice in Education

Now that I'm entering the adult world and have a new pair of lenses, I see more of what society really is. Many times, actions taken are only halfway completed—a way of saying, "Well at least we did something." No one goes to the full extent to provide equality and equity is one of those halfway completed actions. According to Noltrmeyer, Mujic, and Mc Loughlin (2012), the primary reason for children to attend schools is that "education serves to stimulate the intellectual, social, and moral development of individuals, which ultimately contributes to the betterment of society." To fulfill this purpose, the authors explain, "Education should be provided in a manner consistent with the principles of a social justice perspective."

See, equity is a good idea but when you consider the past, the present, and possibly the future of America we need more than just the idea of equity to ensure that students are receiving equal education. We also need justice because equity is just not enough. Equity focuses on designing opportunities and resources that will "kind of" fix an issue, but the matter begins with the messed up system we have in the first place that doesn't fulfill the purposes of education. Of course, equity tries to fix that by giving us the tools which support our students, but still we aren't changing the real issue. (For a pictorial representation of this concept, see Tony Ruth's 2019 Equity Series.)

We go to school to learn and create a better future for generations to come. We take the information that we're taught so we can inspire and change what we don't like, whether that be in advancing technology, changing laws, improving architecture, or simply treating others with respect. Education has played a powerful role in countless lives especially for students of color. An educated person of color is a powerful individual because if we don't have justice, we can't have equity. An educated generation of students will bring forth the justice that we need.

AUTHOR: ISABELLA RODARTE (CLASS OF 2020 SAN JOSE HIGH SCHOOL, SAN JOSE, CA)

ISABELLA RODARTE

Noltemeyer, A.L., Mujic, J., & McLoughlin, C.S. (2012). The history of inequality in education. In A.L. Noltemeyer & C.S. McLoughlin (Eds.), *Disproportionality in Education and Special Education.* Charles C. Thomas Publisher Ltd.
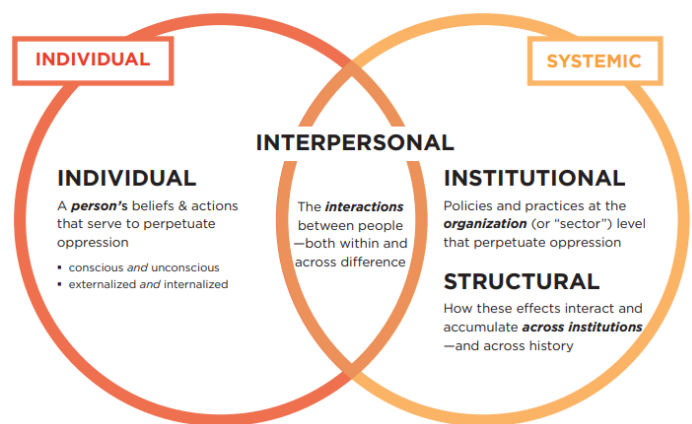
Introduction: Our Challenge, Our Way

The *Ways 2 Equity Playbook (W2EPB)* is designed to facilitate the overhaul of deeply embedded inequities in our current educational system. The *Playbook* has the potential of changing the dynamic of systemic oppression, thereby advancing the promise of public education. It is in the schools, after all, where some of the most profound struggles for humanity, dignity, and freedom have taken place. For all that, schools have also been a site of exclusion and marginalization (Noguera, 2003). The essential, complex role of schools in society as a whole has never been more clear-cut than in the COVID-19 pandemic, as has the need to address the profound inequities articulated by the Black Lives Matter movement in their fight to eradicate white supremacy. The twin afflictions of systemic racism and COVID-19 (which disproportionately affect people of color and especially Black people) demonstrate the need to move forward through *W2EPB* as a crucial component of this long overdue overhaul. The "new normal" is a time to envision and act on redressing the inequities baked into the "old normal."

"Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next," writes novelist Arundhati Roy (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed to us in no uncertain terms how the inequities of our past can be expressed in the present-day world. This portal between worlds gifts us a new clarity, as painful as the truth may be to digest. Now, as we bear witness to the grave, concentrated effects of a long history of systemic racism, poverty, and xenophobia, we also see a movement rising and expanding as people from all ages and walks of life take to the streets chanting in unison, "BLACK LIVES MATTER!" There is a fresh consciousness in development around systemic racism and the ways in which it breeds violence and suffering. A shared language that is anti-racist and pro-justice is taking root. It is time for schools to focus their greatest efforts on ensuring that this movement also takes flight within public education for African American students, families, and teachers. In the words of Dr. Angela Birts, "When Black students succeed, we all succeed." (For more, read Dr. Birts' section on African American Students.)

It is in this moment, however, that we also see those who are poor, Black, Indigenous, undocumented, incarcerated, and elderly experiencing the greatest rates of death, the worst cases of illness, and the least access to testing and health care. In the case of schools, distance learning has caused the most disruption to those who experience food, housing, economic, health, emotional, and (now) technology insecurity. We hear stories of students who are unable to engage in the online curriculum due to lack of access to the internet and devices. Students with disa-

NATIONAL EQUITY PROJECT

THE LENS OF SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION

INDIVIDUAL | SYSTEMIC

INTERPERSONAL

INDIVIDUAL
A *person's* beliefs & actions that serve to perpetuate oppression
- conscious *and* unconscious
- externalized *and* internalized

The *interactions* between people —both within and across difference

INSTITUTIONAL
Policies and practices at the *organization* (or "sector") level that perpetuate oppression

STRUCTURAL
How these effects interact and accumulate **across institutions** —and across history

Used with permission from the National Equity Project.

bilities who counted on their schools to provide them with expert teachers, therapy, and assistive technology cannot receive their accommodations. Asian American students are being bullied and scapegoated for the virus. Young people who live in households with abuse no longer have an escape in schools (Lloyd, 2018). As we stand in this doorway, we see the dreams of high school graduates—hard won for many—put on hold as postsecondary institutions close residence halls through the fall and move indefinitely to distance learning. For young people poised to enter the employment world, job and pay prospects are grim.

These problems are not new. However, the "trigger event" of the COVID-19 pandemic has clearly revealed the suffering caused by systemic oppression. Today, we find ourselves in a position to develop a new collective mindset, to imagine what our new normal will be, and to bring it to life with creativity and love. In the words of National Equity Project's Hugh Vasquez, what if we...don't return to school as usual? We can start, for example, by making sure that upholding the humanity of students—families and teachers, too—is the single most important thing we do. Remember, for example, that for Black students and families, the Black Lives Matter movement emerged from a place of pain forged with love into a collective mobilization not just to survive, but to **live** and **thrive**. In the words shared by Dupe Thomas, Wellness Outreach for the Santa Clara Unified School District[1]:

> Black-identified folks—whether we're "full" or "mixed", dark-skinned to light-skinned—are feeling some kind of way about what's happened recently and carry the names

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[1] With contribution from Katerina Pogosov, LMFT.

and pictures of past victims on our backs. While some of us don't have a direct connection with those who've been affected by police brutality, I need you all to please understand that many of us don't just see Eric Garner on the ground dying, we see our dad or uncle or brother or cousin. Past losses we've experienced can come roaring back when we see or hear about another person killed. We are hurting and we are on edge. We are hopeful yet enraged by the continued injustices and inequalities that we face everyday. We are unsure of the future, even a trip to the grocery store invokes anxiety. Now the big question. What can you do? Become an ally. Express empathy. Seek to understand. Here are a few ideas though not an all encompassing list.

- Reflect on your position and do what you can, whatever resonates highest for you.
- Speak up and speak out—sign petitions, call lawmakers, call out racist comments and jokes, ask clarifying questions.
- Educate yourself, speak with coworkers, friends, family and youth who identify as Black, African, African-American, BIPOC (Black Indigenous Person of Color).
- Educate yourself with race related materials from valid sources (such as this report by the Black Leadership Kitchen Cabinet).

The *W2EPB* was largely written in the period just prior to the COVID-19 outbreak and the mass uprisings for Black lives. As a result, several of the sections do not directly take up these issues. However, knowing that we are entering into an unprecedented time in schools, we hope that the various parts of the *Playbook* will be thoughtfully engaged and applied to create the very best social, emotional, and academic conditions possible for the students who need them the most.

The Challenge

Equity is *the* public education objective for the 21st century. At all levels of education, we find the word "equity"—we *see* the term all around us, *hear* it in our daily conversations about students, and *feel* its urgency when we look at data illuminating the vast outcome disparities across student groups. Yet, figuring out how to achieve equity remains a challenge for schools, districts, county offices of education, and the individuals who comprise these organizations. The *Ways 2 Equity Playbook* is designed as a guide to assist these varying levels of the education system in meeting the most important educational challenge we have.

The Way

Finding a way to equity means starting the work by understanding the equity challenges for the most underserved students in the public education system. The CA-1 grant has identified three specific student groups as those with the most to gain from

systemic equity work undertaken at the site, district, and county levels, as illustrated through the data presented throughout the *Playbook*. To this end, a targeted universalist approach orients our work. Engaging targeted universalism means that we believe that when we focus equity efforts on the student groups who have been most marginalized, *all* students benefit. In California, current student data show that the focal student groups of the CA-1 project, African American students, students with disabilities, and English Learners, are most disadvantaged by an inequitable education system. With respect to these groups, 2018-19 CA Dashboard statistics reflect some of the starkest disparities. For example:

- Suspension rates for students who are African American were 9.1% as compared to 3.5% for all students.
- CAASPP scores for students classified as English Learners: 87.4% scored below standard in Math and 87.3% scored below standard in English & Language Arts.
- Graduation rates for students with disabilities were 67.7%, while students with no reported disabilities graduated at rates almost 20 percentage points higher (86.7%).

These statistics are significant because they allow us to see educational inequity in numeric form. It is also imperative to remember that a statistic is alive with real human experiences.

Prioritizing equity for students historically and currently underserved by the education system is vital if we hope to achieve the best outcomes for *all* students attending California schools. Such an emphasis ultimately strengthens the education system as a whole. Blankstein and Noguera (2014) write, "[T]he highest level of excellence will actually be obtained *through* the pursuit of equity" (p. 5). The word "through" is significant as it emphasizes that it is through process-based experiences that we work toward equity. It is in this spirit that the title *Ways 2 Equity* came into being.

Recognizing that the "road" to equity for any school, district, or county is context-specific, filled with decisions-to-be-made, and varied, the designers of the Playbook envisioned versatility as a main feature. The materials in the *W2EPB* are intentionally designed to offer flexibility in a variety of contexts. Simultaneously, it provides the specificity necessary for supporting equity teams to confidently undertake the complex work. The final product is intended to guide individual- and group-reflection as part of a continuous improvement process at the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and systemic levels.

The *Ways 2 Equity Playbook* helps schools and districts to focus, and deepen their equity efforts already in progress. The Playbook does this by providing overviews of major equity issues in education across various categories, tools, resources, and reading material to guide specific parts of the work, and reflection questions for individual and group discussion. The *W2EPB* has been developed with an understanding that California school districts are already engaged in equity work to some degree. The Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) is intended to support

the thinking and organization of educational efforts that promote equity. The work being done in districts supported through Differentiated Assistance (Tier 2 under the California System of Support) is also equity-centered and likely draws on strategies of continuous improvement[2] and principles of improvement science, which are drawn upon in the *W2EPB*. In addition, the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework and focus on team structures aids in the advancement of equity for students. The *W2EPB* helps districts and schools maintain focus on equity as they work toward systems improvement.

Design of the Ways 2 Equity Playbook

Just as equity work in education requires collaboration and shared vision, so has the development of the *W2EPB*. The *W2EPB* Design Team at SCCOE is grateful to the National Equity Project (NEP), who facilitated four meetings over a four-month period to ensure the integration of *liberatory design* principles into the process. Liberatory design regards those who are most affected by a problem as those who should be most involved in decision-making processes around finding solutions to the problem. Over the course of these four months, the SCCOE Design Team, made up of educators and administrators from the Santa Clara County Office of Education and partnering school districts from within the county, went through a process of exploring and establishing a collective definition of equity, prototyping potential equity assessment and action tools for the *W2EPB*, and defining the *W2EPB* Design Principles (see below). All of this work was filtered through a deep engagement with NEP's "Lens of Systemic Oppression". Ultimately, the final *W2EPB* reflects our design experience, and as a result, the reader will find that the tools offered prioritize these objectives: process over mandate; continuous improvement over broad-reaching goals; collaboration over individual heroism; and "knowledge-holder" over "expert".

To this end, the *W2EPB* Team developed the *Ways 2 Equity Playbook* Ethics of Navigation. In our equity work, we:

1. Humanize data. Numbers represent *real* lives of *real* students, families, and educators.
2. Create opportunities to explore culture, specifically as it relates to internalized and transferred oppression.
3. Center and uplift the knowledge of those "closest to the pain", employing their expertise to address entrenched equity challenges.
4. Debunk "failure", intuiting learning from even the most profound defeat.
5. Understand that process is dynamic, iterative, and ongoing. Develop your process in a manner that reflects the equitable and liberatory experiences and practices you wish to see in our outcomes.

6. Prioritize collaboration and the collective.
7. Critically and explicitly address the political and economic power at play in the education system.
8. Articulate the centrality of anti-racist and anti-bias education to equity work.
9. Use language thoughtfully, understanding that words matter because they are powerful.
10. Practice self-awareness, *especially* when the problems feel most urgent.
11. Build on what's working; study and change what's not.
12. Celebrate your successes as you will find your way to many.

These ethics lie at the heart of reimagining and reconstructing relationships, policies, practices, and programs so that they address systemic causes of inequity. As cliche as this phrase has become, our schools need this now more than ever. Recognizing that there is no singular "way" toward equity, the creators of the *W2EPB* offer these ethics as a way to better ensure that equity lies at the heart of work to improve your system. The materials that follow have been developed to support schools, districts, and county offices of education in undertaking equity work.

Resources

- **FSG:** Getting to Yes: How to generate consensus for targeted universalism
- **Second Step: SEL Resources for Educators** https://tinyurl.com/yaydoyhu
- **Common Sense: Emotional Well-being for 6-12 Students** https://wideopenschool.org/programs/educator/6-12/emotional-well-being/
- **Mental Health during COVID-19 (resources for families)** https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tInbrIOfvZ6vhP--SPWVzx2VUfHENoKwM01pSIN-lya8/edit

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SECTION AUTHOR & CONTENT SPECIALIST: DR. ERICA BOAS

[2] Continuous improvement is an ongoing effort to improve services or processes within an organization. These efforts, methodically integrated into daily work of individuals, are consistently measured to understand what is working for whom, and under what conditions. In short, continuous improvement means getting better all the time and knowing why.

Defining Equity

To achieve equity, you must define what you mean by equity. In essence, educational equity means that every student can go to school and feel that they belong, are valued, and can succeed. Noguera (2019) explains that the "true" meaning of equity is "acknowledging students' differences and giving them what they need to be successful. It also means staying focused on outcomes, both academic and developmental". In other words, to achieve equity, educators and administrators must know the students whom they teach, understand which pedagogies and resources each student needs to thrive, and remain attuned to how quantitative and qualitative data reflect this. This requires focused investigation of the systems in place that are producing the current results. This way, new systems can be established that ensure that each child receives what they need to succeed can be established.

The focus on equitable outcomes rather than equality (sameness) of resources is key to defining "equity". Making this point visually, the graphic below demonstrates that different students require different resources and support to achieve desired outcomes. As Kimberlé Crenshaw (1998) put it, "Treating different things the same can generate 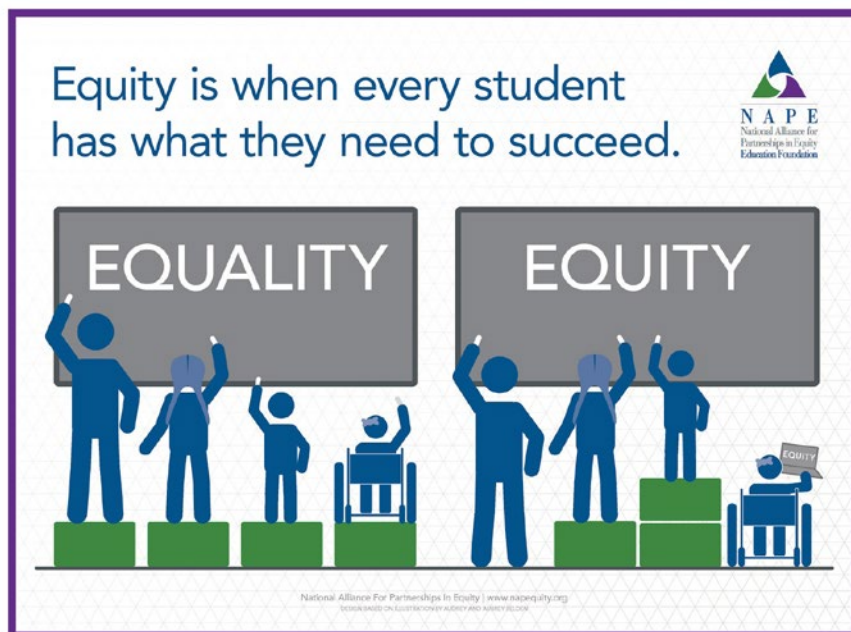as much inequality as treating the same things differently." Therefore, if we really want to achieve equity, we must be willing to learn how to provide differently for different students. This, however, can be challenging to put into action.

The main purpose of the *Ways 2 Equity Playbook* is to assist schools, districts, and county offices of education in taking thoughtful action by helping them to find their unique pathways to equity, equity that is, by definition, systemic. Because working toward equity requires ongoing action and continuous improvement, the *W2EPB* definition of equity centers "ways", or practices that support its advancement. It is understood that for many, the road taken will quite likely feel like uncharted territory. Afterall, the infrastructure for equity as an overarching objective for public education has yet to be built into the system—but is both possible and necessary.

With the public education system we have inherited a legacy. Boldly put: the U.S. education system originated as a tool to further privilege the racially and economically advantaged (see Kliewer & Fitzgerald, 2001; Rooks, 2020). To a great extent, mental "fitness" was measured through standardized tests norm-referenced to White, educated men, thus advantaging them and those like them while disadvantaging the "other" (Kendi, 2019; see also the National Education Association's "History of Standardized Testing in the United States"). When we analyze data and take honest stock of the outcomes, we see that this pattern persists within the education system. As is shown through the W2EPB, it is undeniable that in comparison to most other student groups, White students continue to receive higher test scores, enroll in and pass more honors and Advanced Placement classes, go to college more, have better teachers, and be suspended less.

There is a hard truth in the data presented throughout this document: For students who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)[1], poor, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, plus other groups (LGBTQIA+)[2], and/or identified as having disabilities, schools are often institutions which systematically reproduce and maintain their oppression. Consequently, the institution of schooling does not value what these

Equity is when every student has what they need to succeed.

EQUALITY   EQUITY

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[1] BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. This term is used "to highlight the unique relationship to whiteness that Indigenous and Black (African Americans) people have, which shapes the experiences of and relationship to white supremacy for all people of color within a U.S. context" (The BIPOC Project). In effect, the term illuminates the fact that U.S. concepts of race were built on white supremacist notions of blackness and indigeneity.

[2] LGBTQIA+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, plus other groups marginalized due to gender and sexual identities.

Defining Equity (from National Equity Project)

Each student[3] receives what they need, when they need it, to thrive social-emotionally and academically.

Working toward equity means that we engage in these practices and behaviors:

- Promoting just and fair inclusion, and creating the conditions in which each person participates, prospers, and reaches their full potential.

- Removing the predictability of success and failure that is currently correlated with a student's ethnicity, culture, race, or socio-economic status.

- Interrupting inequitable practices, examining biases, and creating inclusive school environments for each student and their families.

- Paying attention to the social and historic forces which create and maintain systems in which students are treated differently based on who they are.

students bring to school: their culture (Valenzuela, 1999; Perry & Steele, 2004), including their languages (Rosa & Flores, 2017), agency (Paris & Alim, 2017), funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992), community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), and their bodies (Hattery & Smith, 2017; Morris, 2016). The core motivation of the *W2EPB* is the strong belief that all students deserve dignity and respect and that they should be valued for their full humanity.

Frequently, however, this is not what happens. Instead, a deficit perspective (or mindset) is used to understand BIPOC students, students with disabilities, and students whose first language is not English. A deficit perspective views students through what they *do not* have, or what they lack, as opposed to seeing them for the assets they possess and bring to school every day. To counter the pervasiveness of this deficit perspective, a commitment to transforming the education system must be cultivated. Paris and Alim (2017) write, "We believe that equity and access can best be achieved by centering the dynamic practices and selves of students and communities of color in a critical, additive, and expansive vision of schooling" (p. 3). How do we take action toward equity? The objective of the *Ways 2 Equity Playbook* is to offer a response to this question.

Given the profound and heavy nature of the above, those of us who serve students and schools must be tenacious and bold. It should be expected that the work ahead will be challenging. And while it may be uncomfortable for some, it will be inspiring and uplifting for many. Working toward equity is the best thing we can do for all students, families, and everyone who makes up the life of schools. Accordingly, it is necessary to cultivate opportunities for what Singleton (2014) calls "courageous conversations", or critical dialogue and reflection. Engagement in such discussions can cultivate essential attitudes of an equity mindset: humility, transparency, courage, and a willingness to learn and change. With emphasis simultaneously placed on work to address implicit biases, great strides can be made to advance equity. From the beginning, the *W2EPB* highlights learning about systemic oppression, activities that address implicit biases, processes which include self-reflection, engagement with equity ideas, and critical dialogue.

Reflection Questions:

1. What is your organization's working definition of equity? Whose voices were included in this definition? Whose voices were not?

2. How has your organization engaged in conversations about the meaning of equity? Who has participated in these conversations? Who has not?

3. What are some reasons educators might be fearful about introducing conversations about racism in their classes? What can school leaders do to alleviate that fear? What can we do as individual educators to alleviate that fear in ourselves?

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[3] The use of "student" reflects an awareness of the audience for this playbook. It is understood that those using these materials are engaged in the education sphere. However, there are some realms of the education sphere where "student" may not be the most accurate word when referring to those in TK, preschool, early childhood programs, or adult education programs.

Resources

- To further examine different types of educational inequity, such as societal, socioeconomic, familial, cultural, etc.: https://www.edglossary.org/equity/
- Equity Literacy Institute offers a free-low-cost self-paced learning module. https://equity-literacy.thinkific.com/
- See Glen Singleton's *Courageous Conversations about Race: A field guide for achieving equity in schools* (2005) for a powerful guide for talking about power and privilege related to race so that education systems can then create plans necessary for their transformation.

Tools

- CA-1 Course with Micro-Credential Badge: "Vision One" https://www.learningdesigned.org/node/975/initiative-resources
- Use the History of Education Timeline Activity to investigate the history of educational inequity. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NCN7Qx-GbLewltmmMY_68_leqpsNVlkqgj45CrucNrfU/edit

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SECTION AUTHOR & CONTENT SPECIALIST: DR. ERICA BOAS

How to Use the *Ways 2 Equity Playbook*

As a product of the California Statewide System of Support, the *Ways 2 Equity Playbook (W2EPB)* draws on methods of continuous improvement in its approach to systems-based equity work. This section provides guidance on how to use the *W2EPB*. Please note that we have assembled a list of recommended equity audits and assessment resources, but the *W2EPB* is not in itself an equity audit. In addition, the *W2EPB* was designed as a resource to be used electronically, offering digital-only sections and links to online resources and tools throughout. Please check the electronic version for updates, as we understand the *Playbook* as a "prototype" upon which we will continue to iterate with input and new developments in the field. Please see http://www.inclusioncollaborative.org/cepip.aspx for the electronic document that includes additional sections: district case studies and a list of equity assessments and audits.

Organization of the Ways 2 Equity Playbook

The *W2EPB* is organized to guide schools, district, and county offices through their equity work. It has been assembled so that the sections of the *Playbook* move the reader from the more conceptual and theoretical to the more practical. However, just as equity work requires simultaneous engagement with theory AND practice, the *Playbook* sections strive to address both layers of equity work at the same time. The education system cannot advance equity without seeing these as two parts of an integrated whole.

Preparing for Equity Work

1. Thoroughly read the sections in Part I: Ramping Up. (These pages will orient you to the thinking behind the *W2EPB* and its approach to the process.)
2. Assess where to *start* by using the "On-ramps to Equity".
3. Establish your core equity team that is representative of the school community. (Through the process, there will be a need to develop smaller teams to guide specific aspects of the work.)
4. Choose and use assessment/audit tools to take the equity temperature of your site.
5. Using a planning tool, begin designing your site's ways to equity. (E.g. Sampson's "Digging for Equity".)

Engaging the Equity Work

Use the "On-ramps to Equity" to begin your process. As has been stated, undertaking equity work is not a one-size-fits-all process; intentionality and planning are key to achieving successful outcomes. In addition, it is imperative to simultaneously and continuously explore the comingling of implicit bias and systemic oppression in personal reflection and within your educational contexts. Note: The Inclusion Collaborative of the Santa Clara County Office of Education has created an online micro-credential module for teachers to support implementation of the *W2EPB* in the classroom: Utilizing the Ways 2 Equity Playbook.

Using Protocols to Guide your Equity Work

Throughout the *W2EPB*, we offer tools and resources to support you in your journey toward equity. Many of these tools come in the form of "protocols". A protocol is a structured process or set of guidelines that promote meaningful, efficient, and equitable inquiry and communication. Using protocols can help ensure that work is collaborative, equitable, and focused. (Links to protocols are provided throughout the *W2EPB*. They can be accessed through the electronic version of the *Playbook* at http://www.inclusioncollaborative.org/cepip.aspx)

Equity Case Studies

The *W2EPB* provides examples of districts that have taken up focused equity work and made improvements. These sites were chosen as models because they have taken action on equity challenges and have positively impacted equity in their contexts. It is important to note that the narratives are process-focused to provide a model for other districts that inspires belief that equity *can* be achieved through hard work. Therefore, these stories can be useful for schools and districts that are interested in taking similar action. Specific equity tools and activities used by these sites are referenced and linked within the case studies, providing opportunity to better understand how the tools can be applied in a real context.

On-Ramps: Beginning and Continuing on your Equity Journey

These "on-ramps" should be used to help you identify where you are in your journey, your objectives, and how to proceed. This tool can be used as a self-assessment and inventory of actions, with each component essential to designing and carrying forth your equity work. For example, if you begin in column #2, everything listed in column #1 is still a necessary component to be addressed and should be as fully engaged as possible. This is intentional. While equity is an urgent need, to truly see changes in your system, the work must be deliberate, purposeful, collaborative, and deep. So use these on-ramps to gauge where you are and what you need to do. From there, engage in continuous improvement cycles. Finally, remember this: Working toward equity is complex, so not everything here happens in every place and at every time. To that end, the following is offered as a set of processes to help your system delve into the work.

"PRE" WORK: Before you begin, be sure to do the following.

- Beginning this journey means preparing your system to engage in work that is sometimes messy, often emotional, and challenges our most basic assumptions.
- Leadership must communicate the importance, excitement, and challenge of this work toward equity to staff: personal work and institutional work.
- Gather and explore relevant data, both public and internal; especially investigating disproportionality through an intersectional data analysis of the focal student groups: African American students, students with disabilities, and English learners.
- Read through the *Ways 2 Equity Playbook*, highlighting areas of focus.

On-Ramps: Beginning and Continuing on your Equity Journey

	1. **Starting your Engine:** Learn about Equity in your System	2. **Picking up Speed:** Dive into Planning for Equity	3. **Merging onto the Highway:** Share Plans and Begin your Equity Cycles	Relevant *W2EPB* Sections: Access to find information and tools
Leadership Development	☐ Establish a core leadership team that will identify and develop a broader equity leadership team ☐ Identify trainings/education for leadership team on systemic racism & implicit bias ☐ Take implicit bias assessment ☐ Explore equity literature for future book circles (see resources) ☐ Establish community agreements/norms	☐ Establish a broader, representative equity leadership team across stakeholder groups ☐ Leadership team engage in an equity assessment ☐ Develop smaller leadership teams for specific areas of work (ongoing) ☐ Identify an equity team facilitator who is available, consistent, and experienced ☐ Initiate equity literature book circles/equity discussions with all staff	☐ Ensure that representative stakeholders are participants at all levels of process ☐ Continue equity literature book circles/equity discussions with all staff	Team Development & Facilitation Implicit Bias & Cultivating Equity Mindshifts Equity Literature
Teacher/Staff Development	☐ Take implicit bias assessment ☐ Participate in trainings/education on systemic racism & implicit bias ☐ Explore equity literature for future book circles (see resources)	☐ Reflect on results of implicit bias assessment; consider next steps for individuals and collective action based on results ☐ Further focus trainings/education for teachers on systemic racism & implicit bias ☐ Initiate equity literature book circles/equity discussions with all staff	☐ Continued, focused trainings/education for teachers on addressing systemic racism & implicit bias through effective pedagogy ☐ Continue equity literature book circles/equity discussions with all staff	Team Development & Facilitation Implicit Bias & Cultivating Equity Mindshifts Equity Literature
Data & Research	☐ Needs assessment: Investigate Dashboard data of districts/schools using data exploration protocol ☐ Identify focal student groups ☐ Needs assessment: Survey teachers, staff, parents, students, and other stakeholders ☐ Explore equity audits/assessments to use in your context	☐ Continue to collect relevant quantitative and qualitative data at the local and state levels ☐ Conduct intersectional data analysis for disproportionality ☐ Conduct root cause analysis	☐ Continue to collect and share relevant quantitative and qualitative data ☐ Continue to conduct intersectional data analysis for disproportionality, with attention to African American students, SWD, and ELs ☐ Plan cycles of research and measurement for improvement	Using Data to Inform Equity List of Equity Audits & Assessments African American Students Students with Disabilities English Learners

On-Ramps: Beginning and Continuing on your Equity Journey

	1. **Starting your Engine:** Learn about Equity in your System	2. **Picking up Speed:** Dive into Planning for Equity	3. **Merging onto the Highway:** Share Plans and Begin your Equity Cycles	Relevant *W2EPB* Sections: Access to find information and tools
Planning	□ Identify and broadly define equity challenges □ Begin to draft equity goals that explicitly address inequities found in needs assessment □ Develop a timeline starting with these on-ramps and cycles of continuous improvement	□ Develop shared definition of equity □ Define and prioritize your equity goals □ Choose set of tools to address the challenge based on defined equity goals □ Begin drafting an equity plan (made up of report of findings, tools, strategies, communication plan, plan to monitor progress)	□ Narrow focus to one equity challenge, drawing on stakeholder input □ Finalize equity plan □ Initiate and continue use of equity tools and strategies □ Check for integrity of the equity plan	Defining Equity Using Data to Inform Equity
Communication	□ Identify stakeholders □ Begin development of communication plan	□ Continue to develop communication plan □ Share equity data with community of stakeholders	□ Finalize communication plan □ Communicate the equity plan to stakeholders □ Continue to share data findings and open up conversations with stakeholders	Developing an Equity Communication Plan
Culture & Climate	□ Calibrate potential equity goals to mission and vision □ Begin process of ongoing personal reflection	□ Align equity objectives to mission and vision □ Continue ongoing personal reflection □ Include students and community representation in decision-making and work	□ Check for and build student and community representation in decision-making and work	Creating a Culture of Inclusion & Belonging Implicit Bias & Cultivating Equity Mindshifts Student Engagement Family Engagement
Progress Monitoring	□ Check-in with teachers and staff about their response to the equity focus	□ Continue monitoring equity and representativeness of leadership team	□ Monitor progress: Schedule regular meetings (every 2-4 weeks) □ Monitor leadership capacity-building	Team Development & Facilitation Using Data to Inform Equity

These on-ramps were developed at the Santa Clara County Office of Education from a combination of vetted sources: *The Equity Framework*, (Linton, 2011); *Self-Assessment of MTSS Implementation (SAM)*, (Stockslager, K., et. al., 2016), *Culturally Responsive Organizational Series*, Sampson, 2019, and the SCCOE *W2EPB* Team.

