



ATLANTA  
PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS



Center for Equity  
+ Social Justice

# Equity In Action: All In Atlanta Public Schools Strategic Equity Framework

*(DRAFT)*  
As of 6/13/2022

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*(Subject to Change; Updated As of 6/6/2022)*

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# SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

## A Substantial Remedy for a Substantial Challenge



**Dr. Lisa Herring, Superintendent**

There's an old saying that states, "when something special has been done to create a problem, something special has to be done to fix it."

The very nature of the challenge to rectify past systemic inequities demands that we peer into the vaulted chapters of history. Our exploration, if you will, must examine structural imbalances that persist to this day.

By addressing systemic inequities head-on, and allocating ample resources, the Atlanta Board of Education has placed APS in the position to eradicate the structural imbalances that hamper student academic performance.

The APS Center for Equity and Social Justice (CESJ) is the apparatus in waging this mission. The CESJ strives to be a major player and trusted partner in the push to reconstruct policy, processes and actions in the education arena. The end-goal of this historic effort is for each student to have what they need to be successful—regardless of their zip code.

Not only is the strategic equity framework the first of its kind in the district, but it also has the added distinction of being the first in Georgia.

This framework is critical for a host of reasons. First and foremost, it better positions APS scholars for success in the classroom and beyond. Second, equity fights racism along multiple fronts. Third, it helps to create opportunities in disciplines and fields critical to quality-of-life, such as housing, healthcare, business, transportation, and much more.

From our cutting-edge APS 5 framework that serves as the roadmap to our "North Star", to supplier diversity in the broader economic realm, APS is fashioning a conduit for advancing comprehensive equity using an assortment of tools.

APS is proud of its partnership with the City of Atlanta in pushing equity to the forefront. The City and Atlanta Mayor Andre' Dickens have worked hand-in-hand with APS to deliver mechanisms designed to help close the opportunity gap via new initiatives such as the Operation HOPE Child Savings Accounts (CSA) Program and the Summer Youth Employment Program.

Partnerships like the one APS enjoys with the City of Atlanta, along with robust policy, rigorous tools, and a supportive, results-oriented board will help position the district's strategic equity framework for greater and greater success over time.

What does success look like? A level playing field where one's initiative and performance determines the outcome, not racism and systemic roadblocks.

For our scholars, their families, and others throughout the district, we believe this strategic equity framework constitutes a substantial remedy for a substantial challenge, and will garner handsome returns for many years to come.

# CHIEF EQUITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE OFFICER'S MESSAGE

## The Pursuit of Educational Equity



**Dr. Tauheedah Baker-Jones**  
**Chief Equity & Social Justice Officer**

Our Board sought action in the pursuit of educational equity when it passed the district's first Equity Policy in 2019.

In the policy, the Board directed the superintendent and administration to factor equity into everything the district does. The Board also doubled down on its commitment in August 2020, when they adopted their Commitment to Equity & Anti-Racism Resolution, affirming the Board's commitment to actively interrupt systemic racism and eliminate inequities in our education system.

Our district administration also took up the charge of equity when it outlined the 11 Equity Commitments to guide our efforts in the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. Included were commitments to leverage school improvements to advance equity, ensure equitable funding, and ensure access to equitable learning environments.

Our superintendent, Dr. Lisa Herring explicitly incorporated social justice as the focus and goal of our work and created the district's first office devoted solely to advancing equity in education.

Now, the Center for Equity and Social Justice is

taking our equity efforts even further with the development of this Strategic Equity Framework.

These collective efforts to advance equity within our district illustrate the vital point that no one person or office can advance educational equity across the entire system. We must work collectively to ensure that educational equity is realized within our district. Achieving equity requires attention from everyone—our staff, families, and communities. Our shared goal is to ensure that every student has what they need to thrive, so they are prepared for college, career, and life, and to achieve this, we must be ALL IN!

This Strategic Equity Framework will guide our efforts to ensure that every student thrives, not by accident, but by design. It grounds us in our core values and elevates the structures that are essential for doing the transformative personal, relational, and institutional work necessary to create more equitable learning experiences and outcomes for all students. It also provides us with the philosophical foundation and tools we need to ensure that each undertaking is pursued with equity as a goal.

The aim of this framework is to ensure an excellent, equitable, and engaging educational experience for every child, in every classroom, every day. To accomplish our aim, we must marshal change through teaching, learning, critical inquiry, self-reflection, brave conversations, and courageous leadership. It will also require that we adjust our policies, processes, and practices.

Achieving educational equity within our district is a task with more urgency and purpose than any other body of work before us. I know that the Atlanta Public Schools will do the hard work to get it done and we will work together to engage in the work required of us.

By 2026, through ongoing transformation, we will have narrowed opportunity gaps for our students, particularly for our Black and Brown students—who face the greatest climb. We are in this together, and we will do this together! We are all in!

# Atlanta Public Schools, Center for Equity and Social Justice

**Email:** Equity&SocialJustice@atlanta.k12.ga.us

**Phone:** (404) 802-2867

**Chief Equity and Social Justice Officer** ..... **Dr. Tauheedah Baker-Jones**  
**Administrative Manager**..... **Ashli Reese**

**Office of Equitable Learning Environments (ELE):** Provides technical support and develops programming for the Schools, Academics, and Performance Divisions. Also provides technical support and programming for school-based staff and personnel.

Executive Director ..... Eliana Pereyra  
Administrative Assistant ..... Delicia Heard  
Coordinator, Equitable Schools & Academics ..... Gina Devoe  
Coordinator, Equity-Focused Professional Learning ..... Dr. Emily Watson  
Coordinator, Equitable Student Support Services ..... Rhonda Hudson  
Coordinator, Multilingual Stakeholder Supports ..... Kyle Bolt

**Office of Equity Strategy and Coherence (ESAC):** Provides technical support and develops programming for the Finance, Operations, Talent and Strategy Divisions. Also supports equity-focused communications, public engagement, and data analysis.

Executive Director ..... Natasha Speed  
Program Director, Equity Strategy ..... Ketisha Kinnebrew  
Administrative Assistant ..... Delicia Heard  
Coordinator, Supplier Diversity ..... Brent Bailey  
Coordinator, Workplace Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion ..... Carina Windom  
Coordinator, Equity-Focused Communications and Public Relations ..... Alicia Lurry  
Equity Data Strategist ..... Emily Gell  
Equity Data Strategist ..... Dedrick McCord  
Senior Research Associate ..... Vacant



**Office of Federal Programs:** Builds the district’s capacity to support the needs of our most vulnerable student populations. The office provides technical assistance, program monitoring and resources to district offices and schools to ensure that all children have an opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and to achieve proficiency on the state standards.

Executive Director .....Larry Wallace  
Administrative Assistant.....Dionka Jones  
Fiscal Manager .....Cyrus Tolbert  
Professional Learning & Communications Manager.....Candice Butler  
Program Director, (Title I, Midtown, Therrell, Charter/Partner Schools)..... Dale Butler  
Program Director, (Title IV, Douglass, Washington, Jackson, Mays, North Atlanta)..... Kelly Day  
Program Director, (Title II, Carver, South Atlanta, Private Schools)..... Lyndsay Evans

**Office of The Organizational Ombuds:** Provides a neutral and informal platform for grievance resolution, resource sharing, stakeholder advocacy, and collaborative discussion. The Ombuds Office also examines current APS policies and practices and works to interrupt and eliminate inequitable practices and create inclusive and just conditions for all students.

Organizational Ombuds..... Deidre Smith, JD.  
Policy Analysis & Advocacy Officer .....Dr. Quinton Stroud  
Ombuds Specialist ..... Shonda Liddell



# ROLE OF THE CENTER FOR EQUITY + SOCIAL JUSTICE (CESJ)

The APS Center for Equity and Social Justice (CESJ) is the district's first office **devoted** solely to **advancing equity in education**. The CESJ **supports** the **implementation of equity-focused, evidence-based practices** for entities throughout the district, and **supports district staff** in **ensuring that educational equity** is a **primary consideration** in our problem solving, decision-making, planning and implementation processes. We also **examine** current **policies and practices**, and work to **interrupt and eliminate inequitable practices** to create **inclusive and just conditions** for **all** staff and students. In practice, the Center for Equity + Social Justice (CESJ) is here to:

- **Collaborate** with district leaders, who are responsible for ensuring educational equity, as thought-partners in tackling equity challenges and ensuring that equity is fully embedded into their deliberation and decision-making processes.

We *thought-partner* with district staff by sharing research on best practices, sharing resources for creating or expanding equity, evaluating equity impact and elevating equity considerations, and providing the tools and professional learning necessary to build the equity lens and stamina required to advance equity in our district.

- **Engage** district staff in authentic conversations around equity-focused data, developing goals to define success and action plans to translate intent into action, offering feedback on the equity impacts and considerations inherent in key initiatives, and supporting with the development of mitigation plans to minimize any unintended impact.
- **Support** district leaders in measuring progress toward achieving equity and illuminating district strengths and areas for growth via equity audits, conducting root cause analyses for any patterns of disadvantage and disparate impact, and measuring programmatic effectiveness and return on investment.

## CESJ MISSION

To positively impact the lives of our learners and learning communities so that every single one of our students thrives – not by accident, but by design

## CESJ VISION

Inspire a diverse, inclusive and responsive organizational culture that serves as a national model for intentionally, explicitly, and sustainably addressing challenges of equity in education.

## WHAT IS SOCIAL JUSTICE?<sup>1</sup> HOW WILL IT BE ACHIEVED?

Justice is the concept of fairness. Social justice is fairness as it manifests. Thus, at its core, social justice is about the fair distribution of opportunities and privileges as they apply to individuals within a society.

Social justice in education takes two forms. The first form is about distributing resources fairly, and treating all students equitably, so that every student within the system is achieving at their highest level. Social justice, in this case, is achieved when the district has broken the predictive link between student identity and their outcomes. Simply stated, when your zip code, and positionality relative to the Interstate-20, no longer determines your educational outcomes. When demography is no longer destiny for our children!

The second form of social justice is in how and what students are taught within our schools. When focusing on social justice in education, the curriculum is specifically chosen to broaden students' worldviews through incorporating different ideas and challenging opinions. Instead of ignoring real-world issues such as sexism, racism, poverty, etc., social justice addresses it and encourages students to exercise analytical and critical thinking skills. Commitment to social justice requires that we pay close attention to our choice of curriculum and how it can be used to expand our students' minds. Social justice also requires that all students have access and a voice in the curriculum through mitigation against race, class, ability, language, gender, and other boundaries that often hinders access to the curriculum. Social justice, then, is achieved when all of our students are able to develop a healthy socio-political consciousness, sense of agency, and a positive social and cultural identity through engagement with our curriculum.

The only way to achieve social justice in education is through focusing intentionally and consistently on equity, and ensuring that equity is at the forefront of our decision-making processes.

## WHAT IS EQUITY?

In the Atlanta Public Schools, equity means the quality or ideal of being just and fair, regardless of economic, social, cultural, and human differences among and between persons.

Equity goes deeper than equality to address the root causes of disparity and recognize the reality that each child is different. Students from historically marginalized communities and identity groups, students with special needs and who are academically/artistically gifted, and students from low-socio-economic backgrounds each require differentiated resources and support.

Leading for equity requires that we focus on the groups with the highest needs by people, time, and place. Committing to equity means:

- Creating an organizational culture and environment where all stakeholders feel welcomed, valued, and affirmed for who they are;
- Providing students with additional and differentiated resources based on their educational needs;

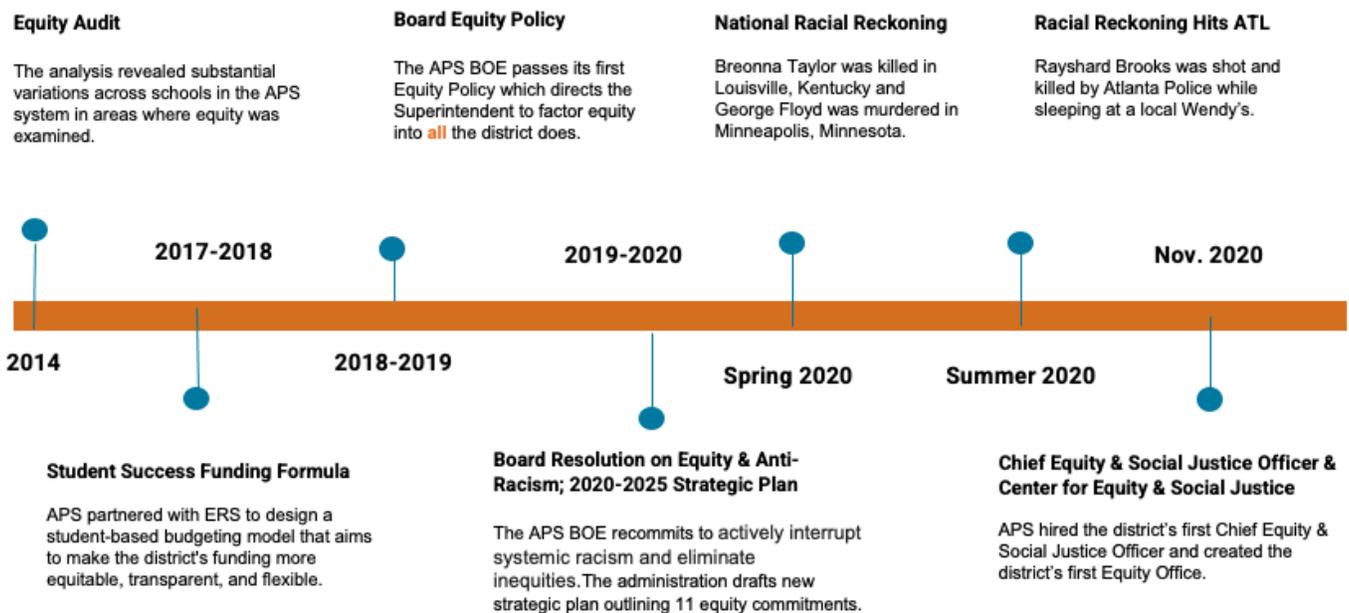
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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Human Rights Careers

- Examining personal biases, assumptions and behaviors to interrupt inequitable practices and dismantle inequitable systems and to ensure inclusive environments for all;
- Discovering and cultivating the unique gifts, talents, culture and interests that every person possesses;<sup>2</sup>
- Working to break the predictive link between a students’ race, class, gender, gender identity, or any other social or cultural factors and their outcomes; and
- Taking accountability for historical inequity and advancing solutions to address root causes through an equity-focused, continuous improvement approach.<sup>3</sup>

## APS JOURNEY TOWARD EQUITY

### APS Journey Towards Resource Equity Historical Timeline



<sup>2</sup> Adopted from the Chicago Public Schools Equity Framework, 2020

<sup>3</sup> Adopted from the Chicago Public Schools Equity Framework, 2020

# RELEVANT POLICY & GUIDANCE

## ABOE Policy BAC: Equity

The Atlanta Board of Education adopted Policy BAC: Equity on April 8, 2019. In it, the Board states:

The Atlanta Board of Education is committed to providing each student at every school with the full support and opportunity to fulfill their highest potential. The Board acknowledges the historic and current inequity, bias, and oppression existing at all levels of our society, including our schools. In Atlanta, we have experienced unique challenges which have divided neighborhoods, broken trust, and called integrity into question. We seek to understand, disrupt, and dismantle patterns and structures of institutional bias (conscious or unconscious) creating disparities and perpetuating achievement gaps among students.

The Atlanta Board of Education recognizes equity means the quality or ideal of being just and fair, regardless of economic, social, cultural, and human differences among and between persons. We believe that achieving equity requires strategic decision-making to remedy opportunity and learning gaps and create a barrier-free environment, which enables all students to graduate ready for college and career. The aim of equity is to provide students with additional and differentiated resources based on their educational needs. We must be bold and intentional if we are to design systems which are free from bias and favoritism and which truly affirm all the gifts and needs that make each of our students unique individuals.

The history of Atlanta and Atlanta Public Schools demands that the primary focus of our equity policy must be race. In APS, data shows our greatest opportunity gaps exist among our African-American and Hispanic students across all neighborhoods, and further that race is closely correlated with income. However, the Board recognizes other characteristics which can intersect with race and with one another, including but not limited to: ethnicity, national origin, and cultural/language heritage; gender; sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression; religion; family structure; housing situation; interaction with the justice system; physical, intellectual, or emotional disability; and learning differences. These factors reach beyond our traditional narrative of the north-south divide to expose disparities within neighborhoods, schools, and classrooms.

The Board directs the Superintendent to factor equity into all the district does, including, but not limited to practices, procedures, programs, assessments, evaluations, school governance, professional development, resource allocations, sites, facilities, operations, budgets, spending, services, contracts, partnerships, and all strategic planning, including:

- The District shall remedy the practices that lead to: (1) the disproportionate representation of students of color in areas such as special education and discipline and assignment to alternative schools and (2) the under-representation of students of color in the Gifted and Talented Education program and advanced studies.
- The District shall identify and address any barriers to equity that result from school governance structures.
- The District shall create robust Cluster and school-based communication plans.

- The District commits to work aggressively toward equity in the allocation of resources.
- The District will work aggressively to ensure that every classroom and every school has high quality teachers and principals.

In support of equity:

- The Superintendent shall establish a Community Equity Advisory Committee to provide advice and input to the Superintendent on equity issues within the school district. Each Board Member will make one appointment to this advisory committee. The Advisory Committee shall consist of no more than eleven members.
- The Superintendent shall develop a biennial equity plan. In conjunction with the beginning of the budget process, the Board will review the Superintendent’s equity plan to ensure that all students are being provided equitable access to excellent educational opportunities.
- The Board and Superintendent will develop annual equity goals and the district shall review existing policies, programs, professional development and procedures to ensure the promotion of equity.
- At the November Board of Education meeting each year, the Superintendent shall provide an equity update presentation to the Board. The Board may also require updates on equity plan execution on an ad hoc basis, depending on circumstances. The Superintendent is directed to develop regulations to implement this policy.

## **ABOE RESOLUTION: COMMITMENT TO EQUITY & ANTI-RACISM**

On August 3, 2020, the Atlanta Board of Education passed a resolution re-committing to the work of advancing equity within Atlanta Public Schools and taking a firm stance of anti-racism.

Anti-Racism is the act of opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life.<sup>4</sup> According to Ibram X. Kendi, one can only be an anti-racist if one is actively supporting anti-racist policies and explicitly expressing anti-racist ideas; there is no “neutral.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, as educators, if we are not working to support anti-racist policies and practices, we are working to uphold racist policies and practices.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Adopted from Baker-Jones, Tauheedah, Jennifer Cheatham and Erica Jordan Thomas, Note on Racial Equity in School Systems, PEL-096, (Public Education Leadership Project (PELP), published 2020), <https://pelp.fas.harvard.edu/files/pelp/files/pel096p2.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Kendi, How to Be an Anti-Racist.

<sup>6</sup> Adapted from Baker-Jones, Tauheedah, Jennifer Cheatham and Erica Jordan Thomas, Note on Racial Equity in School Systems, PEL-096, (Public Education Leadership Project (PELP), published 2020), <https://pelp.fas.harvard.edu/files/pelp/files/pel096p2.pdf>

In this regard, the Board resolution states:

**WHEREAS,** the recent incidents of violence against Black Americans highlight the systemic bias and institutional racism in our society that has senselessly and atrociously devastated Black lives throughout our country's history; **and**

**WHEREAS,** the Atlanta Board of Education is committed to providing each student at every school with the full support and opportunity to fulfill their highest potential; **and**

**WHEREAS,** we are committed to actively interrupting systemic racism and eliminating inequities in our education system; **and**

**WHEREAS,** the Atlanta Board of Education recognizes equity means the quality or ideal of being just and fair, regardless of economic, social, cultural, and human differences among and between persons; **and**

**WHEREAS,** this violence, racism, and disregard of human dignity and life reflect and perpetuate a system within which students, families, and staff of color and their families are oppressed and attacked, both through explicit racist actions as well as unconscious bias and micro-aggressions; **and**

**WHEREAS,** we seek to understand, disrupt, and dismantle patterns and structures of institutional bias (conscious or unconscious) creating disparities and perpetuating achievement gaps among students, and ensure ALL children and families are able to thrive; **and**

**WHEREAS,** education is a key lever for creating this more equitable and anti-racist community, nation, and world; **and**

**WHEREAS,** our district is committed to promoting equity within and across our schools, in conversation and partnership with students, families, staff, and community stakeholders; **and**

**WHEREAS,** in moving from planning to action, the Atlanta Board of Education has adopted an Equity Policy, developed a Strategic Plan and approved the Student Success Formula to provide students with additional and differentiated resources based on their educational needs; **and**

**WHEREAS,** as a school board and district we value each and every student, family, and staff member and are committed to creating an equitable and anti-racist system that honors and elevates all; **and**

**WHEREAS,** we recognize that the experiences and outcomes in our district are not consistent for historically underserved and marginalized groups, including people of color; those experiencing poverty, homelessness, or foster/kinship care; students who identify as LGBTQ+; students receiving special education instruction; and students who are linguistically diverse; **and now therefore be it**

**RESOLVED,** that on this 3rd day of August Two Thousand and Twenty, the Atlanta Board of Education continues to stand in solidarity with the Black Community, in our schools, district, and nation to condemn this violence and the blatant disrespect by some Americans for Black lives - we see it, we hear it, and we are committed to changing the system; **and therefore be it further**

**RESOLVED,** that the Atlanta Board of Education commits to its own work as individuals and our collective work overseeing the district in continuing to become equitable and anti-racist in behaviors, actions, and policies; **and therefore be it finally**

**RESOLVED,** that the Atlanta Board of Education calls on and commits to working with our local governmental agencies to strengthen the collective work of diversity, equity, and inclusion in our community. This specifically includes participation on a multi-discipline inter-agency task force by one or more board member representatives.

## CONNECTION TO ABOE’S GOALS & GUARDRAILS

APS recognizes that school systems exist for one reason and one reason only: to improve student outcomes. The Atlanta Board of Education has implemented the Council of the Great City Schools’ (CGCS) Student Outcomes Focused Governance Framework to identify strengths and weaknesses in our current system. They have also developed Goals and Guardrails based on the CGCS SOFG framework to track progress along the journey toward improving student outcomes. It must be noted, however, that student outcomes will not change, until adult behaviors and actions change.

This is where the work of equity comes in. Equity challenges us to shift our mindsets and change our behavior. Equity is the only way to ensure that all students are provided with what they need to be prepared for college, career, and life.

## EQUITY IN ACTION: LOOKS LIKE, FEELS LIKE

### What Does Equity Look Like In Action?

	<b>Leveraging School Improvement to Advance Equity</b>		<b>Addressing Disproportionate Discipline Practices</b>
	<b>Ensuring Equitable Funding</b>		<b>Integrating Social, Emotional, &amp; Academic Practices</b>
	<b>Increasing Access to Effective Leaders &amp; Teachers</b>		<b>Improving Access to High-Quality Instructional Programming &amp; Materials</b>
	<b>Partnering with Families &amp; Communities</b>		<b>Expanding Access to Co-Curricular &amp; Extra-Curricular Activities</b>
	<b>Supporting Special Populations</b>		<b>Ensuring Equitable Learning Environments</b>
	<b>Increasing Access to Advanced Coursework</b>		

## What Does Equity Feel Like In Action?

<b>I am valued for my strengths and contributions</b>	<b>I feel cared about, and I care about others</b>
<b>I am supported and encouraged to meet high expectations</b>	<b>My relationships are authentic and meaningful</b>
<b>I have the resources I need to succeed and perform at high levels</b>	<b>I feel comfortable and welcomed at school and in district offices</b>
<b>I am respected for who I am, and my voice is heard and appreciated</b>	<b>I am empowered to achieve my goals and realize my dreams</b>
<b>I am academically confident, intellectually challenged, and instructionally engaged</b>	<b>My potential is seen, and I am encouraged to reach my full potential</b>
<b>I see myself represented in curriculum</b>	<b>I see my place and responsibility in creating a more just society</b>

DRAFT

# WHY, WHAT, & HOW

## WHY A FOCUS ON EQUITY?

We are committed to equity because leading for equity is the ethical thing to do. Looking at our most recent 2019 achievement data, 76% of our White are performing on grade level by fourth grade, compared to 16% of Black students and 23% of Hispanic students. At the current rate of growth, it will take us roughly 128 years to close the gap between our students.<sup>7</sup> Many structural elements — including higher suspension rates for children of color, lack of access to high quality instruction and curricula materials, and culturally and linguistically exclusive learning environments— influence these racially disparate outcomes.