SECTION AUTHOR & CONTENT SPECIALIST: DR. ERICA BOAS

African American Students

African Americans have fought for equitable education for over a century. Still, Black students continue to face some of the greatest educational barriers of any student group. This section examines the profoundly entrenched inequalities, such as residential segregation, that result in equity gaps in educational achievement, economic prosperity, civic engagement, and lifelong wellness. Promising practices for improving the conditions of the public education system for Black students are offered.

History of African Americans/Blacks in Education[1]

African Americans have always had an enormous desire for fair and equal education. The struggle to achieve this goal has been long and hard throughout history, making equity—ensuring that everyone receives or has what is needed to thrive and reach one's full potential—a formidable task. Today, understanding the current state of Black education in this country requires knowledge of key historical events.

Before the Civil War, the schooling of Blacks was a criminal offense. After the Civil War and the legal end of slavery (1865), African Americans mobilized to bring public education to the South (Rooks, 2020). That is, only North Carolina among Southern states had established a comprehensive system of education for whites, and public schools emerged for Black and White students simultaneously in most of the South during Reconstruction (1863- 1877). In addition, the nation's first historically Black colleges such as Howard University in Washington, D.C., and Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee were established during this time (Freedmen's Bureau, 2011).

Having been denied education under slavery, freed Blacks saw schooling as central to their understanding of freedom, and freed Blacks of all ages flocked to schools after the Civil War. Much of the funding for Black education came from the state government, but they themselves made efforts to organize schools, purchasing land, constructing buildings, and raising money to hire teachers. In doing so, they literally laid the groundwork for their children's school experience. Images from this era reflect overcrowded classrooms, often without blackboard and chalk, with forty or more African American students deeply engaged in learning despite resources. Research shows that many young men and women who attended these schools known as "freedmen's schools" became teachers who instructed the next generation (Pariseau, 2005). Meanwhile, violence was on the rise during the Reconstruction era.

The ratification of the 13th Amendment abolished slavery in the United States. During this time, the Reconstruction era, federal, state, and local statutes and policies emerged (e.g., Jim Crow laws, Black Codes) that legalized racial segregation, establishing the creation of segregated public schooling. Some states required separate textbooks for Black and White students. The local and national government created these laws to exclude Blacks, denying them the right to vote, obtain employment, and receive access to education. Just as images from this era would show Blacks engaged in learning, they would also depict Blacks in danger of survival. Black schools were vandalized and destroyed, and mobs of violent Whites (e.g., Ku Klux Klan) attacked, tortured and lynched Black citizens in the night. Additionally, families were attacked and forced off their land all across the South (Digital history, 2003). As these harsh conditions permeated the U.S., Reconstruction was also a time when many citizens, especially Blacks, stood up, assumed leadership roles, and vigorously opposed the laws. For example, in 1892, an African American train passenger, Homer Plessy, refused to sit in a car for blacks. He argued that his constitutional rights were violated, which culminated in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the landmark 1896 U.S. Supreme Court decision which ruled a law that "implies merely a legal distinction"

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[1] The racial identity category, African American/Black is used interchangeably throughout this section to describe the historical and social experiences of Blacks in this country.

The counties serving the largest percentages of Black/African American students include: Solano (14.3 %), Sacramento (11.7%), Alameda (10.0 %), Contra Costa (9.0%), and San Francisco (8.6 %). In each of these counties, Black students represent 10% of the K-12 population. Los Angeles County has the largest Black student population in the state of California, with 111,240 students (7.5%) of Black students comprising the school-aged population. (Source: kidsdata.org.)

between Whites and Blacks was not unconstitutional (Landmark Cases of the U.S. Supreme Court, 2020).

The 1954 landmark case, *Brown vs. Board of Education*, overturned *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, ruling that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal". The process of desegregation shocked the conscience of our nation. African American students, such as the "Little Rock Nine," faced abuse, humiliation, and racial terror as they stepped foot on previously all-White public high schools, bravely initiating the long-fought process of desegregation in American public schools. Meanwhile, the violence against Blacks continued to rise.

In the book *A Life Is More Than a Moment: The Desegregation of Little Rock's Central High*, Will Counts (2007) presents his photographs and artifacts that capture the turbulent times. These include images from 1957 in Little Rock, Arkansas showing swarms of angry mobs of white people waiting for Black students as they approached the school, and the National Guard escorting members of Little Rock Nine to class. Countless other images of this period also capture the pervasive and painful violence committed against Blacks who wanted better opportunities. Still, an image can only convey so much about the pain Blacks individually and collectively endured, and the trauma from the past they still confront today. We have historically seen Blacks deprived of rights in the form of jobs, voting, and education. The U.S. school system, for example, continues to struggle to provide fair education to African American children.

The Current State of African Americans and Educational Equity

While Brown vs. Board of Education was supposed to end segregation in schools, at the national level, schools remain highly segregated by race and ethnicity. A 2019 U.S. Department of Education report explains, "In 2016, the percentage of children under the age of 18 in families living in poverty was higher for Black children than Latinx children (31 and 26 percent, respectively), and the percentages for both of these groups were higher than for White and Asian children (10 percent each)" (NCES, 2019). Additional 2017 data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) report on mathematics and reading assessments reveal that 7 in 10 black students (72.4%) attend economically segregated schools. Racial and residential segregation reinforces school segregation, and educational disparities between rich and poor students, and between white and students of color persists.

California is no exception in this. Black and Latinx students in California are also more likely to attend schools with a large low-income population. Despite funding specifically allocated to high-poverty schools, due largely to racial and economic segregation, these students still receive lower quality instruction (Cano, 2019), higher rates of exclusionary discipline (Gonzalez, 2016), and lower test scores (UNCF, 2018).

African Americans want high quality, fair, and equitable educational opportunities for their children. No matter their circumstances and conditions, there is an inherent desire for Blacks to want more for themselves, to thrive, and to achieve (Love, 2019). Yet, racism, systematic oppression, and discrimination flood many communities, classrooms, and school halls, effectively curtailing the road to success for many students (Kohl, 2015). Though many unfairly bear the brunt of these social conditions that are beyond their control, so many push ahead, achieve, and flourish despite the adversity (Ed Trust-West, 2015).

When Black students succeed, we all succeed. The social, cultural, and political future of our country will be defined by the opportunities we create for Black youth and students of color. To understand the status of Blacks in California's educational system, the focus of this section, we must examine the following areas: who African American students are and what they are experiencing; what isn't working in K-12 schools; and what can be done to rectify equity issues they face systematically, structurally, and socio-emotionally.

African American Students and Educational Equity

There are 334,654 African American K-12 public school students in California, 5.4 % of the state's public school population This represents a decline from 2014-15, when African American students comprised 373,000 or 6% of the student population (California Department of Education, 2019). Overall, the African American student population in California is in steady decline. (**Figure 1**) Some counties have seen dramatic decreases in the African American population over the last two decades. For instance, between 1994 and 2018, Alameda County experienced a decline in the Black student population from 22.9 percent to 10 percent, and San Francisco County experienced a decline from 18.2 percent to 8.6 percent (kidsdata.org, 2020). The counties with the largest African American school-age population are Solano (14.3%) and Sacramento (11.7%).

African American Students

Figure 1. Ethnic distribution of students in California's public schools: 2014-15 through 2019-20 adopted data from California Department of Education's DataQuest 'Enrollment Multi-Year Summary by Ethnicity' report.

Academic Year	African American	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Hispanic or Latino	White not Hispanic	Two or More Races Not Hispanic
2019-20	5.3%	0.5%	9.3%	54.9%	22.4%	3.9%
2018-19	5.4%	0.5%	9.3%	54.6%	22.9%	3.6%
2017-18	5.5%	0.5%	9.2%	54.3%	23.2%	3.5%
2016-17	5.6%	0.5%	9.0%	54.2%	23.6%	3.3%
2015-16	5.8%	0.6%	8.9%	54.0%	24.1 %	3.1%
2014-15	6.0%	0.6%	8.9%	53.6%	24.6%	2.8%

As the population of African American residents and school--aged students continues to dwindle, few comprehensive studies investigate intersectional factors that have contributed to the shrinking size of Black communities in California. Gentrification of California's urban centers and a subsequent housing crisis (Brown, 2016; Bunten, 2019), and the quest for affordable living (Toppo & Overberg, 2015; Brookings, 2015) are products of systemic oppression that impact California schools.

Major Equity Issues Impacting African American Students

Studies reveal that at every benchmark in Black students' lives, from early childhood education through higher education, they encounter far more significant obstacles than many of their peers. Black students face racial discrimination in the form of implicit bias, microaggressions, or subtle racial epithets aimed at their race. They experience systematically lower expectations for achievement and excessive school discipline (Anderson, 2018). Unlike the legally sanctioned racism of the past, these discriminatory behaviors may be subtly expressed and therefore difficult to name and address. Ultimately, however, it is the subconscious beliefs of teachers and administrators coupled with educational policies and practices that are tied to a history of oppression which result in inequities for Black students (Quereshi & Okonofua, 2017). Therefore, at the national and state levels, African American students are more likely to:

- **Attend schools in economically disadvantaged or low-income, racially segregated communities.**
(Boshmaronald & Brownstein, 2016; Hannah-Jones, 2014)
- **Experience barriers to attending early childhood and preschool education programs.**
(Morgan et al., 2012; EdTrust, 2019).

- **Be chronically absent.**
(More in the section 'Chronic Absenteeism'.)
- **Be disciplined, suspended or expelled.**
(More in the section, 'Suspension Rates and School Discipline').
- **Experience inequitable access to quality curriculum and instruction.**
(Ladson-Billings, 1994; Quiocho & Rios, 2000).
- **Receive instruction from ineffective teachers regardless of the quality of the school.**
(Ed Trust-West, 2015; Lewis and Diamond, 2015).
- **Experience bias and discrimination.**
(More in the section, Implicit Bias).

Promising Practices for Better Educating and Supporting African American Students

- **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy** acknowledges and utilizes the cultural and historical backgrounds, knowledge, and experiences of students to inform the teachers' classroom and methodology. For more information, see Culturally Relevant Pedagogy section.)
- **Racial Identity Development** is commonly found in psychology and therapy literature are several frameworks that describe African American stages of racial and ethnic identity development (Cross et. al, 2017; 1971; Sellers, Shelton, Rowley, 1998; Scottham, Sellers, and Nguyen, 2008). Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum (1997; 2017), an expert on race relations in the classroom and the development of racial identity, exculidates best practices for affirming youth racial identity in her book, Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?.
- **Restorative Justice/Restorative Practices** has proven to be a useful approach for addressing the disproportionality of school discipline (González, 2015).

Reflection Questions:

1. Describe how you think the African American students are doing in your school, district, and community. In your opinion, are they well? What are the factors contributing to their wellness?

2. Now look at the data on the African American students in your school, district, and community. What do the data tell you, and how do they compare to your initial thoughts?

3. Are there obstacles preventing African American students from being engaged (e.g. classroom), feeling welcome (e.g. school environment), or achieving academically in your school?

4. What are the possibilities and limitations for better serving African American students in your school or district? What needs to happen to do so?

Resources

Learn more about African American youth experiences in schools and racial equity:

- **Explore student-teacher relationships that make a difference.** Book: No More Teaching Without Positive Relationships

- **Promote the racial identity development of Black youth.** Visit: Racial Equity Tools & Teaching Black History: Resources For All Ages (article) & Art and the African American Experience Teacher Guides (article) & 15 Books to Read by Black Female Authors, New York Times Style Magazine

- **Tackle the social emotional health and well-being needs of youth.** Visit: The Future of Healing: Shifting From Trauma Informed Care to Healing Centered Engagement & Trauma Informed Educational Practices (Webinar) & Affirming Black Lives without Inducing Trauma (article)

- **Read and see an example of a local assessment and research that is "of, for and by the African/African Ancestry communities of Santa Clara County".** The Black Leadership Kitchen Cabinet African/African Ancestry Education Assessment & Research Project

Learn about the underlying problem that has led to recent tragedies of racial injustice:

- **Reflect on symptoms of racial injustices against Blacks in this country.** Read The Case for Reparations (article & audio); The New Jim Crow (book); The Warmth of Other Suns (book)

- **Learn about a host of organizations with a history of addressing symptoms of racial injustices against Black people in broader society.** Raheem; Color of Change; Black Lives Matter; SMASH.

Take action:

- **Provide high quality learning opportunities to better serve California's African American students & additional recommendations.** "Black Minds Matter: Supporting the Educational Success of Black Children in California"

- **Challenge deficit narrative about the aspirations of African American youth & additional recommendations.** "A Seat at the Table: African American Youth's Perceptions of K-12 Education"

- **Address implicit bias/racial disparities in school discipline & additional recommendations.** "Locked Out of the Classroom: How Implicit Bias Contributes to Disparities in School Discipline" and "Get Out! Black Males Suspensions in California Public Schools"

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SECTION AUTHOR & CONTENT SPECIALIST: DR. ANGELA BIRTS

Students with Disabilities

Historically, students with disabilities have faced a variety of challenges and inequities within the educational system. This section contains a brief history of special education legislation and discusses the current inequities that students with disabilities face in schools today. Included is a discussion on evidenced-based best practices and resources for working with students with disabilities.

## Background and History on Students with Disabilities and Equity in Education

Several factors including segregation, reduced rigor in instruction, deficit perspectives, and a shortage of qualified teachers have led to the inequities that students with disabilities have historically faced in their educational experience. Prior to the Education of all Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA) of 1975, children with disabilities were segregated from their peers and were not participating in and receiving appropriate educational services. Congress specifically highlights in the federal statutes the segregation and educational disservice to students with disabilities prior to the enactment of EAHCA of 1975.

EAHCA was amended and eventually became the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 1990. Since then it has been revised numerous times to guarantee the educational rights to all students with disabilities from birth to age 22.[1]

Equity and Achievement

The goal of IDEA is to provide a free and appropriate education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) for all children with disabilities; however, in analyzing the data for students with disabilities, this goal has yet to be reached. The exclusion of students with disabilities from the general education classroom often leads to a less rigorous level of instruction of the core curriculum in more restrictive environments. Students with disabilities who are English Learners (EL) require specific instructional supports to acquire English language skills and to access the general education curriculum. The over identification of EL students as needing special education services is an added issue. In the 2017-2018 school year, 16.6 percent of students who are EL students were identified as having a disability as compared to the non-EL school population which had a rate of 12 percent. The California Department of Education has created a resource guide to address this issue, California Department of Education Practitioner's Guide for Educating English Learners with Disabilities.

Figure 2. Percent of Students who Met or Exceeded Standards on CAASP: English Langue Arts/Literacy
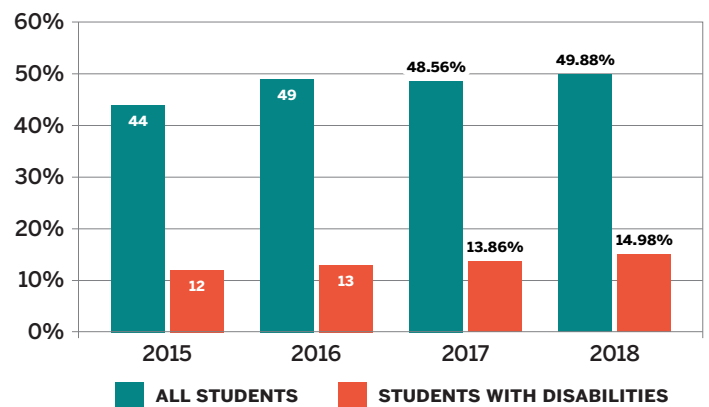
Note: 2015 and 2016 achievement level percentages were reported to the nearest whole number. Beginning in 2017, achievement level percentages were reported to the nearest hundredths. https://www.ed-data.org/state/CA

Figure 3. Percent of Students who Met or Exceeded Standards on CAASP: Math
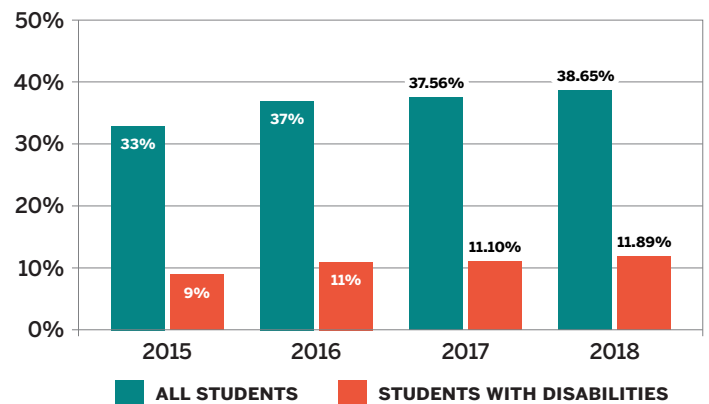
Note: 2015 and 2016 achievement level percentages were reported to the nearest whole number. Beginning in 2017, achievement level percentages were reported to the nearest hundredths. https://www.ed-data.org/state/CA

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[1] In these revisions Congress has addressed the poor implementation of IDEA "(the implementation) has been impeded by low expectations, and an insufficient focus on applying replicable research on proven methods of teaching and learning for children with disabilities" (United States Department of Education, IDEA Section 1400, n.d.). This was further clarified in the *2017 Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District* in a decision by the Supreme Court that students with disabilities are entitled to more than the *de minimus* or minimal benefit from the Individualized Educational Program (*Endrew F. v. Douglas County School Dist. RE–1, 15-827, 580 U.S.__ (2017)*).

Continuing Inequities in Education for Students with Disabilities
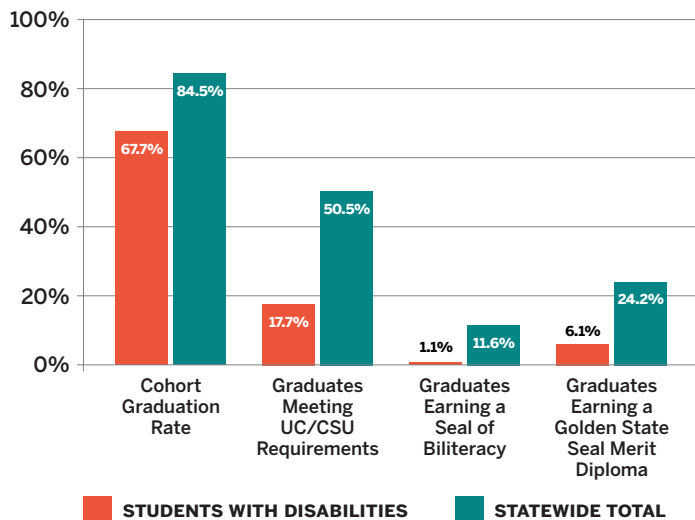
Statistics show that students in special education continue to face inequities as compared to their general education peers in numerous areas:

- lower achievement rate (see **Figures 2 and 3**)
- lower graduation rate as compare to their peers (see **Figure 4**)
- lower rate of meeting the UC A-G requirements (see **Figure 4**)
- higher rate of dropping out of school (see **Figure 5**); and
- higher rate of suspensions (see **Figure 6**)

At the center of these inequities is the continued segregation and marginalization of students with disabilities from the general education setting. Although the EAHCA act was passed 45 years ago, in California students with disabilities continue to be se-gregated and marginalized in separate settings at a higher rate as compared to the overall rates for students with disabilities at the federal level (see **Figure 7**). An outgrowth of the separate subsystem of instruction of students with disabilities is that they are often not challenged with the same rigor and standards-based curriculum as their peers in the general education setting. This often leads to students being underprepared which creates a continuous cycle of obstacles for them to be returned to the general education classroom. Compounding this is the missed access to the curriculum during intervention. When students receive an "intervention" curriculum they are losing access to the standards-based curriculum of their peers. Once they are not receiving that standards-based curriculum it is very difficult to reintegrate them back to standards-based instruction.

Further exacerbation of these inequities has occurred during the recent shutdown of schools as part of the COVID-19 response.

Figure 4. 2018-19 Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES   STATEWIDE TOTAL

https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dqcensus/CohRate.aspx?cds=00&agglevel=state&year=2018-19

Figure 5. Drop-out Rates for Students with Disabilites

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES   STATEWIDE TOTAL

https://www.ed-data.org/state/CA
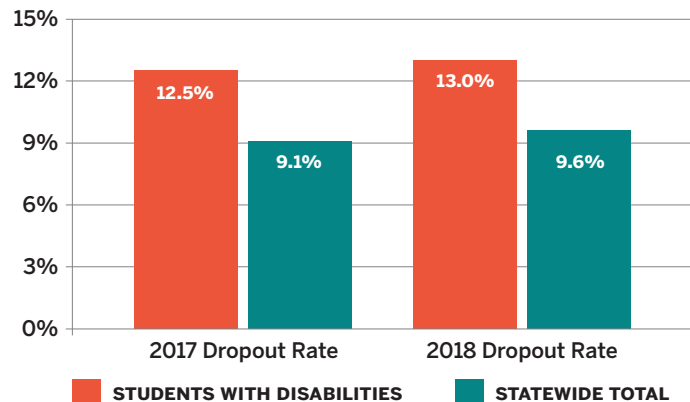
Districts and schools have struggled to redesign equitable instruction for all students but have struggled the most with implementing effective instruction for students with disabilities. Numerous national organizations (e.g., Council on Exceptional Students, Consortium of Citizens with Disabilities, and Great Schools) have sent letters to the United States Department of Education requesting flexibility in the timelines for implementing IDEA but at the same time asking that that IDEA be preserved for students with disabilities. CDE has compiled resources and infor-mation on their website which addresses the implementation of IDEA during the COVID-19 school shutdown.

Equity in Instruction

A key barrier to equity for students with disabilities is the persi-stent shortage of qualified special education teachers and the training of general education teachers. According to the Learning Policy Institute, the teacher shortage in California has worsened since 2015. In addition, the authors highlight that the greatest shortage and the highest attrition rates is with special education teachers (Darling-Hammond, Sutcher, & Carver-Thomas, 2018). Two out of three new special education teachers are on substan-dard permits or credentials. Teacher shortages are usually the highest in districts that serve the most disadvantaged students with the highest turnover rates being in rural and urban areas (Darling-Hammond et al., 2018).

In Forward Together Helping Educators Unlock the Power of Students Who Learn Differently (2019), Galiatsos, Kruse, and Whittaker surveyed a variety of teachers with varied educational and teaching experiences and report "Only 17% of surveyed tea-chers feel very prepared to teach students with mild to moderate disabilities" and only about half of teachers strongly believe that students with mild to moderate disabilities can perform at grade level expectations.

Galiatsos et al (2019) discuss the need to have an MTSS in place and to use researched based instructional methods that are

specific to each student's needs. In their report, the authors specifically call-out the "Eight Key Practices" for success in the classroom: explicit targeted instruction; Universal Design for Learning (UDL); strategy instruction; flexible grouping; positive behavior strategies; evidenced-based content instruction; collaboration between general education and special education; and culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy. In addition, the Council on Exceptional Children(CEC) and the Center for the Collaboration for Effective Educator Reform and Accountability (CEEDAR) developed 22 high leverage practices for students with disabilities in the area of collaboration, assessment, social emotional and behavior and instruction with the idea that the practices would be taught in teacher education programs and be incorporated into districts' professional development.

Figure 6. Statewide Suspension Rates for Students with Disabilities
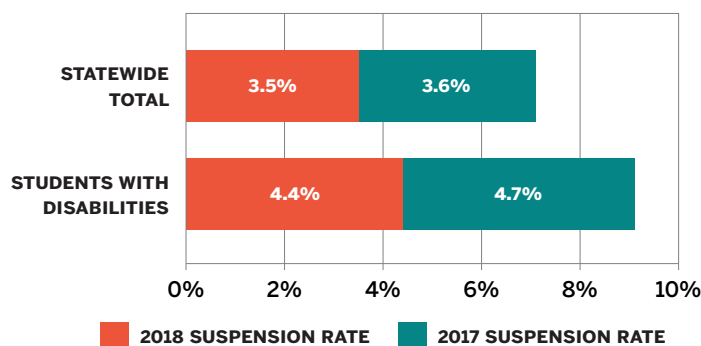
Equitable Classrooms

Over the last two decades researchers have focused on the benefits gained for students with and without disabilities in general education settings. In their 2004 article, Cole, Waildron and Majd, studied the effects of inclusive settings for students with and without disabilities. The study revealed that peers without a disability made greater gains in reading and math when taught in inclusive settings. In their literature review of

inclusive classrooms, Kalambouka, Farrell, Dyson and Kaplan (2007) found there were no adverse effects on students without disabilities who were taught in inclusive settings. However, the authors stress that it is not enough to have the students with disabilities in the class but that the appropriate supports must be in place for them to succeed.

In addition, students with disabilities are more often than not viewed through a deficit perspective, which means that the students are viewed through a lens of what they lack rather than their strengths. In their book *Affirming Disability: Strengths-Based Portraits of Culturally Diverse Families* authors Sauer and Rossetti (2019) present the experiences of six immigrant families navigating the special education system. Of use to practitioners, the authors offer a guide for pre- and in-service teachers to develop a personal action plan for changing classroom/school practices and cultivating relationships with families.

Continued segregation, the shortage of qualified and properly trained teachers, and the lack of applied evidence-based school and classroom practices (e.g. UDL, MTSS, SEL, PBIS, standards based instruction etc.) for students with disabilities all contribute to an inequitable education for students in special education.

Reflection Questions:

1. How have you created a positive school wide environment that is welcoming and inclusive and provides social emotional and behavioral supports for all students?

2. Are all students welcome in all school activities and receive equal access to the grade level curriculum? What supports are provided so that students with disabilities are in extracurricular activities?

3. What communication systems are in place that provide for consultation and collaboration between general education and special education teachers? How are these communications used to expand opportunities for learning?

4. How might you design instruction so that not only the students with disabilities have support in tier one instruction but all students in class could benefit from built-in supports?

Figure 7. State and Federal Percentage of Students Served Ages 6-21 by Educational Settings (Fall 2017)

State	Correctional facility	Homebound/ hospital	Inside regular class less than 40% of the day	Inside regular class 40% through 79% of the day	Inside regular class 80% or more of the day	Parentally placed in private schools	Residential facility	Separate school
All States	0.2%	0.4%	13.3%	18.1%	63.5%	1.5%	0.2%	2.8%
California	0.2%	0.3%	19.8%	20.7%	56.1%	0.5%	0.1%	3%

Tools:

- CA-1 Course with Micro-Credential Badge: "Supporting Students with Disabilities" https://www.learningdesigned.org/node/975/initiative-resources

Resources

- **California Department of Education Practitioner's Guide for Educating English Learners with Disabilities** https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/ac/documents/ab2785guide.pdf
- **CAST UDL** http://www.cast.org/
- **FORWARD TOGETHER Helping Educators Unlock the Power of Students Who Learn Differently** https://www.ncld.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Forward-Together_NCLD-report.pdf
- **University of Florida CEEDAR Resources and Reports** https://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/reports/
- **High Leverage Practices and Evidenced Based Practices a Promising Pair** https://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/reports/
- **Understood** https://www.understood.org/
- **Understood Corona Virus Resources** https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/coronavirus-latest-updates
- **The IRIS Center Vanderbilt University** https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/resources/ebp_summaries/
- **The Iris Center UDL** https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/udl/cresource/q1/p01/

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Books

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- Hollie, S. (2012) Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning: Classroom Practices for Students. Shell Education. ISBN 978-1-4258-1731-2
- McLeskey, J., Maheady, L., Billingsley, B., & Brownell, M. High Leverage Practices for Inclusive Classrooms. Council for Exceptional Children. ISBN-13: 978-1138039186 ISBN-10: 1138039187
- Sauer, J.S. & Rossetti, Z. (2019). Affirming Disability: Strengths-Based Portraits of Culturally Diverse Families. Teachers College Press.