The aim of equity is to provide students with additional and differentiated resources based on their educational needs, so that we may break the historical patterns of inequity that have resulted in far too few Black, Brown and low-income children succeeding at high levels. We can do this if we focus our resources, energy, and talent on leveling the playing field for our most vulnerable students.

## WHAT WILL IT TAKE?

Equity requires that we lean into the hard work of eliminating barriers, providing the right resources, and ensuring that all students, particularly Black and Hispanic students, have the support they need to reach their full potential. Equity also requires that our schools are places where every student is affirmed for who they are, while being challenged to excel.

To achieve equitable outcomes, we must have shared language, tools, and accountability for supporting our students and communities and we must develop and implement policies that support us in educating all students effectively and equitably.

Focusing on our students most impacted by inequity, this APS Equity Framework will guide our district toward providing the appropriate supports and services necessary to promote positive student outcomes and realize our district's mission and vision.

## HOW WILL WE GET THERE?

Addressing challenges of equity in education requires designing and adjusting systems, policies, processes, programs and initiatives to improve outcomes. To engage in this work, all of our stakeholders (internal and external) must engage in authentic conversations about how to achieve equity, and we must take a targeted approach to eliminating inequitable outcomes caused by structural inequities.

This Equity Framework is designed to serve as a starting point to create meaningful and impactful change within our district and schools. It is intended to support our internal stakeholders in building their capacity, further developing an equity lens, and building the professional stamina required to address equity issues related to their scopes of work.

<sup>7</sup> Georgia CAN. (December 2019). Pockets of Promise Amidst Widespread Inequities: The State of Atlanta Public Schools in 2019. Atlanta, GA: Latino Association for Parents of Public Schools. Retrieved from <https://gacan.org>.

## CAUSES OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

### What is contributing to the achievement gap between student subgroups?

In order to fully understand the achievement gap, we must examine the nature and impact of slavery and racial discrimination within the United States. During the period of slavery, laws were passed forbidding Black Americans from learning to read, write and educate themselves. In Georgia, these Anti-Literacy laws were so strict that failure to comply was punishable by death.<sup>8</sup>

At the end of slavery, Black Americans across the South enrolled in schools run by churches and the newly created Freedmen's Bureau. From 1866-1867, The Freedmen's Bureau established free public schools in Atlanta for Freedmen in the Storrow's and Summer Hill's Grammar Schools.<sup>9</sup>

To ensure that Black Americans did not gain an educational advantage over whites, Atlanta's white establishment created Atlanta's first free public schools for all- The Atlanta Public Schools- in January 1872. In 1890, Georgia also passed its first Jim Crow Law, and began the process of legally segregating all matters of public life by race, including schools.

For the next sixty years, "separate but equal" would only be relevant in law. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that "separate but equal" was unconstitutional in the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education*.

In summation, slavery, Anti-literacy laws, segregation and racial discrimination have had a profound and compounded impact on the economic mobility and educational opportunities available to African Americans. Since the time of slavery, African Americans have been playing catch up with their white counterparts. However, despite these challenges, even prior to *Brown v. Board of Education*, Black students made notable academic gains.

Because learning is culturally and linguistically situated, Dr. Jarvis Givens theorizes that this was due to the shared culture, heritage, values, and backgrounds that Black students had with their Black educators.<sup>10</sup> Racial discrimination in law and practice, caused the number of Black educators to drop dramatically after the *Brown* decision. At this same time, the achievement levels of Black students also began to decline substantially.<sup>11</sup>

In the 50 years since the *Brown* decision, school districts have engaged in tremendous reform efforts to address the decline and subsequent gaps in achievement. This has shifted the conversation from concerns about segregation to issues of equity – ensuring that all students are educated at high levels and receive the support they need for personal and academic growth. Still, over fifty years later, the racial "achievement gap" persists.

According to research, this is because the gap is not an achievement gap at all. Rather, the gap is being caused by the mental models that educators hold. These mental models are grounded in a belief that students of color lack the ability to achieve at high levels. Thus, the "achievement gap" is in reality a "belief gap" resulting from the pervasive effects of personal and institutional racism in our schools. Despite the rhetoric that "all children can learn at high

<sup>8</sup> Guest, K. "Eternally Forgotten History of the Atlanta Public Schools: The First Schools for African-American Students." *Atlanta's Past Revisited*, 18 May 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Givens, J. R. (2023). *Fugitive pedagogy: Carter G. Woodson and the Art of Black Teaching*. Harvard University Press.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

levels,” the belief that some children cannot learn at high levels persists and is the root cause of racial achievement disparities.

Thus, in the Atlanta Public Schools, we are prioritizing racial equity because racial and ethnic minorities have been historically prohibited and structurally excluded from educational opportunities.

The million-dollar question then is, “*how do we close the belief gap, so that we can successfully increase the academic achievement of historically marginalized students?*” To answer this question, the Atlanta Public Schools has embraced a list of five evidence-based strategies about race, and achievement, that inform our work and approach to equity<sup>12</sup>:

**Strategy One:** deals with pedagogy, and the importance of embracing pedagogy that is responsive to the needs of minority students. As we have asserted, the “achievement gap,” as it has been improperly termed, is not an achievement gap at all. In addition to the belief gap that exists between teachers’ expectations of students and their potential, there also exists a cultural gap between our educators, the curriculum, and how content is being taught and tested to marginalized student populations. To address and close the “achievement gap,” in addition to addressing the belief gap, educators must also work to close the cultural gap that exists within their curricula and teaching practices.

Researchers Mary Stone Hanley and George Noblit define culture as, “*a set of tools, perspectives, and capabilities, which students can deploy in the pursuit of learning*”<sup>13</sup> According to the National Education Association (NEA), culture is, “*an accumulation of the ways of being, doing, and sense making of the world that has been developed across generations and social contexts.*”

From these definitions, it is evident that culture is vitally important if learners are to grasp and make sense of new knowledge and information. As stated, students come into classrooms with predisposed ways of acquiring new information and making sense of the world. For the most part, American schools are currently shaped by the culture of students from white, middle-class, cultural backgrounds.<sup>14</sup> This cultural bias enables the students from this demographic to thrive academically because it makes use of the tools, funds of knowledge, and skill sets that these students bring with them to the classroom. Conversely, this cultural bias fails to tap into, and utilize, the cultural acumen that minority students bring with them to the classroom. As a result, their academic achievement is stifled and an “achievement gap” is created.

**Strategy Two:** has to do with school culture. Working from the assumption that school culture can be defined as the guiding beliefs, assumptions, and expectations that are evident in the way a school operates<sup>15</sup>, researchers have found significant relationships between various factors of school culture, school climate, leadership, and student achievement. There is one aspect of school culture that we believe warrants particular attention if minority students are to be successful academically. This aspect has to do with student-teacher relationships, and a culture of “authentic care.”

It is imperative that schools servicing minority students have a school-wide culture that is

<sup>12</sup> Tauheedah Baker-Jones, “Five Strategies That Will Undoubtedly Increase the Academic Achievement of Minority Students,” last modified October 10, 2017, retrieved May 15, 2020, <https://www.advocatesfordiversity.org/blog>.

<sup>13</sup> Mary Stone Hanley and George W. Noblit, “Cultural Responsiveness, Racial Identity and Academic Success: A Review of Literature,” A paper prepared for The Heinz Endowments, accessed at [https://www.heinz.org/userfiles/library/culture-report\\_final.pdf](https://www.heinz.org/userfiles/library/culture-report_final.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Perry, T., Steele, C. and Hilliard, A. (2003). *Young, gifted and black: promoting high achievement among African American students*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

<sup>15</sup> Fullan, M., & Hargreaves, A. (1996). *What’s worth fighting for in your school?* Teachers College Press.

grounded in authentic care. In her book, *Subtractive Schooling*, Angela Valenzuela states that when Latino/a students speak of what they value most about school, the primary focus of their conversation is centered on schools providing a culture of “care.” This culture of care must be “authentic.” Authentic care is grounded in compassion, as well as structure and high expectations. Authentic care fosters reciprocal relationships among students and teachers, and includes acceptance of the students’ cultural backgrounds, values, beliefs, and ways of being. Valenzuela argues that relationships with school personnel, particularly with teachers, play a critical role in the extent to which minority students feel welcome or alienated at school.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, the need for teacher–student relationships that are grounded in “authentic care” is vitally important to the overall success of minority students. This authentic care cannot be coerced or pretentious. Students have a weird knack for knowing the teachers whose care is primarily performative or contrived. Therefore, the teachers, who have the most difficult time building relationships with minority students, also experience difficulty with managing their classrooms. Students are more likely to be emotionally and intellectually invested in classes where they have authentically caring relationships with their teachers.<sup>17</sup> For minority students, the best way to push these students academically is to build positive, meaningful, authentically caring relationships with them. The evidence of which can be seen.

**Strategy Three:** focuses on instruction that is student-centered and intellectually challenging. This type of learning experience emphasizes the principles of “encouragement of meaningful and deep learning, challenging higher-order thinking, and adaptation to individual and cultural differences”.<sup>18</sup> Student engagement is increased when learning is meaningful, and all students get excited when they can make personal connections to what they are learning. Therefore, the best way to increase student engagement is to make learning relevant by delivering instruction that is student-centered. This means that at its core, student-centered teaching and learning includes teaching practices that are culturally responsive, culturally appropriate, culturally compatible, and culturally relevant.<sup>19</sup> To be truly student centered, teaching must be sensitive to the cultural practices of students and must be sensitive to the effect of those practices on classroom learning. It must also respect the language practices of students because language provides a basis for further learning.<sup>20</sup>

**Strategy Four:** has to do with developing the cultural competency of staff. Strategies one through three stress the importance of educators to be critically aware of minority students’ cultures, identity, and backgrounds. However, for educators to be successful in this regard, they must develop cultural competency. Cultural competency is the ability to successfully teach students who come from cultures different from our own. It entails developing certain personal and interpersonal awareness and sensitivities, understanding certain bodies of cultural knowledge, and mastering a set of skills that, taken together, underlie effective cross-cultural teaching and culturally responsive pedagogy.<sup>21</sup> Cultural competency can be learned,

<sup>16</sup> Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive Schooling: U.S. Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring*. New York: State University of New York Press.

<sup>17</sup> Phelan, P., Davidson, A., Locke H., and Thanh C. “Speaking up: Students’ Perspectives on School.” *Phi Delta Kappan* 73.9 (1992): 695–704.

<sup>18</sup> Cornelius-White, J.H. & Harbaugh, A.P. *Learner-Centered Instruction: Building Relationships for Student Success*. N.p.: Sage Publications, 2010. Print.

<sup>19</sup> Ladson-Billings, G. “Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy.” *American Educational Research Journal* 32 (1995):465–491.

<sup>20</sup> Bransford, J. et. al (2000). *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School*. Washington, DC: National Research Council: National Academy Press.

<sup>21</sup> Cooper, J. E., He, Y., & Levin, B. B. (2011). *Developing critical cultural competence: A guide for 21.-century educators*. Corwin.

practiced, and institutionalized to better serve minority students, their families, and their communities, and developing cultural competency is the key to thriving in culturally diverse schools.<sup>22</sup> Cultural competency cannot be acquired because of a single day of training, reading a book, or taking a course. Educators become culturally competent over time. However, researchers do suggest some key places to start. Great starting points for developing cultural competence include:

1. Valuing diversity
2. Doing critical self-reflection and identity work;
3. Engaging wholeheartedly with the students, families, and communities; and
4. Engaging in transformative actions that lead to change in local educational settings

**Strategy Five:** looks at leadership, and its role in enhancing the learning, and promoting the success of, minority students. Currently, minority students face multifaceted educational marginalization. Minority students, and their families, are forbidden from speaking their native language and dialect, are not represented in the curriculum, are culturally alienated by standardized tests, are viewed as being apathetic toward education, and have lowered expectations projected upon them. These educational practices are exclusionary, and they have negative implications on the academic success of minority students. To reverse them, school and district leadership must become inclusive. James Ryan defines inclusive leadership as a “collective influence processes that promotes inclusion.” He contends that only inclusive leadership can address, and correct, the exclusionary barriers listed above. Leadership can actively promote inclusion by:<sup>23</sup>

1. Advocating for inclusion;
2. Educating all stakeholders in the leadership process;
3. Developing the critical consciousness of members in their school community;
4. Promoting authentic and critical dialogue within the school community;
5. Emphasizing student learning and equitable classroom practice;
6. Adopting inclusive policy making processes;
7. Incorporating whole-school approaches, and
8. Ensuring meaningful inclusion.

According to Ryan, inclusive leadership includes as many values and perspectives as possible in the decision and policy making process. For leadership to be inclusive, everyone needs the opportunity to influence what happens in the organization: students, teachers, staff and parents. In schools and districts where inclusive leadership is evident, there have been significant gains in minority student achievement.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ryan, J. (2006). *Inclusive Leadership*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

## WHAT IS RACIAL EQUITY?<sup>25</sup>

There is a strong predictability in racial outcomes even across intersecting identities of gender, gender identity, socioeconomic group, and health status. This creates an immediate and pressing need for racial equity if we are to transform the experiences of students within APS and the City of Atlanta.

Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted one's potential outcomes.<sup>26</sup> Addressing racial inequities requires moving beyond acknowledging gaps or disparities between racial groups and toward creating a deliberate and intentional racial equity strategy aimed at combating racism in all its forms.<sup>27</sup>

Racial equity is a process. It requires practices, initiatives, and outcomes that eliminates all forms of racial oppression and co-creates conditions that enable those most impacted by structural inequity to reach their full potential by centering their agency.

Racial equity also requires accounting for past inequities and centering those historically marginalized by providing targeted support and eliminating policies, practices, and attitudes at the individual, interpersonal, and institutional level that have a negative impact on student outcomes. Introspection and reflection are also necessary to uncover how we perpetuate or interrupt inequity.

At APS, the Center for Equity and Social Justice believes that all staff must take an anti-racist stance, which means disrupting the racism, colorism, respectability politics, and disadvantages our students face at the classroom, school, and district levels. We must not, and cannot, perpetuate the historical inequities faced by our students, schools, and communities of color, and we must support anti-racist policies and practices.

### Examples of Anti-racist practices include:

- Setting targets for hiring and retaining Black and Brown staff
- Developing an anti-racist stance as an educational organization at the classroom, school, or district levels
- Ensuring the physical environment affirms the cultures of students who are low-income, LGBTQ+, and students of color
- Changing policies that negatively impact historically marginalized communities

We must do the hard work of creating thoughtful, adaptive practices that address structures or systems that either support or prevent students from reaching our goals, and racial equity work requires a targeted universalist approach.

The 2020–2025 APS Strategic Plan made concrete equity commitments to increase the educational outcomes of Black and Hispanic students, which are reflective of our targeted universalism and racial equity guiding principles and philosophy.

To employ a racial equity lens, in pursuit of our equity commitments, we must always ask the questions:

- How will this shift in practice affect the lived experiences of Black, Brown, Indigenous, and all students of color?

<sup>25</sup> Adapted from the Chicago Public Schools Equity Framework, 2020

<sup>26</sup> Baker-Jones, Tauheedah, Jennifer Cheatham and Erica Jordan Thomas, Note on Racial Equity in School Systems, PEL-096, (Public Education Leadership Project (PELP), published 2020), <https://pelp.fas.harvard.edu/files/pelp/files/pel096p2.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

If the answer is that it will negatively affect them or contribute to accumulated burden, we need to redesign the policy or practice. In designing, or redesigning policies and practices, we must ensure our students and communities of color, and especially those most negatively impacted by inequity, are at the table to cocreate solutions.

## Emphasis on Underrepresented Students: Other identities that warrant our intentional supports<sup>28</sup>

While race and ethnicity are the overwhelming and predominant factors driving disproportionate outcomes, they are not the sole factor. Thus, we must also acknowledge and affirm additional specific identities and areas for which our students also experience marginalization, and in most cases, the compounded experiences of students at intersection of race and the following labels or identities:

**National Origin:** 7.6% of Metro Atlanta residents over 5 have limited English proficiency and 4% of APS students have limited English Proficiency. 14% of metro Atlanta residents are immigrants. Georgia policy O.C.G.A. 20-2-156 (2010) created the ESOL program to give all Georgia youth with limited English proficiency an opportunity to develop English language skills.<sup>29</sup>

**Disability:** Currently, 91% of students with disabilities in APS are students of color. As of 2019, district proficiency in ELA (37%) was four times that of students with disabilities (9%). The reported 2021 graduation rate for students with disabilities (73%) was 10 percentage points lower than that of the district overall (83%). Additionally, in 2021 Males (16%) have been identified as students with disabilities at twice the rate of female peers (8%).<sup>30</sup>

- **Discipline:** African American students made up 94% of APS's out of school suspensions between 2017-2019, compared to 2% of their white counterparts.<sup>31</sup> In FY2018, Black girls in APS were 50 times more likely to be suspended than their White female peers.<sup>32</sup> In addition, approximately 20% of African American students have received at least one in-school or out-of-school suspension, compared to 2% of their white peers (see Figure 3).<sup>33</sup>
- **Sexual Orientation:** In 2021 in Georgia, approximately 64,000 youth ages 13-17 identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, and 4,000 identified as transgender. 40% of youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ+.<sup>34</sup>
- **LGBTQ+ Suicide Ideation/Mental Health:** 95% of LGBTQ+ students in Georgia report hearing anti-LGBTQ remarks from students in school. 45% of all national LGBTQ+ youth have seriously considered suicide. A 2021 national survey found that over half of transgender youth considered suicide in the prior year.<sup>35</sup>
- **Socio-Economic Status:** 77% of APS students live in poverty, compared to only 35% of children in the city. A child living in poverty within the city of Atlanta has only a 4.5%

<sup>28</sup> Adapted from the Washington, DC Public Schools Equity Brochure, 2017

<sup>29</sup> <https://atlantaregional.org/plans-reports/limited-english-proficiency-lep-plan/#:~:text=Metro%20Atlanta's%20LEP%20Population&text=The%20Census%20estimates%20that%2037%2C393.31.9%20percent%20of%20this%20population> & <https://gosa.georgia.gov/dashboards-data-report-card/downloadable-data>

<sup>30</sup> APSGraphs

<sup>31</sup> Schott Foundation for Public Education (July 2020). Loving Cities Index: Atlanta, GA. Quincy, MA. Retrieved from <https://lovingcities.schottfoundation.org>

<sup>32</sup> OCRData.ed.gov

<sup>33</sup> Schott Foundation for Public Education (July 2020). Loving Cities Index: Atlanta, GA. Quincy, MA. Retrieved from <https://lovingcities.schottfoundation.org>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/Georgia-Snapshot-2019.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2022/#suicide-by-gender> & <https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Meetings/Attachment.aspx?S=36031014&AID=1306879&MID=95458>

chance of achieving upward economic mobility.<sup>36</sup> In Fulton County, the teen birth rate is 22.5 per 1,000.<sup>37</sup> Nationally, only about 50% of teen mothers receive a high school diploma by 22 years of age.<sup>38</sup>

- **Homelessness:** About 1,500 students and families experienced homelessness during the 2020–2021 school year. Homeless students across Atlanta experience myriad educational barriers including lower attendance rates, more frequent school transfers, and incomplete or inaccurate student records, all of which affect reading levels, promotion rates, and graduation rates.<sup>39</sup>

The great news is research consistently shows educational programs that support underrepresented students have positive educational impacts for all students. Educationally equitable schools are academically beneficial for white, middle class and educationally connected students as well. We can and will create excellent classrooms, schools, and educational outcomes for all of our students.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Schott Foundation for Public Education (July 2020). Loving Cities Index: Atlanta, GA. Quincy, MA. Retrieved from <https://lovingcities.schottfoundation.org>.

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/Page/186>

<sup>38</sup> [2019EHCY\\_DataReport.pdf \(gadoe.org\)](https://www.gadoe.org/2019EHCY_DataReport.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/Page/186> & [2019EHCY\\_DataReport.pdf \(gadoe.org\)](https://www.gadoe.org/2019EHCY_DataReport.pdf)

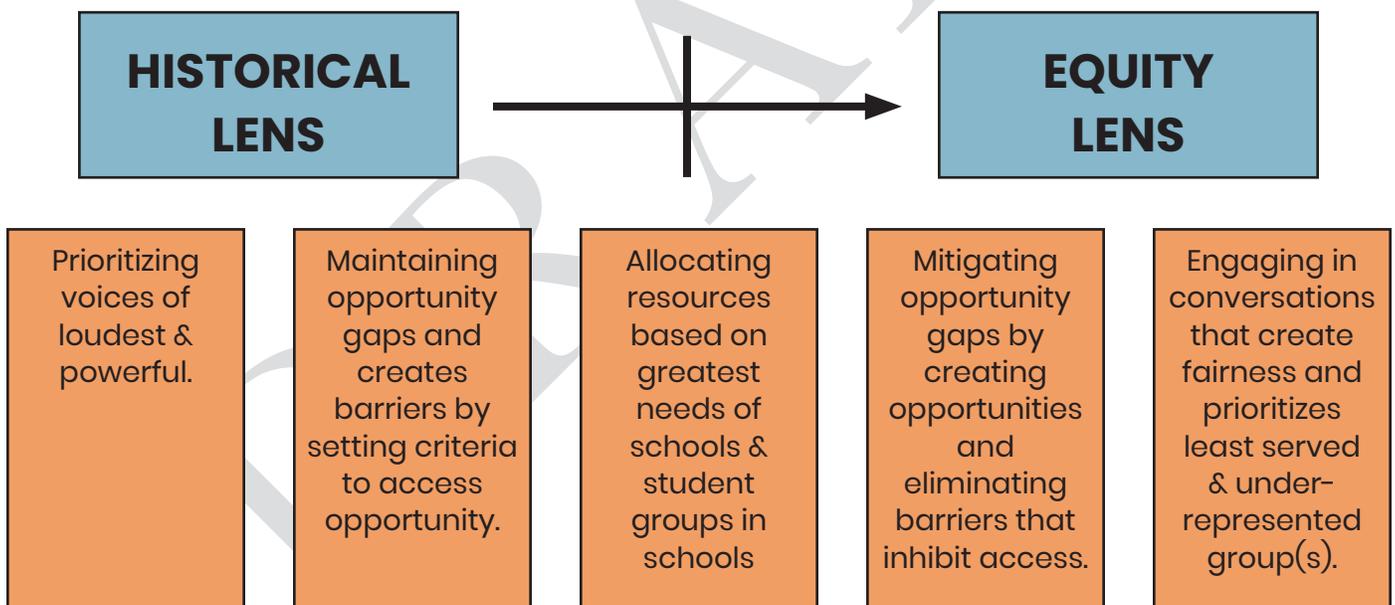
<sup>40</sup> Adopted from Minneapolis Public Schools Equity Framework, 2019

# WHAT IS AN EQUITY LENS?<sup>41</sup>

*“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”*  
- Maya Angelou

An equity lens is a process of paying disciplined attention to historically marginalized populations (race, ethnicity, ability, etc.) while analyzing problems, looking for solutions and defining success. An equity lens critiques a “color blind” or “equality of need” approach, arguing that these lenses perpetuate systems of disadvantage and prevent structural racism from being acknowledged.

An equity lens also allows us to “see” the system differently. Leading for equity requires that we see the system in which we are functioning and determine how the system is reproducing inequitable outcomes. To do this, we must take on an intentional disposition to see the invisible structures, policies, and behaviors that sustain unequal outcomes and interrupt the ways of working that serve, implicitly or explicitly, to perpetuate gaps in opportunity for vulnerable communities.<sup>42</sup> Application of an equity lens helps to illuminate disparate outcomes, patterns of disadvantage, and root cause. Transitioning from our historical lens to an equity lens requires:



An essential component of collective leadership for equity is the equity lens. We must apply an equity lens that enables us to see and understand the existing structures and conditions that create inequities, as well as the changes that are necessary to create more equitable learning environments.

To become a more equitable school district, we must adopt a new way of understanding the work of equity. This is a shift from a historical lens that upholds structural inequities to an equity lens that creates fair access and opportunities for all. Shifting from a historical lens to an equity lens requires re-imagining what our district could look like, do, and accomplish.