SECTION AUTHOR & CONTENT SPECIALIST:
DR. ANNA MARIE VILLALOBOS

English Learners

Although English Learners constitute a large percentage of the students in the state of California they do not necessarily constitute a large percentage of the students graduating from high school and continuing onto higher education. This portion of the Playbook focuses on the equity issues and opportunity gaps faced by English Learners in academics, instruction and long term educational outcomes. The section also contains information and resources on evidenced-based best practices for English Learners and COVID-19 resources for teachers and families.

English Learners Demographics

English Learners (ELs)[1] make-up 19.3 percent of the total enrollment in California's public schools and continue to face a number of equity issues in their schooling and educational outcomes. CalEdFacts reports a total of 2,587,609 students (English Learners and Fluent English Proficient) who speak a language other than English in their homes. In California this represents 41.8 percent of the state's public school enrollment. The majority of English Learner (EL) students (70.2 percent) are enrolled in grades kindergarten through grade six with the remaining 29.8 percent enrolled in grades seven through twelve. Spanish is the most frequently spoken language (82.2 percent) for EL students in California. The EL students in the state's public school system are quite diverse. Some EL students arrive in the United States well prepared academically from another country and live in affluent and or middle class neighborhoods. Their parents are professionals and they have academic and financial resources. Other EL students have had limited educational experiences in their home country, have limited financial resources, represent a large number of our socially economically disadvantaged students and until recently many were refugees (California Department of Social Services, 2020).

Academic Equity

One of the major issues is the opportunity gap in academic achievement. Over the last five years more than 80 percent of EL students continue to perform at below standard levels on the English Language Arts (ELA) section of California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) (See Figure EL1). Similarly, since 2014-15 more than 80 percent of EL students scored below standard on the Mathematics subtest on the CAASPP (See Figure EL2). In looking at the EL students' CAASPP scores from 2014-2015 through 2018-2019 the scores have remained static and have not shown improvement.

Long-Term English Learners (LTEL) are another of concern. An LTEL is a student in grades six through twelve who has been enrolled in a school in the United States for six years or more and who has stayed at the same level of proficiency for two or more years or who has regressed to a lower level of English proficiency. According to WestEd's report on LTELs (2016), in California the number of LTELs in secondary schools grew from 344,862 in 2008/09 to 380,995 in 2015/16. These students also have a lower graduation rate 49% than their peers (Wested, 2016). There are a number of reasons why some students become LTELS and are never reclassified and are stuck at the intermediate level of proficiency: poor English language development instruction; attending multiple schools; interrupted schooling; and experiencing instruction in a narrow curriculum solely focused on English language development and not on other the content areas needed to develop academic language.

The recent onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has generated additional inequities for EL students. Many EL students have limited access to the technology needed for virtual instruction and may not have the familial resources to support their education at home. Teachers need to focus on restructuring their content and curriculum for distance learning for all their students which includes designing supports for ELs and their families. Californians Together has created a number of COVID-19 resources for both educators and families to use with EL students during the pandemic.

One positive note is that the percentage of Redesignated English Proficient students has increased over the last five years. This could be a function of the decrease in the number of new EL students migrating to the state and the present EL students being present in school for a longer period of time allowing for more opportunities to become proficient and to be redesignated. It may also be due to the recent adoption of the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) which tests for English Language Proficiency and is aligned with the English Language Development Standards. The ELPAC which is part of the statewide assessment system is administered when the EL student first enters school and then on an annual basis until

[1] According to the California Department of Education (CDE) English Learner students are those students for whom there is a report of a primary language other than English on the state-approved Home Language Survey **and** who, on the basis of the state approved oral language (grades kindergarten through twelve) assessment procedures and literacy (grades three through twelve only), have been determined to lack the clearly defined English language skills of listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing necessary to succeed in the school's regular instructional programs. California *Education Code*, Section 52164.1 (a) contains legal requirements which direct schools to determine the language(s) spoken in the home of each student.

they are found to be English proficient. Another possible cause for an increase in reclassification is that districts are allowed to use local criteria as one of the four measures for redesignation. They can use a comparison of student performance in basic skills against an empirically established range of performance in basic skills of English proficient students of the same age (Updated Reclassification Guidelines).

Graduation Rates and College/Career Preparedness

Another area of inequity for EL students is in the educational outcomes as measured by graduation, dropout rate, and college and career readiness. EL students had the lowest graduation rate in 2015-2016 (67.1 percent) and (67.9 percent) for 2016-2017 when compared to their peers across student groups (See **Figure 8**). Except for Native Americans, EL students have the highest dropout rate compared to their peers over the last two reported years. (See **Figure 9**). Meeting the A-G requirements for attending a University of California or California State University is another challenging area for EL students. In the past two years about 24 percent of EL students met the A-G requirements to attend a public university (See **Figure 10**). The data for EL students highlights that the inequities are not just in the student's achievement on the CAASPP tests but also in the final outcomes for the students as they transition into the working world. Furthermore, EL students are often students who are facing poverty and food insecurity. According to Dataquest, more than 20 percent of EL students receive free and reduced lunch and are considered socio-economically disadvantaged. All of these factors impact the learning of students, and therefore highlight

the importance that instruction and schooling can make to overcome these obstacles.

Instruction of English Learners

The goal of instruction for EL students is to have them achieve on par with their English speaking peers in the state curriculum and meet the Common Core State Standards. According to the California Department of Education, schools may provide English Language Development (ELD) for EL students in a number of settings; however, most provide ELD in one of the following settings: dual immersion, transitional developmental; and structured English immersion. The state has adopted English Language Development (ELD) standards that are aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Schools are required to use the ELD standards in the instruction of EL students so that students will attain proficiency in reading , writing, speaking and listening in English. The state ELA/ELD Framework has four overarching goals for English Language Arts and English Language Development instruction for students to achieve by high school graduation:

• College, career and civic readiness

• Obtained the ability to be literate individuals

• Become widely literate

• Acquire the skills needed to live and learn in the 21st century

The California Department of Education (CDE) English Learner Roadmap articulates the mission and vision the state has for the education of EL students. The Roadmap contains a number of resources for the instruction of ELs. Research shows that EL students learn best when they are taught with a combination of their and primary and secondary language (Goldenberg, 2008).

Figure 8. Cohort Graduates by Race/Ethnicity or English Learner Status
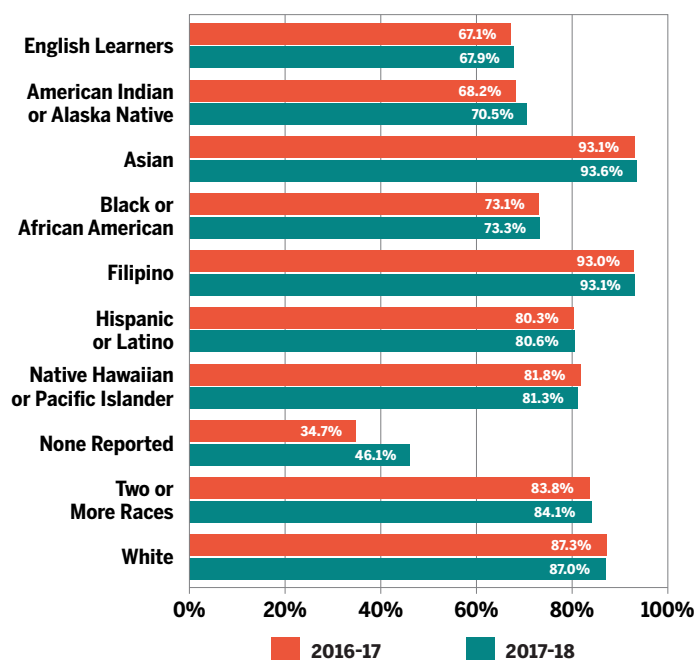
Figure 9. Cohort Dropouts by Race/Ethnicity or English Learner Status
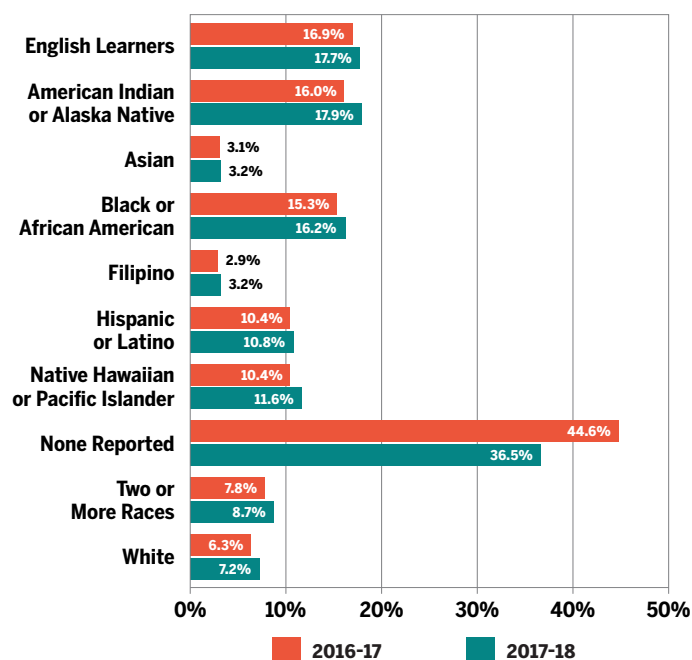
Teachers need to provide culturally relevant pedagogy, which includes getting to know their students, having an asset-based mindset, and using this knowledge to design learning and make the curriculum meaningful and comprehensible for students. EL students need highly scaffolded instruction containing the following elements: graphic organizers; visual thinking strategies for improved comprehension; differentiated instruction; direct explicit English instruction on usage, grammar, phonemes; and increased oral practice and opportunities to speak. The National Education Association (NEA) Equity and Language Training Module for Closing Achievement Gaps offers a number of ideas and resources for teaching ELs including research-based instructional strategies.

Intersectionality of English Learners with Additional Student Groups

Intersectionality of students occurs when a student can be found in one or more identified student groups. The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) focuses on three major student groups who require additional resources and support: students who are Foster Youth, students who are English Learners, and students who are Socio-economically Disadvantaged (SED). In addition to these groups, when addressing equity issues students who are BIPOC (Black Indigeneous People of Color), students with disabilities, and LGBTQ+(Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,Transgender, Queer Community) students must also be considered. EL students intersect in a number of these categories. The California Practitioner's Guide for Educating English Learners with Disabilities reports that in 2017-2018, 12 percent of students in the state qualified for special education but 16.6 percent of EL students were identified as a student with a disability and as previously noted EL

students constitute over 20 percent of the students who are SED. Additionally, the majority of EL students in the state are Hispanic or Vietnamese and are students of color (Dataquest, 2019).

Promising Practice
Mount Pleasant Elementary School District

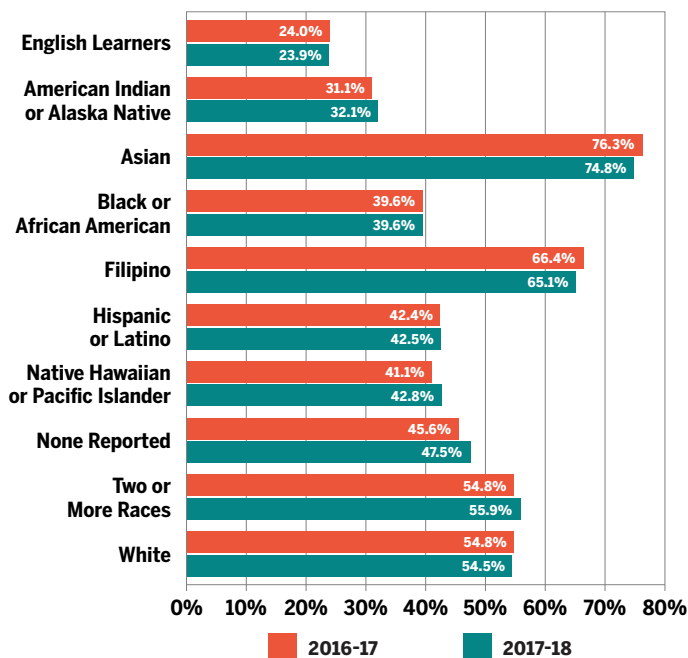Since 2017, the Mount Pleasant Elementary School District (MPESD), a small K-8 district located on San Jose's East Side, has been engaged in a rigorous equity project to improve learning for their English Learner (EL) students. Drawing on methods of improvement science and using cycles of inquiry, MPESD has developed teacher expertise and leadership in their equity work to improve instruction specifically for their EL students. After adopting the EL Education curriculum in 2017, the following school year MPESD initiated their program to engage in cycles of improvement in English and Language Arts (ELA) teaching. (See the MPESD Equity Case Study for more details on their process.)

Reflection Questions:

1. When you think about your students, how are you considering your EL students in creating a positive schoolwide and classroom environment so that it is apparent that all cultures and languages are respected and valued?

2. In what ways have you structured the school and classroom learning environment to build upon the ELs' background and funds of knowledge?

3. What measures and supports are in place to effectively monitor ELs' progress and ensure they are not pushed-out of the educational system?

Figure 10. Cohort Graduates Meeting UC/CSU Requirements by Race/Ethnicity or English Learner Status

Group	2016-17	2017-18
English Learners	24.0%	23.9%
American Indian or Alaska Native	31.1%	32.1%
Asian	76.3%	74.8%
Black or African American	39.6%	39.6%
Filipino	66.4%	65.1%
Hispanic or Latino	42.4%	42.5%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	41.1%	42.8%
None Reported	45.6%	47.5%
Two or More Races	54.8%	55.9%
White	54.8%	54.5%

Figure 11. Suspension Rate by Race/Ethnicity or English Learner Status

Group	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
English Learners	3.1%	3.1%	3.0%
American Indian or Alaska Native	7.8%	7.4%	7.2%
Asian	1.0%	1.1%	1.0%
Black or African American	10.1%	9.8%	9.4%
Filipino	1.4%	1.4%	1.3%
Hispanic or Latino	3.7%	3.7%	3.6%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	4.8%	5.0%	4.7%
None Reported	2.8%	2.8%	3.0%
Two or More Races	3.6%	3.6%	3.5%
White	3.1%	3.2%	3.0%
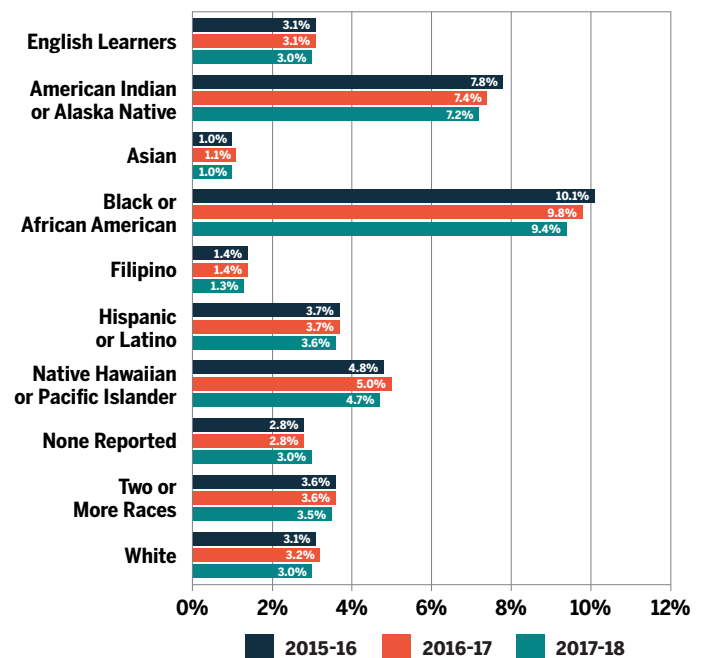
Figure 12. CAASPP ELA/Literacy Results for English Learners

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
STD EXCEEDED LEVEL 4	2%	3%	2.34%	2.5%	2.37%
STD MET LEVEL 3	9%	10%	9.75%	10.12%	10.32%
STD NEARLY MET LEVEL 2	24%	25%	24.06%	24.35%	25.14%
STD NOT MET LEVEL 1	65%	62%	63.84%	63.03%	62.17%

Legend:
- STD EXCEEDED LEVEL 4
- STD MET LEVEL 3
- STD NEARLY MET LEVEL 2
- STD NOT MET LEVEL 1
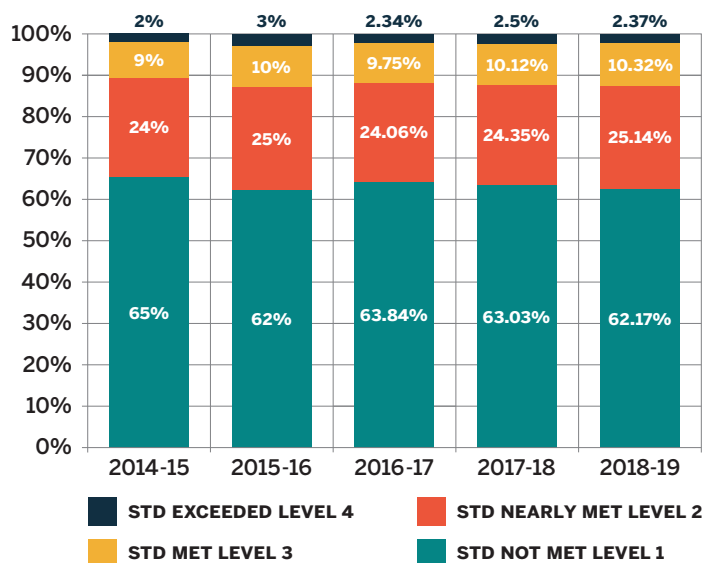
Figure 13. CCAASPP Mathematics Results for English Learners

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
STD EXCEEDED LEVEL 4	3%	3%	3.2%	3.36%	3.41%
STD MET LEVEL 3	8%	9%	9.12%	9.21%	9.17%
STD NEARLY MET LEVEL 2	24%	25%	23.41%	22.92%	23.02%
STD NOT MET LEVEL 1	65%	63%	64.27%	64.51%	64.41%

Legend:
- STD EXCEEDED LEVEL 4
- STD MET LEVEL 3
- STD NEARLY MET LEVEL 2
- STD NOT MET LEVEL 1
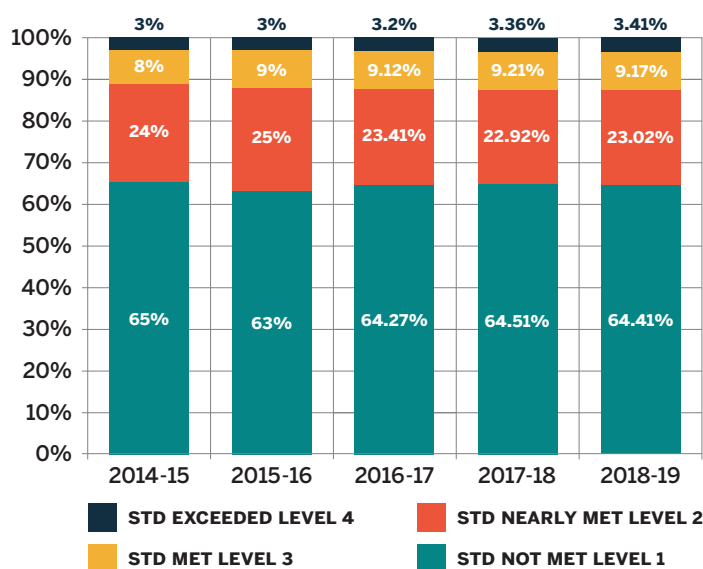
Figure 14. English Language Acquisition Status

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
ENGLISH LEARNER	22.3	22.1	21.4	20.4	19.4
FLUENT ENGLISH PROFICIENT	20.5	20.7	21.3	22.0	22.5
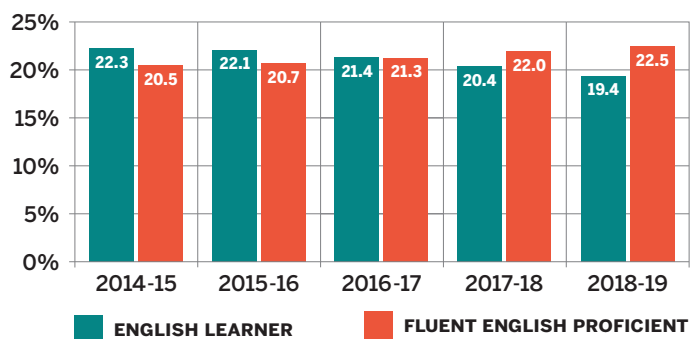
4. How is instruction and the learning environment designed so that ELs' are supported and can learn the grade level curriculum?
5. How is information shared and community voice gathered to inform district and school policies for the EL community?
6. How is the school/district/classroom teacher addressing the increased needs of the EL students and community during COVID-19?

Tools

- CA-1 Course with Micro-Credential Badge: "Supporting English Learners" https://www.learningdesigned.org/node/975/initiative-resources

Resources

- California Department of Education Learning Foundations https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/rm/foundations.asp
- California Department of Education Practitioner's Guide for Educating English Learners with Disabilities https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/ac/documents/ab2785guide.pdf
- California English Learner Roadmap https://www.californianstogether.org/publications-2/
- Colorin Colorado https://www.colorincolorado.org/
- COVID_19 Californians Together Resources for Educators https://www.californianstogether.org/covid-19-resources/
- Support Ed Top Ten Ways to Support English Learners http://getsupported.net/supporteds-top-10-ways-support--english-learners-2017/
- United States Department of Education English Language Toolkit https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner--toolkit/index.html
- Unlocking the Research on English Learners: What we Know and Don't Know and Don't Yet Know on Effective Instruction https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/ac/documents/ab2785guide.pdf

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- Ralabate, Patti and Nelson, Loui. (2017) Culturally Responsive Design for English Learners: The UDL Approach. CAST Publishing, Wakefield, MA
- Colorin Colorado Books for Professionals https://www.colorincolorado.org/books-authors/books-professionals

SECTION AUTHOR & CONTENT SPECIALIST:
DR. ANNA MARIE VILLALOBOS

Building an Equity Leadership Team

> Once you have chosen equity as your path, the first step to the success of your equity work is developing your equity team. This section provides direction on the following:
> - Who should be included on the equity leadership team
> - Recommendations for team organization, including developing a structure of distributed leadership
> - Descriptions of the key roles of facilitation and coordination
> - Suggestions for meeting structures and content

What is an Equity Leadership Team?

The equity team does the foundational work of defining the focus and building the structures essential for sustainability. While finding the "right" people for the team is important, perhaps more critical is the organization and development of the team so that they can lead for equity.

An important consideration is that there are often a small number of people at a site who are frequently called on to do equity work. This may be due to a number of factors, such as their race, ethnicity, gender, way of speaking, or past commitment. In addition, while it may seem logical to assign the equity work to a team that is already working on equity (i.e. MTSS, Differentiated Assistance, etc.), remember that equity work requires longterm and sometimes intense effort. Be mindful about placing more responsibility for achieving equity on the shoulders of those who are already doing it. Bringing new people to the equity table will provide an incredible learning experience.

To help build the equity literacy (see Equity Literacy Institute) of all staff, and to develop the foundations of equity (your team) at your site, look around and observe the potential in those who may be less vocal or those who have not necessarily demonstrated an outright commitment to equity but may have shown their deep care for the students and families. We in education know that burnout is real, and it is helpful and necessary that all shoulder the equity work. (See the Morgan Hill Unified School District Equity Case Study for an example of equity leadership at work.)

Developing your Equity Team: Distributed Leadership

Leadership is key to achieving any level of organizational change. Leading for equity, however, requires a transformation of leadership structures. In short, if you desire organizational change, change how you are organized. Distributed leadership (also called "shared leadership") offers a conceptual framework for undertaking the challenge of transforming leadership processes, attitudes, and arrangements so that they are profoundly relational. According to Nigel Bennett and colleagues (2003), "Distributed leadership is not something 'done' by an individual 'to' others, or a set of individual actions through which people contribute to a group or organization... [it] is a group activity that works through and within relationships, rather than individual action."

On a fundamental level, transforming systems of oppression to achieve equity means reflecting deeply on who is at the table in decision-making. Further, with respect to decision-making, it is vital that those who lead for equity engage in a practice of deep personal reflection to consider the values we hold around decision-making—how we make decisions, who is impacted by our methods and how, and who may be left out as a result. Thus, processes of authentic collaboration must also be embedded into the work.

As Massachusetts Congressperson Ayanna Pressley has put it, "The people closest to the pain should be closest to the power." To be effective in advancing equity, leadership teams must look and feel distinct from hierarchically configured top-down leadership. Historically and now, those who hold the deepest knowledge of systemic injustices are under-represented in leadership positions. Wenger-Trayner's guide, "Leadership groups: distributed

> The following questions can help guide decisions on how to identify who will comprise the equity leadership team:
> ☐ Do they represent the school community in terms of race, ethnicity, language, religion, and other identities?
> ☐ Do they represent the school community across departments and groups (see 'Team Organization' below)?
> ☐ Are they interested in and curious about working on issues of equity?
> ☐ Are they willing to commit to this long-term, challenging work?
> ☐ Are they ready to learn as well as act?
> ☐ Are they available, and do they have the time and energy for the work?

RESOURCES FOR EFFECTIVE FACILITATION

SELF-GUIDED FACILITATOR TRAINING	FORMAL TRAINING (through an external organization)
Seeds for Change	Technology of Participation (TOPS)
Anti-Oppressive Resource and Training Alliance "Anti-Oppressive Facilitation Guide" (AORTA)	Interaction Associates "Essential Facilitation"
National Gender & Equity Campaign of AAPIP	National Equity Project "Designing and Facilitating Meetings for Equity"

leadership in social learning" is a helpful and creative manual for developing distributed leadership. EdEquity offers a Courageous Leadership Equity Rubric to help gauge your level of leadership for advancing equity.

It may be challenging to bring representatives from diverse groups to the table. However, the more you are able to do so, the more likely you will meet the equity needs of your diverse community and build up the people power for continuing equity work. Plan to think outside of the box about meeting time and space, means of communication, planning, and the many taken-for-granted aspects of meeting in the traditional way. Your diverse group will have diverse needs.

Facilitating Equity Work

Facilitation means "the act of making easy or easier" and is the engine of equity work. The role of the facilitator is to guide the process and ensure that participants are collaborative and focused during meetings. Because open, transparent communication is at the heart of these endeavors, designating a strong facilitator to shepherd and support the process will be vital to your equity efforts. It is also advised that there be a co-facilitator who can support in this important role.

While the skills, behaviors, and moves of a facilitator for equity are much like those of any good facilitator, a strong facilitator of equity work will need to already possess or have the capacity to develop unique qualities. Foremost, this facilitator will need to be equity literate with an ability to push conversations on equity. (We suggest using the National Equity Project's "Lens of Systemic Oppression" as a way to ground equity discussions and actions.) This means that the facilitator should be comfortable naming and owning their identities and have an understanding of how they may affect the dynamics of the group. This person should be knowledgeable in facilitation, consistent in performance, and available to take on this significant role. The processes, structures, and discussions inherent to distributed leadership may be new for the team, and a strong facilitator will be able to guide this new arrangement. Finally, facilitators should incorporate routines for gathering feedback and engaging in reflective practices, so

making space to listen to and collect feedback from the group will be important.

A facilitator can be trained either through self-guided learning, or through formal training offered by an outside organization. Self-guided learning is less costly and can be more flexible. Receiving training from an organization will likely require a fee, a couple of days away from the worksite, and group learning. The following are recommended resources for education and training on facilitation. (Note that while it is the suggestion of the *W2EPB* authors that the facilitator receive formal training, in no way should lack of access to this training keep you from your equity work.)

Coordinating Equity Work

In addition to a facilitator, you will need an organized and communicative person to coordinate the process. The main responsibilities of this role will be to schedule meetings, maintain open, transparent lines of communication, and create structures for maintaining and sharing documents.

Team Organization

Depending on the nature of the equity work with which you are engaging, you can configure your team in different ways. You will likely need to develop multiple teams within the larger team so that people can work across roles and levels. Here are some ways to organize your equity teams:

- Site
- Grade level
- Affinity group (race, ethnicity, language, gender, sexual orientation, disability, socio-economic status, school role, etc.)
- Issue (chronic absenteeism, discipline, academics, special education, social-emotional wellness, community engagement, etc.)

As stated above, to understand your system in the most complete way possible, your equity leadership teams should reflect the school community. Including representation from the following groups can help you to do this.

Building an Equity Leadership Team

Students • Office staff • Teachers • Parents
Paraprofessionals • Administrators • Custodial staff
Bus drivers and cafeteria workers
Resource officers • Counselors
Other community members close to the identified issues

More Important Considerations:

- While this work will be deeply collaborative, it will be necessary to start with a small group to begin facilitating and coordinating the work.
- Schedule meetings regularly and continuously (once a month for the main team, and more frequently for focused teams).
- Commit to and honor the time you envision for these meetings. Equity work is easy to set aside when there seem to be more urgent problems in front of you, but it is the equity work that will ultimately help mitigate many of these urgent issues.
- Address implicit bias within the team and develop equity mindedness internally (Implicit Bias section).
- Create team "rituals" for self-reflection, making time for individual members to reflect on their own learning and the work of the team. (Example of a reflection activity from NSRF.)
- Remember that equity work requires honesty and vulnerability, and this can be the most challenging aspect of all. Make space and time for this.
- As an initial step, develop a communication plan. (Developing an Equity Communication Plan section)

Reflection Questions

1. Who is currently engaging in equity work at your school or district? Who is missing? How does this representation reflect your vision for equity?
2. What qualities do you think of when you imagine a strong facilitator of equity work?
3. How would you assess your team's (or potential team's) equity literacy? What needs to be learned or further developed?

Tools

- **CA-1 Courses with Micro-Credential Badge: "Building Collaborative Teams" & "Equitable Leadership"**
  https://www.learningdesigned.org/node/975/initiative-resources
- **MTSS Building Level Teaming Structures:**
  https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B2XhME5fsp7gb09_uWUo-zNFk2cU0/edit
- **EdEquity: Courageous Leadership Equity Rubric**
  https://edequity.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2.-Level-V-Rubric-Equity-Leadership-Rubric.pdf
- **Morgan Hill Unified School District Case Study on Leadership and School Climate**
  https://docs.google.com/document/d/1N-gtQNwUCqjo-e5ntDxpyD4eccXI_KEY6DYMKux3V7VE/edit

Facilitation:

- **Liberating Structures: Including and Unleashing Everyone** provides 33 tools/protocols for facilitating groups.
  http://www.liberatingstructures.com/ls-menu/
- **National School Reform Faculty: Considerations for Responsive Facilitation (and many more protocols for facilitating and engaging in equity work).**
  https://www.nsrfharmony.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/responsive_facilitation_0.pdf
  https://nsrfharmony.org/protocols/
- **Facilitation Quick Tips Sheet**
  http://www.authenticityconsulting.com/misc/facilitation--techniques.pdf

Resources

- **The Art of Effective Facilitation (whole book + chapter on safe vs. brave spaces by Arao & Clemens)**
  https://styluspub.presswarehouse.com/browse/book/9781579229740/The%20Art%20of%20Effective%20Facilitation
  https://www.gvsu.edu/cms4/asset/843249C9-B1E5-BD-47-A25EDBC68363B726/from-safe-spaces-to-brave-spaces.pdf
- **Wenger-Trayner: Leadership groups: distributed leadership in social learning**
  https://wenger-trayner.com/resources/leadership-groups--for-social-learning/
- **Transforming Educational Systems Toward Continuous Improvement**
  https://www.carnegiefoundation.org/resources/publications/transforming-educational-systems-toward-continuous-improvement/

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SECTION AUTHOR & CONTENT SPECIALIST: DR. ERICA BOAS

Developing an Equity Communication Plan

This section offers guidance on taking steps toward developing a communication plan for your equity work. It describes a communication plan and its importance, provides suggestions on developing community agreements, and offers recommendations on communicating across stakeholder groups.

What is a Communication Plan?

Communication is the heartbeat of equity work. Keeping stakeholders in-the-know and creating feedback loops are the vital work of communication. In addition, communication-centered practices such as dialogue, conversation, language, and messaging are some of the main vehicles to achieving your equity objectives. An equity communication plan is necessary to sustaining your equity work, as it serves as the roadmap for the "what", "how", and "why" of your efforts.

In order to successfully promote equity, you will need to develop your vision, narrative strategies, and a well-designed communication process. A communication plan for equity requires that the communication plan is in itself a practice of equity. That is, it is necessarily collaboratively developed, transparent, and inclusive. To fully realize your plan, using a detailed strategic planning tool such as Vision, Values, and Voice: A Communications Toolkit produced by The Opportunity Agenda will help you to cover the many facets of developing your communication plan.

Community Agreements

A vital but often overlooked step in the process of creating an equity communication plan is to ensure that community agreements have been developed and put into place for those stakeholders who comprise the equity leadership team. Agreements are distinct from "norms" or "rules". According to the National Equity Project (NEP), agreements are:

> A consensus on what every person in our group needs from each other and commits to each other in order to feel safe, supported, open, productive and trusting... so that we can do our best work, achieve our common vision, and serve our students and families well.

Agreements provide a common understanding for people as they work together toward collective action. For tips on how to further create such agreements, see NEP's guidance on Developing Community Agreements. In addition, as explained in this video educators are encouraged to create a "soft place for hard conversations" in their classrooms through community agreements.

Communication Plan Checklist

The following adapted checklist from Diversity Officer Magazine provides a way to organize the development of your equity communication plan.

You can use this list to help you develop a communication plan.

- ☐ Create a description of the communication plan that includes your equity vision.
- ☐ Outline your communication objectives.
- ☐ Identify main messages to convey and information that you want to share, including the precise language you want to use.
- ☐ Describe each group that you want to reach (leadership, teachers, families, community members, support staff, etc.).
- ☐ Identify communications channels (e.g., video, email, website, newsletter, staff meetings, LCAP, social media, postings, etc.).
- ☐ Develop a timeline for your communication plan.
- ☐ Budget for communication plan and activities.
- ☐ Identify milestones in your plan and timeline.
- ☐ Design evaluation of effectiveness of the communication plan.
- ☐ Create processes for taking and sharing notes/information from meetings with your broader community.

Communicating within your Team

Your team is committed to advancing equity. Equity is the air they breathe, it is what keeps them up at night, and when they sleep, it visits them in their dreams. However, they are also busy. Creating a plan for communicating internally with your equity team is critical to ensuring that the equity work gets done. Planning and documenting who will communicate what to whom and when can be facilitated through a communication planning tool like this one from the Schoolwide Integrated Framework for Transformation Education Center (SWIFT). A tool like this supports

Developing an Equity Communication Plan

equitable processes by ensuring that communication is inclusive and transparent.

Communicating with Students and Families: Collecting and Sharing Information

Communicating your equity work to students and families must be done transparently. At the core of equity is honesty — honesty about your data, honesty about your plans to address disparities, honesty about what you know and do not know, and honesty about how difficult it may be to be honest about all this. To cultivate trust with your stakeholders, and to develop their capacity to engage in the equity work, you must learn to lay your cards on the table and invite people into the conversation. (See section Using Data to Inform and Drive Equity Work, especially the content on data walks.) When you hold meetings, send out communications with meeting agendas and notes along with any non-confidential materials that may have been shared. Create a secure online repository where your community members know they can access this information. Transparency is of utmost importance.

Reflection Questions

1. What communication plan do you currently have in place? Who was involved in its development?
2. Which stakeholder groups are explicitly written into the communication plan? Which are not?
3. Does your communication plan include a variety of methods for connecting with the diversity of stakeholders in your education network?

4. What does your equity message look like at the classroom, site, district, and community level?

Tools

- **The Opportunity Agenda: Vision, Values, and Voice: A Communications Toolkit**
  https://www.opportunityagenda.org/explore/communications-toolkit
- **National Equity Project: Developing Community Agreements**
  https://nationalequityproject.org/resources/featured-resources/developing-community-agreements
- **SWIFT: Communication Plan**
  http://www.swiftschools.org/sites/default/files/Communication%20Plan_0.pdf

Resources

- **Diversity Officer Magazine: Developing a High Impact Diversity Initiative Communication Strategy**
  https://diversityofficermagazine.com/diversity-inclusion/implementing-a-high-impact-diversity-initiative-communication-strategy/
- **Community Toolbox: Developing a Plan for Communication**
  https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/promoting-interest/communication-plan/main

SECTION AUTHOR & CONTENT SPECIALIST: DR. ERICA BOAS

Implicit Bias and Cultivating Equity Mindedness

In this section implicit bias is defined and explained in relation to developing equity mindsets toward systems change. It is emphasized that implicit bias, while necessary to investigate, will not result in systems change unless structural oppression is simultaneously addressed. Tools and resources, including self-assessments, are offered at the end of the section.

What is Implicit Bias?

"Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner" (Kirwan Institute, 2015). Over the past decade, talk of implicit bias (or unconscious bias) has become standard within organizations, and scientific research has shown that the impacts of implicit bias reach further than we might imagine. Schools, non-profit organizations, police departments, hospitals, and private corporations have taken up the work of addressing implicit bias. The hope is that mindsets can be changed and along with that the practices and policies that lead to inequitable education outcomes, such as the over-representation of African American students in suspensions for willful defiance starting in preschool (Gilliam, et. al., 2016). Living in a system of inequity, we are conditioned to learn specific forms of prejudice, accept certain behaviors as normal, and internalize a value structure that reflects this social context. Therefore, we all have biases. If our biases go unchecked, there is a risk that our actions and decisions can have negative real-world impacts that were not intended and may not even reflect your conscious values. This is what is referred to as "implicit bias"—the unconscious actions that result in unintended, sometimes detrimental, outcomes. Our biases, however, are malleable and can be interrupted and changed.

Stanford Professor of Psychology Jennifer Eberhardt has conducted award-winning studies on implicit bias. She shows how implicit bias begins early in life and is developed over the course of one's life. In her 2019 book, *Biased: Uncovering the Hidden Prejudice That Shapes What We See, Think, and Do*, Eberhardt explains how basic building blocks of knowledge are formed early on, which shape information acquired thereafter. This new information is then filtered through older lenses, affecting the meanings ascribed to the new information. Taken at face value, this process is biological—our brains are hardwired for bias. Because it is biologically based, the process is sometimes misunderstood as a neutral one. However, while the process may be biological and therefore understood as somehow neutral, the information that comprises the biases are not neutral. Since the development of our brains is responsive to the context in which they are shaped, our biases are greatly influenced by the belief systems inherent in our social contexts.

Implicit Bias and Systems Change

To understand implicit bias, one must start with an understanding of the human brain. Given that our brains are historical organs, they develop with the messages and cues that come from the world in which we live, in other words, our social contexts. Therefore, if our brains develop within a culture of whiteness, as long as our biases go unchallenged, they will reflect these values. For this reason, equity work must examine both implicit (personal) biases alongside structural biases. There are myriad equity issues that surface every day in our schools, and each of these issues requires that we learn about and reflect on our personal implicit biases while also learning about and examining the ways in which our structures—policies, practices, and programs—maintain inequities. Examples of such equity issues include the over-representation of:

- African American boys in suspensions and expulsions (Wood, Harris, & Howard, 2018)
- English Learners in special education (Harry & Klingner, 2014)
- White students in Advanced Placement courses (Lewis & Diamond, 2018).

It is vital that we examine these issues on multiple levels—that is, as a system. By definition, a systems investigation includes the people who make up the system (ourselves) as well as the processes and tools that are part of that system (see Kania, Kramer, and Senge, 2018). If implicit biases are produced within particular social contexts, in order to change systems, we must

> *"Implicit biases come from the culture. I think of them as the thumbprint of the culture on our minds. Human beings have the ability to learn to associate two things together very quickly—that is innate. What we teach ourselves, what we choose to associate is up to us."*

be able to examine and reflect on our individual, personal biases (also known as meta-cognition) while simultaneously analyzing the structural oppressions that support inequities. As Osta and Vasquez (2019) of the National Equity Project explain:

> Most work on implicit bias focuses on increasing awareness of individuals in service of changing how they view and treat others. However, in order to lead to meaningful change, an exploration of implicit bias must be situated as part of a much larger conversation about how current inequities in our institutions came to be, how they are held in place, and what our role as leaders is in perpetuating inequities despite our good intentions.

Implicit biases are held and acted upon by individuals, but they also take root in our systems, made up of the programs, policies, and practices of schooling.

Addressing Implicit Bias

Although implicit bias runs deep, it *is* possible to change mindsets. In fact, systemic transformation depends upon it. As stated above, the important thing is to remember that changing individual mindsets needs to happen simultaneously with changing the policies and practices of equity. It is therefore constructive to think of the two levels as interrelated and mutually informing.

How do you change mindsets? According to Kahneman (2011), it is important first to understand that as humans, we need to be able to make snap decisions, so our brains are designed to act quickly, especially in stressful situations or if we are tired. Most of the decisions we make are made using fast judgments. Our brains can also function more deliberately, which provides us with an aptitude to think critically. Implicit biases are more likely to express themselves when making snap judgements. Likewise, it is more probable that implicit biases can be assessed and modified when we are slow and deliberate in our thinking. Recent work on "de-biasing" has supported efforts not only to understand implicit bias but also to develop new ways of thinking (see John Lewis Jr.'s video on de-biasing). Putting into practice processes for developing equity-mindedness is another way to challenge our implicit biases.

In education, for example, practitioners must work to mitigate their own biases, and institutions need to provide structural systems to reduce bias in decision-making practices (e.g., discipline policies). With experimentation and improvement, strategies such as equity mindedness can help reduce the impact of bias.

Developing Equity Mindedness

Equity mindedness is a set of attitudes and beliefs that lead to individual and collective behaviors that favor equity. It is a predisposition to critical self-reflection, a propensity toward distributed leadership, and a willingness to "stay in the conversation" (Watson, 2020). According to the University of Southern California's Center for Urban Education, "Equity-minded practitioners question their own assumptions, recognize stereotypes that harm student success, and continually reassess their practices to create change." Beyond individual reflection, equity mindedness is an "individual's capacity to recognize and address racialized structures, policies, and practices that produce and sustain racial inequities" (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015).

It is not necessary to first be cleansed of implicit bias to become equity-minded. In fact, it is important to take time to understand personal biases and structural inequities at the same time. To reflect on yourself and the deep questions that will inevitably arise about your belief systems, to develop understanding of when it's time to step up and when you should step back, to continue to learn about the historical systemic oppression, to stay in the equity conversation with your colleagues (*especially* when it's hardest), and to listen. This is what it means to be equity minded.

Reflection Questions

Personal:

1. What were you taught about race, gender, disability, and language? How might this teaching impact your implicit biases? First, answer this question through examination of the explicit teaching you received. Next, answer the question through examination of the implicit teaching you received.

2. What steps do you take to interrupt your own unconscious biases?

Institutional:

1. What practices are in place at your site to ensure that people have the time, space, and resources to engage in reflection on their implicit biases?

2. In what ways are students authentically recognized and celebrated in your school community?

3. How are you continuously investigating and developing assets-based approaches to your instruction and behavior management?

Resources

Learn much more about implicit bias:

- **Mahzarin Banaji and Anthony Greenwald's book Blindspot: Hidden Bias of Good People**
  http://blindspot.fas.harvard.edu/Book

- **Institute of Humane Education: 9 resources to teach about unconscious bias**
  https://humaneeducation.org/9-resources-teaching-unconscious-bias/

- **NYTimes video series Who me? Biased? Peanut butter, Jelly Racism'**
  https://www.nytimes.com/video/who-me-biased

Take a course:

- **Western Education Equity Assistance Center course on implicit bias: Exploring the Foundations of Bias and the work we must do to change it.**
  https://www.msudenver.edu/weeac/virtualcollege/courseaccess-whohasbiaswealldo/

- **Kirwin Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State University: 'Implicit Bias Module Series'**
  http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/implicit-bias-training/

- **MTV's Bias Cleanse 'Look Different'**
  http://www.lookdifferent.org/what-can-i-do/bias-cleanse

Tools:

Take action:

- **John Lewis, Jr.: Implicit Bias and Debiasing**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8EMN4065xlw

- **Californians for Justice: 6 Things School Staff can do to Interrupt Unconscious Bias**
  https://caljustice.org/resource/6-things-school-staff-can-do-to-interrupt-unconscious-bias/

- **NPR Morning Edition: How to Fight Racial Bias When It's Silent and Subtle**
  https://www.wbur.org/npr/203306999/How-To-Fight-Racial-Bias-When-Its-Silent-And-Subtle

Take an implicit bias assessment:

- **Harvard's Project Implicit:**
  https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html

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SECTION AUTHOR & CONTENT SPECIALIST: DR. ERICA BOAS

Using Data to Inform and Drive Equity Work

The fundamental purpose of using data for equity is to improve understanding of the outcomes a system is producing. We use data to help us ask the questions about our system that will help us to make changes to our system. To do this, we will need to engage in routines of data exploration toward action, which is described in this section:
- **Explore quantitative data to understand what disparities are being produced as a result of our system.**
- **Based on these findings, develop relevant questions and engage in qualitative data collection and analysis to learn more about how the system is being experienced by various stakeholders.**
- **Once you have explored your data, develop a plan to take data-informed action steps toward equity.**

What is Data?

"Data" is broadly defined as "units of information". Therefore, when we explore data in our education work, we investigate a collection of facts, such as numbers, words, measurements, observations or descriptions of things. When the word "data" is used, people commonly understand it to mean numerical or statistical facts. However, data can be *qualitative* or *quantitative*, and both are critical to informing your equity work. *Qualitative* data are units of information described through words. Data is *quantitative* when numbers represent units of information. In schools, we most often use quantitative data to understand outcomes such as assessment scores, chronic absenteeism, the number of disciplinary actions taken on a student or student group. We use qualitative data to more deeply comprehend how people experience the environments of schooling through observations, open-ended survey responses, or interviews. Generally put, quantitative data will help you see *what* outcomes your current system is producing, and qualitative data will help you understand *how* those outcomes are being produced. But any kind of data used in equity work requires that you actually use what you learn to inform your actions and drive further investigation of your system.

Using Data in Equity Work: See the System

To change your system, you first have to be able to see your system in an honest way. Investigating school and district data will be instrumental in helping you to quickly gain perspective on the outcomes produced by the system that is currently in place. The public data accessible through the California School Dashboard provides a starting place to begin your investigation of school and district outcomes. (See below in "Tools and Resources" for tutorials on using the Dashboard.) However, it will be important to dive more deeply into your data, which means that leadership teams and the broader school community will need to engage in focused conversations on the local, sitebased data, which also means collecting and analyzing qualitative data, such as empathy interviews and observations. Bringing together diverse stakeholders to explore the data and make decisions based on the data informs the future of equity at your site. The guidance and tools offered in this section help you do this while maintaining a focus on equity.

Before beginning data exploration in your equity work, be sure that you have set the stage with your equity team. They should first understand that investigating data for equity requires a different kind of engagement than exploring data for other purposes. While understanding student outcomes is a significant aspect of the work of teachers, investigating disproportionality and reflecting on the ways in which implicit bias and structural oppression combine to create disparate outcomes for students means that people will need to employ a "window and mirror" approach (Bishop, 1990; Style, 1988). This requires that participants are simultaneously engaged in inward-facing self-reflection while examining outward-facing educational problems. Osta and Vasquez (2019) of the National Equity Project write:

> Each of us needs to look *in the mirror* to notice how our particular lived experiences have shaped our beliefs, attitudes, and biases about ourselves and others. And, with increased knowledge of ourselves, we also need to look *out the window* to understand how racism, classism, sexism and other forms of systemic oppression operate in our institutions to create systemic advantage for some groups (white, male, heterosexual, cisgender, etc.) and disadvantage for other groups (people of color, women, LGTBQ+ people, etc.) in every sector of community life.

The authors describe how to enter into conversations about data with an equity mind-set.

In setting the stage for looking at data, prepare for what Jones-Ratcliffe and Lugo (2020) describe as common "pitfalls". They offer tips for how to avoid these pitfalls in efforts to facilitate equity conversations while investigating data. Being prepared to address these pitfalls early on in your equity journey will allow a group to more quickly dive into the equity conversations necessary to positively effect change.

Building trust and skill takes time and practice, but the time taken in the "pre-work" will be time well spent (see "On-Ramps" section). The following section explains what it means to "stay low inference" when investigating quantitative data.

PITFALLS	HOW TO AVOID PITFALLS
The truth hurts. People would rather ignore or avoid difficult data about racially disparate patterns.	Build trust and skill for interracial dialogue through racial equity learning and activities. • Ask: What do you need from your team to be able to engage in these important discussions?
We are all biased and see data through our racial identities.	Stay low inference (just an observation of the data facts—see below). • Ask: What aspects of your identity impact your ability to stay low inference?
People often blame students and their families for bad outcomes instead of implicating themselves.	Maintain a systemic lens. • Ask: How does your system function to create the outcomes it gets?

(Jones-Ratcliffe & Lugo, 2020)

Quantitative Data:
Begin with Low Inference Observations, Use a Protocol, and Disaggregate

The "Ladder of Inference" is a well-known practical tool in data exploration and critical thinking that serves as a model demonstrating the relationship between thinking and action. Jones-Ratcliffe and Lugo (2020) advise those exploring data with an equity lens to "stay low inference", and observational in their understanding—to describe the facts alone. This practice permits people to take distance, to suspend interpretation and feelings about the meaning of the data. It is also suggested that you use a data investigation protocol (see below). Using a data investigation protocol will help participants to engage largely in low inference observations and can be used as a point of entry into what can be difficult conversations about equity. A protocol for using the ladder of inference is offered here, and another protocol for staying low inference while discussing data is here. Two protocols that help keep the data conversations low on the ladder of inference are offered here.

It will also be necessary to disaggregate data to understand how the system is serving its students. When data are disaggregated, they are broken down into separate groups. By doing this outcomes can be compared with respect to race, gender, disability status and type, socioeconomic status, language, and other groups. The Digging for Equity guide written by Dr. Darlene Sampson is recommended to guide work to disaggregate data at the district and school levels.

Qualitative Data:
Empathy Interviews and Surveys

As discussed above, in the world of education, "data" is most often understood as numerical data. However, if one truly wishes to understand the multiplicity of experiences and perspectives that make up the everyday lives of schools, collecting and learning from qualitative data will be essential as it can provide the means to understand how the problems captured in the quantitative data are experienced in schools.

Empathy Interviews
One of the most powerful ways to learn about the gap between what's intended for education and what actually happens in education is to conduct interviews with the diverse members of the school community. A type of interview that has become well-known in improvement work is the empathy interview, which is intended to help us achieve a deeper understanding of the problem we are trying to solve from the point of view of another. It is empathy which affords us "the intrapersonal realisation of another's plight that illuminates the potential consequences of one's own actions on the lives of others" (Colesante & Biggs, 1999). Therefore, the purpose of empathy interviews is to learn about how one's experience provokes feelings so that we can make changes to the system with positive impacts. Through an empathy interview, for example, we would learn from a student how their math teacher's efforts to implement culturally responsive pedagogy affects that student's feeling about being in that class. More than anything, the power in empathy interviews is that it compels deep listening with humility, whether the person you interview is a parent, principal, counselor, office clerk, or bus driver. Because those closest to the pain are also closest to the solution, there is great value in listening to the perspectives, feelings, and experiences of these community members.

Surveys
Schools and districts are likely already using surveys with school stakeholders for their Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs), which include survey items intended to gather feedback on equity issues. Surveys are a relatively efficient method for collecting stakeholder feedback and are therefore widely used by schools and districts. There are a number of equity concerns to take into account when using surveys with stakeholders:

1. Language Access: Surveys should be administered in the languages read by the members of the community. If you do not have surveys in multiple languages, you will need a plan for reaching those who do not read the languages in which the survey is written (i.e. focus groups, phone calls, or interviews).

2. Access to Technology: If surveys are administered electronically, you will need to ensure that your community members have access to a device and internet. If you do not do this, it is likely that you will exclude your least resourced families from participating.

3. Low Response Rates: It is common that survey responses will be relatively low, so you will need to strategize on how to best outreach to your community. Hint: emails won't be the most effective way to reach your community.

4. Survey Fatigue: This refers to what happens when survey respondents become bored, tired or uninterested in the survey and begin to perform at a substandard level. The number of surveys received and the length of the surveys can bring on these feelings of fatigue.

5. Sharing Survey Data: Once survey feedback has been collected, share your (anonymous) findings so that they are available to and engaged by the school community (see next section for more about sharing data).

Presenting and Sharing the Data

It cannot be emphasized enough that data and research findings need to be shared, discussed, and acted upon with participation from your community. This means that the community should also be empowered to participate in decision-making on next steps for taking action. While it may feel vulnerable and uncomfortable to make less-than-flattering outcomes known to the public, this transparency is how you build the knowledge base, trust, and capacity that is vital to your equity work. These recommendations from the organization Racial Equity Tools can help you make equity-informed decisions about how to present your data, offering several excellent resources, including a guide on the specifics of sharing data from an equity standpoint.

There are many ways to share data with your community and engage in data conversations. A "data walk" is one way to present data to your communities while building collaborative capacity. In a data walk, data are displayed in a manner that is easy to understand. The objective is to create an environment where community members can learn about educational outcomes, ask questions, and engage in discussion for action. Several groups have developed methods for doing data walks. The toolkit created by Ed-Trust West provides a presentation template as well as tips and a facilitation guide. The Urban Institute and the Annie E. Casey Foundation also offer resources for conducting data walks. In addition, a critical facet of equity in these data walks is that how the data are presented is an equity issue in itself.

Reflection Questions:

1. Who is currently at the table when you explore data for your school or district? Who is missing? If necessary, how can you take steps to bring a more representative group to the table in the future?

2. In what ways does bias show up in your data analysis and discussions? What strategies do you employ to acknowledge and counteract the bias?

3. How do you invite diverse stakeholders to speak their truth? How are multiple perspectives held by the group? How are they respected, honored, and acted upon?

4. How can you bring your quantitative and qualitative data into conversation to attain a more complete picture of the "whole child and the whole school?"

Tools

- **CA-1 Courses with Micro-Credential Badge: "Data Based Decision Making Using Academic Data" & "Data Based Decision Making Using Behavioral Data"** https://www.learningdesigned.org/node/975/initiative-resources
- **Sampson, D. (2019). Digging for Equity Framework. Western Educational Equity Assistance Center.** https://drive.google.com/open?id=1N_O2QMmDRGhp4WksoOYyxZj2KMsxwF-G

Where to Find Data:
- **CA Dashboard** https://www.caschooldashboard.org/
- **DataQuest (CA Dept of Ed)** https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/
- **Office of Civil Rights Data Collection** https://ocrdata.ed.gov/Home

How to Access California Data:
- **For an overview of the Dashboard by the California Department of Education (CDE), see this video. Refer to this video produced by the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA)**
  CDE Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kpR9xneWGjQ
  ACSA Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Y1mgcWIEEM

Surveys
- **Panorama Student Equity and Inclusion Survey:** https://www.panoramaed.com/equity-inclusion-survey

Empathy Interviews
- **Stanford D-School Empathy Guide:** https://dschool-old.stanford.edu/sandbox/groups/dtbcresources/wiki/15fd1/attachments/75438/FIELDGUIDE-Screen-DTBC-March-2013.pdf
- **Sample Empathy Interview Protocol:** https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eBnhfi9CTbWw4iQRN1n0WDIYzX00nEy-XK-Rh9StakOk/edit?usp=sharing

Data Inquiry Protocols
- **Ladder of Inference Protocol:** https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OGZzpVYA_QcbmF0RyeqHyiDTBTGyBZ33O7l9fj-kJsJM/edit
- **Low Inference Data Observation Protocol:** https://docs.google.com/document/d/1QIHCJiZC8afrvLZKm5AX7-Sof-9SFIONpm1Hu09FHIfM/edit
- **CCSESA Multiple Indicator Data Observation Tool:** https://ccsesa.org/?wpfb_dl=6118

Resources

- **National School Reform Faculty (NSRF) protocols for investigating data for equity** https://nsrfharmony.org/protocols/

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SECTION AUTHOR & CONTENT SPECIALIST: **DR. ERICA BOAS**

Creating a Culture of Inclusion & Belonging

Fostering a culture of inclusion in schools is important for developing a sense of belonging and welcoming for all of our students. In addition to defining inclusion, this section addresses the essential role of inclusive practices to create a sense of belonging when working toward equity. To this end, we offer tools and resources to break down barriers to inclusion with regard to the three focal student groups.

What is Inclusion?

The fundamental reason we must consider inclusion in education is because exclusion is a structurally entrenched problem. While a difficult notion, it is important to remember that the U.S. public school system originated in exclusionary practices (see sections "Defining Equity" and "African American Students", also Timeline of Education activity). The male children of the educated White elite were the first to benefit from this system that was built uniquely for them. Since the beginning, the U.S. education system has been a site of intense debate over who can, should, and will be included in the group that benefits from this public good, one that brings with it the promise of the nation's principles of democracy and equality. Who is included and who is not? Who belongs and who does not? How is this made known? What are the practices put into place that lead to inclusion, to exclusion? How is belonging felt/not felt in practice? These are the questions to guide your efforts to create a culture of inclusion and belonging.

According to the Inclusion Collaborative at the Santa Clara County Office of Education, inclusion is when children of *all* abilities participate in a learning environment *together*. They emphasize that *all* students can benefit from inclusive routines and activities and that inclusion teaches *all* students about respecting differences and diversity in a learning community.

The concept of "inclusive classrooms" emerged from the disabilities rights movement, and in education it is commonly understood as pertaining to students with disabilities (SWD). Inclusion is when students with disabilities and their supports are included in the general education classroom. It is important that educators continue to build on this model of inclusion by expanding its meaning to all students. This means that educators will need to take action to ensure that their inclusive practices result in their students feeling a sense of belonging. Chris Kliewer, researcher and long-time disabilities rights activist, provides a beautiful and clear example of such a practice in this video.

While the concept of inclusion must maintain students with disabilities as the ones who were intended to benefit from these practices, the idea is not *only* for students with disabilities as it impacts all students. (How ironic would it be if we only intended to practice inclusion to serve one group of students?). Everyone in the classroom benefits from every person being included, accepted, and feeling that they belong. This is the essence of an inclusive school culture: each student has a role and feels their purpose for being there. Inclusive education removes barriers to learning through intentional practices to include all students, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized (Ahmad, 2012). Without inclusive practices, students may have more difficulty integrating into their classrooms, an important social environment (Kavkler, Babuder, & Magajna, 2015).

Barriers to Inclusion

Historically, the U.S. education system has excluded students with disabilities (SWD) from going to school or has placed them in separate classrooms (see section "Students with Disabilities", Boroson, 2017; Dukes & Berlingo, 2020). However, categorizing students with disabilities in such a way has had an "othering" effect on those placed in separate classrooms and contributes to discrimination against students who are not inlcuded in the "regular classroom" (Dukes & Berlingo, 2020). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act has made access to the least restrictive learning environments (LRE) a right for students with disabilities. According to a 2020 U.S. Department of Education report, nationally, 63.5% of children with disabilities are in general education classrooms 80% or more of their school day while in California that number is about 57% (2019 Legislative Analyst's Report).

Creating a Culture of Inclusion and Belonging

Barriers that inhibit students from achieving a sense of belonging in the general education classroom continue to exist. Placing a student in the general education classroom also does not guarantee that they are receiving the support needed for an equitable education. When we consider what the "least restrictive learning environment" means for the student, we are not just deciding between the special and general education classrooms, for an environment is so much more than a location. An environment includes *everything*; it is the teacher, the peers, aids, and other members of a student's support team. The environment is the learning material, the physical accessibility of a room, and every element that can add to or detract from a student's learning. It is the educator's responsibility to understand that these elements add to our students' learning experiences.