<sup>41</sup> Adapted from the Chicago Public Schools Equity Framework, 2020

<sup>42</sup> Baker-Jones, Tauheedah, Jennifer Cheatham and Erica Jordan Thomas, Note on Racial Equity in School Systems, PEL-096, (Public Education Leadership Project (PELP), published 2020), <https://pelp.fas.harvard.edu/files/pelp/files/pel096p2.pdf>.

## APPLYING AN EQUITY LENS<sup>43</sup>

Without an equity lens, we will maintain the opportunity gaps we are working to mitigate and the achievement gaps we are seeking to close. We must apply an equity lens to every challenge we seek to solve.

An equity lens is applicable to any context—classroom, school, or district department. To create the real, transformational change that will support all students, we must use an equity lens to engage with our colleagues on complicated and complex problems.

**Everyone is accountable for having an equity lens and is expected to continuously improve their lens; this is how we transform our district to advance equity for students.**

Applying an equity lens allows us to deeply clarify the equity challenge we are solving. Applying an equity lens helps us to determine what high-impact change ideas we need to implement to ensure that all students thrive and are prepared for college, career, and life.

## TARGETED UNIVERSALISM

### Guiding Philosophy: All Means All<sup>44</sup>

[Targeted Universalism](#) - watch 4 min video

Direct link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0At2xbQB7w>

The Targeted Universalist (TU) is an approach to equity developed by John Powell at the Othering and Belonging Institute. TU is an inclusive approach for leading for equity because the strategy is inclusive of the needs of all groups within a system. According to Powell, there are five essential steps for implementing a Targeted Universalist approach<sup>45</sup>:

1. Establish a universal goal based upon a broadly shared recognition of a system problem and our collective aspirations.
2. Assess general overall performance relative to the universal goal.
3. Identify groups that are performing differently with respect to the universal goal. Groups should be disaggregated.
4. Assess and understand the structures that support or impede each group or community from achieving the universal goal.
5. Develop and implement targeted strategies for each group to reach the universal goal.

For example, when looking at the 2020 APS Graduation Rates by subgroup:

- White students (96.7%)
- Hispanic students (82.8%)
- Black students (77.2%)

Targeted Universalism would mean the difference between a Targeted goal of creating a goal of obtaining an 85% graduation rate for Latinx and Black students vs. creating a Targeted Universalist goal of obtaining a 98% graduation rate for all students.

<sup>43</sup> Adopted from the Chicago Public Schools Equity Framework, 2020

<sup>44</sup> Adapted from the Chicago Public Schools Equity Framework, 2020

<sup>45</sup> Othering & Belonging Institute at UC Berkeley (Producer). (2019, May 8). Who belongs? EP 10 – T John A. Powell [Audio interview]. (E-Resource)

This targeted universalist goal acknowledges the fact that all of our students have gains to be made and allows us to avoid taking a “one size fits all” approach to equity as we recognize that students have different needs based on how they are situated in their daily lives. With this approach everyone has room for growth and should be afforded the resources, opportunities, and rigorous educational experiences to achieve the universal goal.

It also allows us through the goal development process to examine how all student groups (based on race, gender, gender expression, economic disadvantage, diverse learning needs) are positioned toward the universal goal.

This is an important distinction because targeting a specific identity group, or groups, reinforces the implicit message that there is something inherently wrong with the targeted group that is preventing them from achieving. It also fails to acknowledge that there are systems and structures in place that are creating their outcomes and reproducing their marginalization.

Thus, Targeted Universalism necessitates a level of granular analysis of the systems and structures in place within institutions that enable or hinder all groups from achieving universal goals. If you work to remove these barriers, the targeted group will meet the universal goal.

**Figure 1 Illustrates Targeted Universalism in Practice:**



The image above of children picking apples depicts the difference between equality and equity. At first glance, it appears that the objective is for each child to pick an apple, and we see the impact of what a focus on equality produces for students on the image to the left and what a focus on equity produces for students on the image to the right.

However, Targeted Universalism takes us a step beyond and pushes us to make the goal more universal. So, instead of the goal being that each child picks an apple, the targeted universal goal would be that each child picks as many apples as possible, and we implement structures

(the tree) to ensure that the opportunity is present for them to do so. Understanding the broader objective of the task, the ladders in the image emphasize the important, and often hidden, role that institutions and systems play in determining the short-term and long-term success of individuals.

Targeted Universalism recognizes the critical role of systems and structures in students' everyday experiences and acknowledges that the way students interact with those systems and structures differs depending on identity and students' life circumstances, both of which can affect how they perform in school.

Targeted Universalism also acknowledges that different strategies are needed for everyone to be able to benefit from reaching the universal goal and that there needs to be prioritization of the different needs, different strategies, and an equitable—rather than equal—distribution of resources. Therefore, when implementing a strategy grounded in Targeted Universalism, it is important to set universal goals for all groups and targeted strategies and processes to achieve those goals.<sup>46</sup> There should be a wide range of implementation strategies, and the implementation strategies should be tailored to address the structures that hinder various groups from achieving the universal goal or desired outcome for all populations.

TU encourages us to seek out what is working and develop diverse solutions to create change. When we better understand what students need, we can create the practices that will best support all students in reaching the universal goal. Solutions developed via a TU approach support the most marginalized groups while also helping all students advance toward the shared goal. how do I delete hard returns

In implementing a Targeted Universalist approach to the equity work within the Atlanta Public Schools, it was imperative that particular attention is paid to the structures to be transformed. We must also accept the power that we each hold— teachers, principals, school communities—to create school environments that support equitable outcomes for all students.

Thus, to effectively reduce disparities in opportunities, we must empower all educators, staff, and students across the district to identify the challenges within their individual classroom, school, clusters, or district departments, and to implement thoughtful, data-driven practices to help all students reach our shared, universal goal..

To implement a Targeted Universalist approach with fidelity, we must engage in a collaborative and ongoing inquiry process to prioritize and understand the equity challenges we face from multiple perspectives. With this information we must assess the root causes, design at the margins, dismantle ineffective systems, and implement new approaches that create greater equity and improved outcomes. For example, in the graduation example above, we should ask ourselves the following questions as part of our inquiry process:

- What are the current graduation rates for each student group? (considering the intersectionalities of race and gender).
- What are the factors internal and external to the school that affect the experiences of different groups?.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

- What are the neighborhood assets and challenges where students live and how might those affect their experiences inside or outside of school? .
- What are the different conditions and resources necessary for each student group to thrive?.
- What policies benefit or burden each student group?.

We would then co-construct practices and policies that support all student groups in attaining the universal goal. We would then meet regularly to assess progress and adjust practices as needed. Throughout this process, teachers, principals and school-based staff should be at the forefront leading the process because they are on the front lines of leading for equity. They are the ones implementing promising practices and creating school cultures that support all students..

### **Benefits of Targeted Universalism<sup>47</sup>**

- Organizes stakeholder around a shared universal goal;
- Allows leaders to use quantitative and qualitative data to understand how different student groups are currently situated in relation to the goal;
- Recognizes the critical role that systems and structures play in students’ educational experiences and acknowledges that the way students interact with those systems and structures differs depending on identity and students’ life circumstances; and
- Pushes leaders to operate with sensitivity to structural and cultural dynamics and focus our attention on the structural changes needed, rather than locating the problems of inequity in our students; thus
- Focusing strategy, efforts, and resources on developing short- and long-term targeted solutions to support all student groups in reaching the shared goal, while leading and developing intensive strategies to support those who are furthest away from the goal

### **Impact of Targeted Universalism.**

Both transactional and transformational change can occur through Targeted Universalism. According to Powell, “Transactional changes reform or eliminate a single barrier within a structure to enable more people to achieve the universal goal. Transformative changes are changes in the structures and systems that shape group outcomes.”<sup>48</sup> Transactional changes are leveraged to address the effects of oppressive structures. Transformative change is more durable and sufficient because the change efforts work to address the root causes of the problem to be solved. .

The change method selected depends on the context and circumstance of the reform effort that is taking place. Whatever the change processes, an evaluation component that measures impact of the effort should be integrated into the early stages.

Targeted Universalism allows us to then respond collectively and intentionally to produce transformational change by focusing our attention on the structural changes needed, rather than locating the problems of inequity within our students.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

## SYSTEMIC BARRIERS TO CHANGE<sup>49</sup>

*Progress is a nice word. But change is its motivator. And change has its enemies.*

*--Robert Kennedy*

There are predictable barriers that arise as we attempt to make transformational organizational shifts. The design of the APS Strategic Equity Framework addresses and attends to common change barriers such as:

- Systemic unwillingness and ineffective habits of the system, the power of doing things the way we've always done them. (Ex: expecting families to be engaged with school staff at the school site; steadfastly adhering to traditional teaching and learning practices)
- Leadership and staff resistance - the belief that equity is not important or fear of being uncomfortable or fear of having brave conversations.
- Lack of leadership vision, will, skill or experience with culturally responsive, authentic, equitable pedagogy.
- Lack of staff vision, will, skill or experience with culturally responsive, authentic, equitable pedagogy.
- Lack of allocated time or financial resources for equitable and culturally responsive practice, professional development at all levels, relationship building, community and family engagement and partnerships.
- Lack of quality data for informed decision making and effective leadership
- Families with historic privilege overwhelming and dominating school and district decision-making processes, events, and conversations.

Each element of the APS Strategic Equity Framework calls for broader coalitions across lines of difference, inclusive engagement and authentic voice that leads to real conversations and responsive schools, reflective practice, data-driven decision making, on-going professional learning, and resource allocations that support equity.

<sup>49</sup> Adopted from Minneapolis Public Schools Equity Framework, 2019

## WHAT IS AN EQUITY FRAMEWORK?

*There is a difference between charity and justice. Charity says, here let me help you. Justice says why is this happening, let me seek to change it."*

**-Marshall Ganz**

An Equity Framework outlines our path toward transformational change and serves as a foundation for our understanding and building out change ideas.

The **APS Strategic Equity Framework** is a source of guidance, tools, evidence-based ideas, and resources for APS staff, partners, and community members addressing complex equity issues.

The **goal** of the APS Strategic Equity Framework is to create shared language, tools, and accountability on what equity looks like, and means, within our district.

## HOW THE APS STRATEGIC EQUITY FRAMEWORK WAS DESIGNED

This Strategic Equity Framework was developed under the leadership of the Atlanta Public Schools Center for Equity + Social Justice. It has been shaped by ideas and feedback from teachers, staff, students, administrators, families, and partners who generously contributed insights and perspectives. Through our Equity Audits and Assessments we have uncovered systemic gaps and opportunities for growth. With this data, we engaged stakeholders through Equity TEAs (Talking Equity Atlanta), Equity Design Team convenings, and other engagements and feedback sessions. Over the course of one year, we've heard from over 2,000 voices from within our district and across the city about root causes of our challenges, as well as their aspirations for the future.

This draft Strategic Equity Framework is being released based on the needs and the aspirations expressed during those engagements and illuminated through data analysis. It is designed to articulate what being a school district that centers equity in its work will truly require.

Additionally, this framework was built on a foundation of national best practices from other leading school districts engaged in this work, equity experts in the field, and education networks supporting the work of educational equity. It represents an extraordinarily collaborative effort with contributions from within and beyond Atlanta Public Schools.

The information provided in this framework aims to articulate a strategic focus and provide the set of processes necessary to advance equity within the Atlanta Public Schools. It serves as a hub for a variety of tools and resources that will equip APS internal stakeholders with **keeping equity at the forefront of their efforts.**

## CURRENT EQUITY CHALLENGE

### What is Preventing Us from Realizing Our Vision of Equity?

Through our various stakeholder engagements, the follow equity challenge emerged:

*APS is not clearly aligned on why an explicit process to center equity in everything the district does is needed. In addition, APS leadership has also yet to adopt an official process for fully embedding equity, continuous improvement and stakeholder engagement into organizational deliberation and decision-making processes and has yet to build systems of shared accountability and collective responsibility that translate intent to do equity into action. Failure to fully realize these actions adversely impacts the educational experiences and outcomes of all APS students, particularly our Black and Brown students.*

Through this framework, the Center for Equity and Social Justice attempts to address this challenge relative to its sphere of influence.

## THEORY OF ACTION

The Theory of action that forms the basis for this equity framework and our work to advance equity is:

**If...** APS staff collectively:

- Advocates for, and promotes, equitable organizational and instructional practices,
- Participates in on-going opportunities for equity-focused professional learning & development, and
- Employs tools, and engages with resources, that build their lens, capacity, and stamina to put equity into action within their scopes of work.

**Then...** APS staff will have greater capacity to:

1. Engage in equity-guided and data-informed goal setting, decision-making, and program evaluation.
2. Embed equity meaningfully in our policies, processes, and structures throughout the organization.
3. Allocate, utilize, and mobilize resources based on the unique needs of every child and community, and
4. Foster a culture of belonging that values the strengths of all stakeholders, elevates stakeholder voice, and shares power in decision-making.

**So that...**

- Educational outcomes are improved for all students, particularly our Black and Brown students.

# EQUITY FRAMEWORK GUIDING BELIEFS

*Equity is not a zero-sum game. When all of our students are seen, valued, and supported, our entire city will succeed. In the Atlanta Public Schools, all Means all.*

**- Dr. Tauheedah Baker-Jones, Chief Equity + Social Justice Officer**

The following outlines the assumptions being made about what will produce improved outcomes for the students and adults within our school district. Our belief statement also articulates the conditions that must be present in a school for equity to manifest and the support that the central office must provide to ensure that our schools are successful in this work.

## **Introductory Statement of Belief:**

*We believe that all students can learn at high levels. We also believe that our students will thrive in an environment that is culturally affirming, values their unique gifts and abilities, and that embodies high expectations through caring and authentic relationships.*

## **Clear and Sustained Focus:**

*To be successful we must have clear expectations which will lead to an aligned and focused organization. We must have shared accountability and take collective responsibility because achieving equity requires collaborative effort from everyone.*

## **Great Teaching and Leadership Matters:**

*Quality teaching and a common curriculum matter. Great teaching in an urban setting requires teachers and leaders to be committed to culturally responsive and relevant instruction.*

## **Schools at the Center:**

*All schools must be student-centered, welcoming, and inclusive of family and student voice in order for all students to learn at high levels.*

## **District as the Foundational Support:**

*The District must provide the professional development, resources, and tools that schools need to ensure that rigorous and engaging tasks, aligned to state standards, are evident in every classroom. APS leaders must foster a safe, trusting, and respectful culture.*

## THE EQUITY FRAMEWORK IN ACTION<sup>50</sup>

**“One does not understand structures or systems by looking at intent. Instead, we have to examine what they actually do—how they operate and what the outcomes are. Certainly, a system or structure could be established for the purpose of excluding or discriminating. However, most structures produce racialized outcomes without intent.”**

**– John Powell**

**Step 1:** What’s on your mind? What are you trying to change, improve, or solve? What are your Targeted Universal Goals?

**Step 2:** Unpack the Current Situation—What are the root causes of the challenge, what are the mental models perpetuating the challenge? What possible actions steps can be taken to address the challenge? Mental models are the way a person perceives the world around them. They are based in belief as opposed to facts.

**Step 3:** Articulate the Core Equity Challenge. An equity challenge is a clear concise statement that articulates who is most negatively impacted in a given situation or system and what inequitable outcomes or experiences need to be disrupted or interrupted (e.g. African American males do not have equitable access to advanced placement courses.). Use the Equity Impact Assessment tool to support you in this endeavor.

**Step 4:** Design Your Change Idea. You can use our Equity By Design Protocol to support you in implementing this step with fidelity.

**Step 5:** Implement High Impact Change Idea and Monitor Progress using an academic return on investment protocol, program evaluation tool, or other continuous improvement tool.

By engaging in a truly equity driven process—where our equity lens is always engaged—we can develop and implement initiatives to make meaningful change for our students. While these initiatives may benefit all students, they should specifically benefit our greatest needs groups while prioritizing racial identity.

<sup>50</sup> Adopted from the Chicago Public Schools Equity Framework, 2020

# STRATEGIC EQUITY FRAMEWORK LEVERS, FOCUS, & PILLARS

*“We can, whenever we choose, teach all children whose learning is important to us. Whether we do so depends upon how we feel about the fact that we have not done so already.”*

– **Dr. Ron Edmunds, Founder, Center for Effective Schools**

Our Levers, Foci, and Equity Pillars provide a descriptive, conceptual understanding of what equity work requires of the individuals and groups within our district, and how we can think and act in service of our students, especially those historically underserved and subject to historical negative impacts.

## The levers that we will pull to advance educational equity include:

- **Our Systems**
- **Our People**

## Under each lever, our focus will be:

- **Equity Level 1: Our Systems: Instituting Equity-Focused Practices**
- **Equity Level 2: Our People Maintaining Equity-Centered Beliefs**

## The pillars that will support us in executing on our focus are:

- **Equity Pillar 1: Promoting** Equity-Guided & Data-Informed Decision-Making
- **Equity Pillar 2: Designing** Equitable Systems, Structures, & Policies
- **Equity Pillar 3: Cultivating** Asset-Based Mindsets & A Culture of Belonging
- **Equity Pillar 4: Centering** Stakeholder Voice & Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement

	<b>Equity Level 1: Our People</b>	<b>Equity Level 2: Our Systems</b>
<b>Equity-Focused Practices</b>	<p><b>Equity Pillar 1: Promoting</b> Equity-Guided &amp; Data-Informed Decision-Making</p> <p><b>Equity Pillar In Action:</b> To put this Equity Pillar into action it is critical that we build intentional ways of using data to elevate where to prioritize and allocate people, time, and money to align with levels of need and opportunity.</p> <p>We must also use data in ways that humanize and make decisions in collaboration with the community that we serve, engage in decision-making that deepens relationships and trust, and avoid unintended impacts or harm to communities.</p> <p>While it may be important to move quickly and decisively, we must appreciate that we often deal with problems that are not simple, but are rather complex problems that benefit from a deliberate decision-making process that ensures the voices and perspectives of the people experiencing the problem are involved in the decision-making process.</p> <p>To execute on this Equity Pillar with fidelity we must continuously reflect on, and consider, the aspects of our identities, public perceptions and stigmas associated with various groups, and how our identity and experiences shape our actions and decision-making. We must also check our assumptions and ensure that our decisions are grounded in our collective values. It is also necessary to prioritize groups in the decision-making process who have been historically marginalized and negatively impacted by our decision-making.</p>	<p><b>Equity Pillar 2: Designing</b> Equitable Systems, Structures, &amp; Policies</p> <p><b>Equity Pillar In Action:</b> To put this Equity Pillar into action we must acknowledge the historical and social context of bias and inequity in our district and intentionally lead teams and schools with an equity lens. District staff must also learn and develop practices that infuse equity into their daily work and establish policies that promote equitable outcomes for marginalized groups.</p> <p>To execute on this Equity Pillar with fidelity we must examine the impact of key policies, practices, systems, and budgets on students and communities and recommend and implement actions for change.</p> <p>District leaders, school administrators, teachers, and support staff must also engage in continuous learning to identify ways to disrupt and design their own policies and practices to promote responsive, equitable learning environments for all students across the district.</p>

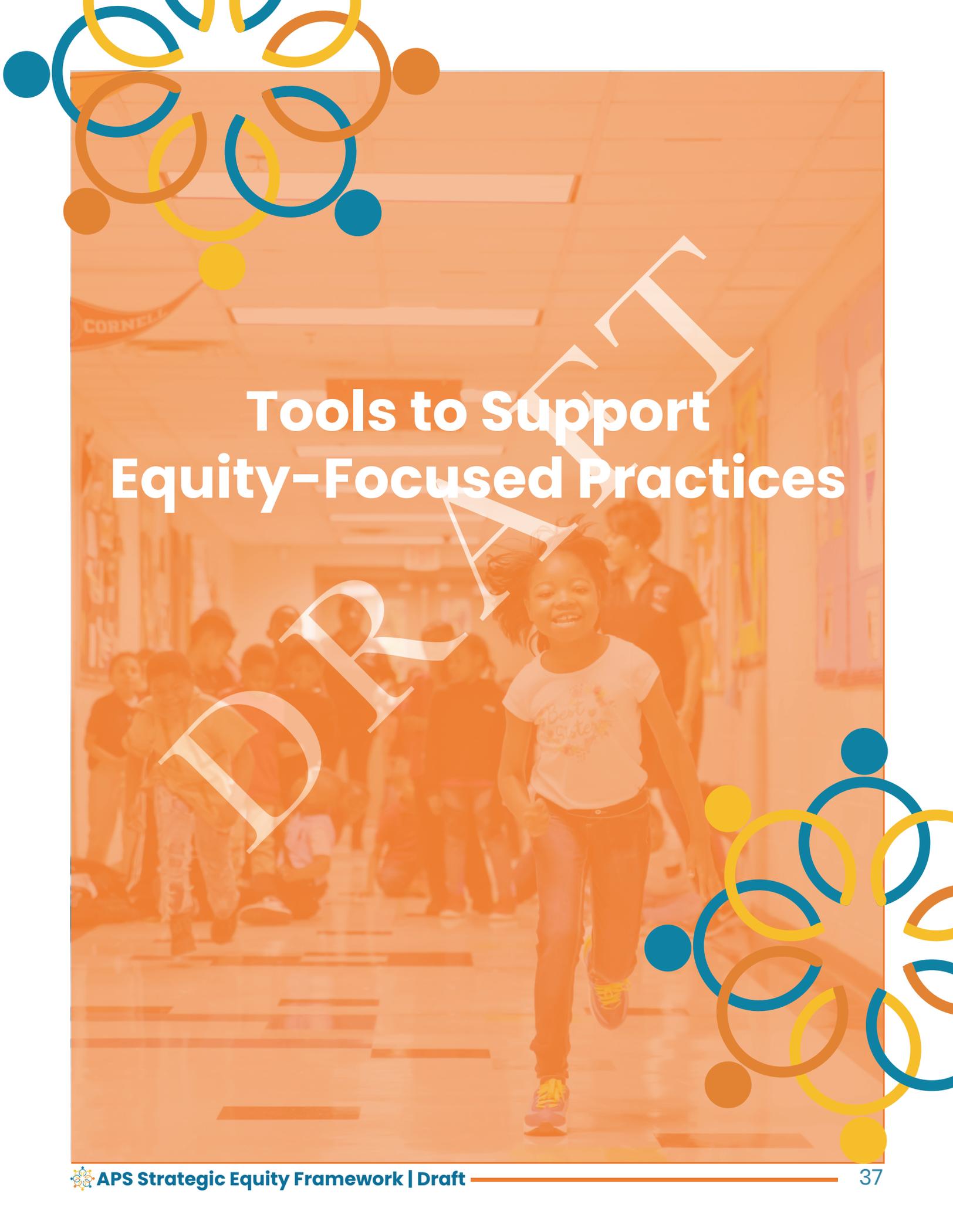
Equity-Centered Beliefs	Equity Level 1: Our People	Equity Level 2: Our Systems
	<p><b>Equity Framework Tools to support putting this Equity Pillar into Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equity-Focused Data Analysis Protocol</li> <li>• Equity Impact Assessment</li> <li>• Equity-Guided Decision-Making Tool</li> </ul> <p><b>Additional CESJ Resources to support putting this Equity Pillar into Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity Index- ESAC*</li> <li>• Tangibles Index- ELE*</li> <li>• Intangibles Index</li> <li>• System Supports Index</li> <li>• Continuous Improvement Plan Template</li> <li>• Continuous Improvement Plan Development Guide</li> </ul>	<p><b>Equity Framework Tools to support putting this Equity Pillar into Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equity Plan Template</li> <li>• Equity By Design: Design Thinking Protocol</li> <li>• Equity-Focused Policy Analysis Tool</li> <li>• Systems Level Equity Assessment Tool</li> </ul> <p><b>Additional CESJ Resources to support putting this Equity Pillar into Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culturally &amp; Linguistically Responsive MTSS Implementation Rubric</li> <li>• Supplier Diversity Training Module</li> <li>• Implicit Bias Training (Hiring Managers)</li> <li>• Equity Audits</li> <li>• Classroom &amp; School Equity Learning Walks Tool</li> <li>• Federal Programs Allowable Uses Quick Guide</li> </ul>
<p><b>Equity Pillar 3: Cultivating</b> Asset-Based Mindsets &amp; A Culture of Belonging</p> <p><b>Equity Pillar In Action:</b> To put this Equity Pillar into action we must focus on strengths and viewing diversity in thought, culture, background, and attributes as positive assets versus deficits.</p> <p>Cultivating an asset-based mindset pushes us to think about what we want for students as a result of equity - beyond only working to stop the negative consequences of inequity.</p> <p>To execute on this Equity Pillar with fidelity we must ensure that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Everyone in our organization feels seen, affirmed, valued, and connected.</li> <li>2. We leverage the benefits of diversity to enhance organizational learning and growth.</li> <li>3. Ensure all students have a voice and are seen in the curriculum through supplementation that mitigates race, class, ability, language, gender, and other boundaries that often hinders access to the curriculum.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Equity Pillar 4: Centering</b> Stakeholder Voice &amp; Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement</p> <p><b>Equity Pillar In Action:</b> To put this Equity Pillar into action we must value, and place a high premium, on the voice, interests, and expertise of all stakeholders, while prioritizing the voices of those that have been historically marginalized and negatively impacted by our practices. We must also provide accessible, authentic, and collaborative experiences in schools, offices, online, and beyond.</p> <p>To execute on this Equity Pillar with fidelity we must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Further transparency and power sharing,</li> <li>2. Codesign solutions to complex and challenging issues and problems, and</li> <li>3. Bring together diverse stakeholders to engage in authentic conversations about challenging issues caused and upheld by systemic oppression.</li> </ol>	