The need for a focus on inclusion not only applies to students with disabilities but to any student who is not a part of the predominant student population. According to Dover and Rodriguez (2018), English learners make up 18.6% of California student enrollment, but those who are learning the predominant language of a school may be challenged to feel connected academically, socially, and relationally at school and in their community. They write, "Institutional forces in schools, including pressure towards standardization, monolingualism, and test-based accountability, can trouble teachers' efforts to center the immediate, localized, and situated needs of their students." California classrooms are increasingly diverse, and it is necessary to be aware of the structures that pressure students to fit into one standardized, monolinguistic culture. In addition to students feeling excluded, families of English learners may also struggle to feel engaged with the school community. Parents have expressed sadness over the communication gaps with their schools (Good, Maseqicz, Vogel, 2010).

Over decades people have written about and discussed the myriad ways in which African American students experience exclusion in schools. The W2EPB is but one of multiple efforts to transform an education system so that the practices of school reflect a fundamental belief system of inclusion that leads to all students feeling that they belong, are valued, and respected. As discussed in previous sections, African American students are more likely to experience exclusionary discipline practices like out of school suspensions. These exclusionary practices not only negatively affect student engagement in the school and classroom environments, but they also increase their likelihood of being pushed out of school before they graduate (see sections "Suspension Rates and School Discipline" and "African American Students"). Suspension leads not only to lost instructional time, but these exclusionary practices convey the message that they are not welcome, or that they do not belong.

Breaking Down Barriers to Inclusion

As educators, we may practice placing ourselves in the position of each student before us. Questions we may ask: *Are there any barriers preventing all students from accessing this lesson? How can these barriers be overcome?*

Through this exercise, we may consider what language, learning tools, and perspectives are being used and if these are fully accessible to all students. Creating an accessible classroom may take some creativity. This is why teachers must know and build relationships with their students in the practice of facilitating an inclusive environment. Additionally, students must also have the opportunity to learn about one another. Knowing one another as people, and not through labels, is what helps break down barriers to inclusion and belonging.

Promising Practices

Greetings at the Door

Making an effort towards inclusion can begin as soon as students enter their learning environment, with something as simple as intently greeting students at the door (Cook, C. et. al., 2018). This video provides an example of how teachers can welcome students right at the classroom door with a personalized handshake for each student. This is just one way for teachers to convey to students that they are seen and cared for in the classroom. The importance of this greeting is to build relationships and communicate a message of inclusion and belonging to students. What does your school do to ensure that each student who walks into their classroom feels welcome? (See ARUSD case study.)

My Name My Identity Initiative

The My Name, My Identity initiative, launched in 2016 through the Santa Clara County Office of Education, is intended to bring awareness to the importance of respecting one's name and identities in school communities. The second objective is to help create a culture of respect and inclusiveness in school

communities across the nation by asking educators, parents, community members, and students to take the pledge to pronounce student names correctly and to honor their identities.

Reflection Questions:

1. What are some ways inclusion and belonging are measured for your school community? What is not being measured?

2. In your school community which students are set up most to feel a sense of belonging? Which students are not? What data support this?

3. What practices do you engage to develop a sense of inclusion and belonging for your school's families? When families enter your community, where during the onboarding process are there opportunities to begin to develop a sense of inclusion and belonging?

4. "It would be **more surprising** if Black males were doing well academically in spite of the broad array of difficulties that confront them. Scholars and researchers commonly understand that environmental and cultural factors have a profound influence on human behaviors, including academic performance" (Noguera, 2003).

   • Noticing this described relationship between a student's environment and their learning, what is the environment that your students are walking into as they enter your school?

   • What efforts are being made to welcome each student who walks into their classroom?

   • Conversely, what practices are in place that result in the exclusion of particular students?

Tools

• **Think Inclusive: 5 Strategies for Structuring and Inclusive Classroom Environment**
https://www.thinkinclusive.us/5-strategies-for-structuring-
-an-inclusive-classroom-environment/

• **Teaching Tolerance: Learning Plans for Diversity**
https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/
learning-plans?keyword=&field_social_justice_do-
main%5B40%5D=40

• **Scholastic: Lesson Plans on Multiculturalism & Diversity**
https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plans/teachin-
g-content/multiculturalism-and-diversity/

Resources

• **Te Kete Ipurangi: Inclusive Education guide to developing an inclusive classroom culture**
https://www.inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/developing-an-inclu-
sive-classroom-culture/

• **Think Inclusive: What does inclusion look like?**
https://www.thinkinclusive.us/inclusion-is-belonging/

• **Othering & Belonging Institute: Blueprint for Belonging**
https://belonging.berkeley.edu/b4b

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SECTION AUTHORS AND CONTENT SPECIALISTS:
DR. ERICA BOAS & THERESE SALGADO

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

This section highlights culturally relevant pedagogy (and the related instructional practices of culturally responsive teaching and culturally sustaining pedagogy) as a practice of equity. Culturally relevant pedagogy is explained, barriers to its implementation are underlined, and promising practices are presented.

What is Culturally Relevant Pedagogy?

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) acknowledges and utilizes the cultural and historical backgrounds, knowledge, and experiences of students to inform the teachers' classroom and methodology. Employing culturally relevant pedagogy helps teachers to create a bridge between the identities and communities to which students belong, while simultaneously meeting learning objectives and expectations in the classroom. CRP was coined by Gloria Ladson-Billings in a 1995 article. In her proceeding book, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*, she writes that culturally relevant pedagogy "empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 17). These classroom settings have the power to improve the lives of Black/African American[1] students and the outcomes of all children. This approach has proven effective in teacher education programs that should prepare teachers to successfully teach African American, and all students of color. In another book, Ladson-Billings (2001) emphasizes that students must "experience academic success; develop and/or maintain cultural competence, and develop a critical consciousness in which they challenge the status quo of the current social order" (p. 143). Effective training is required for new teachers to realize these goals.

The terminology and meaning of "culturally relevant pedagogy" has evolved over the past decade and is sometimes used synonymously with culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010; Hammond, 2015) and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). Each of these frameworks offers a variation on the original concept of culturally relevant pedagogy. According to Gay (2010), culturally responsive teaching is "the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant…" (p. 31). (See CRP Tenets.) Paris (2012), wishing to expand the terminology and goals of CRT writes, "The term culturally sustaining requires that our pedagogies be more than responsive of or relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young people—it requires that they support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence" (p. 95). While the terminology differs, it is clear to see that regardless of the term, there is a commitment to the wellness and achievement of Black, Indigenous, and students of color in each of these frameworks.

Multicultural awareness and knowledge foreground the fundamental principles of culturally relevant teaching. However, as Hammond points out in an interview, the most important facet to remember about culturally responsive, resonant, or sustaining teaching is that it "is about *building the learning capacity* of the individual student. There is a focus on leveraging the affective and the cognitive scaffolding that students bring with them." To do this, teachers must develop relationships with students that allow all students to be their authentic selves and feel a sense of belonging. A human-care approach to teaching that is culturally relevant also allows teachers to see students' identities and the cultural, historical, and familial backgrounds as assets as opposed to detriments to learning. Therefore, the onus is on teachers to work toward a common goal and understanding of how to leverage students' experiences to help create an inclusive classroom and curricula that reaches and empowers all learners.

Researchers emphasize that culturally relevant education is an inclusive framework used to describe teachers' attempts

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[1] The racial identity category, African American/Black is used interchangeably throughout this section to describe the historical and social experiences of Blacks in this country.

to effectively teach diverse students and to integrate multi-cultural content and socio-political consciousness in learning environments (Dover, 2013). For instance, teachers who employ culturally relevant pedagogy embody certain characteristics (see table below). For teachers to effectively teach diverse students, an "inside-out" or "windows and mirrors" approach to leading is required. They must be conscious of their positionality. In other words, they must be aware of their identities, unintentional biases they hold in regards to race, gender, and socio-economic status, and they must recognize how these factors show up in the classroom (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017).

Barriers to Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Challenges arise in district's and teacher's interpretation, implementation, and evaluation of culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching practices, which poses barriers to successfully reaching students of color and producing positive outcomes. These can include:

- Teachers and administrators, such as principals, are not always aware of the subconscious beliefs persistent within them, and all of us, which are commonly referred to as implicit bias.
- Teachers and districts do not address the sociopolitical consciousness in their definition of CRP, which is vital for effectively tackling the systemic roots of racism in American schools.
- The terms "relevant" and "responsive" can easily lead to essentializing practices.
- CRP is not just about helping a student or some students, it is about transforming the system, changing how teachers relate to students, and continuous learning.
- CRP is not to be mistaken for the implementation of superficial classroom practices without spending time cultivating relationships and making spaces where students can express their full humanity.

Promising Practices in Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Mathematics

Dr. Robert "Bob" Moses, civil rights activist, and educator, founded The Algebra Project, an organization that helps low-income and underrepresented students achieve the math skills they need for economic success. He founded the organization in 1982, but it wasn't until years later that he piloted the program when he taught Algebra for thirteen years (1996-2006) in Mississippi public schools. As a teacher and founder of the project, Dr. Moses challenged students to access mathematics and set higher expectations for themselves on what they can do with mathematics in the real-world. Beginning in 9th grade and following students for four years, the Algebra Project prepares students to thrive in college math—a standard Dr. Moses holds that it is vital for all students in the country. In a 2016 PBS interview, Dr. Moses explained, "the languages that the kids

own—just the ordinary street language—is available as a bridge into the languages of math and science." His national math literacy efforts continue to prove effective in bringing culturally relevant education to diverse students.

STEM Education

Bryan Brown's (2019) book, "Science in the City: Culturally Relevant Stem Education" explores how language and culture matters for effective science teaching among students of color. Dr. Brown is an Associate professor of science education and associate dean for student affairs at the Graduate School of Education at Stanford University. For more on his research that explores the relationship between student identity, discourse, classroom culture, and academic achievement in science education, visit here, or watch his latest interview.

History/Social Studies

In Culturally Relevant, Purpose-Driven Learning & Teaching in a Middle School Social Studies Classroom, Milner (2014) investigates how a teacher's ability to emphasize purpose to her middle school students within an urban public school fosters culturally relevant teaching in the classroom. He argued that the teacher, who was African American, empowered her students to critically reflect on the challenges in their local community to develop a sociopolitical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 2009). He conceptualizes several culturally relevant teaching practices that shape the teacher's efforts to create conscientious students—all encapsulated the kind of purposeful teaching described in the literature on culturally relevant education. They entailed the following:

1. Building relationships with her students
2. Seeing teaching and learning as a mission and responsibility

3. Remembering race
4. Moving beyond materialism[2]
5. Accepting and serving in multiple roles
6. Promoting self and school pride

English Language Arts

Several bodies of research show how using culturally relevant materials engage students in English language arts (Feger, 2006; Hastie, Martin, & Buchanan, 2006; Beach et al., 2015). Implementing culturally relevant pedagogy in the English language arts classroom can take on many different forms, such as through hip hop pedagogy, where students analyze lyrics and express their voices about issues and tensions plaguing their communities (Prier, 2012; Hill and Ladson-Billings, 2009). In her study *Hybrid texts fifth graders, rap music, and writing* Christianakis (2011) explores a teachers' practice of using language, rap, and poetry to help urban fifth-grade students develop their literacy skills in the classroom. She found that as the diverse group of students, all from low-income families, "expressed their intellectual creativity," they became increasingly engaged in the curriculum
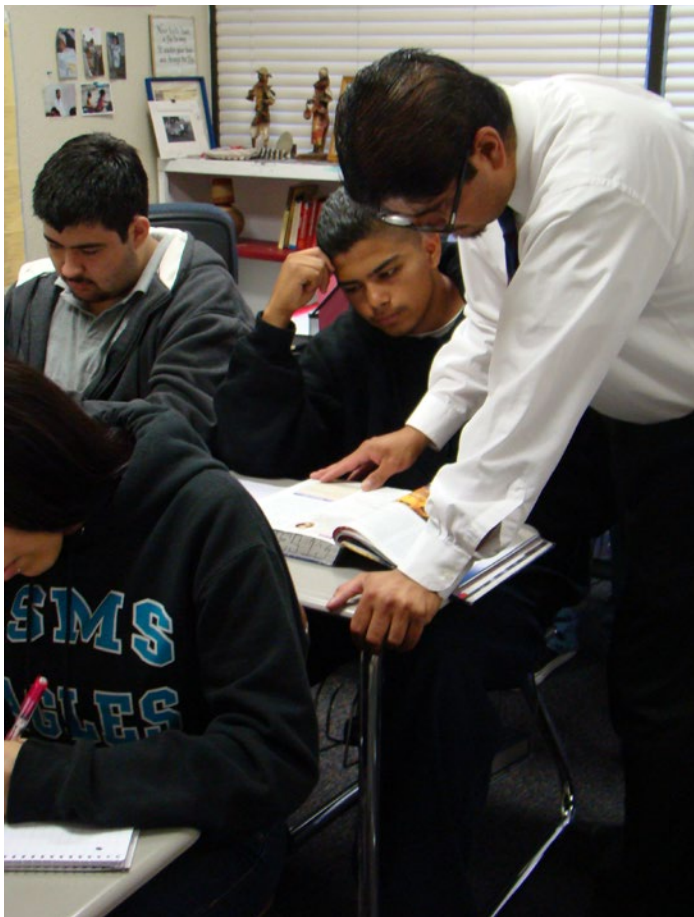
and were more motivated to complete their work (p. 1157). When teachers recognize students' cultural backgrounds and incorporate aspects of students' cultures, including linguistic identity, into their pedagogy and teaching, they consequently enhance students' literacy experiences and increase their sociopolitical awareness (Ladson-Billings, 1995a).

Tools

- **CA-1 Course with Micro-Credential Badge: "Culturally Responsive Anti-Bias Teaching"**
  https://www.learningdesigned.org/node/975/initiative-resources
- **Tenets of Culturally Relevant Pedagogies and Related Frameworks**
  https://drive.google.com/open?id=1izsHjfTaJqQ7xAkjNkPza-wIiijlqr0UMACq1W1TXu1Q

Resources

- **New York State Education Department: Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework**
  http://www.nysed.gov/bilingual-ed/culturally-responsive--sustaining-education-framework

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SECTION AUTHOR & CONTENT SPECIALIST: DR. ANGELA BIRTS

[2] Successful African American teachers of Black students are able to unpack this issue with students, which essentially means a teachers' belief that a students' growth can develop through service or something greater than themselves rather than what they can acquire through material possessions.

Social Emotional Learning

This section was written during the COVID-19 period. Schools closed, children and their families sheltered in their homes, distance learning was quickly developed, and many teachers and students experienced a rupture to the relationships that they had developed through daily interactions over the past months. With an understanding that public schools provide much more than an academic education to children and youth experiencing poverty, racism, and health issues, numerous articles and reports were published advocating for the need for social and emotional learning (SEL), perspectives, and practices in this moment (here is one). From an equity perspective, SEL is fundamental to schooling every single day. Co-authored by Dupe Thomas, Community Health Outreach Worker at Santa Clara High School, this section is provided to support work on social and emotional learning.

What is Social Emotional Learning?

All learning is social and emotional because all learning starts with human relationships. According to the *Handbook of Social and Emotional Learning*, social and emotional learning (SEL) is:

> A process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2015).

As contributing author and Community Health Outreach Worker for Santa Clara High School, Dupe Thomas, MSW writes:

> In my experience, I have recognized the importance of self-reflection and personal self-awareness as an adult and educator. The person in environment (PIE) theory comes to mind. We must look at the environment in which a person lives and creates in, incorporating the various factors and their implications, which can contribute to our understanding of self, students, and others.

Authentic SEL also requires that educators honor and take feelings seriously. As Professor Eve Ewing discussed in her May 14, 2020 virtual talk, *What a School Means*, it is necessary to make space for feelings. Young people need this. So much of schooling is the emotional experiences that come from being in schools—and this is easy to forget or not to see. But in order to improve a student's experience in school, educators must understand how students experience school. This can be best done by taking time and making space to express and articulate feelings.

Social Emotional Learning and Equity: Relationships Matter

Strong relationships and connectedness lie at the heart of equity work. In fact, equity cannot be achieved without building systems that allow for authentic human connection. Without a foundation of solid relationships, physical and emotional safety and the cultivation of a positive school environment cannot be accomplished. While SEL alone cannot solve the social problems that affect our students, without providing social and emotional safety nets, the effects of these inequities will be even harder felt. In the words of the National Equity Project, "The promise of social and emotional development as a lever for increasing educational equity rests on the capacity of educators to understand that *all learning is social and emotional* and all learning is mediated by relationships that sit in a sociopolitical, racialized context—for all children, not just those who are black and brown."

We are all lifelong learners. Creating strong relationships using SEL requires adults to dedicate time, energy, effort, and some level of vulnerability into understanding their own personal relationship(s) with SEL and the impacts to their individual lives. Once a personal relationship is identified and meaning is created, the work can begin both internally and externally. Meaningful, timely and easily accessible resources for adults and educators is crucial for the growth and development of SEL on campuses. When educators and adults are given opportunities to explore SEL and give themselves (ourselves) permission to do so, our students benefit when we share what we've learned about human interaction and connection.

All students and Black, Indigenous, and people of color, in particular, have been over-looked, dismissed, and marginalized within the educational system. SEL is for every person—for every student representing any race, language, gender, disability status, or religion. It is so important to acknowledge and engage with each other and our students in humanizing ways, rather than in a rushed or robotic manner. Whether in meetings, classes, conference settings or in passing social interactions, we all want to be seen and to connect with one another, to belong and be accepted. Relationship building and social emotional learning is a process; it is the foundation that creates meaning in the trajectory of students' lives.

CASEL Wheel & Competencies

Transformative/Culturally Responsive SEL

An emergent area of research and practice is called "transformative SEL". Jagas, Rivas-Drake, and Williams (2019) write that "for SEL to adequately serve those from underserved communities—and promote the optimal developmental outcomes for all children, youth, and adults—it must cultivate in them the knowledge, attitudes, and skills required for critical examination and collaborative action to address root causes of inequities. Toward this end, transformative SEL is aimed at educational equity—fostering the learning environments that will produce equitable outcomes for children and young people furthest from opportunity."

This is to say that SEL cannot be implemented in a vacuum. Its practices must take into account that children come from diverse cultures, have lived through different experiences, and express a range of assets (not all of which are valued by our school system). Because SEL operates on a relational level, and relationships are expressed in varying ways across culture, it is possible that well-intentioned SEL practices result in inadvertently alienating some students. A transformative or culturally responsive approach to SEL addresses this problem by including and engaging students in the co-construction of respectful relationships. In addition, an important facet of transformative

SEL is to understand that meaningful relationships are developed when all people involved are listened to, their cultures, experiences, and knowledge valued. Furthermore, the scope of impact does not stop at the relationship but extends to the potential in collaboration in addressing community and social problems. As Simmons (2019) writes, "Social-emotional learning (SEL) skills can help us build communities that foster courageous conversations across difference so that our students can confront injustice, hate, and inequity."

'Trauma-Informed'/'Trauma-Sensitive' Approaches

The Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) study has helped us to better understand the effects of childhood trauma throughout the lifecycle. The research finding that many experience great amounts of trauma in childhood (especially those who are BIPOC[1], live in poverty, or have one or more parents who have been incarcerated) led educators to adopt "trauma-informed" or "trauma-sensitive" approaches to teaching and counseling. The Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI) explains on their website, 'In a trauma-sensitive school educators make the switch from asking 'what can I do to fix this child?' to 'what can we do as a community to support all children to help them feel safe and participate fully in our school community?'" Recognizing that children who experience trauma require therapeutic environments, it is vital that focus be put on cultivating a positive school climate so that they can thrive. And this is key to equity work: Develop a mindset that focuses on changing the system rather than the individual.

Importance of SEL for Adults

SEL is not just for students. To improve social, emotional, and academic outcomes for students, it has become increasingly clear that we also need to support the social-emotional development and well-being of educators and staff. Increasing our self-awareness and dedication to self care practices positively impacts one's level of social emotional availability and learning. The level at which we are able to show up for ourselves and practice self-kindness affects the level at which we are able to show up for students. This is a mirroring effect. We cannot pour from an empty cup. Intuitively, we know when we are operating from an empty cup and students see, feel and can identify this within adults. As adults and educators, it is absolutely our responsibility to role model and practice what we teach. SEL is woven into every human interaction. As educators, we are given the beautiful task of guiding students and promoting SEL education for and with the students with whom we are fortunate to connect. This is a gift.

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[1] BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. This term is used "to highlight the unique relationship to whiteness that Indigenous and Black (African Americans) people have, which shapes the experiences of and relationship to white supremacy for all people of color within a U.S. context" (The BIPOC Project). In effect, the term illuminates the fact that U.S. concepts of race were built on white supremacist notions of blackness and indigeneity.

Reflection Questions:

1. What do teachers, administrators, staff, and parents believe about the role of relationships in learning?
2. How can you shift adult mindsets and help them understand, develop, and model SEL skills for students?
3. How does the unofficial and official curriculum honor feelings or "affect" in the educational process?
4. How can you develop programs, resources, and activities to support adults' own self-care and well-being in schools?

Tools:

- CA-1 Courses with Micro-Credential Badge: "Supporting Positive Behavior" & "Relationship-Centered Schools" https://www.learningdesigned.org/node/975/initiative-resources
- Universal Screening Assessments (a list of universal screening assessments for behavior/SEL) https://assets-global.website-files.com/5d3725188825e-071f1670246/5d8393cfa70460bf54f37f21_Screener%20Tools%20Table.pdf
- CASEL: SEL Competencies https://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/CASEL-Competencies.pdf

Resources:

- PBIS Technical Assistance Center https://pbis.sccoe.org/home/Pages/default.aspx
- CASEL:
  - CASEL CARES SEL Resources During COVID-19 https://casel.org/resources-covid/
- Equity and Social and Emotional Learning: A cultural analysis https://measuringsel.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Frameworks-Equity.pdf
- Toward Transformative SEL: Using an equity lens https://measuringsel.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Framework_EquitySummary-.pdf
- Panorama: Adult SEL Toolkit https://go.panoramaed.com/adult-sel-social-emotional-learning-toolkit
- Child Trauma Academy https://www.childtrauma.org/
- Trauma Learning and Policy Initiative https://traumasensitiveschools.org/about-tlpi/
- Suggested readings:
  - Perry, B. & Szalavitz, M. (2017). The Boy who was Raised as a Dog. Basic Books.
  - Howard, J. R., Milner-McCall, T., & Howard, T. C. (2020). No More Teaching Without Positive Relationships. Heinemann.

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SECTION AUTHORS AND CONTENT SPECIALISTS:
DR. ERICA BOAS & DUPE THOMAS

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning aims to engage all students through multiple means. This section provides an overview of UDL, as well as resources and tools for further exploration and implementation.

What is Universal Design for Learning?

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is defined by the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) as *a research-based set of principles to guide the design of learning environments that are accessible and effective for all*. The goal of UDL is to be able to recognize potential barriers and then to design accordingly so that these potential barriers can be eliminated thus allowing for the cultivation of expert learners.

The UDL framework is rooted in three principles:
- Engagement: The affective network of learning or the "why".
- Representation: The recognition network or the "what" of learning.
- Action and Expression: The strategic network or the "how" of learning.

In addition to the principles, this framework also includes the UDL Guidelines and linked checkpoints. It provides a method by which educators and others can use to design curriculum and instruction to support the development of "Expert Learners". UDL defines "Expert Learners" as those who are: purposeful and motivated; resourceful and knowledgeable; and strategic and goal-directed.

Key questions to guide UDL Implementation (Murawski & Scott, 2019):

1. Was a specific learning goal identified that was flexible enough to allow for learner variability? To write a flexible goal, remove words that specify exactly how the goal must be met.

2. Were multiple options for assessment provided? Assessments should allow students to have options to demonstrate their learning.

3. Does the design consider students' strengths, interests, preferences, and barriers related to learning? Does the design consider curriculum and learning environment barriers?

4. Were the UDL guidelines and checkpoints applied?

UDL: There is No 'Average Learner'

When educators realize that the average learner is a myth and begin to design their lessons "to the edges", the students who have been historically marginalized in school settings are centered in pedagogies and learning processes. This means that not only is content revised, but the *experience* of learning is also reimagined. As Meyer, Rose and Gordon (2014) explain in their book, *Universal Design for Learning Theory and Practice*:

> The unnecessary barriers in traditional education extended beyond those that impeded students from accessing content and expressing knowledge. Even more important in motivating our work were the affective barriers. Students coming to school with curiosity and a strong desire to learn found that fire quenched when they were stigmatized—not because of anything that was in their control but because of inaccessible learning environments.
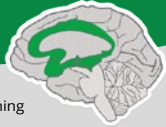
Within a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), UDL is a tier one support. When used with fidelity, UDL minimizes the need for interventions and creates space for enrichment opportunities. UDL principles further reduce barriers and ensure

The Universal Design for Learning Guidelines

CAST | Until learning has no limits

Provide multiple means of **Engagement**	Provide multiple means of **Representation**	Provide multiple means of **Action & Expression**
Affective Networks The "WHY" of Learning	Recognition Networks The "WHAT" of Learning	Strategic Networks The "HOW" of Learning

Access

Provide options for **Recruiting Interest**	Provide options for **Perception**	Provide options for **Physical Action**
• Optimize individual choice and autonomy • Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity • Minimize threats and distractions	• Offer ways of customizing the display of information • Offer alternatives for auditory information • Offer alternatives for visual information	• Vary the methods for response and navigation • Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies

Build

Provide options for **Sustaining Effort & Persistence**	Provide options for **Language & Symbols**	Provide options for **Expression & Communication**
• Heighten salience of goals and objectives • Vary demands and resources to optimize challenge • Foster collaboration and community • Increase mastery-oriented feedback	• Clarify vocabulary and symbols • Clarify syntax and structure • Support decoding of text, mathematical notation, and symbols • Promote understanding across languages • Illustrate through multiple media	• Use multiple media for communication • Use multiple tools for construction and composition • Build fluencies with graduated levels of support for practice and performance

Internalize

Provide options for **Self Regulation**	Provide options for **Comprehension**	Provide options for **Executive Functions**
• Promote expectations and beliefs that optimize motivation • Facilitate personal coping skills and strategies • Develop self-assessment and reflection	• Activate or supply background knowledge • Highlight patterns, critical features, big ideas, and relationships • Guide information processing and visualization • Maximize transfer and generalization	• Guide appropriate goal-setting • Support planning and strategy development • Facilitate managing information and resources • Enhance capacity for monitoring progress

Goal

Expert learners who are...

Purposeful & Motivated	Resourceful & Knowledgeable	Strategic & Goal-Directed

udlguidelines.cast.org | © CAST, Inc. 2018 | Suggested Citation: CAST (2018). Universal design for learning guidelines version 2.2 [graphic organizer]. Wakefield, MA: Author.

equitable access for students across all tiers of support. If UDL is applied in tier one the students who are at the margins of learning in the classroom (e.g. students with disabilities, English learners, students in poverty) receive the supports (scaffolds, assistive technology, etc.) they need in an inclusive environment. The added benefit of UDL is that by removing barriers to learning, instruction can be designed to maximize the learning opportunities for all students in the classroom. In tier two (targeted) and tier three (intensive) instruction is designed and differentiated specifically for the student's success and has frequent progress monitoring. The scaffolds and strategies that have been proven successful in tiers two and three should then be implemented as supports in tier one. UDL provides for a more vigorous instruction for all students since it is a proactively and intentionally designed framework that removes barriers to learning and supports all students.

Reflection Questions:

1. How can UDL be incorporated into tier one instruction in classrooms?
2. What are some ways teachers can support and design instruction for student engagement?
3. How can teachers build-in better representational access and support for better comprehension of the curriculum through their instruction?
4. How can teachers create variations in the actions and expression needed to demonstrate learning?
5. How can teachers design increased opportunities for student choice in the engagement, representation and action/expression of student learning?

Universal Design for Learning

Tools:
- CA-1 Course with Micro-Credential Badge: "Universal Design for Learning Associate Credential" https://www.learningdesigned.org/node/975/initiative-resources
- UDL Lesson Planning Tool http://lessonbuilder.cast.org/
- Free Technology Toolkit for UDL in All Classrooms https://www.thinglink.com/scene/830135641269338112?buttonSource=viewLimits

Resources:
- UDL Guidelines http://udlguidelines.cast.org/
- Fifty Ways to Reach Your Learners Using UDL as a Guide https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGuwggVAQpM
- UDL Progressions http://castpublishing.org/novak-rodriguez-udl-progression-rubric/
- UDL YouTube Channel https://www.youtube.com/user/UDLCenter
- IRIS UDL Module https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/udl/#content

Books:
- Novak, K. (2016). *UDL now! A teacher's guide to applying universal design for learning in today's classrooms*. CAST Professional Publishing.
- Ralabate, P. & Nelson, L. (2017). *Culturally Responsive Design for English Learners: The UDL Approach*. CAST Publishing.

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- Murawski, W. W. & Scott, K. L. (2019). *What really works for universal design for learning?* Corwin Press.

SECTION AUTHORS AND CONTENT SPECIALISTS:
KELLY WYLIE & DR. ANNA MARIE VILLALOBOS

Educational Technology

This section takes a student- and family-centered view of the intersection of access to technology and equity. As we write the *Ways 2 Equity Playbook*, the COVID-19 pandemic is changing the ways we understand and do school across California and the nation. During this time of school closures, educators had to make a swift transition to distance learning, which exposed the deeply entrenched, historic inequities experienced by students, families, schools, districts, and neighborhoods. Conversations on educational equity have centered around how to reach and teach students remotely, and more importantly, what it means to do so in an equitable way. This pandemic has brought us valuable lessons about the function of technology in education and educational equity more broadly.

Access and Inclusion

We learned a lot during the COVID-19 pandemic that can be useful as we move forward. With respect to educational technology, for example, much attention has been placed on the noticeable gaps in digital *access* to material resources and quality (high speed) internet connections (Aschoff, 2020). These access gaps illuminate a well-known fact fundamental to educational equity work: students and families who make up our school communities live extremely disparate lives, and this difference correlates to extreme disparities in educational outcomes. Clearly, this "digital divide" makes accessing information far more challenging for some than others. However, access to technology is only one piece of the equity puzzle. We also need to consider how the distance learning technologies have been able to create—or limit—conditions of inclusion.