	<b>Equity Level 1: Our People</b>	<b>Equity Level 2: Our Systems</b>
	<p><b>Equity Framework Tools to support putting this Equity Pillar into Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leader &amp; Teacher Equity Dispositions</li> <li>• Asset-Based Mindset Root Cause Analysis Protocol</li> <li>• Family Assets to Enrich Classrooms Worksheet</li> <li>• Diversity, Equity, Inclusion &amp; Belonging Infographic</li> <li>• Transgender Student Support Plan</li> <li>• Equity-Focused Professional Learning Plan</li> <li>• Equity-Focused Micro-Credentialing</li> <li>• Equity Practices in Professional Learning</li> <li>• Guidance &amp; Approval Process for DEIB Services, Resources, &amp; Materials</li> </ul> <p><b>Additional CESJ Resources to support putting this Equity Pillar into Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equity-Focused Micro-Credentialing</li> <li>• Implicit Bias Training (All Staff)</li> <li>• Controversial Issues Toolkit</li> <li>• Culturally &amp; Linguistically Responsive Practices Toolkit</li> <li>• Culturally &amp; Linguistically Responsive Curriculum Scorecard</li> <li>• Toolkit for Creating Affirming Spaces for LGBTQIA+ Students</li> </ul>	<p><b>Equity Framework Tools to support putting this Equity Pillar into Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culturally Responsive Stakeholder Engagement Planning Tool</li> <li>• Equitable Family Collaboration: Co-Design Circles Method</li> <li>• APS BRAVE Spaces Program</li> <li>• Protocol for Navigating BRAVE Conversations</li> <li>• BRAVE Discussion Norms</li> <li>• BRAVE Discussion Protocol</li> <li>• BRAVE Centering Protocol</li> </ul> <p><b>Additional CESJ Resources to support putting this Equity Pillar into Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Family Engagement Survey</li> <li>• Annual DEIB Survey (Student &amp; Staff)</li> </ul>

# STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

- **Equity Pillar 1: Promoting** Equity-Guided & Data-Informed Decision-Making
  - Equity-Focused Data Analysis Protocol
  - Equity Impact Assessment
  - Equity-Guided Decision-Making Tool
- **Equity Pillar 2: Designing** Equitable Systems, Structures, & Policies
  - Equity Plan Template
  - Equity By Design: Design Thinking Protocol
  - Equity-Focused Policy Analysis Tool
  - Systems Level Equity Assessment Tool
- **Equity Pillar 3: Cultivating** Asset-Based Mindsets & an Organizational Culture of Belonging
  - Leader Equity Dispositions
  - Teacher Equity Dispositions
  - Asset-Based Mindset Root Cause Analysis Protocol
  - Family Assets to Enrich Classrooms Worksheet
  - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging Infographic
  - Transgender Student Support Plan
  - Equity-Focused Professional Learning Plan
  - Equity-Focused Micro-Credentialing
  - Equity Practices in Professional Learning
  - Guidance & Approval Process for DEIB Services, Resources, & Materials
- **Equity Pillar 4: Centering** Stakeholder Voice & Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement
  - Culturally Responsive Stakeholder Engagement Planning Tool
  - Equitable Family Collaboration: Co-Design Circles Method
  - APS BRAVE Spaces Program
  - Protocol for Navigating BRAVE Conversations
  - BRAVE Discussion Norms
  - BRAVE Discussion Protocol
  - BRAVE Centering Protocol

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# Tools to Support Equity-Focused Practices

## Our People: Promoting Equity-Guided & Data-Informed Decision-Making

- Equity-Focused Data Analysis Protocol
- Equity Impact Assessment
- Equity-Guided Decision-Making Tool

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# Equity-Focused Data Analysis Protocol

## Background

The Framework for Evaluating Data from an Equity Lens, created by the Center for Equity and Social Justice, nurtures **reflexivity**, leading us to consider the impact of data on students, families, and communities. Data appears objective, but it is inherently subjective: all stages of the data cycle—from its funding, motivation, collection, design, and interpretation—are subject to **explicit** and **implicit biases**. While it has historically been used as a **tool of oppression**, data capacity to further the goal of racial and economic **justice**.

**Goal:** To **evaluate the data** through the **lens of equity**.

## Defining Equity Lens

The process of paying disciplined attention to historically marginalized populations (race, ethnicity, ability, etc.) while analyzing problems, looking for solutions and defining success. An equity lens critiques a “color blind” or “equality of need” approach, arguing that these lenses perpetuate systems of disadvantage and prevent structural racism from being acknowledged. Application of an equity lens helps to illuminate disparate outcomes, patterns of disadvantage, and root cause.

## Essential Questions

### **Achievement Status:**

- How have achievement rates for subgroups changed over time?
- What teacher and staff qualities are related to student achievement across subgroups?

### **Educational Opportunities:**

- What types of in-school and afterschool opportunities are offered to support or enhance student success, and which students participate in them?
- What patterns or inconsistencies are evident within racial, socioeconomic, or ability statuses across the different data sets? What systemic barriers or mental models may be contributing to these trends? Mental models are the way a person perceives the world around them. They are based in belief as opposed to facts.

### **Systems & Structures:**

- Focus on structures vs. individuals: What internal systems or structures are producing the current results?
- What policies and practices are in place to address historical and social inequities?

### **Financial:**

- How have you adjusted your budget/expenditures to address the needs of all students, particularly those at risk of not meeting challenging State academic standards?

- How have you adjusted your budget/expenditures to address the needs of each subgroup of students (economically disadvantaged students; students from major racial and ethnic groups; students with disabilities; and English learners)

### **Reflection:**

- What did you and your team learn about student outcomes and equity throughout this process?
- How do your identities (e.g., gender, race, sexuality, religion, socio-economic status), biases, and strengths impact your understanding and utilization of the data?
- What do the data patterns reveal about how educators interact with different students?
- What assumptions may educators make about students when looking at the data? (e.g., the SAT as a measure of college success and readiness, student demography limited their success, etc.)? How will you mitigate the impact of these assumptions?
- Whose voice is reflected in the data? How can missing voices be captured?

### **Action:**

- What strategies will you put in place for reducing equity gaps and improving student outcomes (also include socio-emotional and wrap-around supports)?
- How well does your action plan address the needs of all student groups? What is our evidence that your action plan is supporting each student to thrive?
- To what extent did you involve students and/or families in the data analysis and action planning process?
- How are biases within your teams and department impacting the way you are using, or plan to use, data?
- How will you maximize your remaining budget to address the needs of all students and subgroups?

### **Resources:**

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/6-steps-equitable-data-analysis>

# Equity Impact Assessment (EIA)<sup>51</sup>

## Overview

The Atlanta Public Schools Board “directs the Superintendent to factor equity into all the district does, including, but not limited to practices, procedures, programs, assessments, evaluations, school governance, professional development, resource allocations, sites, facilities, operations, budgets, spending, services, contracts, partnerships, and all strategic planning...”.

Given the myriad of decisions that the district makes each day, it is important to identify the critical decision points where the administration will pause and factor equity meaningfully and intentionally into its decision making, the EIA is designed to identify those choice points and articulates the steps that will be taken to factor equity into district decision making.

Examining our work through an equity lens allows us to interrupt and eliminate inequitable practices. The Equity Impact Assessment (EIA) is designed to do just that. This six step process is designed to guide teams and decision-makers through a set of criteria to consider, questions, and protocols. This process will support teams in developing implementation and accountability plans through an equity lens.

All-In Cities, an initiative of Policy Link, defines an equity impact assessment as “the general framework for an equity impact assessment is a structured analysis that can be applied to any standard policy- or decision-making process with the goal of identifying the populations likely to be affected and taking steps to close existing racial gaps and/or mitigate unintended consequences.”.

The purpose of this EIA is to integrate equity into the district decision making and deliberation processes; this EIA was adapted from the Minneapolis Public Schools EDIA, Educational Equity Guidance Tool, and [The CPS Racial Equity Impact Assessment \(REIA\)](#). Below we share a few examples of how leaders in the field define an EIA.

## Best Practices

- **This is a deliberate process, not a checkbox process.** The aim of the EIA is to integrate the equity into the district decision making and deliberation processes, not to just fill out a form. This analysis will help APS teams and leaders make decisions shaped by our equity values.
- **Start with EIA in mind.** This process is designed to support projects in the early design phases, not midway through or at the end.
- **Collaborate and Co-create.** This EIA should not be completed by one individual, department, or school. Work with stakeholders of varying experiences, backgrounds and skills. Involve those most impacted by the decision.

<sup>51</sup> Adapted from Chicago Public Schools REIA and Minneapolis EDIA

- **Revisit, repeat and refine.** The EIA is not meant to be a static process. As you look at data and engage those affected you will gain additional insight. Revisiting, repeating and refining it at different points in time, will reveal different opportunities to consider equity. For instance, your anticipated outcomes may change. For large scale and/or longer projects, revisit the EIA regularly and determine if your initial recommendations still stand. Reach out for technical assistance as needed.

## POSSIBLE USES OF AN EIA

Stakeholders	Suggestions about how you can use the EIA in your work and/or role in APS
Principals or Assistant Principals	<p>Work with stakeholders in your school to collaboratively assess a proposal.</p> <p>Assess your own leadership and who benefits or is unintentionally burdened by your actions and proposals</p>
Instructional Staff	<p>Engage in a root cause study about how to foster an inclusive classroom.</p> <p>Reflect on how your instructional plan might affect your least-served students.</p>
Departments and District Offices	<p>Inquire about where inequities exists in your locus of control and identify next steps.</p> <p>Implement an inquiry process for potential equity-based Continuous Improvement priorities</p> <p>Engage in a listening campaign with diverse stakeholders to better understand the impact of your work on your least-served students and your equity ecosystem.</p> <p>Design a change in practice that might allow your organization to better serve particular students.</p>
Student Groups	<p>Inquire about your classmates' experiences, especially your least served peers', seek change, and present findings to school leadership.</p> <p>Talk to your peers about how to foster equity and inclusion at your school.</p>
Families	<p>Assess your school's budget and make recommendations to promote equity.</p> <p>Evaluate how school or district policies impact your school.</p>
Go Teams and Board of Education	<p>Participate in listening campaigns among diverse stakeholders to better understand your equity ecosystem.</p> <p>Evaluate school funding within your network and consider differences in available opportunities and specific hardships schools and students face.</p> <p>Recognize and recommend changes to institutionalized practices and policies that may be perpetuating inequity.</p>

# SIX PHASES OF EQUITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

## PHASE

# 1

## DETERMINE NEED

### Impact to Students Criteria:

- Impacts all students within one of the following:
  - the District,
  - a cluster,
  - an attendance zone,
  - or a school
- If the policy, program, or procedure will have a disproportionate impact\* on: African American, Latino, student with disabilities, and other special student populations (LGBTQ+, Low SES, Gender, etc.) ability to graduate ready for college and career, and exhibiting the skill-sets articulated by the APS PoG; and Affect one of the following: 1) Academic coursework; 2) College entrance exams participation; or 3) Access to co-curricular and extracurricular activities

### Impact to Resources Criteria:

- When there are considerable amount of resources\*\* being allocated to any new or existing program, practice and/or procedure, or initiative.” It is primarily used to show how the program/practice or initiative will advance equity

### Priority Elevated By District Leadership:

- When the decision maker(s) in charge of a specific decision or action requires an EIA
- When one is deemed appropriate by the Superintendent, Board, or Chief Equity and Social Justice Officer

\*[Definition of Disproportionate Impact](#) is defined as the impact will be greater than the percentage of students within a respective demographic. (i.e. if you have 77% of your students who identify as AA, then AA should not account for more than 77% of your suspension rates.)

\*\*Considerable amount of resources means the dollar amount meets the purchasing thresholds that require Board approval. See page 9 of [Procurement Procedures Manual](#)

## PHASE

# 2

## COMPLETE MINI-EIA

The purpose of the EIA is to operationalize equity into the district decision making and deliberation processes. Full EIAs are known to take 3 – 10 months, but in some cases shorter processes have been implemented. Time for completion depends on the scale of the project and how much the requestor has completed prior to submitting the request

## STEP 1 ARTICULATE THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

### Lead Question:

What problem(s) are you trying to solve?

### Additional Question:

- What evidence is there that the problem is important to stakeholders (teachers, principals, district leaders, board, families, students, and/or community)?

**Quick Tips:** Draft a problem of practice (POP) statement. A solid POP should be something that impedes progress towards the district's vision and definition of success, links to the instructional core, is framed as a statement not a question, is clear, succinct, & jargon free, is measurable (based on data) and time bound, the district plays a critical role in resolving it, clear evidence the problem is important to stakeholders (teachers, principals, district leaders, board, families, students, and local leaders) addresses the most critical points for all stakeholders, is manageable enough to address in one year

**Tools:** [PELP POP Criteria for a Solid Problem of Practice](#)

### Quick Example

The pandemic disrupted business as usual processes. Therefore, many of us realized there was a need to re-imagine how we show up for our students, families, communities, and customers. With the charge to re-imagine how we work, team members have expressed to their leadership that there is a need to increase access to and flexibility of professional development opportunities. The team decided to use Phase 2 of the EIA to propose a solution.

#### *Problem of Practice Statement:*

All employees on Team X do not consistently participate in topic of interest or job specific professional development (PD) opportunities, which limits the team's ability to participate in meaningful discussions and/or learning opportunities that could help with re-imagining and redesigning how we work to advance our mission.

## STEP 2 DATA CONSIDERATIONS

### Lead Question:

What data substantiates that this problem(s) exists?

### Additional Questions:

- What inequities currently exist (i.e. racial, socioeconomic, linguistic)?
- Do you have any qualitative data regarding students, staff, and families experiences?
- What is the research-base to support the proposal?
- What are the best practices & research into action (if any)?
- What is the historical context, local (i.e. population and place-based) context?

**Quick Tips:** Compile data and information (i.e., policies, guidelines, existing materials) related to the topic. Review the data and information with key stakeholders. Develop 3 lists: 1) what you notice, 2) what you wonder, and 3) things you need to consider as it relates to inequities. Have a candid discussion about what this means for addressing your problem statement.

**Tools:** [Equity-Focused Data Analysis Protocol](#)

### Quick Example

Using this example, a few key data points to examine would be PD participation by role, time with the district, and policies on PD. The leadership team gathered data and synthesized the following:

*Noticings:* Inequities existed by roles and responsibilities and time with the district. There were team members on some teams who have not participated in job specific PD within the past five years, while other team members have monthly/quarterly/or annual training sessions.

*Wonderings:* Why was there a discrepancy? Do all employees really need PD?

*Considerations:* All employees should participate in some form of PD. Job-specific PD opportunities help us deliver the best learning environments and support systems for our students

## STEP 3 ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS (RCA)

### Lead Question:

How do you know you are tackling the right problem(s)? Does the proposal address a symptom or root cause?

### Additional Questions:

- What sources of information will guide this inquiry?
- What are the underlying root causes?
- What are the consequences of NOT addressing this root cause(s)? Be specific.

What are the consequences of NOT How will you determine causes and symptoms? How will you build consensus on root causes?

**Quick Tips:** Bring together a Focus Group consisting of a diverse group of stakeholders with close proximity to, and who are impacted by, the problem. Conduct a Root Cause Analysis and share back the findings.

**Tools:** Root Cause Analysis: Fishbone Template, 5 Whys or Asset-Based Mindset-Root Cause Analysis Protocol

### Quick Example

Based on the data gathered, leaders had ideas on why the discrepancy exists between employee participation in PD. However, they needed to dig deeper to ensure the plan they propose will be designed to address the root cause for the discrepancy. Leaders brought together a focus group to determine the root cause by using the 5 Whys tool:

*WHY 1: Why does participation in job specific PD vary by roles and responsibilities?*

*A: Some employees are required to participate in job specific PD, while others are not*

*WHY 2: Why are some employees required to participate in job specific PD, while others are not*

*A: As the team worked through the 5 WHYS, they came to a consensus that the root cause of the discrepancy was due to the understanding that leadership does not consistently set the expectation nor offer job-specific professional development opportunities to all employees*

## STEP 4 INITIAL STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

### Lead Question:

Who are the most impacted communities and how were they engaged?

### Additional Questions

- How do the impacted communities perceive the current state and the proposal?
- How does the entire community feel?
- Who does the proposal benefit?

**Quick Tips:** Stakeholder engagement should be considered throughout the entire process. Describe how communities have been engaged and if there will be opportunities to expand engagement including pre-proposal input.

**Tools:** Back to the Future  
Equitable Family Collaboration Co-Design Circles Method  
Culturally Responsive Stakeholder Engagement Planning Tool

### Quick Example

After facilitating a focus group to identify the root cause, the leadership team decided to engage a broader set of stakeholders (i.e., teachers, employees) to gather their insights and to determine if our initial assumptions and focus-group take-aways were accurate.

We also solicited advice from these stakeholders on possible solutions to the challenge and drafted a Theory of Action.

The leaders used the information gathered to begin crafting a viable solution to the problem. Stakeholders expressed feeling heard and they appreciated being consulted.

## STEP 5 WHAT IS THE INITIAL PROPOSAL AND DESIRED OUTCOMES?

### Lead Question:

Why? What are the intended outcomes?

### Additional Question:

- How does it align to vision, graduate vision, core values, APS 5, District Equity Commitments, Student Outcomes Focused Governance?
- What relevant research informs and supports this project or policy implementation?
- Chief level approval:

**Quick Tips:** Share your WHY and describe the successes you would like to replicate/scale. Describe what success will look like (brief narrative with KPI) and what change you hope to see as a result.

**Action Step:** Create a Phase 2 report, along with supporting documents to the Center for Equity and Social Justice for review

Note: Include a statement of Chief level support

### Quick Example

After articulating the problem statement, reviewing data, conducting a root cause analysis, engaging stakeholders in a meaningful discussion, and thinking through who benefits from or is burdened by the decision to be made, leaders put forth this proposal to address the discrepancy in access to and flexibility of job specific PD.

The leaders engaged employees in a competency, skill, and interest assessment to better understand how to further enhance the knowledge, skills, and abilities of their team. Based on that assessment leaders worked with their employees to co-develop personalized professional development plans. Some PD will be completed in house using ELIS and in-house learning opportunities. However, some will require purchasing external job specific courses not offered by the district. This will require the leaders to increase their PD budget request by \$100K.

### PHASE

## 3

## APPLY AN EQUITY LENS (CESJ)

An equity lens is defined as the process of paying disciplined attention to historically marginalized populations (race, ethnicity, ability, etc.) while analyzing problems, looking for solutions and defining success. An equity lens critiques a “color blind” or “equality of need” approach, arguing that these lenses perpetuate systems of disadvantage and prevent structural racism from being acknowledged. Application of an equity lens helps to illuminate disparate outcomes, patterns of disadvantage, and root cause.

**This step will be conducted by an Equity Specialist from the Center for Equity and Social Justice (CESJ).**

**Submit your completed Phase 2 report, along with supporting documents to the Center for Equity and Social Justice for review.**

**Your Phase 2 report should be submitted to the following CESJ offices based your location within the district:**

**Office of Equitable Learning Environments (ELE):** Provides technical and EIA support for the Schools, Academics, and Performance Divisions. Also provides technical support and programming for school-based staff and personnel.

**Office of Equity Strategy and Coherence (ESAC):** Provides technical and EIA support for the Finance, Operations, Talent and Strategy Divisions. Also supports equity-focused communications, public engagement, and data analysis supports.

An Equity Specialist will be assigned to review your Phase 2 Report and provide feedback on the equity concerns, considerations, evidence based best practices, and resources for the proposed initiative, practice, program or procedure.

The Equity Specialist will also determine if the proposal will enter the full EDIA process with input from CESJ senior leadership.

**Please note that this section takes a minimum of 6 weeks to complete. The time this step takes depends on the complexity of the initiative, program, procedure or practice.**

The steps in this phase of the EIA process include:

- **Conduct listening and observation sessions**, that at a minimum answers the questions below (this includes a list of general questions, specific questions will be added based on information received from step 2):
  - Whose voices have been included and/or prioritized while identifying potential strategies?
  - What are potential ways to improve the experiences of those adversely impacted by your equity challenge?
  - What reliable strategies and structures can be used continuously to assess the proposal's effect on equity?
  - How do you account for accumulated burden? How do you create a fair distribution of the burden?
  - What are potential equity-based strategies?
  - What learning cycles and monitoring goals could be established to measure the progress of potential strategies?
  - What are possible solutions or next steps to advance equity and inclusion?
- **Consider who benefits from or who is burdened by the proposal:** Describe how the current proposal/ practice/policy is shifting power to better integrate and prioritize communities of color.
  - What are the strategies for advancing educational equity and mitigating against unintended consequences?
  - Are people traumatized or re-traumatized by the proposal/ practice/policy?
  - How are communities of color affected being included or excluded?
  - How is the proposal/ practice/ policy accounting for the emotional and physical safety of communities affected?
- **Elevate Equity Wonderings, Noticing, and Considerations:**
  - Review systems and structures, financial burden, achievement status, and educational opportunities
  - Share wonderings, noticings, and considerations to help mitigate known and unknown risks
  - Share information, ideas, and resources for creating or expanding equity through this process
- **Submit EIA Recommendation to CESJ leadership for review**
  - CESJ leadership will review findings compiled by the Equity Specialist to determine if there is a need for a Full EIA process.

## PHASE

# 4

## EXECUTE FULL EIA

**If the proposal needs to enter the full EIA process, the lead staff member for the project must participate in a -- Using the EIA to Create and Expand Educational Equity -- professional learning session. This session is required once per year prior to engaging in a full EIA process.**

The Equity Specialist will support the project lead in the completion of the full EIA process.

## STEP 6 WIDER STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND CO-DESIGN

### Lead Question:

How have you ensured that the voices and perspectives of the people experiencing the problem are involved in the decision-making and design process?

### Additional Questions

- How were impacted stakeholders involved in the innovation and design process?
- How did you engage the voices of those historically marginalized in the process?
- Have you incorporated their advice and recommendations into the proposal to the maximum extent possible?
- How have you ensured that their concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the solution and alternatives developed?
- How will you capture data on stakeholder feedback, next steps, etc. during the design process?

**Quick Tips:** Stakeholder engagement should be considered throughout the entire process. Describe how communities have been engaged and if there will be opportunities to expand engagement including pre-proposal input.

**Tools:** [Back to the Future](#); [Equitable Family Collaboration](#); [Co-Design Circles Method](#); [Culturally Responsive Stakeholder Engagement Planning Tool](#)

### Quick Example

We engaged the employees in a Back to the Future protocol to get their ideas on what the future state of PD should look like, what the past PD experiences have been, and what connection is needed to move from the past to the future ideal state.

The stakeholders engaged in this process are as follows....

What emerged from these engagements are the following...

The leaders used that information to begin crafting a solution proposal and we iterated on the proposal 2 times based on ongoing feedback we received from stakeholders from subsequent engagements.

An outline of the stakeholder engagement plan for development of this initiative is included in the Appendix below. You will also find in the Appendix the notes and meeting minutes collected from each engagement.

You will see stakeholder feedback incorporated into Parts 1 & 3 of this proposal. job specific courses not offered by the district. This will require the leaders to increase their PD budget request by \$100K.

## STEP 7 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN CONSIDERATIONS

### Lead Question:

Is the proposal realistic, adequately funded and adequately staffed? How are you implementing this decision?