Because our schools and neighborhoods are highly segregated, equity issues are experienced across and within districts and schools. These pre-existing educational disparities were brought into intense focus when schools closed. Districts with more affluent student populations were able to roll out distance learning almost immediately, and others were constrained because they first needed to account for and equip families with necessary technology (devices, hotspots, etc.). While some teachers were encouraged to call or video conference with individual students, others were told not to make contact until it was known that ALL students could be reached. Meanwhile, the disparities grew as *some* students were able to receive academic lessons and social-emotional connection with their teachers, *some* families with means to do so continued their children's educational experiences, and *some* students were left in limbo. In addition, of great concern were those students with disabilities who rely on assistive technology to help them learn. Students with limited access to resources who rely on school materials for these technologies were unable to access them at home. Moving from an in-person learning environment to a distance learning context was impossible for some without their assistive technology.

In regards to equity, what became clear is that "access" has multiple levels of meaning. On one level, it is about being able to receive the material resources necessary for learning. However, access is also about the *quality* of an educational experience that becomes available by having access to materials in the first place. Those students, families, and even teachers in some cases, who experienced limited access to technology could not participate in the same ways as those with access. The most profound lessons offered to us by the COVID-19 pandemic are those that have helped us to better see the truth of our system. It is important to take these lessons and consider how the resource divide plays out in the everyday experience of schooling.

Innovation and Intervention

Now that all students are being asked to use technology as the foundation of their learning, we have heard stories from a few teachers who are seeing some student engagement improve with distance learning. While these teacher observations should in no way be used to counter the fact that so much learning and security have been lost during this time, especially for students experiencing poverty, these examples can serve as reminders that "normal" practices of schooling do not serve all students well. Here we see the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principle of "multiple means" and that using technologies and/or alternative environments may be what some students need. This is to say that it was never the student who was the problem but rather the context. We now have an opportunity to change some pedagogical habits that have worked to exclude some students.

A significant takeaway here is a new understanding of the difference between using technology for innovation versus using it for intervention. Educators are being asked to make technological innovations to their teaching. They are being made to think about what differentiated instruction means through a digital platform—and to make innovations so that students can learn. This often requires that educators move beyond simply "substituting" a manual practice for a digital. In educational technology pedagogy, "substitution" happens when one takes a pencil-and-paper practice and turns it into an electronic one. (For further information on integrating technology into student learning, see the work of Dr. Ruben Puentedura, or review the SAMR model.) While substitution is often an appropriate instructional move, it

Educational Technology & Equity

is not necessarily innovative in the way that is required to create inclusive online learning environments.

Ideally, technology would be used to innovate on teaching and learning every time it is present. Even when technology is used to help students develop skills that may be required for them to "catch up" to grade level or to assist them in meeting a standard, technology should be used in a way that deepens students' learning experiences. If technology is used as intervention, that needs to be done in an innovative way rather than employing a tool in academic intervention merely because it is easy to do so. Research shows that the best high leverage practices (HLPs) for intervention include engaging students, accessing students' prior knowledge, and providing direct instruction of the desired skill. The proper and creative use of technology can provide for all of these strategies.

Culturally Responsive Teaching and Technology

The real technological innovations happen when humans use and apply technology in creative ways. At all levels of education, educators should strive for culturally and linguistically responsive approaches to teaching and learning (see section Culturally Responsive Pedagogy). In the realm of technology, this is no different. As discussed above, technology can be leveraged in many ways to help teachers to connect with students and families. In addition, it can help build bridges for students so that they can express their individual identities and knowledge in new ways. It should be acknowledged and deeply considered that students of all ages are using technology in various ways in their everyday lives (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Their engagement with technology is increasingly linked to their identities. Therefore, if educators are challenged to understand the importance of technology (social media, video games, media, etc.) in students' lives, then they are potentially missing opportunities to understand and connect with the students as individuals. And it is this human connection that

is at the heart of equity work. The New York State Department of Education provides guidance on culturally and linguistically responsive instruction through technology, and the US Department of Education has a dedicated website to technology and equity.

Applying an equity lens, schools and districts might ask the following questions about how they are innovating for equity with their use of technology.

Reflection Questions

1. What is the vision for technology in your learning environment? Are all students included in equitable ways? Are students provided opportunities to both develop and express their knowledge and identities through the use of technology?

2. How is technology used as an intervention vs. an innovation for students? Which students are being tasked to use technology to "level up" rather than get to grade level? Is disproportionality present in these outcomes?

3. Are educators educated and equipped to use and teach technology in equitable ways in their classes? How do they feel about using technology in their learning environments, for what purposes, and for whom?

Resources

- **Advancing Equity in an Era of Crisis: A Guide to Equity in Remote Learning**
  https://1303197b-6e91-48cc-9169-7e3fbe4f96db.filesusr.com/ugd/2651b4_15917a14cb0144e7a9095bb44b863c1f.pdf

- **U.S. Office of Educational Technology: Equity**
  https://tech.ed.gov/equity/

- **Digital Promise: How Access to Technology Can Create Equity in Schools**
  https://digitalpromise.org/2019/04/29/equity-in-schools-access-technology/

- **NY State's Culturally Responsive Instruction through Technology**
  http://www.nysed.gov/edtech/culturally-responsive-instruction-through-technology-0

- **What Four Divides Teaches us about Digital Literacy**
  https://tinyurl.com/ya4gr9n7

- **Online Learning in the Wake of COVID-19: Tips and Resources for PreK-12 with Equity in Mind**
  https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/online-learning-wake-covid-19/

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SECTION AUTHORS AND CONTENT SPECIALISTS: DR. ERICA BOAS & ABBY ALMERIDO

Suspension Rates and School Discipline

In this section, types of school suspensions are defined. Suspensions are discussed in relation to its negative impacts on our three focal student groups 1) African American Students; 2) Students with Disabilities; and 3) English Learners, as well as overall school climate. This section also provides resources that may be used to begin addressing the inequity of how school suspensions function.

Overview of School Suspensions

School suspension is a form of punishment intended to decrease the likelihood of future negative behaviors in a student. However, suspensions have been shown to be ineffective and come with a multitude of other negative effects on students and school climate. Negative impacts have been shown to affect the student's well-being, academic achievement, contribute to entry in the juvenile justice system, and increase the likelihood of dropping out of school (Haight, Kayama, & Gibson, 2016). Research shows that Black, Native American, and Latinx students are disproportionately disciplined through exclusionary practices, what has been termed a "racial discipline gap" (Losen, et. al., 2015; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). Moreover, a punitive environment can impact a school's overall climate of well-being and fairness. However, practices, policies, and resources exist that promote positive discipline over punitive discipline, as discussed below.

There are two types of school suspensions. The more common out-of-school suspension (OSS) is when a student is not permitted to be on school premises. In-school suspension (ISS) involves the student being removed from their typical classroom and away from peers, but without being removed from the school campus. It has been shown that OSS is more strongly associated with poor student achievement, higher suspension rates, and dropout rates than ISS (Noltemeyer, Ward, & Mcloghlin, 2015). However, evidence shows that because ISS removes students from their classrooms, it decreases the amount of instruction they receive (Losen, et. al., 2015). Taking into account the numerous negative consequences of school suspension, especially OSS, brings up the question of what equity looks like when schools address negative student behaviors.

Our Students and Suspensions

Research supports the prevalence of suspensions for certain student groups. In addition, the data underline the intersectional nature of this discipline issue, as presented below:

- In California, students with disabilities have the **second highest** rate of suspension after African American students, and they are more than **twice as likely** to receive an OSS than students without disabilities. (**Figure 15**.)

- The exclusion rate for California's English Learners with no reported disabilities is 3.2% while the rate of English Learners with disabilities is 5.2%. In one study, California was found to have one of the highest rates of exclusionary discipline for English Learners with disabilities (Whitford, Katsiyannis, Counts, et al., 2018). (**Figure 15**.)

Figure 15. 2018-19 Statewide Suspension Rates
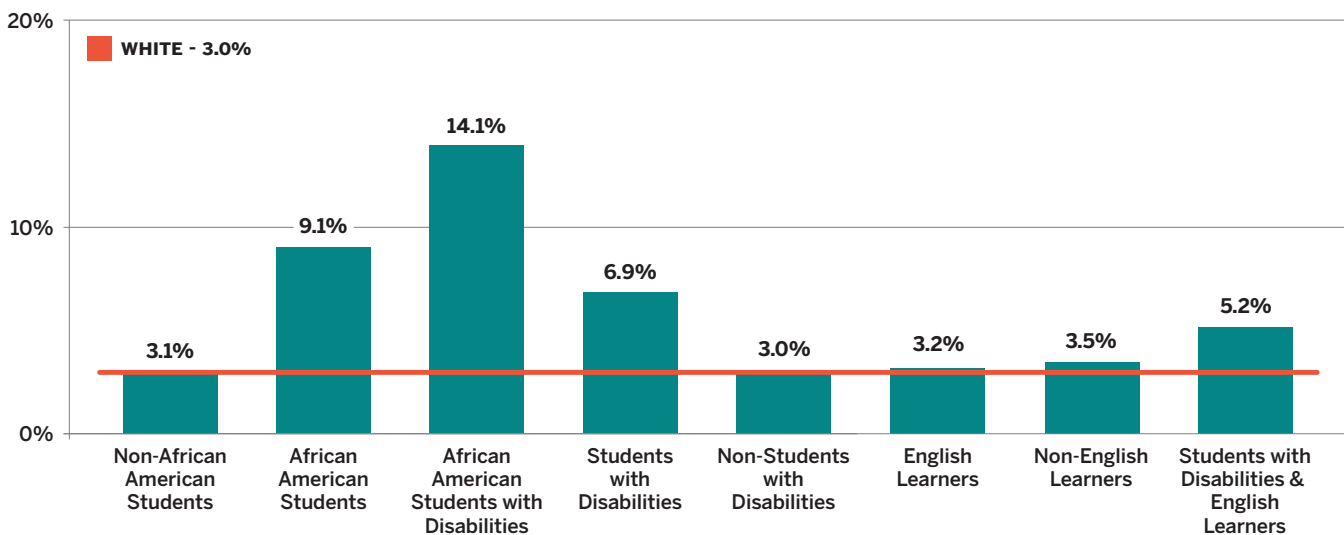
Suspension Rates and School Discipline

- African American students are **no more likely** than other groups of students to engage in unsafe or rule-breaking behaviors at school, but are **3 times** more likely than their white peers to be suspended nationally (Parker, 2015). More specifically, California suspension rates have shown that African American girls experienced OSS at a rate about **4 times** higher than White girls, and African American boys were suspended about **3 times** more than White boys. (**Figure 16**.)
- In many cases, teachers, administrators, and school resource officers disproportionately discipline students for "discretionary offenses with vague definitions," authors Ajmel Quereshi, Senior Counsel, and Professor Jason Okonofua argue (NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc., 2017).
- Other populations of students that disproportionately experience suspension include Latinx and Native American students. These students not only experience suspensions more often than their White peers, but also for longer periods of time.

Figure 16. 2018-19 Statewide Suspension Rates by Race/Gender
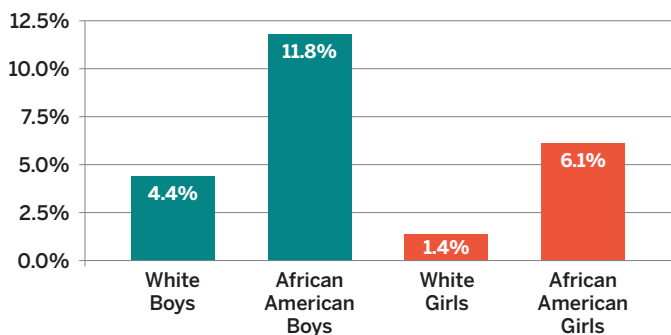
In-School Arrests

While school resource officers (SROs) are used to help maintain a safe school environment, their presence is also a source of controversy when it comes to managing student misbehavior. Noting the relationship between school resource officers and increased rates of exclusionary discipline is especially important considering that students who experience exclusionary discipline are more likely to partake in the juvenile detention system and incarceration later on in their lives (Chu & Ready, 2018). The 2020 Black Lives Matter movement has brought the issue of police in schools into stark focus.

Promising Practices

Oak Grove School District – Reforming Suspension Policies and Practices

Between the 2017-18 and 2018-19 school years, Oak Grove School District (OGSD) in San Jose, California successfully lowered their suspension rates for students with disabilities, students

experiencing homelessness, and foster youth. 2018 district-level data showed disproportionality in rates of exclusionary discipline. In collaboration with the Santa Clara County Office of Education Differentiated Assistance team over the spring and fall of 2019, OGSD reformed their disciplinary policies and practices, resulting in progress toward equity. (See OGSD Case Study.)

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

PBIS is an evidence-based three-tiered framework to improve and integrate all the data, systems, and practices affecting student outcomes every day" (pbis.org). PBIS can be beneficial in supporting positive behaviors of students and preventing or addressing challenging behaviors. Rather than using negative reinforcement, such as taking a student out of the classroom (OSS), PBIS can help schools identify a number of ways to positively reinforce desired behaviors. PBIS recommends alternatives to suspension.

Restorative Practices

Conflicts in schools are inevitable. However, one way to bring students together and encourage them to practice conflict resolution is through restorative justice. Restorative justice is intended to be more than sitting students involved in conflict in a circle. Restorative justice practices invite members of the school community to be heard, to reflect on the impact of their actions on others, to take responsibility, and to make amends. Here are some resources:

- *Edutopia* Implementing restorative justice: A guide for schools
  https://www.edutopia.org/blog/restorative-justice-resources--matt-davis
- SFUSD's Restorative Practices Whole-School Implementation Guide
  https://www.healthiersf.org/RestorativePractices/Resources/documents/SFUSD%20Whole%20School%20Implementation%20Guide%20final.pdf

Whatever practice a school decides to use, the emphasis is on creating a school culture that serves to best support our students.

Reflection Questions

1. "Disproportionality in out-of-school suspensions is a persistent social justice issue affecting students, families, and schools" (Haight, Kayama, & Gibson, 2016, pg. 235).
   - Reflecting on this quote, how can a student's experience with suspension connect with their experiences beyond their schooling?
   - What can you do to help reduce the disparities shown in suspensions?
2. How often do you revisit discipline policies? In what ways do you examine if discipline policies disproportionately affect and/or target certain students and families?

What alternatives to suspension might you implement? Consider the following policies:

- Homework
- Dress Code
- Suspension
- Tardiness
- Detention/Saturday School

3. Go deep: For what behaviors are students most often disciplined? At what time in the day and in which locations are students most often disciplined?

Tools

- **Alternatives to Suspension Fact Sheet: Targeted Tier II Interventions**
  https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/sped/alt/058197
- **PBIS World Alternatives to Suspension**
  https://www.pbisworld.com/tier-2/alternatives-to-suspension/

Resources

- **PBIS Technical Assistance Center**
  https://pbis.sccoe.org/home/Pages/default.aspx
- **"Don't Suspend Me: An Alternative Discipline Toolkit"**
  https://www.middleweb.com/36090/a-principals-toolkit-for--suspension-alternatives/

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- Haight, W., Kayama, M., & Gibson, P. A. (2016). Out-of-school suspensions of black youths: culture, ability, disability, gender, and perspective. *Social Work, 61*(3), 235–243.
- Losen, D., Hodson, C., Keith II, M. A., Morrison, K., & Belway, S. (2015). *Are We Closing the School Discipline Gap?* The Center for Civil Rights Remedies.
- Noltemeyer, A. L., Ward, R. M., Mcloughlin, C. (2015). Relationship between school suspension and student outcomes: A meta-analysis. *School Psychology Review 44*(3), 224-240.
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SECTION AUTHORS AND CONTENT SPECIALISTS:
THERESE SALGADO & DR. ERICA BOAS

Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism results in lost instructional time and, as a result, decreased student achievement. This section defines chronic absenteeism and provides an explanation of why and how chronic absenteeism is a result of multiple equity issues for particular student groups. The section ends with an example of a real life promising practice and relevant tools and resources.

What is Chronic Absenteeism?

The passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015 required that schools attend to the role that school climate, student engagement, and student health play in student achievement. Schools use rates of student absenteeism as an indicator to measure student engagement. Chronic absenteeism is a measure of how many students miss a defined number of school days (often around 15 or more days) for any reason. It is not the same as truancy (Attendance Works, 2016). Research shows that in addition to lower academic achievement, chronic absenteeism is associated with a number of negative consequences for students, including disengagement from school, course failure, and increased risk of not graduating (Garcia & Weiss, 2018). In California, recent research shows that rates of chronic absenteeism are slowly increasing.

As explained by the California Department of Education:

> The Chronic Absenteeism indicator is based on the number of students who were absent for 10 percent or more of the total instructional school days. For example, most schools have 180 instructional days; if a student is absent 18 or more of those days, the student would be considered chronically absent. The Dashboard reports chronic absenteeism only for grades K–8 (i.e., it is not an indicator reported for high schools). However, the viewer can access chronic absenteeism rates for high schools on DataQuest since it reports these rates for all grade levels (K–12).

There is a correlation between student achievement and number of days a student is absent; the reason for the absence is of little significance when it comes to measuring loss of instructional opportunity (Ginsburg, Chang, & Jordan, 2014). Therefore, in calculating the rate of chronic absenteeism no distinction is made between unexcused absences (truancy) and excused absences. By measuring chronic absenteeism, then, students who may be at risk for chronic absenteeism can be identified, and support for the student and family can be provided.

Equity & Chronic Absenteeism

According to a report by the U.S. Department of Education, chronic absenteeism in early childhood can prevent children from reaching important milestones. In addition, chronic absenteeism is a better predictor of whether students will graduate from high school than test scores alone. As efforts are put into place to improve school attendance, it is important to remember that students and families may face considerable barriers when it comes to attending school. When examining the data on chronic absenteeism, it is necessary to continue to ask "why" we see patterns in the data across student demographics that are aligned with overall academic outcomes for the state. According to a 2016 report by the National Association for Elementary School Principals (NAESP), there are six common causes of chronic absenteeism across the grade levels:

1. Poor grades
2. Bullying
3. Illness
4. Caring for another family member
5. Mental or emotional health issues
6. Difficulties securing housing or food

In addition to the above, the U.S. Department of Education reports reliable transportation as another barrier to attending school.

It is paramount to keep at the forefront what this list shows: the most common reasons for absenteeism exist beyond the control of students and their families. The highest rates of chronic absenteeism in California are experienced by students who are African American (22.5%), Native American (21.8%), and Pacific Islander (20.2%). Black children are 40 percent more likely than their Hispanic peers to be chronically absent. The reasons vary, but can include: poor health, limited transportation, and a lack of safety—which can be acute in economically disadvantaged communities and areas of poverty (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2019).

When looking at the data, it can be further observed that the above named student groups are also the racial/ethnic groups who experience the most socioeconomic disadvantage. It is notable that the common causes of chronic absenteeism listed above are deeply rooted in racial and economic inequalities that reach far beyond schools. These include food insecurity, chronic health problems/poor health care, lack of access to affordable health and child care.[1] If chronic absenteeism is an indicator that a student is experiencing loss of instructional opportunity and may not graduate from

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[1] The detrimental consequences of structural health inequities have been made radically visible in the COVID-19 period when African Americans have disproportionately accounted for 34% of COVID-19 deaths but make up 13% of the U.S. population (Aubrey, 2020). African Americans are more likely to experience poverty (and, therefore, stress) and have underlying health conditions (see interview with Dr. Uché Blackstock). Like other institutionalized racial inequalities, these health disparities have a long history in the United States.

Figure 17. 2018-19 Statewide Chronic Abenteeism Rates
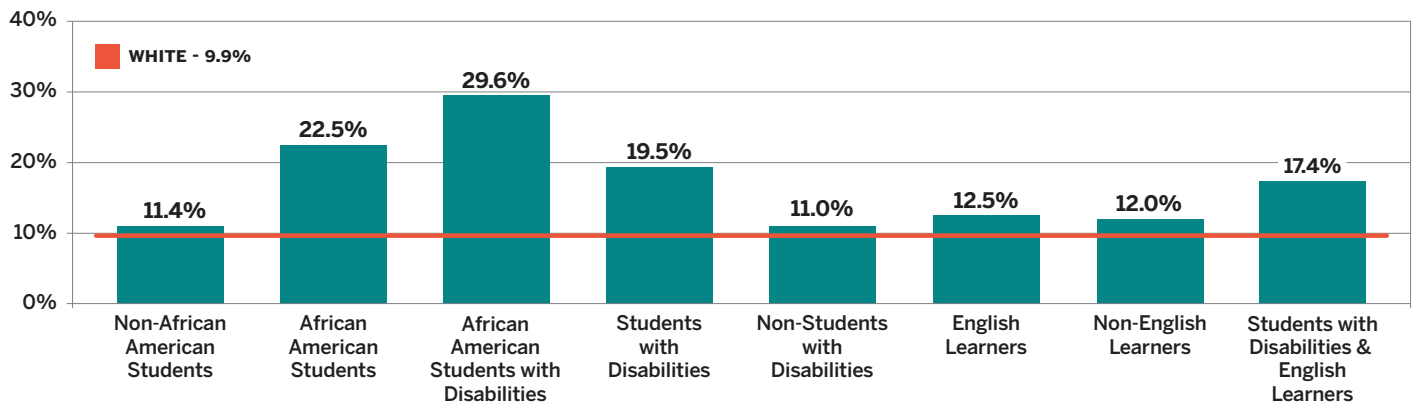
high school (and will therefore be more likely to work a low-wage job or spend time in prison), then focusing attention on chronic absenteeism is worth every effort. Focused work to address chronic absenteeism has the potential to positively impact educational success rates. Yet, given the causes of chronic absenteeism for students, it is vital that students and their families be afforded the understanding and support needed to regularly attend school. The following practices can guide work to positively respond to barriers to attending school.

Promising Practices

While not every one of these causes can be remedied through schools, there are practices that can be used to support students and families and help them to be at school more often. The general philosophy behind these practices is to establish processes and routines for regularly checking the attendance data, following up with students and families in a caring and supportive way, understanding the unique situation each student experiences, and creating ways to build a more inclusive and welcoming culture where every person feels a sense of belonging. AttendanceWorks is an organization that focuses exclusively on issues surrounding chronic absenteeism. They conduct research and develop action-oriented tools for schools and districts to address their equity needs around chronic absenteeism.

Alum Rock Union School District – An Equity Case Study

Between early 2019 - 2020, the Alum Rock Union School District (ARUSD) in San Jose, California engaged in an in-depth, long-term project to address their seemingly perpetual problem of chronic absenteeism. The ARUSD group knew they needed to do something differently in order to bring their attendance numbers up. With guidance from the Differentiated Assistance and District Support team, they began work using an improvement science approach to investigate their system. Based on findings from their systems exploration, they fine-tuned their attendance tracking system and created routines to cultivate a feeling of increased belonging at their sites. The details of their process were intrinsic to their success, and are further elaborated in the ARUSD equity case study.

Reflection Questions

1. What are the pervading beliefs in your school/district about why students are chronically absent from school? How do these beliefs play a role in how attendance is managed?
2. What are your current policies and practices for encouraging attendance? If you have reward systems in place, how are you ensuring that these rewards are equitable?
3. Given the common reasons for chronic absenteeism presented above, how might you change your current practices so that students can come to school with greater frequency?
4. What is your current process for tracking attendance? What codes do you use? Are they consistent for all students? How might you make your attendance tracking process more individualized so that you are following up with students and families?

Tools

- **California Department of Education Chronic Absenteeism Indicator Explanation** https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/cm/documents/chronicabsenteeism.pdf
- **Alum Rock Union School District Attendance Tracker** https://tinyurl.com/ARUSDAttTra
- **The Education Trust – West: Chronic Absenteeism Fact Sheet** https://tinyurl.com/y48c8qgf

Resources

- **8 Ways to Prevent Chronic Absenteeism** https://www.educationdive.com/news/8-ways-to-prevent-chronic-absenteeism/527794/
- **Attendance Works: Take Action for Educators webpage** https://www.attendanceworks.org/take-action/educators/

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- U.S. Department of Education. (2016/2019). Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools: A hidden educational crisis. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education.

SECTION AUTHOR & CONTENT SPECIALIST: DR. ERICA BOAS

Academic Achievement: The Opportunity Gap

Within the California school accountability system, "academic achievement" generally refers to the outcomes of the annual performance of students on English Language Arts, math, and science standardized assessments. Yet, in order to think and talk about equity with respect to student achievement, we must place emphasis on the inputs of student achievement. This section begins with a general definition of the measures of "academic achievement", then provides a description of factors that influence academic achievement, presents a discussion of the "achievement gap" vs. the "opportunity gap", and concludes by highlighting promising practices and tools for addressing the disparities in academic achievement.

Defining Academic Achievement

The California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) system comprises several tests, including a set of California Alternate Assessments (CAA) for students with disabilities. In addition to the CAASPP system, there is also the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) system, which is used to assess the progress of the English language proficiency of students whose primary language is not English. (For more information, see the CAASPP website.) Scores on these assessments indicate the levels at which individual students and student groups are at, above, or below standard. At a glance, it is obvious that there are large disparities in the test scores among the classified student groups. (**Figures 18 & 19**)

However, while the state data may define academic achievement using these standardized assessments, there are far more ways in which academic achievement can be demonstrated. There is little agreement over which measures best demonstrate student academic achievement. Some common measures of academic achievement include grade point average (GPA), course placement,

postsecondary enrollment, meeting of A-G requirements, SAT scores, or attainment of a high school diploma. These data should be locally available to educators, and once attained, it will be vital that schools and districts disaggregate the data to investigate disproportionality (see section "Using Data to Inform Equity").

Opportunity Gap vs. Achievement Gap

The data points outlined above may clearly show achievement disparities among student groups, yet the way we think about the factors that influence the outcomes of academic achievement are what need to be investigated as we work toward equity. Common factors that are identified as the causes for unequal outcomes include individual traits such as motivation and grit, social factors such as peer influence and family education levels, structural aspects such as school/teacher quality, and access to an engaging and rigorous curriculum. How we define the problem, and where we place responsibility for the problem will lead us to where we find the solution. Therefore, if we place responsibility on an individual student, our solutions will focus on changing that student. If we blame groups of students or their families, then our solutions

Figure 18. 2018-19 Statewide CAASPP Scores – ELA

Legend: EXCEEDED & MET | NEARLY & NOT MET | WHITE - EXCEEDED & MET
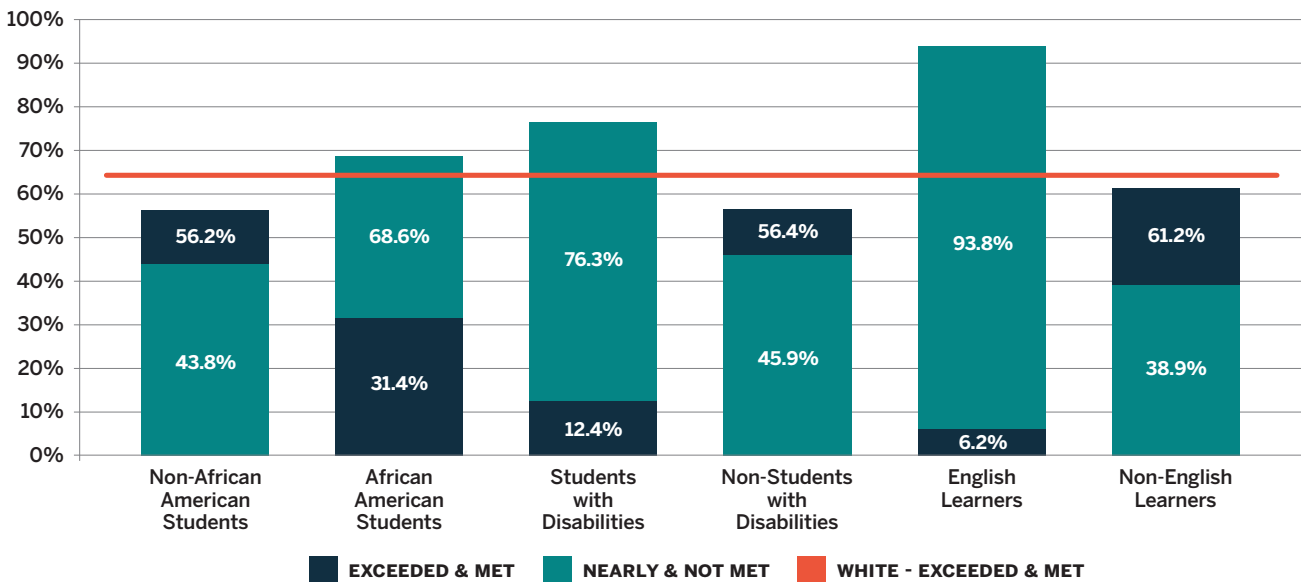
Figure 19. 2018-19 Statewide CAASPP Scores – Math
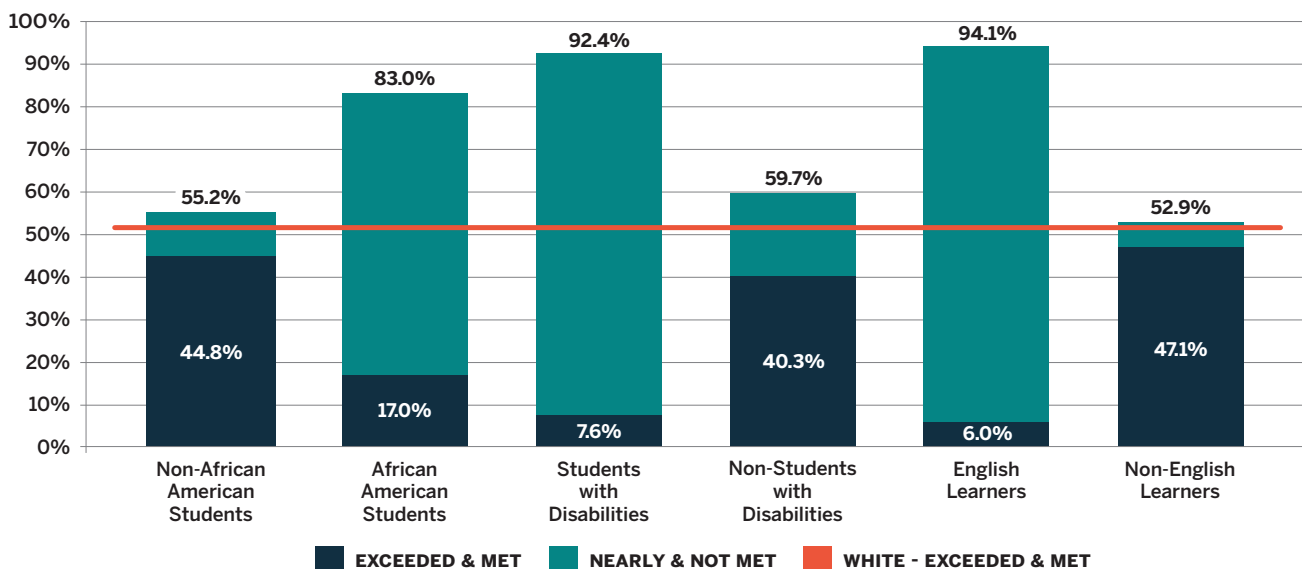
will logically be focused there. However, if we understand and can see that the problem lies in the system that has been created and maintained to produce predictable, patterned outcomes, then we will seek solutions to change the system.

If the fundamental work of educational equity is to change systems of oppression, then we must continue to place our attention on those systems, rather than on individual people or their cultures. The system is made up of policies, routines, practices, and structures that perpetuate inequity. It may be easier for some to focus the burden of responsibility on the families of students or the students themselves using an individual or cultural deficit framework. Placing blame for low achievement on an individual does make room to see systemic root causes of the "opportunity gap" (Carter & Welner, 2013).

When we talk about an "opportunity gap" within education, we are compelled to see achievement outcomes less as an individual's ability to perform well in school, and more as the work of a system that creates relevant and engaging opportunities, makes them accessible, and supports students in their pursuit (see this video and article). However, as Carter and Welner (2013) explain, opportunity has much to do with the web of economic, social, health, and geographic factors into which a person is born. Therefore, the term itself (like the term "pushout"), helps us to keep our equity work focused on how structures and processes are set up to have disparate outcomes.

Promising Practices

In a 2013 Stanford report, Wentworth, Kessler, and Darling-Hammond outline three main characteristics of elementary schools that were successful in closing this gap:

- Each school was led by a dedicated principal who supported teacher recruitment and development, thus ensuring the

school had a solid foundation to provide challenging learning experiences to students based on their individual strengths and needs.

- Each school made the most of scarce resources, ensuring that all resources (people, time, materials, and funding) were aligned with the district's goals.
- Each school was marked by a high degree of relational trust among all members of the school community

Schools of Opportunity is a program of the National Education Policy Center that aims to recognize schools that engage in robust work to close the opportunity gap for their students. The schools that are recognized by the program are those that are not necessarily resource rich, yet they strive for and achieve equity and excellence. They base their criteria for selection on the principles of the book *Closing the Opportunity Gap*. From a Washington Post article by Valerie Strauss (2019), she highlights a California school recognized by the Schools of Opportunity Program:

Social Justice Humanitas in Los Angeles is designed around small learning communities that address broad, inter-disciplinary themes. Ethnic Studies has been part of the core educational program since the school opened. In addition to elective options for students to take Mexican American Studies and African American studies, all social studies classes use an Ethnic Studies framework as a foundation for building their curriculum, thus giving students access to four years of culturally sustaining learning opportunities. The school has virtually eliminated the need for suspensions by embracing restorative practices that address socio-emotional needs and that grow mindfulness.

Academic Achievement: The Opportunity Gap

Reflection Questions:

1. What are your deeply held beliefs about why the "achievement gap" persists? Does this change when you think in terms of an "opportunity gap"?

2. Who is achieving at your site? Who is not? How is this defined? How are students supported?

3. How do you define achievement beyond and in tandem with traditional measures of academic success?

Resources

- **Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education: How to Close the Opportunity Gap: Key Policy Recommendations**
https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Opp%20Gap%20Policy%20Recommendations.pdf

- **NEA Strategies for Closing Achievement Gaps**
http://www.nea.org/home/13550.htm

- **Closing the Achievement Gap: Resources for School Administrators Looking to Make a Change**
https://soeonline.american.edu/blog/closing-the-achievement-gap

Tools

- **CA-1 Course with Micro-Credential Badge: "Reading Instruction that Develops Proficient Readers"**
https://www.learningdesigned.org/node/975/initiative-resources

- **Schools of Opportunity Selection Criteria**
http://www.schoolsofopportunity.org/selection-criteria

Select References

- Carter, P. L., & Welner, K. G. eds. (2013). *Closing the Opportunity Gap: What America Must Do to Give Every Child an Even Chance*. Oxford University Press.

- Wentworth, L., Kessler, J., Darling-Hammond, L. (2013). *Elementary Schools for Equity: Policies and Practices that Help Close the Opportunity Gap*. Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education.

SECTION AUTHOR & CONTENT SPECIALIST: DR. ERICA BOAS

Graduation Rate

This section provides an overview of the California Dashboard Graduation Rate Indicator. It makes a case for using the term "pushout" in place of "dropout" and highlights the causes for non-graduation. Relevant promising practices, tools, and resources are offered.

Graduates, Non-graduates, and Equity

The percentage of students graduating from a high school each year reflects the capability of a school system to meet the varying needs of high school students once they enter the school. The graduation rate indicator is therefore the measurement of several factors that lead to a student graduating or not graduating. From an equity perspective, it is necessary to learn the causes of non-graduation; that is, an examination of equity and graduation rates focuses on how schools are teaching and treating those students who are not graduating. An equity lens emphasizes that the system is failing students and not the other way around. For this reason, "pushout", coined by George Dei in 1997, aptly describes what happens to students who do not graduate from high school. In a 2015 article he writes, "The messages sent by schools—what is valued and deemed legitimate knowledge, what is discussed or not discussed in classrooms, what experiences and identities count or do not count, and how students are perceived by educators" lead to non-graduation for a good number of students.

Generally stated, the high school graduation rate is the percentage of students who enroll in a high school in the 9th grade and graduate from that high school with a standard diploma four years later. California's 2018-19 graduation rate for all students at 84.5% parallels the national graduation rate (84.6% in 2016-17 according to NCES). When we compare graduation rates across student groups, it is easy to see that there are differential outcomes for student groups. For example, **Figure 20** shows that while California-wide the graduation rate in 2018-19 was 84.5% for all students, while for African American students it is almost a full eight percentage points lower. (See **Figure 20** for graduation rates for students with disabilities and English learners.)

In addition to academic results, high school graduation is an important predictor for overall health outcomes. High school graduates have less chance of being in prison (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics), greater financial stability as adults (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), and fewer health problems (Hahn, et. al., 2014). With respect to outcomes in California, rates of graduation show disproportionality across race/ethnicity, language, and disability status, as shown in **Figure 20**.

To change graduation rates, the factors influencing graduation outcomes must first be uncovered. After all, a graduation rate is simply an outcome in statistical form which reflects the extent to which a school, district, or county has put into effect the complex processes and structures required to achieve equity for its students. Therefore, a close, comparative investigation of the graduation rates of student groups can help educators and community members to ask equity questions and direct explorations of the educational process through those questions. Like all equity work, this is a robust, multidimensional undertaking that requires deep reflection, understanding, collaboration, and patience.

Finally, it is also very important to remember that not every student can stay in school to earn their high school diploma. It may just not be possible. For this reason, there are alternatives to a high school diploma. However, the efforts made to welcome students into schools and cultivate learning environments that are engaging and respectful will result in more students graduating from high school with a diploma.

Presented below are promising practices of systemwide efforts put in place to address inequalities in graduation rates.

Promising Practices
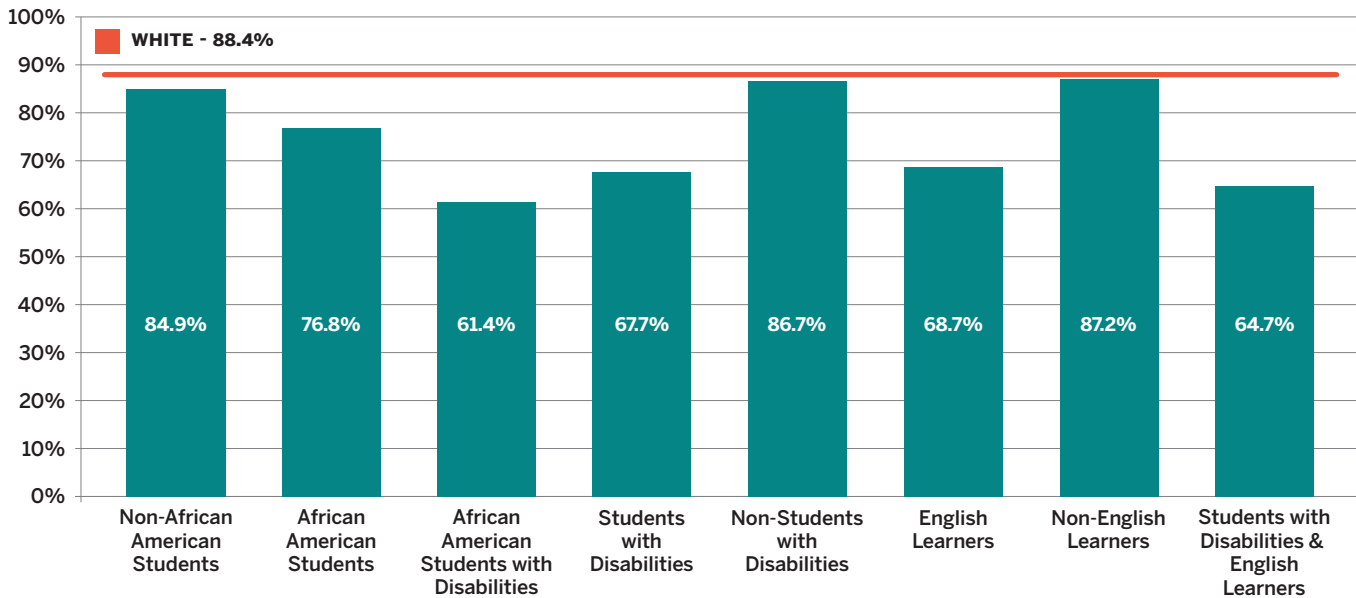
Graduation Equity Initiative (Washington State)

"We did not focus on graduation rates, we focused on meeting the needs of kids," writes Mary Beth Tack, Director of Teaching and Learning for the Kelso School District in Washington State. Changing student outcomes requires shifting the focus from the outcome to the student, and this is the core facet of Washington state's Graduation Equity Initiative. This well-developed initiative can be used as a model for schools, districts, and counties hoping to improve graduation rates, and it makes public some of the tools used to conduct the necessary investigation and actions to improve graduation outcomes. Starting with a committee of community members, teachers, administrators, parents and students, they used a data reflection protocol to take a deep dive into their data. Next, they expanded their system's options and opportunities so that they could better meet the needs of all of their students. From this, they developed a "road map" to provide educators with a clear navigation process so that they could better address: early learning and intervention, improved classroom instruction, and focused on getting students ready for career, college, and community engagement.

Early Warning Indicators

Diplomas Now, a research-based program focused on improving

Graduation Rate

Figure 20. 2018-19 Statewide Graduation Rates

Bar chart showing 2018-19 Statewide Graduation Rates with a WHITE - 88.4% reference line:
- Non-African American Students: 84.9%
- African American Students: 76.8%
- African American Students with Disabilities: 61.4%
- Students with Disabilities: 67.7%
- Non-Students with Disabilities: 86.7%
- English Learners: 68.7%
- Non-English Learners: 87.2%
- Students with Disabilities & English Learners: 64.7%

graduation rates across the nation, provide evidence that looking out for "early warning indicators", or signs that a student is falling off track for graduation can be effective for keeping students in school. These early warning signs include:

- Attendance: less than 85% attendance
- Behavior: an unsatisfactory behavior mark or suspension
- Course performance: an F grade in English or math

Reflection Questions:

1. Who are the "non-graduates", and how is disproportionality presented in these outcomes?
2. What practices are currently in place to support student groups who have been identified as being "at-risk" for being pushed out of school? In your context, are there practices at the school site that may stifle student groups?
3. What are the practices in place to support students to graduate?

Resources

- **What Works Clearinghouse: Preventing Dropout in Secondary Schools**
  https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/24
- **A Practitioner's Guide to Implementing Early Warning Systems**
  https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northwest/pdf/REL_2015056.pdf

Tools

- **Panorama Education: Creating a Portrait of a Graduate**
  https://tinyurl.com/y84okmlt

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SECTION AUTHOR & CONTENT SPECIALIST: DR. ERICA BOAS

College and Career Readiness

In this section, the California State Dashboard College/Career Readiness Indicator (CCI) is explained. Recommendations for engaging in inquiry on the CCI and your system, a promising practice, tools, and resources are offered.

What is the College/Career Readiness Indicator?

As California transitioned to the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), the measurements for achievement also changed. One of the measures put into place is the College/Career Readiness Indicator (CCI) for high schools. According to the California Department of Education, "College or career readiness means completing rigorous coursework, passing challenging exams, or receiving a state seal." (See the 2019 CDE Dashboard Technical Guide, p. 79-91.) While related to the Graduation Rate Indicator, the overarching purpose of the CCI is to provide a measure that will help schools and districts gauge the ways in which the courses of study offered to students support them in becoming career and college ready. To this end, students can meet one of three standards: Prepared, Approaching Prepared, and Not Prepared. In an early report exploring the potential of this indicator, Bae and Darling-Hammond (2014) write:

> If we are thoughtful about how to include meaningful career-ready indicators in the LCAP and in the high school graduation and transition systems, coupled with college indicators, we will be able to encourage the provision of higher quality learning opportunities to students. Such advances will also signal to students, parents, educators, and business and industry leaders that there are multiple pathways to postsecondary success and the ultimate goal of secondary education is to prepare all students equally for college and careers (p. ii).

The idea that *all* students will be prepared for college *and* careers is the core equity concept of this indicator. Because there are several ways to meet "Prepared", undertaking intentional equity work that will result in improved outcomes requires attention to the multiple pathways offered by schools and districts. The California outcomes on the CCI reflect vast disparities among the student groups. With only 23.7% of African American students, 16.8% English Learners, and 10.8% of students with disabilities meeting "Prepared", we have a clear challenge (**Figure 21**).

It is important to note that while the indicator itself is one that affects high schools, the work needed to change these outcomes is the responsibility of all levels of education. Like graduation rates, the outcomes reflected on the CCI are the result of a continuum of opportunity disparities that start long before students reach high school graduation. So although this section focuses on work done at the high school level to advance equity for students, elementary and middle schools must also consider how they can ensure that all students transition to the next level of schooling prepared to succeed.

Recommendations for Learning more about your System and the CCI

The following are steps to take that can help you to better understand where the equity gaps exist in meeting "Prepared" on the CCI.

- Familiarize yourself with the criteria for the CCI.
- Disaggregate the data to investigate outcomes for those student groups not meeting prepared (see section Using Data to Inform Equity). It is likely that your school/district's data reflect the state data. Take an intersectional approach to see if you can dig deeper. For example, if your students who are English Learners are routinely not meeting "Prepared", dig deeper and look intersectionally to see if these ELs are also SWD or Latinx students, for example.
- Conduct a transcript analysis/audit of past students to examine why students did not meet the standards. Often, students are not offered a sequence of courses that would allow them to complete the A-G requirements necessary for admission to a UC/or CSU school. (Student Profile Audit)
- Learn more about the feeder middle school(s) and how their system is preparing students to enter high school.
- Conduct empathy interviews with counselors, teachers, and students to find out more about the supports students receive in their coursework.
- Investigate the system from a high level to learn more about how students are academically tracked and what happens to them once they are on a specific track. (See reflection questions.)

Promising Practice:

The School Counselor Leadership Network (SCLN), a collaborative of the Riverside County Education Collaborative (RCEC) is a program that helps schools support students in preparing for college and career after graduation from high school. In this program, the role of school counselors is seen as critical to the work of preparing students for college and/or careers after high school. The purpose of the network is to, in their words, "provide

College and Career Readiness

Figure 21. 2018-19 Statewide College and Career Readiness Rates
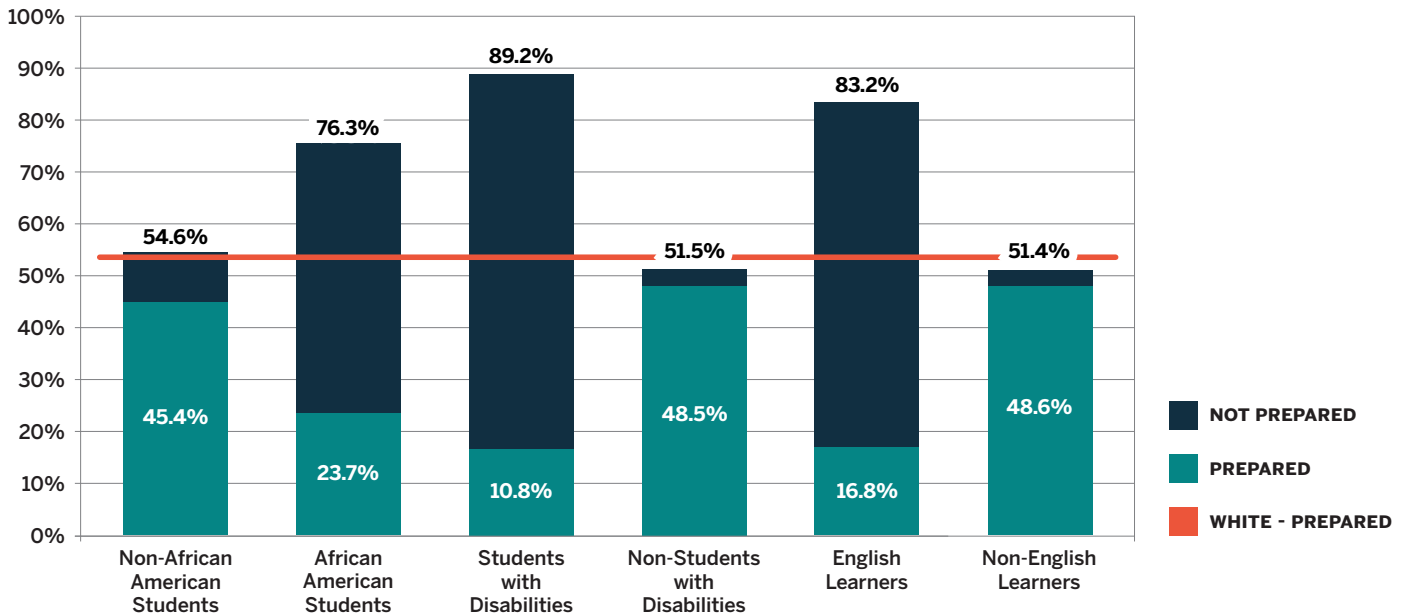
opportunities to collaborate and share best practices to create a high performing culture, promoting college and career readiness. Our goal is for Riverside County students to be successful in completing a rigorous course of study in pursuit of a seamless transition to postsecondary education." One of a variety of programmatic activities, the RCEC leads an in-depth transcript audit with the SCLN where they take an intersectional dive into their district/school data to investigate the ways in which their system may be resulting in disproportionality across student groups. Equipped with this information on the results their system is producing, the counselors are then able to address equity problems at their root causes. (See the linked websites for more information and materials.)

Reflection Questions:

1. What is the tracking system in place at your school/district? Does this process set up students to meet career AND college readiness? Is it flexible so that students can changetracks?

2. How are checkpoints put in place for students as they progress through their high school years? Who checks in with them?

3. What are the beliefs behind student achievement, especially for those student groups who have been historically and currently failed by the education system? What language is used (or not used) to talk about them?

4. How is the balance met between Career/Technical Education (CTE) and College Preparation Education? Are there certain students who are assumed to be on one track versus the other?

Resources

- **The Education Trust - West: Educational Opportunity Audit & Blueprint for Action Resources** https://west.edtrust.org/diploma-matters-educational-opportunity-audit-blueprint-for-action-resources/
- **California Department of Education 2019 Dashboard Technical Guide** https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/cm/documents/dashboardguide19.pdf
- **Riverside County Education Collaborative College and Career Ready** http://www.rcec.us/

Tools

- **Student Profile Audit Protocol** https://docs.google.com/document/d/1YrtirNBm0hru8Fc-l5i7ucKrRszhOMidH55cXXZqkDCo/edit

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SECTION AUTHOR & CONTENT SPECIALIST: DR. ERICA BOAS

Student Engagement

This section explores the vital role that student voice plays in school decision-making processes. At the heart of this work is cultivating strong and healthy relationships between students and the adults that make up a school community.

What is Student Voice?

"Those closest to the pain should be closest to the power, driving & informing the policymaking," tweeted Representative Ayanna Pressley on June 30, 2018. This includes students and the decisions about the education system that directly impact them. Students who are Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) have been historically marginalized and excluded from positive learning environments that value their cultures and knowledge. It is imperative that these students in particular are brought to the table in decision-making activities. Education Code sections 52060 and 52066 guarantee that students have the right to be involved in a formal process to develop their districts' LCAP which includes the formulation of a plan for student engagement as outlined in the Statement of Model Practices for the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) Priority 5: Student Engagement. These include: implement a plan to address student engagement; seek to understand the needs of all students; and support families and students through positive learning environments. The foundation for the model practices is the need for strong positive relationships between students, their families, and schools.

Student-Teacher Relationships

There is research on the positive and negative impact that student teacher relationships can have on student learning. In their analysis of the research related to student teacher relationships and their impact on learning and student engagement, Roorda, Koomen, Split and Oort (2011), found that a negative relationship can impact student attendance and participation in school. Hattie (2009) found a student teacher relationship can have a positive impact and suggests that it is up to teachers to provide a caring and understanding relationship to improve student engagement and achievement.

According to the National Council of Teachers of English (2018):

> The first days of school should be centered around building community through authentic relationships. We believe that students need to trust their teacher in order for the relationship to give way to learning and growth. It is important for teachers to build these relationships responsibly by treating their students with respect and using a culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP). Building these trusting relationships with students provides an inclusive environment and builds a sense of belonging for students in the school community.

Creating space for student voice is an essential component of building a strong positive teacher student relationship. By holding interviews and conducting surveys, schools and districts can create a space for student voice. Student engagement can be increased by expanding opportunities for collaboration and decision making in the classroom (Mitra, 2007). The Center for American Progress website offers a guide with case study examples on Elevating Student Voice in Education. The benefits of student voice as part of the school culture are an increase in student agency, student autonomy in learning, and the creation of independent learners. In the classroom, teachers should enable students to be active participants in their learning. Effective teachers respond to student feedback by adapting their instruction to meet the needs of all learners.

Another method schools can use to build student voice, engagement and belonging is to expand student leadership. Student leadership needs to be shared and not be represented by a handful of students. Leadership potential is inherent in all students, not just a few. When students listen and represent other students, they are taking on an increased responsibility

> *Effective schools build a culture where teachers and students work together, and where student voice, agency and leadership are understood as inter-related factors that contribute to the notion of empowerment... When students experience a sense of belonging and significance through voice, agency and leadership, they are likely to articulate their sense of empowerment...*
>
> **– Victoria State Government Education and Training (2020)**

Student Engagement

in the school community. An example of this work can be found in Californians for Justice. For over 20 years Californians for Justice has worked at ensuring that student voice is listened to and engaged in changing public education, the community, and youth leadership. Realizing how student voice can be not just informative but transformative is shown in the Californians for Justice Spectrum of Student Engagement.

Reflection Questions:

1. To what extent does your school/district engage student voice so that is not just heard, but listened to in authentic ways that result in change? What are some examples of how student voice is engaged?
2. How are the practices and behaviors of "positive student-teacher relationship" understood in your context?
3. How can schools and classrooms increase opportunities in achievement and engagement while providing a sense of belonging and a sense of independence and responsibility for each student's own education?

Tools

- CA-1 Course with Micro-Credential Badge: "Relationship-Centered Schools"
  https://www.learningdesigned.org/node/975/initiative-resources

- Organizational youth decision-making assessment
  http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/c8aa42_b5b4903e19d645e-fbbb8a66d8501d166.pdf

Resources

Californians for Justice:

- **Student Engagement**
  https://caljustice.org/issues/student-engagement/
- **Keeping Students at the Heart of LCFF**
  https://caljustice.egnyte.com/dl/eaxUYNvVPr/
- **Student Voice Matters Video**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hk44_CkE0lA&feature=youtu.be

- **California Youth Leadership Forum**
  https://www.edd.ca.gov/Jobs_and_Training/Youth_Leadership_Forum.htm
- **Elevating Student Voice, Center for American Progress Elevating Student Voice in Education**
  https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2019/08/14/473197/elevating-student-voice-education/
- **Free Child Institute**
  https://freechild.org/YAPTips/
- **Learning from Student Voice: California Youth Truth Student Survey**
  https://youthtruthsurvey.org/lfsv-ca/
- **Victoria State Government Education and Training (2020). Dimension: Empowering students and building school pride.**
  https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/behaviour/engagement/Pages/default.aspx

Books

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SECTION AUTHOR & CONTENT SPECIALIST:
DR. ANNA MARIE VILLALOBOS

Family Engagement

Developing relationships with families and the people who make up the school community is a core equity practice. The Local Control Funding Formula provides guidance on Family Engagement, and this section expands what it means to engage with families so that they are included in decision-making processes and community practices at various levels of school life. Families bring rich knowledge and understanding of their children, and they should be invited in as collaborators and leaders in school life. The section concludes with an expanded offering of resources for cultivating relationships with families.

What is "Family Engagement"?

As one of the strongest predictors of student success, family engagement is an essential component of equity work at all levels of the public education system (Weiss, Bouffard, Bridglall, & Gordon, 2009). According to a 2016 report written by researchers at McREL International for the U.S. Department of Education), family engagement is:

...about building relationships between educators and families and community members. It is an ongoing process of meaningful interaction between schools and families that involves two-way communication and a purposeful focus on supporting student learning.

Family Engagement & Equity

Like all equity work, engaging families requires relationship-building and integrating efforts across different domains of school life. Practices that foster family engagement emphasize bringing diverse families into decision-making processes and creating environments where all kinds of families are welcome and included as partners in processes of schooling, which is different from traditional models of parent involvement. As Weiss, et. al. (2009) point out, an equity reframe of engaging with families is "co-constructed, shared responsibility because meaningful and effective involvement includes not just parents', caregivers', and teachers' behaviors, practices, attitudes, and involvement with the institutions where children learn, but also these institutions' expectations, outreach, partnerships, and interactions with families" (p. 4).

Parent engagement should be an equity practice, and it is essential to ensure that approaches to engaging families are equitable in the first place. That is, to the greatest extent possible, representation of families in decision-making processes should reflect the diversity of the school across categories of race and ethnicity, language, religion, gender, disabilities, gender, and sexuality. While difficult, diverse representation of voice is vital. It is therefore suggested that schools and districts choose and follow an equity--centered family engagement toolkit like the one published by the California Department of Education (see under Tools).

But connecting families to schools in meaningful ways is a complex and challenging undertaking that requires changing how we envision the role of families in the life of schools, listening closely to families, and then taking action to make that vision a reality.

A mental shift from the belief that school leaders alone know what is best for students and families to one that allows families to collaborate in decision-making processes is necessary for fostering effective family engagement. Action taken to engage families must follow from the core idea that families are collaborators and co-leaders in school life. It should remain, however, that family engagement practices continue to include volunteering in the classroom, fundraising, and acting as part of Parent-Teacher Associations, School Site Council, and the like.

Family Engagement

In addition, it is important that meetings are accessible to families with varying needs. This requires that meetings are scheduled during times that allow for families to attend and in spaces that are not only accessible but also welcoming. Child care should also be provided whenever possible, and effort should be made to bring in translators for those who need it. Even if your meetings cannot meet the needs of all families every time, showing that you are making efforts to create spaces of belonging for parents will go far in cultivating meaningful family engagement.

Cultivating Family Engagement

Over the years, educators and researchers have demonstrated that family engagement is key to healthy school life. To support efforts in engaging families, several organizations and individuals have developed toolkits, frameworks, and other resources for developing the structures, processes, and mindsets necessary for engaging families. A select list follows.

Reflection Questions

1. Which families are currently involved in school decision-making? Which are not?
2. How does your school or district currently invite families to collaborate in decision-making and leadership? Are there aspects of the current method that may be barriers to participation? What changes can be put in place so that more families can (and will) participate?
3. What would ideal family engagement look like, feel like, and sound like? How would you know your school or district had achieved this?