### Additional Questions

- What are the measures of success?
- Have you thought through ways to create a more equitable division of impact?
- Does your design process address and mitigate for impacts to communities that may be disparately impacted or burdened as a result of implementation?
- Did you conduct a SWOT Analysis?
- What's the feedback loop? Does your implementation plan allow for ongoing learning and flexibility as new dynamics and feedback emerge? How?
- How are developments shared? What is iterative in your implementation plan (e.g. allowing for emergent participation, co/re-design, etc)

**Quick Tips:** Develop a timeline of key activities, inclusive of the Equity-Guided Decision-Making Tool steps and Culturally Responsive Stakeholder Engagement and how to co-design your implementation plan with those who will be impacted.

**Tools:** McKinsey Implementation Toolkit (obtained from CESJ)

### Quick Example

To ensure they were not blindly throwing money at a problem, the leaders led the team in developing a detailed implementation plan. The plan included measures of success with clearly defined goals. They connected with other districts to learn more about their PD efforts and how their investments helped to advance more equitable outcomes for their students. They discussed risks, scheduled milestones, and assigned tasks for this investment.

## STEP 8 ACCOUNTABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

### Lead Question:

How will you ensure accountability and monitor and communicate results?

### Additional Questions:

- What is your plan for monitoring, evaluating, and continuous improvement including: progress metrics, measures of success, and needed adjustments?
- How and when will impacts and outcomes be monitored and documented?
- Is there long-term sustainability and need for community partnership, investment and buy-in?

**Quick Tips:** Describe how you plan to create opportunities for continuous improvement in your proposal, when possible. Consider using the plan, do, study, act framework. Determine if there is a need to track academic return on investment for this proposal.

**Tools:** Georgia's Systems of Continuous Improvement

### Quick Example

The team leaders recognize this is a considerable amount of resources to pour into PD and they want to be good financial stewards, so they've developed a process for monitoring milestones of completion.

They've created a reporting structure that allows team members to cross-train, when possible and share how their PD has improved the quality of their work and advance the mission of the district.

To take it a step further and ensure sustainability, they created a PD continuous improvement plan.

PHASE

5

## ENGAGE DISTRICT SENIOR LEADERSHIP

- **Review final findings**
  - Proposal and EIA Report should be submitted to District Senior leadership for review and approval prior to being shared with the Board or public and prior to implementation.
- **Senior Leadership approval, request for adjustments, or denial of approval**
- **If Board approval is required, the proposal and a copy of the full EIA Report should be submitted to the Board for review and approval.**

PHASE

6

## MONITOR AND EVALUATE

- **Launch plan, do, study, act (PDSA) and academic return on investment (AROI), if applicable**
- **Implement proposed accountability, mitigation planning, periodic equity audits, and return on investment reviews**
  - Share lessons learned, wins, and emerging best practices
  - Determine continuation, expansion, modifications or cessation of EIA projects or policies
  - Support Tools: APS Continuous Improvement Framework (obtained from the Performance Office); [Georgia's Systems of Continuous Improvement](#)

# Equity-Guided Decision-Making Tool<sup>52</sup>

## Purpose & Use

If your initiative, program, or procedure does not meet the criteria to warrant a full EIA process, per Board policy, equity must still be meaningfully and deliberately integrated into your decision-making and problem-solving process. To support you in this process, please use the following equity-guided decision-making tool.

## Assessing Yourself and Starting Conditions

Instructions: Before using the Equity-Guided Decision-Making Tool or making any important decisions it's important that you first take time to reflect on these pre-questions to assess yourself and the type of decision you need to make. Keep the responses to these pre-questions top of mind as you move through the mini EIA.

### Reflect

- How are you showing up? Is this a proactive or reactive decision? If this is a reactionary decision is it reactionary due to coming from a place of fear? What state of mind would you like to be in when making this decision?
- How are your experiences different from or similar to those impacted by the decision you plan to make? How does race and/or personal beliefs/experiences impact your decision-making process?
- To what extent are roles and responsibilities defined in order to emphasize equity and accountability?

### Assess

- Which organizational value(s) is this decision grounded in? Does it conflict with any of our other organizational or your personal values?
- What assumptions are you making about the needs or wants of our stakeholders? How can you check those assumptions?
- Conduct a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats ([SWOT](#)) analysis for this decision to see what strengths and opportunities you can build on and which weaknesses and threats you can mitigate for

### Delineate

- What kind of a decision is this (ex: urgent, complex, instructional, operational, short-term/long-term, etc)? What is an ideal timeline for thoughtful decision-making? What is your given timeline for making a decision? What else is needed to support your decision-making process?
- What do you know about the problem you are trying to tackle? What information is missing about the problem you are trying to tackle?

The purpose of the mini EIA is to provide a user friendly tool for teams to use in their decision-making processes regardless of meeting the criteria to be considered for a full EIA. Just like the full EIA, mini EIAs operationalize equity into the district decision making and deliberation processes. Time for completion depends on the scale of the project and how much the requestor has completed prior to submitting the request

<sup>52</sup> Adapted from the MMSD: Educational Equity Guidance Tool & Oregon Department of Education: Equity Decision Tools for School Leaders

### **Step 1: Articulate the Problem Statement**

What problem(s) are you trying to solve? What evidence is there that the problem is important to stakeholders (teachers, principals, district leaders, board, families, students, and/or community)?

### **Step 2: Root Cause Analysis (RCA)**

How do you know you are tackling the right problem(s)? Does the proposal address a symptom or root cause? What sources of information will guide this inquiry? What are the underlying root causes? What are the consequences of NOT addressing this root cause(s)? Be specific. How will you determine causes and symptoms? How will you build consensus on root causes?

### **Step 3: Data Considerations**

What data substantiates that this problem(s) exists? What inequities currently exist (i.e. racial, socioeconomic, linguistic?) Do you have any qualitative data regarding students, staff, and families experiences? What is the research-base to support the proposal? What are the best practices & research into action (if any)?

### **Step 4: Stakeholder Engagement**

Who are the most impacted communities and how were they engaged? How do the impacted communities perceive the current state and the proposal? How does the entire community feel? Who does the proposal benefit?

### **Step 5: Consider who BENEFITS from or will be BURDENED by the proposal**

What are the strategies for advancing educational equity and mitigating against unintended consequences? Are people traumatized or re-traumatized by the proposal/practice/policy? How are communities of color affected being included or excluded? How is the proposal/practice/policy accounting for the emotional and physical safety of communities affected?

### **Step 6: What is the INITIAL PROPOSAL and desired outcomes?**

Why? What are the intended outcomes? How does it align to vision, graduate vision, core values, APS 5, District Equity Commitments, Student Outcomes Focused?

### **Step 7: Implementation Plan considerations**

Is the proposal realistic, adequately funded and adequately staffed? What are the measures of success? What's the feedback loop? How are developments shared?

### **Step 8: Accountability considerations**

How will you ensure accountability and monitor and communicate results? How and when will impacts and outcomes be monitored and documented? Is there long-term sustainability and need for community partnership, investment and buy-in?

## Equity-Guided Decision-Making Tool Process

**Articulate Problem**      **What problem(s) are you trying to solve?**

**Root Cause**      **How do you know you are tackling the right problem(s)?**

**Data**      **What is the data and what do they tell us?**

**Stakeholder Engagement**      **How have communities been engaged and are there opportunities to expand engagement including pre-proposal input?**

**Benefits and Burdens**      **Who benefits from or will be burdened by the proposal and what are the strategies for advancing educational equity and mitigating against unintended consequences?**

**Initial Proposal**      **What is the proposal and desired outcomes?**

**Implementation Plan**      **What is the implementation plan?**

**Accountability**      **How will you ensure accountability and Monitor and communicate results?**

## Equity-Guided Decision-Making Tool Worksheet

### Articulate Problem

What problem(s) are you trying to solve?

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What evidence is there that the problem is important to stakeholders (teachers, principals, district leaders, board, families, students, and/or community)?

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### Root Cause

How do you know you are tackling the right problem(s)?

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Does the proposal address a symptom or root cause? What sources of information will guide this inquiry?

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## Equity-Guided Decision-Making Tool Worksheet

What are the underlying root causes? What are the consequences of NOT addressing this root cause(s)? Be specific.

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How will you build consensus on root causes?

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### Data

What data substantiates that this problem(s) exists? What inequities currently exist (i.e. racial, socioeconomic, linguistic?)

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Do you have any qualitative data regarding students, staff, and families experiences?

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## Equity-Guided Decision-Making Tool Worksheet

What is the research-base to support the proposal? What are the best practices & research into action (if any)?

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## Stakeholder Engagement

Who are the most impacted communities and how were they engaged?

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How do the impacted communities perceive the current state and the proposal?

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How do the communities feel about the proposal? Who does the proposal benefit?

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# Equity-Guided Decision-Making Tool Worksheet

## Benefits and Burdens

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Are people traumatized or re-traumatized by the proposal/ practice/policy?

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How are communities of color affected being included or excluded?

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How is the proposal/ practice/ policy accounting for the emotional and physical safety of communities affected?

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# Equity-Guided Decision-Making Tool Worksheet

## Initial Proposal

Why?

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What are the intended outcomes?

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How does it align to vision, graduate vision, core values, APS 5, District Equity Commitments, Student Outcomes Focused?

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## Implementation Plan

Is the proposal realistic, adequately funded and adequately staffed?

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## Equity-Guided Decision-Making Tool Worksheet

What are the measures of success?

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What's the feedback loop? How are developments shared?

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## Accountability

How will you ensure accountability and monitor and communicate results?

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How and when will impacts and outcomes be monitored and documented?

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Is there long-term sustainability and need for community partnership, investment and buy-in?

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DRAFT

# Our Systems: **Designing** Equitable Systems, Structures, & Policies

## CESJ Resources and Equity Framework Tools to support putting this Pillar into Action:

- Equity Plan Template
- Equity By Design: Design Thinking Protocol
- Equity-Focused Policy Analysis Tool
- Systems Level Equity Assessment Tool

DRAFT

# Sample Equity Plan Template<sup>53</sup>

This sample template is intended to guide teams as they develop their own equity goals and plans to ensure that all students, regardless of race or background, have equitable access to excellent educators, equitable resources and high quality programming.

The template consists of six sections. Each section provides a description of the types of content that should be included.

## Section 1: Introduction

- Provide an overview of the plan, including the current state, organizational context and recent applicable actions, all requirements addressed, and relevant policy referenced.
- Provide the definition of “excellence” that your team will use to identify and address gaps in equitable access.
- Provide an overview of the plan development process, including what specific steps were taken to date.

## Section 2: Stakeholder Engagement

- What stakeholder groups have you included in the design of the plan? How many individuals, from which stakeholder groups, met how often and for what purposes?
- What steps have you taken to ensure that stakeholder engagement was broad, diverse, and authentic?
- What plans are in place to continue to engage stakeholders as part of an equity coalition to ensure that you implement the plan as envisioned?
- What mechanisms are in place for receiving and incorporating stakeholder input throughout the process through ongoing, two-way feedback loops?

## Section 3: Equity Gaps

- How are you defining key terminology for equitable access?
- What data sources were used to calculate equity gaps, and what do these data show?
- What inequities did your calculations identify?

## Section 4: Strategies for Eliminating Equity Gaps

- What Theory of Action and core principles are the basis for your plan?
- What root causes have you identified? What mental models and systemic structures account for these inequities? Mental models are the way a person perceives the world around them. They are based in belief as opposed to facts.
- What metrics did you choose to identify root causes, support chosen strategies, and assess performance in the future?
- What targeted strategies and substrategies for addressing equity gaps have you identified to address the root causes? What initiatives and policies related to each strategy are in place or will need to be updated?
- What resources (financial, human capital) will you use to support each strategy?
- What are the timelines and milestones for implementing the strategies and closing the equity gaps?

<sup>53</sup> Source: Center on Great Teachers and Leaders

### **Section 5: Ongoing Monitoring and Support**

- What are the mechanisms for ongoing technical assistance, professional learning, monitoring, and feedback? Who will be responsible for ongoing tasks?
- How frequently will monitoring be conducted?
- How frequently, to which audiences, and through which mechanisms will you publicly report on progress?
- What are the short-term and long-term performance metrics will you use to assess progress toward achieving your goals?

### **Section 6: Conclusion**

- Summarize the main points of each section.

DRAFT

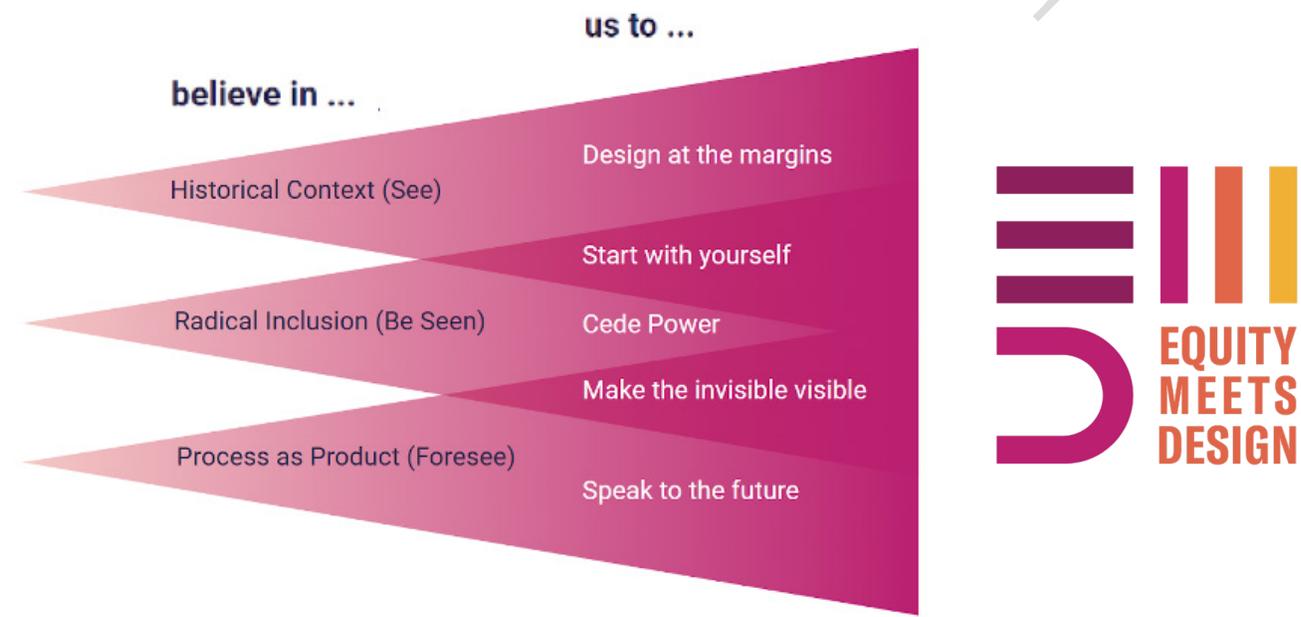
# Equity By Design: Design Thinking Protocol

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mission of our district's equity work is to positively impact the lives of our learners and learning communities, so that every single one of our students thrives – not by accident, but by design.

In order to realize this mission, we must work to ensure that every policy, initiative, and program is designed in a manner that manifests equity. Achieving equity by design requires that we go about the design process in certain ways and hold certain beliefs during the creation process.

An equity-focused design process requires...



## 5 Equity By Design Principles

**In order to design for equity, we must:**

**1. Design at the margins.**

We design at the edge of society; solutions at the margins work for all. Innovations based in equity diffuse inward from the bleeding edge.

**2. Start with yourself.**

Our identities (race, gender, upbringing, social status, home language, etc.) create our lens for the world and how we make sense of it. We have to be aware of this lens and the biases it brings with it, as we design.

**3. Cede power.**

Everyone has power. There is often dissonance between who we are, who we aspire to be, and how we behave. This reconciliation is both uncomfortable and discomfoting. This dissonance and discomfort reveals what power needs to be ceded.

#### **4. Make the invisible visible.**

Implicit biases, power dynamics, and invisible structures all govern relationships with people in our organizations, schools, and governments. By making them visible, we can assess the impact on people and create a space for reflection and repair.

#### **5. Speak to the future.**

There is insidious power in language and discourse to influence and control ideas, beliefs, actions, and ultimately culture. In order to write a different story, we have to use different language. We need to replace our current hegemonic (ruling or dominant) discourse.

**Before beginning a design process that delivers on these 5 principles, we must close any belief gaps that are present and that have served to create the systems and structures in which we currently operate.**

**We must hold the following beliefs if we are to manifest equity by design:**

#### **BELIEF #1 – LEARNING TO SEE: HISTORICAL CONTEXT MATTERS**

Evolutionary science tells us that the most beneficial traits survive; we are the recipients of the genetic legacy of our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. And social inheritance mimics this genetic inheritance: We inherit the traits and characteristics of legacies of privilege and oppression. We must see both who we were (our historical selves) and who we are (our current selves). To understand the present time and space we occupy, we must understand the inherited legacy surrounding the thing we are designing, the place we are designing in, and the community we are designing with.

#### **BELIEF #2 – BE SEEN: RADICAL INCLUSION**

**Equity By Design** is intentional about bringing diverse stakeholders together across race, role, gender, and socioeconomic status to build relationships and lay the groundwork for community. Inclusion is not merely the absence of exclusion: Radical inclusion requires going further – identifying barriers that exclude, and eliminating them; welcoming different people, stories, and experiences to the innovation conversation; creating spaces where everyone can bring their full selves and be equally valued. Radical inclusion is not simply about reducing hate or respecting difference; it is about truly loving others.

#### **BELIEF #3 – FORESEE: PROCESS AS PRODUCT**

Process dictates product. To design for equity, we must design equitably. The practice of equitable design requires that we are mindful of how we achieve equity. Inclusive design practices raise the voices of the marginalized, strengthen relationships across difference, shift positions, and recharge our democracy. Because exclusion feeds inequity, we can no longer argue that there is not enough time to include the community. We must make time for the magic of human connection, especially across difference.

**These core beliefs, and the manifestations thereof, lead us to the following design principles:**

### **DESIGN PRINCIPLE #1 – DESIGN AT THE MARGINS**

Our current innovation conversation is exclusive, accessible only to the powerful and privileged. This erodes the innate creative agency and leadership in the marginalized, reduces the experience of incredibly complex people, and often leads to the allocation of resources to symptoms while neglecting the existence, permanence, and resilience of root causes.

The current social order blames the marginalized for their experience without acknowledging or attempting to redesign oppressive historical structures. equityXdesign expects the privileged to trust and listen to the voices on the margins to identify the root causes of inequity and the ways they manifest. It positions the marginalized as leaders in the design process and experts in their experience, arming them with a process to solve their own problems.

Designing at the margin means that those in privileged positions do not solve for those experiencing oppression; rather, in true community, both the privileged and marginalized build collective responsibility and innovative solutions for our most intractable problems. Even the use of the word marginalized linguistically parallels the exclusion of individuals. The definition of a group simply by their relationship to the dominant culture is a problem that continues to persist.

### **DESIGN PRINCIPLE #2 – START WITH YOURSELF**

Our identities (race, gender, upbringing, social status, home language, etc.) create our lens for the world and how we make sense of it. We must be aware of this lens when engaging in design. When we design for people without understanding the impact of their historical stories, our understanding slips into paternalism. When we design for people without accounting for our own biases, our understanding slips into stereotypes. We must raise our awareness of our own identities and how bias impacts our thoughts, choices, conclusions, and assumptions to truly co-create with others.

### **DESIGN PRINCIPLE #3 – CEDE POWER**

Equity requires a nonviolent, action-oriented spirit of co-creation and co-invention, necessitating an inversion of legacy power structures. Expertise cannot be quantified in degrees, and the designer/end-user dichotomy is no longer useful. We must acknowledge the power dynamics that allow some votes to count more than others. Equitable design demands that practices change and evolve – that we redefine roles, revalue ways of knowing, and reassess the ways we reach decisions. We recognize the potential for cede power to reinforce the hegemonic view of power as a zero-sum game – more for you must mean less for me. This is not the case. We believe that shared power is in the interest of everyone and does not require a growth in the ranks of the powerless. And yet, this work still requires each of us, who hold power in some ways, to deeply question its inheritance and its locus and to cede it when necessary.

Eugene Eubanks, Ralph Parish and Dianne Smith, in “Changing the Discourse in Schools” in *Race, Ethnicity, and Multiculturalism: Policy and Practice* introduced a framework (Discourse 1 vs. Discourse 2) we use to guide our work.

- **Discourse 1** is our current and hegemonic discourse – the language typically used to talk about, question, and plan the work of reform. This dialogue supports and maintains the status quo without appearing unresponsive to outside demands for improvement.
- **Discourse 2**, the discourse of transformation, is the language that tends to be about uncomfortable, unequal, ineffective, prejudicial conditions and relationships. This discourse creates space for ambiguity, change, and the opportunity to be a part of a purposeful structure.

There is an often-overlooked power in language and discourse to influence and control ideas, beliefs, actions, and ultimately culture. When we notice how hegemony dominates our conceptual understanding of problems and how they impact others who are different, we have a powerful opportunity to see the end-users' historical selves and how those selves manifest in the present.

When we take control of our language, when we speak to the future, we lay the groundwork to create something new – together.

#### **DESIGN PRINCIPLE #4 – MAKE THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE**

The relationships between people and problems are often governed by sets of heuristics – techniques that allow problems to be solved with speed, agility, and economy. However, these preexisting schemas can perpetuate exclusionary assumptions and biased practices, manifesting as implicit bias, power dynamics, and hegemonic practices that govern relationships with people in our organizations, schools, and governments. By making them visible, we can assess their impact and create a space for reflection and repair.

#### **DESIGN PRINCIPLE #5 – SPEAK TO THE FUTURE**

Because an equitable reality has never existed, we cannot look to our past to learn how to create an equitable future. With no guide, we must speak this reality into existence. In order to write a different story, we have to use a different language. We must replace our current discourse.

## EQUITY-CENTERED DESIGN THINKING ROADMAP<sup>54</sup>

Phase	Action	Ask Ourselves...	When to Move On
<b>UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM</b>	<b>Empathize</b> <i>What are the needs of the people we are solving for?</i>	<b>Did we:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify a diverse set of people with proximity to the problem (PPP)</li> <li>Create a safe space for honest sharing</li> <li>Listen to and learn from PPP</li> <li>Hear from PPP across lines of difference</li> </ul>	We made a concerted effort to <b>gather thoughts, reflections and concerns</b> from a diverse set of people with proximity to the problem.
	<b>Define</b> <i>What are we trying to solve?</i>	<b>Did we:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the challenge</li> <li>Examine research &amp; data</li> <li>Understand historical context &amp; identify root causes</li> <li>Reflect on personal experiences with the challenge</li> </ul>	We did our best <b>to make sense of</b> Problem X and asked ourselves where the problem manifests itself and what the context is.
<b>EXPLORE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS</b>	<b>Solutions Exploration</b> <i>What could we do?</i>	<b>Did we:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transition to problem-solving</li> <li>Engage community to generate solutions</li> <li>Define success and barriers/mitigations</li> <li>Generate ideas that would lead to success/overcome barriers</li> </ul>	We engaged in multiple rounds of solutions exploration and <b>identified potential solutions</b> to Problem X.
<b>REFLECT ON EFFECTS OF POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS</b>	<b>Prototype &amp; Test</b> <i>What do we do? Does our prototype work?</i>	<b>Did we:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choose ideas to prototype</li> <li>Identify components, goals and activities</li> <li>Have the “embrace failure” mindset</li> <li>Test multiple prototypes</li> <li>Get valuable feedback from PPP</li> </ul>	After settling on a solution, we <b>developed multiple prototypes</b> , identifying basic components, goals and activities. We <b>tested the prototype with PPP</b> , asking if they agreed with our assumptions and design features, and which might be improved.

<sup>54</sup> Adopted from Education First

<b>IMPLEMENT FINAL OPTION</b>	<b>Pilot and/or Implement</b> <i>How do we proceed?</i>	<b>Did we:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify what we learned</li> <li>• Identify questions still open</li> <li>• Consider what to do differently</li> <li>• Revisit earlier phases, as appropriate</li> </ul>	We <b>selected and piloted and/or implemented a solution</b> , leaving ourselves open to revisiting earlier phases and identifying lessons learned.
<b>ENSURE INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE DESIGN</b>	<b>Notice</b> <i>What am I bringing in?</i>	<b>Did we:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge identities, biases, values, power, identity and context</li> </ul>	We <b>practiced self-awareness</b> of our own identity, values, emotions, biases, assumptions & situated-ness.
	<b>Reflect</b> <i>How did I show up?</i>	<b>Did we:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pause to notice our own reactions (emotions, actions, insights, impact)</li> <li>• Reflect on our role as designer and human within the user context</li> </ul>	We <b>noticed, focused and reflected on our actions, emotions, insights and impact</b> as designer(s) and human(s) within our user's context.