Tools/Frameworks

- **California Department of Education Family Engagement Toolkit: Continuous Improvement through an Equity Lens (CA Department of Education)** https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/lc/documents/family-engagement.pdf

- **Family Engagement Framework: A Tool for California School Districts** https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/pf/pf/documents/famengageframeenglish.pdf
- **Toolkit of Resources for Engaging Families and the Community as Partners in Education (Regional Education Laboratory Pacific for the U.S. Department of Education** https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/pdf/REL_2016148.pdf
- **Partners Education in A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family–School Partnerships** https://www2.ed.gov/documents/family-community/partners-education.pdf
- **Reducing Barriers to Family Engagement (Panorama Education)** https://go.panoramaed.com/whitepaper/reducing-barriers--to-family-engagement
- **LCAP Best Practices** https://ccee-ca.org/documents/workshops/CFJ-LCAP-Community-Engagement-Framework.pdf

Resources

- **Families in Schools (Los Angeles, CA)** https://www.familiesinschools.org/
- **Family Engagement Institute (Foothill College, CA)** https://foothill.edu/fei/
- **Dual Capacity-Building Framework (Dr. Karen Mapp)** https://www.dualcapacity.org/
- **National Network of Partnership Schools (Dr. Joyce Epstein)** http://nnps.jhucsos.com/
- **Beyond the Bakesale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies)** https://thenewpress.com/books/beyond-bake-sale
- **School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action (Epstein and Associates)** https://resources.corwin.com/partnershipshandbook
- **Powerful Partnerships: A Teacher's Guide to Engaging Families for Student Success (Mapp, Carver, & Lander** https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/teaching-tools/articles/powerful-partnerships.html#

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SECTION AUTHORS AND CONTENT SPECIALISTS:
DR. ERICA BOAS & JAIME KOO

Glossary

Asset-based Approach
A mindset in which educators view and treat their students for the strengths, gifts, and talents that their students bring into the classroom. "Asset-based teaching seeks to unlock students' potential by focusing on their talents. Also known as strengths-based teaching, this approach contrasts with the more common deficit-based style of teaching which highlights students' inadequacies" (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2018).

Bias
A tendency, inclination, or prejudice towards or against something or someone.

BIPOC
Stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. This term is used "to highlight the unique relationship to whiteness that Indigenous and Black (African Americans) people have, which shapes the experiences of and relationship to white supremacy for all people of color within a U.S. context" (The BIPOC Project). In effect, the term illuminates the fact that the U.S. concepts of race were built on white supremacist notions of Blackness and indigeneity.

CA-1
"A road for schools and districts to follow in their efforts to provide a world-class education for each and every student in the state. CA-1 provides information on effective practices that focus on improving equity overall for underperforming student populations" (CA1 website).

California Equity Performance and Improvement Program (CEPIP)
A two year, 2.5 million dollar grant authorized in 2018 by Assembly Bill 99 to "support and build capacity within County Offices of Education (COEs), Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and schools to promote equity for disadvantaged student populations in California schools."

California School Dashboard
A tool that "provides parents and educators with meaningful information on school and district progress so they can participate in decisions to improve student learning." The California School Dashboard is where much of the data seen in the *W2EPB* has been sourced.

California Statewide System of Support
The objective of the California Statewide System of Support is to support Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and their schools in meeting the needs of each student they serve, with a focus on building local capacity to sustain improvement and effectively address disparities in opportunities and outcomes using models of continuous improvement.

California Way, The
The California Way is the belief of the California State Board of Education that education decisions should be state driven, not federally driven.

Continuous Improvement
An ongoing effort to improve services or processes within an organization. These efforts, methodically integrated into daily work of individuals, are consistently measured to understand what is working for whom, and under what conditions.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
Acknowledges and utilizes the cultural and historical backgrounds, knowledge, and experiences of students to inform the teachers' classroom and methodology. Employing culturally relevant pedagogy helps teachers to create a bridge between the identities and communities to which students belong, while simultaneously meeting learning objectives and expectations in the classroom.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy
The cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of racially and ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy
Seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling.

Deficit Perspective/Thinking/Frameworks
Views students through what they do not have, or what they lack, as opposed to seeing them for the assets they possess. This framework is most often applied to students who are BIPOC, students whose first language is not English.

Digital Divide
The gap in access to technology (i.e. a computer, a computer with a webcam, reliable/high-speed internet) among groups, particularly students in the online classroom setting.

Glossary

Disability Rights
Legally ensures accessibility and safety in transportation and the physical environment; equal opportunities in education, living arrangements, and employment; and freedom from discrimination, abuse, and neglect.

Disability Justice
Challenges the idea that any person's worth as individuals has to do with our ability to perform as productive members of society. It insists that a person's worth is inherent and tied to the liberation of all beings (thebodyisnotanapology.com).

Disparity
The unequal outcomes of one racial or ethnic group as compared to outcomes for another racial/ethnic group.

Disproportionality
The underrepresentation or overrepresentation of a racial or ethnic group compared to its percentage in the total population.

Distributed Leadership
Also referred to as "shared leadership," a conceptual framework for undertaking the challenge of transforming leadership processes, attitudes, and arrangements so that they are profoundly relational, shared, and non-hierarchical.

Equality
An understanding that all students "should have access to the same exact opportunities" (Noguera, 2019).

Equity
"Acknowledging students' differences and giving them what they need to be successful" with a focus on both academic and developmental outcomes (Noguera, 2019).

Equity Literacy
"Equity literacy is a framework for cultivating the knowledge and skills that enable us to be a threat to the existence of inequity in our spheres of influence. More than cultural competence or diversity awareness, equity literacy prepares us to see even subtle ways in which access and opportunity are distributed unfairly across race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, language, and other factors." (equityliteracy.org)

Equity-mindedness
A set of attitudes and beliefs that lead to individual and collective behaviors that favor providing people with the resources and support they need to achieve objectives.

Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE)
Accessible education that meets the individual educational needs of students with disabilities.

Gentrification
"The territorial expansion of a wealthy community into a disinvested neighborhood" (City Lab). Gentrification changes the social and cultural makeup of communities to fit those of the neighborhood's newcomers.

Geo Lead
"Geographical Lead Agencies" and resource/initiative lead agencies were established among the county offices of education (COE) to ensure that they are equipped to meet the needs of local education agencies as they address student outcomes within the state priorities.

High Leverage Practices
A group of researched based practices that are foundational to supporting student learning, particularly for students with disabilities in inclusive settings.

Implicit Bias
"Refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner" (Kirwan Institute, 2015). Implicit bias is unconscious, but it still affects our judgement of others based on factors (i.e. race, disability, gender, culture, language). Also sometimes used interchangeably with "unconscious bias".

Improvement Science
Use of the continuous improvement cycle to solve problems in schools. Improvement science helps guide districts to identify problems of practice and analyze root causes of behavioral and academic challenges in schools.

Inclusion Collaborative
An equity resource by the Santa Clara County Office of Education. "The The Inclusive Collaborative of SCCOE promotes a culture that values all children by strengthening, sustaining, and ensuring inclusive practices" (Inclusion Collaborative).

Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)
The goal of IDEA is to provide a free and appropriate education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) for all children with disabilities.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
The range of settings in which a student with a disability may receive their education and services. The least restrictive environment would be the educational setting where the student would spend the most time with their peers.

LGBTQIA+
tands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, plus other groups marginalized due to gender and sexual identities.

Liberatory Design
"Builds from the tradition of human-centered design (aka design thinking), which shifts traditional power dynamics related to decision-making and brings forth deeper innovation and agency amidst institutionalized norms and structures" (National Equity Project).

Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP)
A tool for local education agencies to set goals, plan actions, and leverage resources to improve student outcomes (CDE).

Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)
A system that changed local educational agencies (LEAs) support, funds, and measurement of results needed to help students achieve goals (CDE).

Local Education Agency (LEA)
Usually a school district, sometimes a school.

Marginalization
The placement of students on the "sidelines," further facilitating inequitable treatment of vulnerable students.

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)
An integrated, comprehensive framework that focuses on CCSS, core instruction, differentiated learning, student-centered learning, individualized student needs, and the alignment of systems necessary for all students' academic, behavioral, and social success (CDE).

On-Ramp
A starting point on the way to equity. On-ramps are designed to help schools, LEAs, and COEs discern where they are at in the process of their equity work.

Opportunity Gap
Relating to the "achievement gap," describes the disparities in academic achievement due to an inequitable distribution of resources and support given to marginalized students.

Racial equity
Race would not be a predictor of advantages or disadvantages experienced by an individual. Achieving racial equity entails eliminating inequality rooted in the "policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race" (Racial Equity Resource Guide).

Reflection/Critical Reflection
Giving thought or consideration to one's own beliefs, understanding, or perspective about a topic. Critical reflection involves assessing these beliefs, where they come from, and their interpersonal or social implications.

School to Prison Pipeline
Describes how the excessive use of exclusionary discipline in schools pushes students, particularly Black males, into the prison system.

Social Justice
The equal access to wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society.

Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA)
All school districts and county school offices are mandated to form consortia in geographical regions to provide for all special education service needs of children residing within the region boundaries. Each region, (SELPA), develops a local plan describing how it will provide special education services (CDE).

Systemic Oppression
Manifests on four levels. 1) the individual - (personal beliefs and actions); 2) the interpersonal (interactions between people); 3) the institutional (practices in an organization); and 4) the structural (across institutions). It is a complex interaction of people, practices, institutions, and ideology that perpetuate inequality (National Equity Project).

Targeted Universalism
This framework sets a universal goal while considering all groups involved. The consideration of all groups involves acknowledgement of advantages and disadvantages present.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
With an understanding that "one size does not fit all," UDL is a framework of instruction that takes into account that different students learn in different ways. The goal of UDL curriculum is to be understood by all students and is designed to be flexible for the needs of students (CAST).

District Case Studies

Alum Rock Union Elementary School District – An Equity Case Study on Chronic Absenteeism

In 2019, the Alum Rock Union Elementary School District (ARUSD) in San Jose, California engaged in an in-depth, long-term project to address their seemingly perpetual problem of chronic absenteeism. Having scored "red" (lowest) on the 2017-18 California Dashboard for chronic absenteeism for four student groups, this district began an improvement journey to change these outcomes. The ARUSD group knew they needed to do something differently in order to bring their attendance numbers up. With guidance from the Differentiated Assistance and District Support team, they began work using an improvement science approach. The fine details of their process were intrinsic to their success.

Made up of a team of district administrators coordinated by Barbara Campbell, Director of Academic Services, the ARUSD team started with a root cause analysis (data inquiry, fishbone diagram, Systems Simulation Activity, empathy interviews, and process maps). Knowing that the school sites would be responsible for the groundwork to address attendance, the district team then convened a larger group of site administrators, classified staff, and coordinators to engage in a district-wide root cause analysis with site input using a fishbone diagram as the main tool. From there, all sites were able to provide input while comparing and contrasting the differing factors related to attendance, whether their attendance rates were high or low. When the ARUSD team reconvened to continue their district-level work, they were able to make sense of the problem from multiple levels. Careful not to place blame on parents, students, teachers, or particular sites, they found a number of factors that were possibly leading to high rates of chronic absenteeism across the district. Main challenges included many of the barriers noted above: a gap in strong student-adult relationships or feelings of belonging, transportation challenges in getting to or leaving school, and student or family illness.

All ARUSD sites were encouraged to develop a strategic action to address chronic absenteeism that was based on their school-specific attendance challenge. Not everyone chose to take action in the same way. This is significant since each school had its unique issue and therefore would require a particular response. After testing their action, the cross-site staff would reconvene to share their findings and discuss what they could do differently to improve on their actions.

For example, one elementary school principal, finding that there was a feeling of disconnection for some students, decided to try "greetings at the door" with one of his first grade teachers who was a good teacher but sometimes had a difficult time building close relationships with her students and families. He found that the teacher, students, AND families all benefited from this simple change. Before long, other teachers were adopting this practice, and everyone was reporting a greater sense of belonging. Attendance, and especially rates of tardiness, improved slightly overall. Equally important, the morning vibe at school was positively affected.

At another middle school site, realizing that there were gaps in procedure and communication with students who were "at-risk" for being chronically absent, a principal developed and created routines around an "Attendance Tracker". With this tool, the principal was able to work with the Community Liaison and Office Assistant to create check-in and follow-up processes with students and their families. This allowed the staff to better understand the needs of the students/families and as a result, how to provide support to help them attend school.

ARUSD engaged in equity work to reduce rates of chronic absenteeism. They succeeded in doing so, moving themselves up from a "red" score to "orange" on the 2018-19 California Dashboard for three out of four student groups. Although their main objective was to improve attendance, because they focused on cultivating relationships, their suspension rates across the district also declined. This work required diligence, collaboration, and a willingness of district and site leaders to deeply investigate their data, to focus on the systems that were holding the problems in place (rather than individual people), and to test small, incremental actions before making larger scale changes.

Morgan Hill Unified School District – An Equity Case Study on Leading for Equity and Impacting School Climate

In 2018-19, the Morgan Hill Unified School District (MHUSD) began a focused site-by-site effort to change school climate and develop equity-minded leaders. This case study explores the mindsets and subsequent actions of two leaders, experienced but new to their sites. One is an Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, and the other is a principal placed at a K-8 school in November after the start of the school year.

California Dashboard student data for the 2018-19 school year showed that 51% of the MHUSD student population was Latinx, 40% was socioeconomically disadvantaged, 16% were English Language Learners, and 12% were students with disabilities. Graduation rates for each of these student groups were in the red (lowest), with chronic absenteeism rates only slightly better. These California Dashboard indicators for academic engagement provided clues to a deep-seated equity problem related to how students were experiencing school. Despite years of dedicated

work by teachers, administrators, families, and students, the data showed little change in outcomes for these historically marginalized student groups.

District-Level Leadership for Equity: 'You have to be Willing to be Disrupted'

To learn about the MHUSD system, the newly hired Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, Pilar Vazquez-Vialva, began acquainting herself with the district through exploration of the district- and site-level data, talking to various people, and observing interactions at the schools. In her initial investigation, she saw pockets of strong equity work happening in the district but recognized the need to develop the capacity of site-based leadership across the district so that they could develop confidence in their equity leadership. As she described it, the student equity gap begins with an equity gap in leadership knowledge, perspective, and training. Therefore, to eliminate the student educational equity gap, we must be willing to change the way we lead, which starts with a shift in mindset. To disrupt the system, "you have to be willing to be disrupted," she summed up.

However, one must learn *how* to be disrupted. This happens through practice with self-reflection that facilitates diving deeply into personal biases to understand how those biases may be informing decisions. Providing leadership teams opportunities to experience and practice these processes will develop the skills necessary to sustain equity work. This is what Asst. Superintendent Vazquez-Vialva has set out to accomplish, starting with a principal ready to take on the work to change the climate at his school.

Site-Level Leadership for Equity: Building Capacity for Collaboration

In November 2019, Principal Alex Aasen moved from a middle school (grades 6-8) to a highly specialized K-8 Spanish/English dual immersion Environmental Science magnet school. Setting out to create a more inclusive school climate, one of his first projects was to establish a leadership team that would be equity-focused and informed. Knowing that his first step would be to develop equity-mindedness among the teachers, Principal Aasen began to look for people who could become part of a leadership team that would drive equity work at the school. Teachers he strategically chose were not necessarily those who talked about equity, but those who showed through their behaviors that they cared deeply, were willing to go the extra mile, and made relational space for their students. These teachers also demonstrated a capacity for collaboration and sharing of ideas, were themselves open to trying new ideas, and were supportive of their colleagues. Most importantly, these teachers were able and willing to engage in self-reflection, learn from that reflection, and incorporate their learning into new practices and behaviors.

The leadership team was developed through a set of processes and practices. The team was provided a small stipend to meet once a month after school. During these meetings, they explored

equity problems using Dufour's four critical questions to guide the discussions. An agenda with a built-in minutes log and a section to track action items kept them on track and focused despite the fact that the issues on the table could not often be fully explored--much less resolved--in the time allotted. This work empowered the teachers to drive their own data exploration, to ask their own questions of data and practices, and most importantly, to help them to see equity challenges through a "window and mirror" approach (Bishop, 1990; Style, 1988). Teachers were simultaneously engaged in inward-facing self-reflection while examining outward-facing problems.

For Principal Aasen, one of the challenges in undertaking equity work to change the school climate was to develop *all* teachers to be leaders for equity. As he learned about the teachers at his new school, he observed some behaviors and practices that he thought could be redirected toward equity. When he witnessed a teacher treating a student unfairly in front of the entire class, he knew he had to intervene. Over the course of a series of meetings, Principal Aasen provided honest, evaluative feedback to the teacher for an immediate understanding of the impact such disparate treatment has on the student's self perception and confidence in his own future achievement. Although non-reelecting a teacher is an option, the reason for the low occurrence of non-reelection can be attributed to an established program at the district which provides systematic support and professional development to teachers who receive any area of "needs improvement" on teacher evaluations.

The Teacher Support Network (TSN) aims to "support permanent teachers who have received either a Partially Meets or Does Not Meet Standards" on their teacher evaluations. Through this program, the teacher who has been identified for the program receives a peer mentor "Support Provider" who meets with the teacher to help them develop their pedagogy around two California Standards for the Teaching Profession: 1) student engagement, and 2) assessing and monitoring progress. The core value embedded in the TSN is the belief that teachers can and should be supported to become the best educators possible. Ultimately, working with teachers in this way helps ensure that students then have the best chance for success within the system. It may be necessary at times to release a teacher because their practices do not positively serve students. However, if we understand equity to be a systemic endeavor, then it is absolutely critical that teachers are first provided the support they need in order to improve so that they can develop into the teachers that students deserve.

The MHUSD example demonstrates the complexity and challenges that come with equity work and, within that work, the necessity of developing teachers and leadership who can blaze new trails for equity. More specifically, while still early in this specific process, the MHUSD story shows us that taking steps to transform school climate requires strategy that is built and implemented through strong equity-minded teaching and leadership.

District Case Studies

Mount Pleasant Elementary School District – An Equity Case Study on Improving Academic Outcomes for English Learners

Since 2017, the Mount Pleasant Elementary School District (MPESD), a small K-8 district located on San Jose's east side, has been engaged in a rigorous equity project to improve learning for their English Learner (EL) students. Drawing on methods of improvement science and using cycles of inquiry, MPESD has developed teacher expertise and leadership in their equity work to improve instruction specifically for their EL students. After adopting the EL Education curriculum in 2017, the following school year MPESD initiated their program to engage in cycles of improvement in English and Language Arts (ELA) teaching.

In the 2018-19 school year, MPESD served 1,617 students, with 47% classified English Learners and almost 80% of whom were considered socioeconomically disadvantaged. Their California state assessment scores in ELA for English Learners had increased from the 2017-18 school year, and it was their hope that continued engagement in teacher inquiry would result in sustained improvement. The MPESD case study illustrates how vision, organizational trust, and leadership development are key components in equity work at the systems level. In addition, it also shows the importance of maintaining focused attention on improving instructional practices through activities such as formative assessment, learning walks, and professional development. Finally, MPESD shows us how monitoring progress through data, feedback, and basing actions for next steps on this information is essential to equity work that improves work environments for teachers as well as outcomes for students.

Following the adoption of the EL Education curriculum, in the 2018-19 school year, MPESD initiated Cohort 1 of their "Continuous Cycles of Teaching and Learning" strategy. The strategy was built on the idea that formative assessment is a "promising strategy for helping ELL students with the formidable challenge of learning rigorous academic content at the same time they are learning English" (Alvarez, et. al., 2014, p.21). Yet, early surveys of teachers showed that they understood formative assessment as static, meaning that they used the information gleaned from these assessments to measure student progress, but not necessarily to inform student academic development. Therefore, through engagement with tools and processes based on the six core principles of improvement science, a major part of the MPESD project was to change teachers' mindsets around formative assessment to help them see how these ongoing assessments can profoundly inform improvements in pedagogy and student learning.

In fall 2017 Cohort 1 (made up of nine voluntary elementary and middle school teachers, Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSAs) and administrators) began to learn more about formative assignment while they engaged in cycles of inquiry on their own work with formative assessments in their classrooms. In the 2018-19 school year, they began their in-depth cycles of inquiry, completing a total of four cycles. Administrators and teachers conducted learning walks (or pre-recorded video if that was more comfortable for teachers) where they would observe in classrooms for ten minutes, take notes, and immediately the TOSA would take over instruction of the classroom following the observation. At that time, the principal, teacher, and sometimes the Superintendent would meet in a nearby room to debrief the observation. With the teacher leading the conversation by providing her/his perspective on the instructional strengths highlighted in the observation, the conversation would lead into areas for improvement and, when relevant and possible, an examination of student data. This ten minute debrief would conclude with the teacher describing her/his opinion on what next steps should be taken. Following learning walks conducted with each of the nine classroom teachers, the whole group would convene to engage in collaborative conversations of their findings, their objectives for improving their instruction, and making decisions about their next professional development activity. Integral to their professional development sessions, including three additional sessions held in the evenings and called "Moonlight University", teachers would be provided with collaborative planning time. These sessions would be compensated through their hourly negotiated rate.

One of the standard tools used by MPESD is the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) form that is part of the Improvement Science/continuous improvement model (see PDSA template). It provides a method for planning, developing, and learning from actions taken. Based on what is learned, next steps are planned. This tool is iterative by design, and it aids in tracking which changes to instruction (or processes, procedures, protocols) led to which results. The tool aids in organizing cycles of inquiry by focusing on specific feedback and subsequent actions.

Over the 2019-20 school year, Cohort 1 continued the above processes while recruiting Cohort 2, made up of 11 teachers. In addition, all site administrators participated in this year. In the summer of 2020, they will begin work with teachers from Cohort 1, who planned and facilitated the professional development activities for Cohort 2.

The MPESD teaching for equity process works because at the forefront it is a trust-based model where transparency is evident in all facets of the process. Through this trust, the MPESD model develops teaching, expertise, and leadership capacity at all levels of the district. It is also a learning-by-doing model, which means that there is less time spent in lecture-based learning and more time spent learning through experience.

Oak Grove School District - An Equity Case Study on School Discipline Policies

Between the 2017-18 and 2018-19 school years, Oak Grove School District (OGSD) in San Jose, California successfully lowered their suspension rates for students with disabilities,

OGSD Suspension Rates	All Students	Students w/ Disabilities	Students Experiencing Homelessness	Foster Youth
2018	2.9%	7.5%	10.4%	12.0%
2019	2.8%	7.0%	5.6%	11.3%

students experiencing homelessness, and foster youth. 2018 district-level data showed disproportionality in rates of exclusionary discipline, as presented in the table below. In collaboration with the Santa Clara County Office of Education Differentiated Assistance team over the spring and fall of 2019, OGSD reformed their disciplinary policies and practices, resulting in progress toward equity.

Using their Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) team for the Differentiated Assistance work, the OGSD team was made up of district coaches, central office administrators, site administrators, teachers, and a union representative. Drawing on principles of improvement science, the OGSD team engaged in a root cause analysis, which included a fishbone diagram, district- and site-level data investigation, empathy interviews, and the creation of process maps that led to the development of a district-wide aim. Importantly, at the center of their root cause analysis were deep conversations about equity that required that the team build trust and will to engage in these difficult conversations. As a result of their investigation, the team chose to focus their efforts on lowering suspension rates for middle school students with disabilities because in examining the statistical data and talking to various stakeholders, they saw that students with disabilities in middle school were being suspended for behaviors that were possibly manifestations of their disability.

One of the key findings for the district that emerged from their equity conversations and systems investigation had to do with a document that was known within the district as the "cheat sheet". The "cheat sheet" was a procedural document that standardized the process for discipline, delineating which behaviors would result in which disciplinary actions. The "cheat sheet" had been created many years before by Oscar Ortiz, an administrator in OGSD and was appreciated by many in the district for its guidance in making what was seen as fair decisions on disciplinary action. However, through reflection and discussion, Mr. Ortiz and the OGSD team began to see how this document was resulting in inequitable treatment, despite creating uniformity in disciplinary action.

The "cheat sheet" is a wonderful example of equity vs. equality. In referring to the "cheat sheet", the sole aspect measured was the behavior itself and not necessarily the particular needs of the student. An honest attempt at fairness was resulting in an inability of the system to take into account the individual needs

of each student. Administrators had begun to rely heavily on this document to decide how they would discipline a student, but the consequences were limited as was flexibility around interpersonal interaction. In addition, the OGSD team noticed that some administrators were using the "cheat sheet" more than others, which was resulting in students in some schools being suspended more than students in other classes.

The "cheat sheet", they decided, would have to be put to rest. In a ceremonious farewell, they parted ways with the document, making sure to thank it for its service while declaring it time to say good-bye. In place of the "cheat sheet", the district began trying out alternatives to suspension. These alternative disciplinary methods were based on a book called *Don't Suspend Me* that the team read together. It changed their mindset on the usefulness of suspension as they began to see the harm that can be caused by suspending students. Learning, a sense of belonging, dignity, and relationships are all lost when students are suspended from school. Instead of suspensions, three OGSD middle school principals began having students conduct research and create presentations on the effects of various forms of behavior on other students (e.g. fighting), engage in reflection, and/or work through restorative practices. The three schools used a shared drive with examples of various behaviors that were linked to leveled options for students based on their abilities. For example, if a student was found vaping, they could find a folder on this topic in the shared drive with options for students based on their skill level in reading and writing.

In the 2019-20 school year, data reflected that OGSD had made advancements in their equity-focused work on exclusionary discipline, as reflected in the table below. Notably, these changes in suspension rates moved the district from a "red" score to "orange" on the 2019 Dashboard. Understanding that changing mindsets, practices, policies, and relationships is a long-term project, they continue to take thoughtful steps toward creating the best experience possible for their students. In the words of Amy Boles, OGSD Director of Educational Services, "We really want to feel like nobody intentionally wants to do work that hurts kids. But when the data comes to us, we can't ignore that we have to do something different...I think (our accomplishment) was a testament to a growth mindset and the team."

Equity Audits and Assessments

TOOLS AND SERVICES FOR CONDUCTING EQUITY AUDITS

NO-COST RESOURCES

Name	Description	Link
Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium: Equity Audit	Three Equity Audit tools combined into one file: Criteria for an Equitable School, Criteria for an Equitable Classroom, and Teacher Behaviors that Encourage Student Persistence.	https://maec.org/resource/equity-audit-materials/
OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS): Culturally Responsive Tiered Fidelity Inventory	The purpose of the SWPBIS Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) is to provide a valid, reliable, and efficient measure of the extent to which school personnel are applying the core features of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (SWPBIS).	https://www.pps.net/cms/lib/OR01913224/Centricity/Domain/44/TFI%20CR%202.1.7.pdf
The Education Trust – West: Teacher Equity Rubric	This rubric is intended for use by district leadership teams to reflect on the progress of implementation of their work to ensure that all students— particularly low-income students and students of color—have equal access to excellent teachers.	https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/EDI_EdTrust_TeacherEquityRubric_April2016.pdf
National Academies: Building Educational Equity Indicator Systems: A Guidebook for States and School Districts	This guidebook shows education leaders how they can measure educational equity within their states and school districts.The eq'uity indicators provide a robust picture of the outcomes and opportunities that are central to educational equity from preK through grade 12.	https://www.nap.edu/read/25833/chapter/1
Epoch Education: Equity Audit Rubric	This rubric was designed to support educators assessing curriculum to maintain an equity lens as they review materials. This tool can be used for curriculum or literature adoptions.	https://epocheducation.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/epoch-education_tools-of-the-trade_equity-audit-rubric-2020_may.pdf
Tennessee Leaders for Equity Playbook	This playbook was developed by a statewide team of school, district, community, higher education, and state leaders in Tennessee with substantial feedback received from a comprehensive set of stakeholder groups.	https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/reports/Tennessee-Leaders-for-Equity-Playbook.pdf

NO-COST RESOURCES *(continued)*

Name	Description	Link
Building Equitable Learning Environments	Not an assessment or rubric per se, but a comprehensive library of resources for doing equity work.	https://equitablelearning.org/
PERTS/Copilot-Elevate	Copilot-Elevate is a professional learning program with a built-in survey engine. It gives educators the formative feedback and best practices they need to ensure all of their students can thrive.	https://www.perts.net/orientation/elevate
Louisiana State Personnel Development Grant: Equitable Classroom Practices Observation Checklist	This document is a checklist of 27 specific, observable teacher behaviors that reflect culturally responsive teaching through examples. This tool can be used as self-reflection or by an external observer to become more aware of incorporating such practices.	https://greatlakesequity.org/sites/default/files/201001011005_equity_tool.pdf

NO-COST SERVICES

Name	Description	Link
Western Educational Equity Assistance Center	Assists states, school districts, public schools (including charter and magnet schools), and Tribal Education Departments to plan and implement practices and policies that promote equity and high quality education for all students.	https://www.msudenver.edu/weeac/
The Education Trust – West: Diploma Matters Audit & Blueprint for Action	Works for the high academic achievement of all students at all levels, pre-k through college. They expose opportunity and achievement gaps that separate students of color and low-income students from other youth, and they identify and advocate for the strategies that will forever close those gaps.	https://west.edtrust.org/diploma-matters-educational-opportunity-audit-blueprint-for-action-resources/

Equity Audits and Assessments

FEE FOR SERVICE

Name	Description	Link
Equity & Results	Provides customized, co-designed scopes with organizations/partnerships that lead to results frameworks that identify strategies for racially equitable impact and a path forward.	https://www.equityandresults.com/
kickup	Helps school districts use data to power job-embedded professional learning.	https://kickup.co/
The Education Trust – West	ETW's tools and services help schools and districts transform their policies, practices, and systems to create equitable access to rigorous and relevant coursework while providing the learning environment and supports students need to thrive.	https://west.edtrust.org/educator-engagement/
National Center for Urban School Transformation	NCUST helps urban school districts and their partners transform urban schools into places where all students achieve academic proficiency, evidence a love of learning, and graduate well prepared to succeed in post-secondary education, the workplace, and their communities.	https://ncust.com/
Pivot Learning	Pivot's mission is to partner with educators to design and implement solutions to their greatest challenges, together pursuing greater educational justice.	https://www.pivotlearning.org/

BOOKS

Name	Description	Link
Using Equity Audits to Create Equitable and Excellent Schools	This book contains practical tools and strategies that make intuitive sense to educators and are easy to apply in reducing inequities in schools.	https://us.corwin.com/en-us/nam/using-equity-audits-to-create-equitable-and-excellent-schools/book229384
Equity 101 - The Equity Framework	The author introduces the three essential characteristics of equity: Clear expectations for closing the achievement gap; Commitment to rigorous curriculum; Relationships that promote learning. Ultimately, this book provides a vision and action plan for creating a system where equity can flourish.	https://us.corwin.com/en-us/nam/equity-101-the-equity-framework/book235762

WAYS 2 EQUITY PLAYBOOK

Santa Clara County Office of Education

1290 Ridder Park Drive, San Jose, CA 95131

www.sccoe.org