**RESOURCES:**

[Changing the Discourse in Schools Resource](#)

<https://bsd405.org/wp-content/pdf/equity/equity-centered-design-thinking-roadmap.pdf>

[eXd White Paper](#)

[Equity Meets Design Master List of Resources](#)

[Equity-Centered Design Thinking Roadmap](#)

<https://dschool.stanford.edu/resources/equity-centered-design-framework>

<https://medium.com/@equityXdesign/racism-and-inequity-are-products-of-design-they-can-be-redesigned-12188363cc>

## Equity-Focused Policy Analysis Tool<sup>55</sup>

**Equity Policy Analysis Tool Objective:** To support the APS's goals of eliminating inequity and closing the opportunity gap, we will incorporate an equity analysis when creating and/or revising agency policy. The following five best practices guide the user through a process of collaborating with historically marginalized communities to ensure all agency policies are in alignment with agency goals.

### We Agree:

- That the importance of training and capacity building within our organization, departments, and internal and external programs is paramount. Increasing the number of trained and skilled employees, including leadership, staff, board members, etc. will not only help to make improvements supporting equity, but will also help to develop an anti-racist culture within our organization.
- That in order to eliminate racial inequities, it is essential that race be clearly called out and institutional and structural racism be addressed within our own organization as well as in the broader systems with which we interact.
- To explore and develop a shared understanding relating to equity, and we also recognize that we and our external partners are all at different places as individuals, programs, and departments. We are committed to move forward with a focus that is intentional and strategic within our organization and our external partners. We will openly share challenges, successes and lessons learned to help move the sum of our equity work forward.
- To have collective buy-in to equity best practices, we will each take responsibility for using the policy equity tool.
- How the policy equity tool is implemented and used will differ from program to program, department to department and across our organization. Accountability for implementation and use within our own organization and to our respective communities (children, students, families and schools) will be essential.
- To approach equity analyses from an evaluative / continuous improvement perspective, as opposed to a checklist. We will seek to strengthen programs, policies and procedures until inequities are eliminated.
- That if the strategy, practice, policy, or procedure works for our most vulnerable communities, it works for everyone. The reverse, however, is not true.
- That we will not let the perceived barriers such as (time, agendas, schedules, etc.) prevent us from interrupting patterns of inequity.
- That use of the tool may not be linear. For example, users may want to start with question 3 in order to ensure they have a clear understanding of the community conditions that may be impacted by the implementation of this policy.
- That after use of the tool, changes in policy may not be needed. However, the procedures associated with that policy may need to be created or enhanced to ensure equity can be achieved

<sup>55</sup> Adapted from the Puget Sound Educational Service Districts' Racial Equity Policy Review Worksheet

**Policy Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reviewer/Reviewers:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Equity Tool – Using Best Practices</b>	
<b>1. How does the policy promote inclusive collaboration and engagement?</b>	
<b>DIVERSITY EQUITY BEST PRACTICES</b>	<b>LOOK-FORS</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Which community does this policy impact? The APS internal community? External community? Both?</li><li>2. How will you identify the diverse groups potentially affected by this policy?</li><li>3. What process will you undertake to collaborate and engage in a dialogue with diverse communities (BIPOC, SPED, LGBTQ, Religious Minorities, etc. internally and/or externally) who have traditionally not been involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of this policy?</li></ol>	
<b>2. How does the policy reflect a consideration of community conditions and set goals for eliminating racial inequity? (Assessment and goal setting should be a process with community involvement.)</b>	
<b>RACIAL EQUITY BEST PRACTICES</b>	<b>LOOK-FORS</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Are the community conditions and/or agency racial inequities that may manifest as a result of this policy clearly documented? If not, what is your plan for assessing the community conditions?</li><li>2. Are there goals and measures for eliminating racial inequity, if so, what are they?</li><li>3. How will goals be adjusted regularly to keep pace with changing community needs and racial demographics?</li><li>4. What additional information could be added to strengthen the policy?</li><li>5. What additional information could be added to other policies which are cross-referenced with this policy?</li></ol>	

## Racial Equity Tool – Using Best Practices

### 3. How will the policy expand opportunity and access for the APS internal and/or external community?

INCLUSIVE EQUITY BEST PRACTICES	LOOK-FORS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How does the policy increase opportunity and/or access for those who historically have been excluded? This means, more explicitly, who benefits from and/or who is harmed by the policy?</li> <li>2. What are the strategies to improve access for ethnically diverse communities, including immigrants and refugees? Are interpretation and translation policies helping to improve access?</li> <li>3. What additional information could be added to strengthen the policy, or the policies cross-referenced with this policy?</li> </ol>	

### 4. How will the policy affect systemic change? (An analysis of power and gatekeeping is critical. How are issues of internalized superiority and inferiority being attended to?)

SOCIAL JUSTICE EQUITY BEST PRACTICES (RACIAL EQUITY)	LOOK-FORS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How does the policy make changes within the organization to eliminate institutional racism?</li> <li>2. How does the policy work to address and eliminate structural racism?</li> <li>3. How will strategies be adjusted regularly to keep pace with changing community needs and racial demographics?</li> </ol>	

### 5. What strategies for eliminating racial inequity does the policy suggest?

SOCIAL JUSTICE BEST PRACTICES (ACCESS)	LOOK-FORS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the overall goals and outcomes? What are the specific strategies for decreasing inequity and/or increasing student achievement? How do the specific strategies work to decrease inequity and increase student achievement?</li> <li>2. Does the policy make provisions for accountability? If so, what are they?</li> <li>3. Is there any additional information that could be added to strengthen the policy, or the policies cross-referenced with this policy?</li> <li>4. Is there any additional information that could be added to strengthen the policy or the policies cross-referenced with this policy?</li> </ol>	

#### After conducting the analysis:

- What are the lessons learned?
- What resources are needed to make changes?
- What are the next steps?

# Systems Level Equity Assessment Tool

## Overview

Thank you for your commitment to the APS guiding principles: Equity, Ethics, Engagement and Excellence. As we continue to work towards our mission: “Through a culture of equity, trust, and collaboration, every student will graduate ready for college, career, and life” we recognize the importance of providing leaders across the organization with the necessary tools to assess strengths and critically reflect on opportunities for growth as it relates to equity.

The Systems Level Equity Assessment tool is adapted from the Harvard University’s Reimagining Integration: Diverse and Equitable Schools (**RIDES**) **Progress Assessment**<sup>56</sup>. The manner in which school systems and structures operate ultimately influences their academic outcomes, culture of belongingness, collective commitment to dismantling racism, and appreciation of diversity. For schools, school districts, or Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) to move toward more effective integration and equitable outcomes for all stakeholders, schools, systems, and structures must create an environment that produces equitable learning outcomes for all students.

## Using a Systems Level Equity Assessment to Drive Inquiry & Improvement

Teachers, leaders, district administrators, and any stakeholder interested in driving change must consider the wide range of elements that interact within the systems and structures that persist in public education. To truly ‘see the system’ leaders must engage in disciplined and structured inquiry and improvement cycles that prioritize bringing together different perspectives of stakeholders, and that allow teams to define actions to disrupt inequitable outcomes.

This Systems Level Equity Assessment serves as an integral tool for system level leaders seeking to engage in equity improvement cycles within their respective locations. This tool is designed for use at either the school or district level.

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<sup>56</sup> The Systems-Level Rubric, developed by Dr. Tauheedah Baker-Jones for the Reimagining Integration: Diverse and Equitable Schools Project at the Harvard Graduate School of Education is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#).

## Instructions

There is no right or wrong way to use these tools and leaders may opt to schedule time to complete a full system assessment or focus on specific action areas. We recommend you start by reviewing the guidance provided in this tool, determine who will be engaged in this process, and what specific areas of focus you are interested in exploring through this process. To support you, we recommend you follow this process:

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Action	Review the Systems Level Equity Assessment tool and rubric	Identify a focus area to start with or a problem of practice you see in your school/ department	Identify members of the equity improvement cycle.	Conduct the equity level assessment
Reflection	What focus area feels most compelling for you?	What data can you reference to inform strengths and opportunities for improvement?	Who would be well positioned to engage in this process?  Who is most directly impacted by the focus area or problem of practice?	What did you notice about the process as a whole?  Where was the group most aligned? Where were there misalignments?

The outcomes of your assessment will inform action steps. Consider the timing of these actions and how you might integrate this process into a continual process of inquiry and improvement in your school, department, or division.

Following is an overview of the two components that will support the process.

### PART ONE: Scoring Guide

- A Scoring Guide that helps you track your school or district progress

### PART TWO: Rubric with key indicators

- The rubric contains a detailed explanation of the indicators across the four levels of the continuum. It is broken up into four domains with specific indicators.
  - The language in the Scoring Guide is from the Proficient Level.
  - To achieve a level requires meeting all the requirements of that level.
  - Identify what evidence supports your claims.
  - Indicate whether it is an immediate or future challenge.

## Notes

- You can expect to spend approximately 45 minutes completing an individual rating; we recommend you get multiple perspectives from a variety of stakeholders. You may also opt to conduct a full assessment, which will warrant more time and preparation.
- You may combine the individual ratings into a collective one, and use your combined ratings—the similarities and the differences, and the rationales each of you provide for your assessments—as a way to begin deep discussions on where you are in your journey toward diverse and equitable schools and systems.
- Please note that this process is not meant to be evaluative or punitive but rather it serves to shine a light on areas of need in order to advance equity in our systems. The tools and resources provided are designed to support critical reflection and collective action to drive change.

DRAFT



Indicator	Performance Level (4-Advanced; 1-Beginner)				Evidence/Comments
	4	3	2	1	
<b>BELONGINGNESS</b>					
<b>A safe, welcoming environment</b> that embraces the diversity of race, ethnicity and religion, gender and sexual orientations among students and staff members is evident throughout the district. Effective strategies for promoting diversity are robust and functioning effectively. Staffing represents a diverse array of perspectives and backgrounds. Staff is also representative of the student population. Inclusive language that is reflected in district documentation (translated documents and access to translation services). Staff work towards transitioning from a dominant to a more inclusive culture and community.					
<b>Clear and effective policies</b> , systems, structures and procedures supporting equity are in place and equitably enacted, such as democratic decision-making and non-exclusionary approaches to discipline. The district has an active and successful equity plan and policy. There is evidence that the district has reduced instances of bullying, harassment and discrimination amongst students and employees. Data allows for the ability to track policies and their impact on subgroups of students.					
<b>Engaging Families in the School Community</b> by providing families, especially from historically marginalized groups, with meaningful opportunities to share feedback, have a voice in decision-making, collaborate in shaping organizational strategy and culture including playing an active role in co-creating an anti-bias or anti-racist culture. Families also actively participate and support classroom activities.					
<b>What are your overall reflections about this domain?</b>	<b>What strengths emerge?</b>  <b>What are 1-2 specific actions you will commit to?</b>				

Indicator	Performance Level (4-Advanced; 1-Beginner)				Evidence/Comments
	4	3	2	1	
<b>COMMITMENT TO DISMANTLING RACIST STRUCTURES</b>					
<b>Operations &amp; Finance</b> fiscal, transportation, security, and facility plans are developed with equity in mind. There is particular attention on reducing disparities (racial, gender, etc.) and there is intentional planning regarding managing operational and budgetary shifts at the systemic level to ensure that there are not disparate outcomes. Fiscal and operational decision-making is not predictable by race, gender or socio-economic level.					
<b>Data</b> is used to analyze, plan and change structures and systems that support racial inequities and learning outcomes. Multiple sources of data are used to analyze and respond to trends in targeted areas such as staffing, budget, community engagement, staff development, student assignment, course enrollment, discipline as well as college & career planning and enrollment. Interventions on learning conditions limit disproportionality.					
<b>Human Resource Practices</b> are transparent. Employees report fair treatment with regard to the hiring, compensation, and onboarding process. There is also equal access to promotional opportunities. The organization promotes teamwork and collaboration, and there is a focus on innovation and creativity. Organizational flexibility, responsiveness, and agility are apparent within all departments.					
<b>Conflict Resolution Processes</b> are collaborative. Difference is dealt with effectively using multiple perspectives/approaches in terms of how power and resources are distributed; how decisions are made and implemented; and, how conflict is resolved.					
<b>Shared decision-making</b> is consistently used as part of a systematic process for examining how different racial and ethnic groups will likely be affected by a proposed action or decision. The district also engages the voices of stakeholders who are closest in proximity to the problem to be solved, or directly impacted by the decision being made, in the deliberation and decision making process.					
<b>What are your overall reflections about this domain?</b>	<b>What strengths emerge?</b>				
	<b>What are 1-2 specific actions you will commit to?</b>				

Indicator	Performance Level (4 - Advanced; 1 - Beginner)				Evidence/Comments
	4	3	2	1	
<b>VALUING DIVERSITY</b>					
<b>Self-awareness</b> and reflection is embedded into practices throughout the district. Leaders, teachers, students and community members are supported in being mindful of the impact of their ways of being and work intentionally to be diverse, inclusive and equitable in policies, procedures, practices, team meetings, and community engagement. There is a comprehensive strategic plan for equity, which includes comprehensive training for all stakeholders on issues of diversity and equity.					
<b>Cultural competency</b> permeates all aspects of the organization. Leadership, staff, students, families, and community members appreciate the presence and contributions of various racial, ethnic, gender, socio-economic diversity of the district ecosystem. Teachers are culturally competent and are able to engage students and their cultural identities in classroom practices, instruction and assessment, with evidence of improved student outcomes. Other culturally appropriate connections enable strong cross-cultural relationships and partnerships resulting in a reduction in inequalities, acceleration of integration and narrowing achievement gaps. Courageous conversations about race and equity are standard practice across the district.					
<b>Community engagement</b> and partnerships demonstrate a full commitment to equity and appreciation of diversity. Community projects enjoy a well integrated involvement from the district. Courageous conversations and procedures effectively engage parents, school and community participation. Accountability for effective implementation of equity projects is robust and effective.					
<b>Leaders build trust</b> by holding an unwavering belief in the powerful potential every student possesses. District leaders value diversity while acknowledging its challenges and rewards. Leadership partners with staff, families and community members to develop trusting relationships (across difference) that enable deliberate naming and interrupting inequitable policies and practices, advocating for social and academic justice, supporting others in their journey to equity, democratic decision-making and, holding self and others accountable for creating opportunities for each student to have successful academic and social learning experiences in the district.					
<b>What are your overall reflections about this domain?</b>	<b>What strengths emerge?</b>				
	<b>What are 1-2 specific actions you will commit to?</b>				

# Systems Level Equity Assessment Rubric

(Performance Level Descriptions)

(Level 4 – Advanced; Level 3 – Proficient; Level 2 – Progressing; Level 1 – Beginner)

	4	3	2	1
<p><b>Academics</b></p> <p><i>Highlights:</i></p> <p><i>Expectations</i></p> <p><i>Access and opportunity</i></p> <p><i>Support system</i></p> <p><i>Cultural representations</i></p>	<p><b>Curriculum</b> Demonstrates a commitment to ensuring that content across all disciplines is rigorous, challenging and culturally relevant and linguistically responsive. Curricula materials across all grade levels and schools reflect high expectations for all students. Teachers are supported in delivering content that is asset-based and representative of various racial, gender, and other marginalized groups. Students are provided with multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery of content and authentic assessments are encouraged.</p>	<p><b>Curriculum</b> is rigorous, challenging and culturally relevant and linguistically responsive. It represents high expectations for all students, requiring critical thinking and problem solving. It is well supported to ensure all students have the opportunity to achieve success at a high academic level. Teachers are supported in delivering content that is asset-based and has social representation from various racial, gender, and other marginalized groups. Opportunities for authentic assessments are provided so that students can demonstrate mastery in various ways.</p>	<p><b>Curriculum</b> is rigorous and student centered. High expectations across the board have become a critical concern for improving instruction in most classes. Student supports are being put in place to enable success in most areas and initial support strategies can be seen to be having initial effects. Content is being adapted to include an asset-based focus with representations from marginalized groups, with effort to eliminate stereotypical representations.</p>	<p><b>Curriculum</b> is sporadically and episodically rigorous, challenging and student centered. There are high expectations for some students, but not others, and expectations are predictable by race. Access and opportunity to achieve success at a high academic level occurs for some students more predictably than others, creating disproportionality. Content is deficit-based including stereotypical representations of marginalized groups. Rigor, challenge and relevance are rare in the curriculum.</p>
<p><i>Highlights:</i></p> <p><i>Equity lens</i></p> <p><i>Relevant to home culture</i></p> <p><i>Culturally relevant and linguistically responsive curriculum</i></p>	<p><b>Instructional practices</b> across the district center equity and effectively build on the interests, strengths, home cultures, languages, and lived experiences of all students and families. All students have equitable access to rigorous courses, as well as open enrollment to signature programs, AP and honors courses. There are supports provided to ensure success for all.</p>	<p><b>Instructional practices</b> capitalize on and connect to students of all backgrounds. Teachers are provided with supplemental materials that allow for diversification of content to ensure that all students have a voice in the curriculum. Most students have equitable access to rigorous courses, as well as open enrollment to signature programs, AP and honors courses.</p>	<p><b>Instructional practices</b> are building emerging strength and capacity to use an equity lens. Pedagogy relies on dominant cultural materials and approaches with limited profusion of culturally relevant or linguistically responsive material throughout the curriculum. Efforts to reach out to families and to draw them and the community into the life of the school is emerging but often perfunctory.</p>	<p><b>Instructional practices</b> rely on majority cultural approaches and material. An equity lens has not been developed systematically and the value of diversity or equity has not been established. Individual efforts for culturally relevant or linguistically responsive pedagogy exist in isolation. Families of diverse backgrounds are disconnected and not well connected to the life of the district.</p>

<p><b>Highlights:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rigorous knowledge and skills are expected</li> <li>Connected to students' backgrounds</li> <li>Connected to students' learning styles</li> <li>Access to rigor and support for all</li> </ul>	<p><b>Rigorous academic preparation</b> 100% of staff are certified in the content area in which they teach and/or hold advanced degrees in their content area. Teachers demonstrate high levels of knowledge and skills.</p>	<p><b>Rigorous academic preparation</b> 80% of staff are certified in the content area in which they teach and/or hold advanced degrees in their content area. Most teachers demonstrate competency when it comes to core content knowledge and skills.</p>	<p><b>Rigorous academic preparation</b> 50% of staff are certified in the content area in which they teach and/or hold advanced degrees in their content area. High performing teachers are clustered in high performing schools. Teachers in the lowest performing schools demonstrate low levels of content knowledge and expertise.</p>	<p><b>Rigorous academic preparation</b> Less than 50% of staff are certified in the content area in which they teach and/or hold advanced degrees in their content area. The majority of teachers demonstrate low levels of knowledge and skills.</p>
<p><b>Highlights:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High quality culturally responsive curriculum</li> <li>Substantial enrichment experiences</li> <li>Personal and professional equity development</li> <li>Eliminating disparity</li> <li>Intentional and data-driven planning</li> <li>Structural and cultural shifts</li> </ul>	<p><b>Learning opportunities</b> involve a rigorous, high quality, and varied curriculum (including social-emotional learning) with substantial enrichment experiences. There is particular attention on reducing disparities in learning (racial, gender, etc.) created by tracking and ability grouping. Appropriate supports are in place to ensure that all students have the opportunity to achieve at high levels. There is intentional planning using multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative student data to manage and respond to structural and cultural shifts as well as changes at the systemic level to ensure that there are no adverse effects on diverse student populations.</p>	<p><b>Learning opportunities</b> involve a challenging and varied curriculum (including social-emotional learning) with substantial enrichment experiences. There is an emergent attention on reducing disparities in learning (racial, gender, etc.) created by tracking and ability grouping. There is intentional planning driven by the use of multiple sources of student data regarding managing structural and cultural shifts as well as changes at the systemic level.</p>	<p><b>Learning opportunities</b> are varied in quality. Focus on socio-emotional learning is emerging. Disparities exist in learning opportunities for various student groups. Discussion regarding tracking and ability grouping begins to shed light on systemic needs for further reflection and change in practice. Systemic challenges of managing structural and cultural changes are becoming clearer and efforts exist to remedy issues. Staff may use some or limited data to inform actions.</p>	<p><b>Learning opportunities</b> are limited and low quality. Disproportionality exists in learning opportunities for various student groups. Tracking and ability grouping is common. Structural and cultural shifts are haphazard.</p>

Belongingness	4	3	2	1
<p><i>Highlights:</i></p> <p>All groups embraced</p> <p>Strategies for managing diversity</p> <p>Collective responsibility for creating inclusive culture</p>	<p><b>A safe, welcoming environment</b> that embraces the diversity of race, ethnicity and religion, gender and sexual orientations among students and staff members is evident throughout the district. Effective strategies for promoting diversity are robust. Staffing diversity represents a diverse array of perspectives and backgrounds. Staff is also representative of the student population. Inclusive language that is reflected in district documentation (translated documents and access to translation services). Leaders and staff engage in collective inquiry to dismantle norms of dominant culture to cultivate a sense of belonging among all members of the school community.</p>	<p><b>A safe, welcoming environment</b> that embraces the diversity of race, ethnicity and religion, gender and sexual orientations among students and staff members is being cultivated throughout the district. Strategies for promoting diversity are functioning effectively. Staff is mostly representative of the student population and there is a diverse array of perspectives and backgrounds. Inclusive language that is reflected in district documentation (translated documents and access to translation services). Staff work towards transitioning from a dominant to a more inclusive culture and community.</p>	<p><b>The district's overall environment</b> tolerates diversity among students and staff while maintaining dominant cultural norms, exclusionary policies and procedures. Effective strategies for managing diversity are emerging conceptually. Efforts are underway to ensure that staffing represents a diverse array of perspectives and backgrounds, and that staff representative of the student population. Literature reviews are taking place to ensure that inclusive language is reflected in district documentation (translated documents and access to translation services).</p>	<p><b>A safe, welcoming environment</b> is not self-evident within the district, as does not appear to be a priority and incidents occur that demonstrate a lack of a safe and welcoming learning environment for students, community members and staff. Staffing does not represent a diverse array of perspectives and background, and is not representative of the student population. District literature does not reflect inclusive language (translated documents and access to translation services).</p>
<p><i>Highlights:</i></p> <p>Systems and structures that support equity</p> <p>Training on managing climate</p> <p>Management of negative issues</p>	<p><b>Clear and effective policies,</b> systems, structures and procedures supporting equity are in place and equitably enacted, such as democratic decision-making and non-exclusionary approaches to discipline. The district has an active and successful equity plan and policy. There is evidence that the district has reduced instances of bullying, harassment and discrimination amongst students and employees. Data allows for the ability to track subgroups of students.</p>	<p><b>Clear and effective policies,</b> systems and procedures supporting equity are in place and consistently enacted, such as democratic decision-making and non-exclusionary approaches to discipline. The district has a plan to help students learn positive social behavior. There is evidence that the district has reduced instances of bullying, harassment or discrimination. Data allows for the ability to track policies and their impact on subgroups of students.</p>	<p><b>Clear and effective policies,</b> systems and procedures supporting equity are being analyzed through a developing equity lens. Initial plans are being created with a focus on embracing diversity, inclusion and equity. Leadership and staff are learning ways to address bullying, harassment and discrimination to shift the culture towards a safe, welcoming and supportive learning environment for all. The district is developing a data dashboard that allows for tracking policies and their impact on subgroups of students.</p>	<p><b>Clear and effective policies,</b> systems and procedures supporting equity are not evident throughout the district. Decision-making is made by a select-few, and implementation is inconsistent. Few to no intentional strategies to manage diversity effectively, leaving in place undressed bullying, harassment and discrimination. Data systems are not in place to track policies and their impact on subgroups of students.</p>

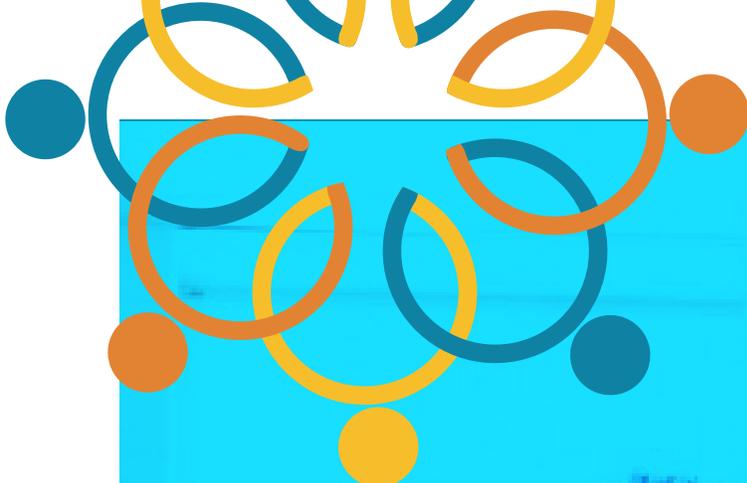
<p><i>Highlights:</i></p> <p>Established family voice</p> <p>Co-creation of a healthy school culture</p> <p>Skills to support a welcoming community</p> <p>All stakeholders involved in decision-making</p>	<p><b>Engaging families in the school community by providing families, especially</b> from historically marginalized groups with meaningful and accessible opportunities to fully engage in the school community. Families have a voice in decision-making and are key collaborators in shaping the organizational strategy and culture. Families play an active role in co-creating an anti-bias and anti-racist culture. There is also diverse representation at all levels within the organization.</p>	<p><b>Engaging families in the school community</b> is emerging with some opportunities for diverse stakeholders to participate in decision-making and in shaping the organizational strategy and culture. Sporadic opportunities exist for diverse stakeholders to take a role in building a welcoming and anti-bias culture. There is little diversity reflected within the organization.</p>	<p><b>Engaging family</b> voice in shaping organizational strategy, culture and decision-making is not well developed. Acknowledgement and productive response to bias within the organization is non-existent.</p>
<p><b>Commitment to dismantling racism</b></p>	<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>2</b></p>
<p><i>Highlights:</i></p> <p>Equitable resource allocation</p> <p>Systems and structure</p> <p>Fiscal transparency</p>	<p><b>Operations &amp; Finance</b> fiscal, transportation, security, and facility plans are developed with equity in mind. There is particular attention on reducing disparities (racial, gender, etc.) and there is intentional planning regarding managing operational and budgetary shifts at the systemic level to ensure that there are not disparate outcomes. Fiscal and operational decision-making is not predictable by race, gender or socio-economic level.</p>	<p><b>Operations &amp; Finance</b> fiscal, transportation, security, and facility plans are developed with equity in mind. Operational and budgetary decisions are tailored in a way that allows resources to go to schools, classrooms, and students who need resources the most. Fiscal and operational decision-making is not predictable by race, gender or socio-economic level.</p>	<p><b>Operations &amp; Finance</b> fiscal, transportation, security, and facility plans are not developed in an equitable manner and disparities with regard to race and income are evident across the district. Fiscal and operational decision-making is predictable by race, gender or socio-economic level. There is no intentionality when making operational and budgetary decisions, so resources may not be diverted to schools, classrooms, and students who need resources the most.</p>

<p><b>Highlights:</b></p> <p>Data analysis (disaggregated) and planning</p> <p>Systems and structures</p> <p>Learning inputs and outcomes</p> <p>Interventions for disproportionality</p>	<p><b>Data</b> are used to analyze, plan and change structures and systems that support racial inequities and learning outcomes. Multiple sources of data are used to analyze and respond to trends in targeted areas such as staffing, budget, community engagement, student staff development, course assignment, discipline as well as college &amp; career planning and enrollment. Interventions limit disproportionality. There is a district benchmark assessment plan that outlines an action plan to improve student achievement across all subgroups.</p>	<p><b>Data</b> analysis and planning for equity are emerging practices. Data analysis exists but it is not targeted, monitored or systemic. Efforts to reduce inequities and disproportionality exist.</p>	<p><b>Data</b> are limited in quantity and use. Structural inequities in learning opportunities and disparities in learning outcomes exist. Data analysis does not demonstrate insight into the management of key systems or policies that maintain inequities.</p>
<p><b>Highlights:</b></p> <p>Effective and transparent HR policies</p> <p>Open access for all to promotional opportunities</p> <p>Full inclusion and participation of all staff</p>	<p><b>Human Resource Practices</b> are transparent. Employees report fair treatment with regard to the hiring, compensation, and onboarding process. There is also equal access to promotional opportunities. The organization promotes teamwork and collaboration, and there is a focus on innovation and creativity. Organizational flexibility, responsiveness, and agility are apparent within all departments.</p>	<p><b>Human Resource Practices</b> are being reviewed to ensure fair treatment with regard to the hiring, compensation, and onboarding process. There is a sense of urgency in addressing gaps in the promotion process. District has an active Title IV plan and is EEOC compliant. However, it is unclear how claims of discrimination and harassment are being addressed and the process for making said claims is not transparent.</p>	<p><b>Human Resource Practices</b> are not transparent. Employees report unfair treatment with regard to the hiring, compensation, and onboarding process. There is also unequal access to promotional opportunities. The organization lacks flexibility, responsiveness, and agility.</p>
<p><b>Highlights:</b></p> <p>Collaborative</p> <p>Collective decision-making</p> <p>Diverse perspectives are valued</p>	<p><b>Conflict Resolution Processes</b> are collaborative. Reciprocal are dealt with effectively using multiple perspectives/ approaches in terms of how power and resources are distributed; how decisions are made and implemented; and, how conflict is resolved.</p>	<p><b>Conflict Resolution Processes</b> are collaborative. Reciprocal accountability structures are in place and decision making is distributive across all members of the organization. District grievance policies are clear and well understood by all stakeholders.</p>	<p><b>Conflict Resolution Processes</b> are not collaborative. Difference is dealt with ineffectively and there is a clear lack of comfort with regard to diversity. Power and resources are distributed inequitably, and decisions are made without the input stakeholder.</p>

<p><i>Highlights:</i></p> <p>Inclusive systematic processes</p> <p>Shared decision making</p> <p>Stakeholder voice</p>	<p><b>Shared decision- making</b> is consistently used as part of a systematic process for examining how different racial and ethnic groups will likely be affected by a proposed action or decision. The school/ district also engages the voices of stakeholders who are closest in proximity to the problem to be solved, or directly impacted by the decision being made, in the deliberation and decision making process.</p>	<p><b>Shared decision- making</b> is used as part of a process for examining how different racial and ethnic groups will likely be affected by a proposed action or decision. The school/ district also engages the voices of stakeholders in the deliberation and decision making process.</p>	<p><b>Shared decision- making</b> is rarely used and there is no defined process to examine how different racial and ethnic groups are affected by actions or decisions. The school/ district may engage the voices of stakeholders although may do so sporadically or with a limited group of stakeholders.</p>	<p><b>Shared decision- making</b> is not part of the decision-making process at the school/district. Lack of consideration for impacts on different racial and ethnic groups of proposed actions or decisions.</p>
<p><b>Diversity</b> <span style="float: right;">1</span></p>				
<p><i>Highlights:</i></p> <p>Self-awareness</p> <p>Mindful of personal and professional impact</p> <p>Comprehensive planning and training for equity</p>	<p><b>Self-awareness</b> and reflection is embedded into practices throughout the district. Leaders, teachers, students and community members are supported in being mindful of the impact of their ways of being and work intentionally to be diverse, inclusive and equitable in policies, procedures, practices, team meetings, and community engagement. There is a comprehensive strategic plan for equity, which includes comprehensive training for all stakeholders on issues of diversity and equity.</p>	<p><b>Self-awareness</b> is encouraged as everyone within the organization is supported in knowing their personal equity journey and being aware of their own cultural history. There is strategic planning and actions taken regarding personal growth/development of all district and community stakeholders.</p>	<p><b>Self-awareness</b> and reflection is beginning to be realized as an important part of the personal and professional practice of all stakeholders. Stakeholder groups (leaders, teachers, students, staff, community members) are becoming aware of how their identities play a role in maintaining the status quo. Sporadic attention to diversity, equity and inclusion is emerging.</p>	<p><b>Self-awareness and reflection</b> is primarily focused on professional practice, but not yet addressing self reflection on race/ethnicity, gender, culture, socio-economic status, etc. and the impact on the consequence of one's role and work toward equity in schools. Awareness of the role of self-identity is limited and creating a personal equity journey is not a priority.</p>

<p><b>Highlights:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appreciation of difference</li> <li>Curriculum support</li> <li>Personal bias</li> <li>Positive cross-cultural contact</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cultural competency</b> permeates all aspects of the organization. Leadership, staff, students, families, and community members appreciate the presence and contributions of various racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientations, socio-economic diversity of the district ecosystem. Teachers are culturally competent and are able to engage students and their cultural identities in classroom practices, instruction and assessment, with evidence of improved student outcomes. Other culturally appropriate connections enable strong cross-cultural relationships and partnerships resulting in a reduction in inequalities, acceleration of integration and narrowing achievement gaps. Courageous conversations about race and equity are standard practice across the district.</p>	<p><b>Cultural competency</b> of all stakeholders is developed and monitored. There is an appreciation of different cultures and connections to families of different backgrounds. Appreciation of difference is modeled by leaders, teachers, and students who embrace brave conversations about race, gender, sexual orientation, economics, oppression and discrimination with a clear understanding of their own biases. There is ongoing reflection of culturally relevant practices, and the curriculum supports the development of cultural proficiency through exploration of the contributions of different racial and cultural groups to history and society as well as addressing bigotry and racism. Multiple, positive cross-cultural contacts between students, staff and community members are facilitated in and out of school/district.</p>	<p><b>Cultural competency</b> is being introduced to leadership and staff, and shifts are beginning to occur with acknowledgement of dominant vs. non-dominant cultural biases and expectations. Attitudes are shifting from tolerance to seeing the benefit of including the backgrounds of students, their families, community and staff in reshaping district culture and classroom pedagogy. There are early efforts to address racism, bigotry and forms of subjugation/oppression of historically marginalized groups. Efforts are being made to create spaces for conversations about cultural dynamics that impact students' self-esteem, achievement and the teachers' role in interrupting inequities in classrooms, schools, and the district as a whole.</p>	<p><b>Cultural competency</b> is not evident and the system's culture is seen through the lens of dominant culture (white/male/anglo/hetero/etc.) without attention to varied cultural ways of being and engaging. Assimilation is the intent of schooling. Diversity, inclusion, equity are buzz words but remain unaddressed in practices and omitted from policies and procedures. Discrimination exists in student placement/assignments, staffing, discipline, etc. Issues of diversity are limited to athletics, entertainment, Black History Month activities, etc. The school community is challenged to address issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, economics, cultural competency, disproportionality, staffing, student outcomes, etc.</p>
<p><b>Highlights:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commitment to equity</li> <li>Appreciation of diversity</li> <li>Integrated school involvement</li> <li>Courageous conversations and procedures</li> <li>Effective implementation of equity projects</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community engagement</b> and partnerships demonstrate a full commitment to equity and appreciation of diversity. Community projects enjoy a well integrated involvement from the district. Courageous conversations and procedures effectively engage parents, school and community participation. Accountability for effective implementation of equity projects is robust and effective.</p>	<p><b>Community engagement</b> and partnerships are an active representation of equity concerns and the valuing of diversity in the community. The district participates in community projects and draws on diverse community assets. Parents and community groups are engaged in courageous conversations about race, class, gender, sexual orientation, expectations, and the role of education in the community. Plans are co-created and action items are monitored for implementation and effectiveness.</p>	<p><b>Community engagement</b> and partnerships are emerging. The importance of managing equity concerns and the valuing of diversity in the community is increasing. Community projects and engagement of the full diversity of community assets is increasing. Courageous conversations about race, class, gender, sexual orientation, expectations among parents and community groups are increasing. The role of education in the community emerges. Plans are co-created and action items are monitored for implementation and effectiveness.</p>	<p><b>Community engagement</b> and partnerships do not reflect the diversity of the community or demonstrate active valuing of equity. The district participation in the community and use of diverse community assets is perfunctory. Courageous conversations about race, class, gender, sexual orientation, expectations, and the role of education in the community are suppressed.</p>

<p><b>Highlights:</b> Collective vision Diverse Partnerships Multiple perspectives/ approaches</p>	<p><b>Leaders build trust</b> by holding an unwavering belief in the powerful potential every student possesses. District leaders value diversity while acknowledging its challenges and rewards. Leadership partners with staff, families and community members to develop trusting relationships (across difference) that enable deliberate naming and interrupting inequitable policies and practices, advocating for social and academic justice, supporting others in their journey to equity, democratic decision-making and, holding self and others accountable for creating opportunities for each student to have successful academic and social learning experiences in the district.</p>	<p><b>Leaders build trust</b> by demonstrating congruence and ownership of the collective vision for equity, active interventions designed to emphasize equity and holding the district community accountable to its commitments. There is evidence of leadership's commitment to diversity (e.g., appointing a Chief Diversity/Equity Officer, establishment of an Equity Team or inclusion of an equity focus in the mission statement and/or strategic plan, etc.). Leaders create partnerships that facilitate bridges across differences.</p>	<p><b>Leaders build trust</b> by attempting to reach out to diverse stakeholders including students, families, staff and community members. District leadership is beginning to be reflective and self-aware of their implicit and explicit biases (named by being in relationship with others across racial, gender, role, socio-economic difference). Leadership is gaining knowledge and skill in effective approaches to address existing inequities, which includes demonstrating respect and trustworthiness through engaging with multiple diverse stakeholders in authentic dialogue and relationships across differences. Leaders persist in unearthing core beliefs regarding historically marginalized groups.</p>	<p><b>Leaders build trust</b> with like-minded colleagues and are less intentional about building relationships across lines of difference (beliefs, racial, gender, socio-economic, etc.) There is avoidance of conflict and resistance to engage in brave conversations about race, gender, and other historically marginalized groups where achievement gaps exist. Existing policies and procedures remain unquestioned; status quo is maintained and achievement gaps persist. Improvement efforts are discussed although little to no attention is given to issues that cause maltreatment or inequities for subgroups of students, families, and teachers.</p>
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# Tools to Support Equity-Centered Beliefs

# Our People: **Cultivating** Asset-Based Mindsets & A Culture of Belonging

## CESJ Resources and Equity Framework Tools to support putting this Pillar into Action:

- Leader Equity Dispositions
- Teacher Equity Dispositions
- Asset-Based Mindset Root Cause Analysis Protocol
- Family Assets to Enrich Classrooms Worksheet
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging Infographic
- Transgender Student Support Plan
- Equity-Focused Professional Learning Plan
- Equity-Focused Micro-Credentialing
- Equity Practices in Professional Learning
- Guidance & Approval Process for DEIB Services, Resources, & Materials

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# Equity Leader Dispositions<sup>57</sup>

Education leaders play a crucial role in identifying and addressing inequities in schools and school systems. To do that work effectively, what do leaders need to know and be able to do? The Leadership Academy developed a list of six research-based leadership dispositions we have found are crucial for leaders to build a path toward creating a school community by, with and for every student.

## Equity Leadership Dispositions

**1 Reflect** on personal assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors.

Personal beliefs determine how an individual sees the world, other people, and oneself. Our beliefs and unconscious biases determine our actions and practices, and these actions inform how systems develop and operate, including our current education system. For leaders to feel comfortable addressing issues of bias, inequity, and race, they first need to have a heightened understanding of their own identities, values, assumptions and biases. In addition to this self-exploration, leaders must cultivate and maintain a deep understanding of how privilege, power, and oppression operate, historically and currently in school and society. Without a firm self-examination of their own identity and role in historically inequitable structures, leaders risk reproducing inequities inside and outside their schools and systems. As leaders of diverse communities, such critical self-reflection should be an ongoing, lifelong process.

### Live this disposition by

- Continuously examining and reflecting on how your role in the system might contribute to or support inequitable practices.
- Actively seeking to learn how privilege, power, and oppression operate historically and currently in education.
- Recognizing the privileges you might hold based on position, identity, or background. Seeking feedback and looking for low-inference evidence to help reflect on how you are leading for equity.

### Questions for reflection

- How has race intersected with your leadership journey?
- What is your personal vision and belief system around race and equity?
- How have you benefited from and leveraged your education to get where you are? How are your experiences different from or similar to the students you serve?

<sup>57</sup> Adopted from The Leadership Academy, New York, NY

## 2 Publicly **model** a personal belief system that is grounded in **equity**.

Those leading for equity must demonstrate that addressing racial inequity is a priority. Leaders accomplish this by consistently naming equity as a driving force behind leadership actions and decisions. By taking a strong and vocal stance, leaders communicate the value of equity across all practice and can establish a coherent and common purpose for members of the learning community. To help others build the skills and will to examine the impact of race and value equity as a shared goal, leaders model their own learning, self-disclosing and acknowledging personal biases and fears. There can be an anxiety and fear in offending, appearing angry, or sounding ignorant when discussing issues of race and inequality. By modeling vulnerability and emphasizing that mistakes will be made when speaking about issues of race, leaders can help others overcome those fears and encourage them to take risks in exploring and sharing their own feelings.

### **Live this disposition by**

- Using language that promotes a belief in the ability of each student and adult to achieve, particularly those from groups that have been historically marginalized.
- Openly valuing the diversity of all members of our community.
- Clearly demonstrating that you believe in eliminating inequities and providing each student with what they need to be successful.
- Publicly discussing the work you are doing to become more aware of your own identity, privilege, and biases. Model vulnerability by acknowledging where there are gaps in your knowledge and skills related to equity.
- Encouraging risk-taking and create space for others to have open dialogue about race and address hard-to-discuss topics.

### **Questions for reflection**

- What is your educational vision in general, and for your district or school specifically? Where does equity fit into that vision?
- What are your beliefs around growth mindset, and how, if at all, have you talked about mindset with your teams?

3 Act with **cultural competence** and **responsiveness** in interactions, decision-making, and practice.

Racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students and families experience school differently, making it essential to examine the norms and interactions around race, ethnicity, and diversity within the school environment. Equity-centered environments are responsive to and inclusive of the cultural identities of students, staff, and the surrounding community. Leaders play an integral part in developing the school environment and in holding staff accountable to meeting the needs of diverse students and families. Leaders therefore model culturally responsive practices, including communicating high expectations for all students; designing curriculum that incorporates students' backgrounds, languages and learning styles; and working with parents and families as valued and respected partners. Stronger partnerships and collaboration between schools and communities improve family engagement and increases the sense of trust between students, families, and schools. It can also reduce cultural misunderstandings and further understanding of the diversity of beliefs and values in the community.

#### **Live this disposition by**

- Actively seeking and making use of diverse perspectives in decision-making.
- Considering the intended and unintended consequences of decisions on all stakeholder groups.
- In group discussions, paying close attention to which voices aren't being heard and invite them to express their perspective.
- Actively seeking to learn about the identities and communities of students in our school(s).
- When decisions are being made, pushing the decision maker to question which groups are benefitting or being left out, and why.

#### **Questions for reflection**

- What have you said and done in your career to address racial inequities?
- Are the decisions you are making as a leader reflecting the needs and priorities of students and families? If so, how? If not, how do you need to change your decision-making process to better reflect the needs of different stakeholders?

4 Purposefully build the capacity of others to **identify** and **disrupt inequities** in the school.

Educational equity work cannot happen in isolation. Without a collaborative effort, staff may believe equity concerns are someone else's job and not their own. To ensure members of the learning community both understand and invest in addressing issues of equity and inclusion, leaders build their capacity through collaborative dialogue and professional learning. Leaders designate time and space for staff to examine their personal beliefs and collaborate to change educational practice. They work with staff in a democratic manner, implementing shared decision-making structures and developing a culture of trust and respect. These leaders understand that empowering staff is a key feature of creating more socially just schools.

#### Live this disposition by

- Creating the conditions and common language for regular courageous conversations around equity
- Building others' capacity to learn and practice language and behaviors that are responsive to differences across lines of race, ethnicity, language, class, religion, ability, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, and other aspects of identity
- Providing the space, tools, and support for staff to reflect on their own personal beliefs, biases, assumptions, and behavior, especially those who have been historically minoritized
- Providing structured and consistent professional learning opportunities to develop and deepen culturally responsive teaching practice

#### Questions for reflection

- How have I created a coalition of leaders around me that all have the capacity to act through a lens of equity?
- Am I creating opportunities for others to lead conversations around equity and receive critical feedback from peers?

5 Confront and **alter institutional biases** of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with minoritized populations.

If schools are to evolve, the organizational structure of schools must be transformed. To do this, leaders must review policies, practices, and structures and remove potential barriers that disadvantage students on the basis of race or ethnicity, gender, ability, sexual orientation, and other characteristics. Students that embody one or many of these characteristics have been minoritized by society and individuals telling them that they are less than and incapable of the skills and abilities of white dominant culture. Confronting these long-standing beliefs and practices requires a collaborative effort, where stakeholders engage in intentional conversations about who benefits from current policy and practice and who is being minoritized or disadvantaged. Leaders can initiate the process by examining individual and system data that have been disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and other characteristics; conducting an equity audit; and engaging in a process of collaborative inquiry.

### Live this disposition by

- Confronting behavior that openly or covertly promotes inequity, colorblindness, and deficit-thinking.
- Regularly examining district data for signs of inequity with the district leadership team.
- Purposefully building the capacity of others to examine their own assumptions, beliefs, and personal biases.
- Establishing high expectations (performance and behavioral) for adults and students in our school(s), regardless of identity or background.
- Regularly engaging in conversations with stakeholders about racial equity and access, even in the face of risk and pushback.

### Questions for reflection

- How have you made equity-focused discussions and learning, particularly those associated with race, part of your staff's professional learning experiences?
- Consider a time when you identified and confronted practices or interactions that were based on race or culturally biased assumptions. How did you manage that situation? What was the outcome?

6 Create **systems and structures to promote equity** with a focus on minoritized populations.

Once barriers are identified, leaders must then ensure that new policies and practices are created that prioritize student need and promote equity. School systems in which all students are successful are systems that create policies based on a thorough analysis of student, teacher, and school data, changing community demographics, and available financial, material, time, and human resources. Equity work is complex, requiring fundamental structural changes and coordinated efforts. Leaders must establish clarity and agreement on a shared vision and plan of action, define clearly articulated measures of success, and build a community-wide commitment to equity and access. Finally, leaders must ensure that this work is not seen as an add-on, but a lens through which all decisions will be made.

### Live this disposition by

- Ensuring that equity is at the forefront of the district and schools' strategic vision.
- Creating processes that promote the recruitment, support, and retention of diverse staff.
- Seeking, allocating, and managing resources to directly support minoritized populations.
- Ensuring that new policies and practices (e.g., curriculum, discipline, funding) prioritize student need and promote equity for minoritized populations.
- Partnering with families, staff, and communities to ensure fair treatment and equal access to opportunities.

### Questions for reflection

- What are your staff assignment policies? How are those policies, as well as your initiatives for recruiting and retaining teachers, helping your school or district better reflect the diversity of your student population?
- How do you determine the needs of different subgroups of students across your district? And then how do you decide how district resources are allocated?

# Equity Teacher Dispositions<sup>58</sup>

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping our future citizens. Thus, they have more power than they often realize in promoting a socially just and equitable society because they can leverage the power of their pedagogy to transform our world. What we chose to teach, how we interact with students, and how we treat families, all play a critical role in how children come to see the world and interact with it. The following six research-based equity dispositions form the foundation of our “Transformative Pedagogy” philosophy and are vitally important for teachers committed to building a culturally and linguistically responsive classroom community by, with and for every child.

## Equity Teacher Dispositions

1 **Reflect** on personal assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors.

Personal beliefs determine how an individual sees the world, other people, and oneself. Our beliefs and unconscious biases determine our actions and practices, and these actions inform how systems develop and operate, including our current education system. For Teachers to feel comfortable addressing issues of bias, inequity, and race, they first need to have a heightened understanding of their own identities, values, assumptions, and biases. In addition to this self-exploration, Teachers must cultivate and maintain a deep understanding of how privilege, power, and oppression operate, historically and currently in school and society. Without a firm self-examination of their own identity and role in historically inequitable structures, teachers risk reproducing inequities inside and outside their classrooms. As Teachers of diverse students, such critical self-reflection should be an ongoing, lifelong process.

<sup>58</sup> The Equity Teacher Dispositions, developed by Dr. Tauheedah Baker-Jones for the Teacher Impact Collaborative.

2 Act with **cultural competence** and **responsiveness** in interactions, decision-making, and practice.

Racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students and families experience school differently, making it essential to examine the norms and interactions around race, ethnicity, and diversity within the classroom environment. Equity-centered environments are responsive to and inclusive of the cultural identities of students, staff, and the surrounding community, and teachers play an integral part in developing the school environment by holding themselves accountable to meeting the needs of diverse students and families. Teachers must, therefore, exhibit culturally responsive practices, including communicating high expectations for all students; designing curriculum that incorporates students' backgrounds, languages and learning styles. This includes delivering student-centered instruction via multiple modes of instruction (cooperative learning, project-based learning, etc.) and allowing students to demonstrate mastery of content through multiple modes (tests, papers, presentations, artistic performances, etc.). This also includes working with parents and families as valued and respected partners. Stronger partnerships and collaboration between teachers and families improve family engagement and increases the sense of trust between students, families, and schools. It can also reduce cultural misunderstandings and further understanding of the diversity of beliefs and values in the community.

3 Confront and **alter institutional biases** of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with minoritized populations.

If schools are to evolve, the organizational structure of schools must be transformed. To do this, Teachers must review policies, practices, and structures and remove potential barriers that disadvantage students on the basis of race or ethnicity, gender, ability, sexual orientation, and other characteristics. Students that embody one or many of these characteristics have been minoritized by society and individuals telling them that they are less than and incapable of the skills and abilities of white dominant culture. Confronting these long-standing beliefs and practices requires a collaborative effort, where stakeholders engage in intentional conversations about who benefits from current policy and practice and who is being minoritized or disadvantaged. Teachers can initiate the process by examining individual, school and district data that have been disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and other characteristics; conducting a classroom equity audit; and engaging in a process of collaborative inquiry.

4 **Cultivate self-love** and knowledge and develop an **appreciation** and **respect for others**.

Teachers provide students opportunities to learn about who they are. A sense of dignity and pride in students' culture, heritage, ethnicity/race, religion, skin tone, and gender is cultivated in the classroom, (e.g., through supplementation of the curriculum to ensure that students' racial or ethnic identity and historical background is incorporated). Students learn about different aspects of their identity, the identity of others, and the history, strengths, and resilience associated with it. Teachers also provide opportunities for students to share their knowledge about their own cultural background with their classmates. The goal is to create a climate of respect for diversity through students learning to listen with kindness and empathy to the experiences of their peers. Negative stereotypes about students' identities are deconstructed.

5 **Teach** about issues of **social injustice**, social movements, and social change.

Teachers move from “celebrating diversity” to an exploration of how diversity has been used as a justification and means to impact various groups of people differently and disparately. Students learn about the history of racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and religious intolerance, and how these forms of oppression have shaped people’s lived experiences today. Teachers make links that show how the historical roots of injustice impact the lived experiences and material conditions of people today. Teachers also share examples of movements of people standing together to address the issues of social injustice. Rather than leaving students feeling overwhelmed and defeated, teachers help students understand that working together, ordinary people have united to create change.

6 Encourage students to **exercise their voice** in the promotion of social change.

Teachers provide opportunities to move beyond raising awareness to empowering and supporting students to take action on issues that affect them and their communities. Students identify issues they feel passionate about and learn the skills of creating change firsthand. Students should also learn how to improve the material conditions of their lives by learning how to do research, analyze who has the power to change particular situations, actualize ways to engage our democratic process to effectuate change, and learn skills with which to advocate for justice (e.g., write letters and speeches, use social media and blogs, etc.)

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## Asset-Based Mindset-Root Cause Analysis Protocol

We can readily articulate how many children live in poverty, are homeless, or in foster care. We track this data because it provides useful information to inform our policy and decision-making. However, what if we knew more about, and could readily articulate, the number of children who demonstrate ingenuity, linguistic creativity, or are proud of their cultural, ethnic, or social identity?<sup>59</sup>

Moving beyond the informative nature of data such as poverty rates, and using this data to guide how we describe our students and families, or how we design our solutions to these challenges, is problematic. This creates the erroneous view that there is something broken within our families and that our students are coming to us with deficits. As a result, our mindsets become oriented toward “fixing” our students and devaluing their potential, and we begin to take a deficit approach toward developing our interventions.

A deficit approach limits our focus to the challenges or adverse experiences that our students are facing, instead of focusing on the assets our students possess that we can leverage to advance their learning. As Richard Chase states, “Where deficits are something to address, assets are something to build upon; they are investments.” They are forward and future facing. Assets are also something that strengthen reciprocal relationships and advance self-determination. In many ways, they are a source of joy, pride, and strength.<sup>60</sup>

Maintaining an asset-based mindset is vitally important because if our students only hear of the challenges that they face and the gaps in their learning, they begin to lose hope in their ability to progress beyond them. However, if our students hear about the assets that they possess from their community, family heritage, and culture, they will develop self-confidence and will leverage these assets to transcend their current circumstance.<sup>61</sup> Maintaining an asset-based mindset requires us to focus on what our students can do, rather than what they cannot do, their life challenges, or their current circumstances. An asset-based mindset is the embodiment of a growth mindset.<sup>62</sup>

To take an asset-based approach to our work, we must research and learn more about the assets within our students’ communities, their families, and their cultures, so that we can tap into and leverage these assets to advance their learning.

One such asset is culture. Learning is culturally and linguistically situated, and our culture determines the ways in which we like to acquire new information, and how we like to communicate out what we have learned and acquired. Thus, culture in and of itself, should be viewed as a vital asset that can be leveraged to advance learning.<sup>63</sup>

For example, if a group of students come from a culture that is musically inclined, rhythmic, and rhyme-oriented, recognizing this is an asset to advance their learning would like creating mnemonic devices for students to better remember content and grasp key concepts (e.g. In 1492, Christopher Columbus sailed the ocean blue), or integrating the arts into your instruction, or designing authentic assessments that allow students to demonstrate their learning in multiple ways.

<sup>59</sup> Chase, Richard. Advocating for indicators of community assets and well-being, Minnesota Compass Data Insights: April 2, 2019

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Di Michele Lalor, Angela. Steps to Developing an Asset-Based Approach to Teaching, Edutopia, October 22, 2020

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

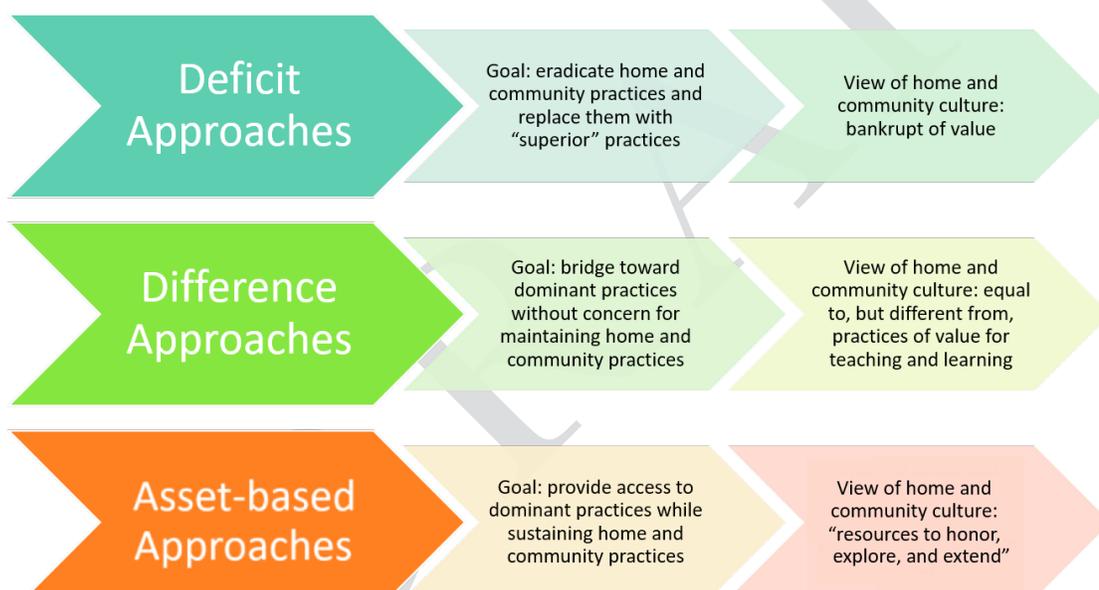
<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

It is important to note that an Asset-Based Mindset is different from a Difference-Oriented Mindset. A Difference-Oriented Mindset recognizes that each student possesses different assets, but views these assets as having less value than those of the dominant group in advancing student learning. Thus, if a student learns differently, has a different culture, speaks a different language, etc., they are asked to assimilate and acquire the dominant group’s cultural assets when it comes to learning and reflecting back what they have learned.

For example, an educator may recognize that students come from a culture that is musically inclined, rhythmic, and rhyme-oriented, but may devalue these assets and identify them as “gifts” or “talents” that these students possess. Thus, rather than leverage these assets to advance student learning in all content areas, educators may relegate students to leveraging these assets in co/extracurriculars.

The figure below describes the difference between the three approaches:

Figure 2: Deficit vs. Difference vs. Asset-Based Approach



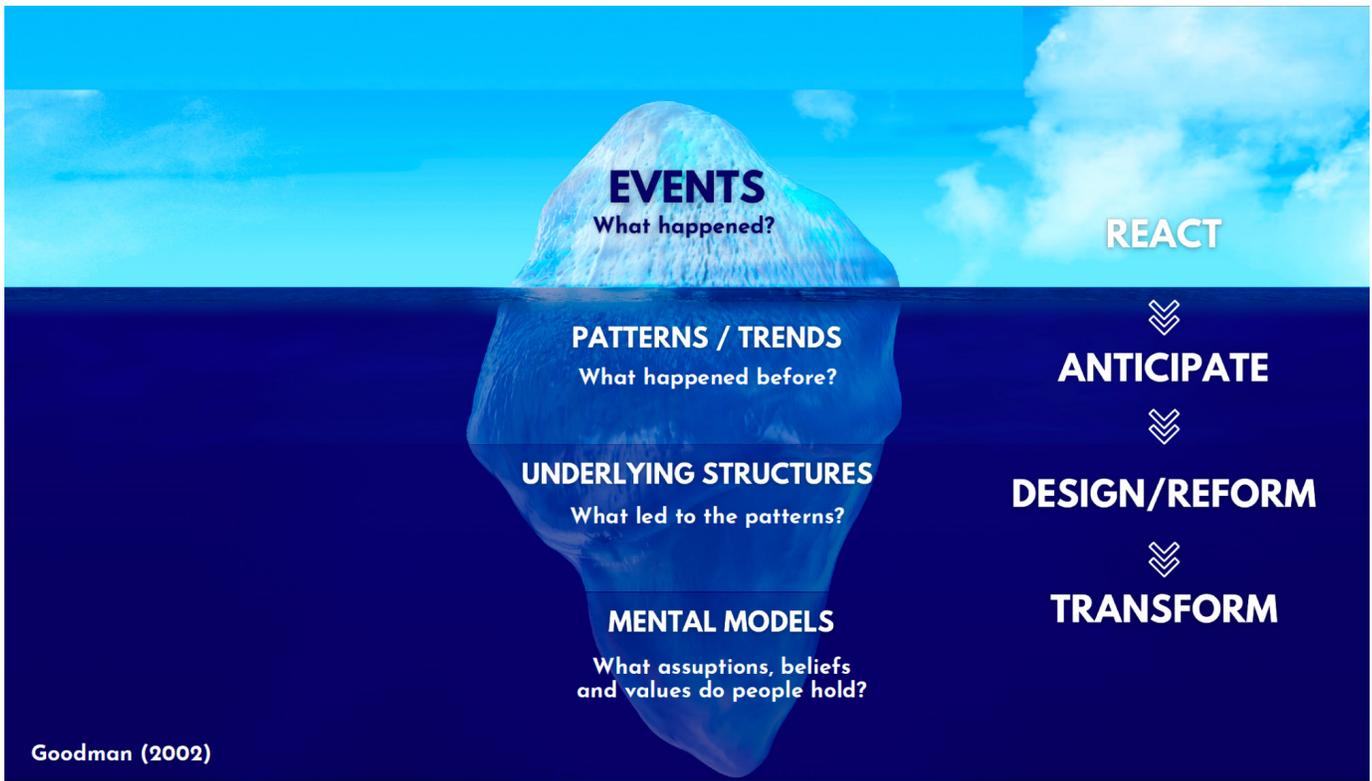
Source: Project READY: Reimagining Equity & Access for Diverse Youth

When educators begin to look at what students know, can do, and bring with them to the classroom, it changes the way they view their students, approach instruction, and solve educational challenges, and they begin to leverage students’ assets as a means for moving learning forward.<sup>6410</sup>

In order to begin to uncover the deficit-based mindsets that exists within the system and the impact it is having on students, you must keep a keen eye on your data, make note of any presenting events or observable trends and patterns, identify the underlying structures, processes or policies that may be contributing to the pattern. and then unpack some of the mental models at play in the scenario. Mental models are the way a person perceives the world around them. They are based in belief as opposed to facts. Think of this process as moving beyond the tip of the iceberg. The following is a graphic representation of this process:

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

Figure 3: Systems Thinking Model



Use the following protocol to support you in analyzing the impact that deficit-based mindsets and deficit-based approaches may be having on your outcomes, and the steps you must take to shift mindsets in order to address the presenting challenge or problem this is creating.

## ASSET-BASED MINDSET-ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS PROTOCOL

**Directions: In small groups, you will work together to:**

1. Identify the patterns and trends based on what you read in the data and your personal experience.
2. Identify the systems, structures, and mental models underneath the presenting patterns. Remember that mental models are the way a person perceives the world around them. They are based in belief as opposed to facts.
3. Develop a problem statement based on your analysis.
4. Think through the steps you must take to shift mindsets toward an asset-based approach to this challenge.

<p><b>What was the presenting event?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Observable Patterns &amp; Trends (Data-Review)</b>  <i>What are some of the patterns that can be discerned connected to the presenting issue/event?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Systems &amp; Structures</b>  <i>What are some of the underlying structures, processes or policies that may be contributing to the patterns discernible in the scenario?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mental Models</b>  <i>What are some of the mental models at play in the scenario?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Problem Statement</b>  <i>What is the <u>real</u> equity challenge or problem that must be addressed in order to manifest improved outcomes?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>Shifting Mindsets</b>  <i>What work is needed to shift mindsets along the continuum toward an asset-based mindset and asset-based approach to this challenge?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>

## Funds of Knowledge: Family Assets to Enrich Classrooms<sup>65</sup>

Home is a place of learning for children. When children come to school they bring knowledge with them that they have learned from family and friends. Teachers can learn from families and use their understanding of families' funds of knowledge to create a welcoming, relevant learning environment. Teachers can build connections between learning at school and the funds of knowledge of the homes of students.

1. Tell families that you would like to learn about their family to get to know them and to know more about their child. This will help you teach their child this year. *Note: Be aware that this activity may be threatening for some families, or may be difficult to complete. Sensitively and respectfully let families know it is their choice whether or not they share information with you. You may also offer to give families additional time, or to tell you their answers rather than writing them.*
2. Ask families to think about their family and the things their family does and the things that are important to them. Ask them to jot down (or tell you) things about their family that they are comfortable sharing in each of the areas listed. Let them know they can skip any area, or add a new one.
3. Families should start with their own family on the front side of the handout. On the back side they can add information about friends and other family members if they would like to.
4. Optional: If you do this activity with several families at the same time, you can ask the families to talk with each other about what they wrote.
5. After you read all of the information shared by families, consider:
  - a. What are similarities and differences amongst the funds of knowledge of your students families this year?
  - b. What are some ways you might connect your instruction during the school day with the funds of knowledge the children in your classroom bring to school?

<sup>65</sup> This document was adapted from Exploring Cultural Concepts, retrieved on May 12, 2016 from <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc>

# Funds of Knowledge: Family Assets to Enrich Classrooms

<b>IMMEDIATE FAMILY</b> (Knowledge and resources within your immediate family)	
Home Language	E.g., English, Spanish
Family Cultural Traditions	E.g., holiday celebrations, foods, arts and crafts
Family Outings and Vacation	E.g., shopping, beach, library, park
Household Chores	E.g., feeding animals, sweeping, dusting, doing dishes
Family Jobs	E.g., teacher, mechanic, construction, farming
Family Interests	E.g., hobbies, caring for family members

Knowledge of Nature and Health

E.g., dancing, exercising, recycling

EXTENDED FAMILY AND FRIENDS

(Knowledge and resources in your extended family and network of friends; consider knowledge in any category from above)

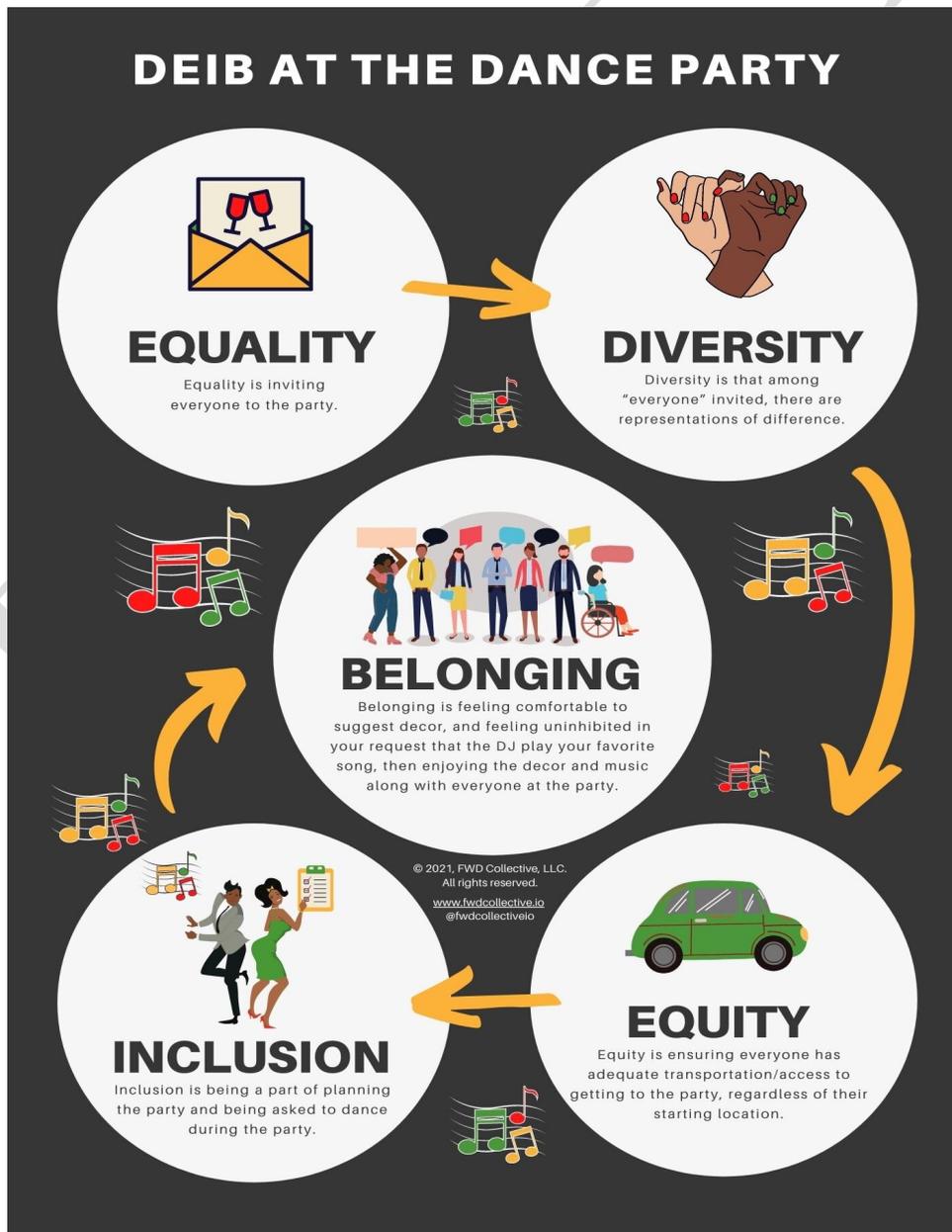
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# Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging Infographic

***"Diversity is a fact. Inclusion is a behavior. But belonging is the emotional outcome that people want in their organization."***

**- Christianne Garofalo**

Belonging is the emotional state that is the end goal of our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts. Belonging is achieved when everyone feels truly welcome and affirmed for who they really are. They do not have to assimilate or consciously (or unconsciously) check a part of themselves at the door. Belonging is achieved when everyone in the organization sees value in having everyone there, exactly as they are. Below is an infographic articulating what Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging look like in action and the process of moving toward this goal.<sup>66</sup>



<sup>66</sup> <https://datapeople.io/article/what-are-diversity-and-inclusion-equity-and-belonging/>

# Transgender Student Support Plan

## APS GENDER SUPPORT PLAN FOR TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NONCONFORMING STUDENTS (CONFIDENTIAL)

**Executive Summary:** The goal of this document is to help school administrative staff create a shared understanding of how the student’s gender will be recognized and supported at school. School staff, guardians (if appropriate) and the student should work collaboratively to develop the document. Sections below outline means for school engagement, privacy concerns, facilities usage requirements, and other considerations as needed. The document also includes a timeline for review and revision to ensure the plan is working to best meet the needs of the student and school.

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Pronouns: \_\_\_\_\_

Legal Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex on Birth Certificate: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Siblings / Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Is name change in Infinite Campus being requested? \_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_ NO

Is gender change in Infinite Campus being requested? \_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_ NO

Has student legally changed name / gender on identifying documents? \_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_ NO

### **PARENT / GUARDIAN ENGAGEMENT**

PARENT(S) / GUARDIAN(S) NAMES: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents / Guardians Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

Which name and pronouns will be used in communications with guardians?

Name to use in communication: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender to be used in communication: \_\_\_\_\_

Are guardians aware of student's gender transition? \_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_ NO

Are guardians supportive of student's gender transition? \_\_\_\_ YES \_\_\_\_ NO

If guardians are NOT aware or supportive, what considerations will be needed during the implementation of support plan?

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**DISCLOSURE, CONFIDENTIALITY, PRIVACY**

What members of the school team will comprise the Student's Administrative Support Team? (Name / Title)

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School Contact Person (Selected by student to support in gender related issues including bullying, harassment, or facilities needs):

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If school contact person is unavailable, how will the student proceed if reporting an issue? (Secondary contact / Plan for self-management):

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Which groups/individuals does the student wish to share knowledge of their gender with?

\_\_\_\_ Open to all adults and peers

\_\_\_\_ In-School Administrative Support Team

Specify Staff: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Other school level leaders (counselor, AP, Principal, etc.)

Specify Staff: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ District Level Staff:

Specify Staff: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Teachers / Other School Staff

Specify Staff: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Student will not be openly “out” but some students may be aware of their gender

Specify Students: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Others

Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

If students wants to share information, when and how would they prefer for information regarding their gender to be communicated?

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If the student is requested privacy in regard to their gender, how will the school manage possible compromises of student privacy?

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What ways might the school need to anticipate privacy needs of the student?

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How will the staff respond to questions regarding students gender from the following groups:

Students: \_\_\_\_\_

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Staff: \_\_\_\_\_

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Parents / Community: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How will privacy be considered in the following situations?

Registration / Enrollment: \_\_\_\_\_

Enrollment: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Books: \_\_\_\_\_

Attendance Records: \_\_\_\_\_

School – Home Communications: \_\_\_\_\_

Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Standardized Tests: \_\_\_\_\_

After-school / Extracurricular Activities: \_\_\_\_\_

Photos / Yearbook: \_\_\_\_\_

Outside district providers: \_\_\_\_\_

Infinite Campus: \_\_\_\_\_

How will instances be handled if incorrect name or pronouns are used by staff? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

By students? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If parents/guardians are not aware or supportive of student's gender status, how will school-home communications be managed? \_\_\_\_\_

## **FACILITIES AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

Restroom Plan: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Locker Room Plan: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Field Trip Plan: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Overnight Trips Plan: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Gendered Activities Plan (ex. Sports): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other Extra-curricular Activities Plan: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

How will issues related to school dress code and student's aesthetic choices be managed?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Are there any specific social situations with other students, family, or staff that need to be discussed or that may impede implementation of this plan?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Are there any factors regarding the student's siblings which will need to be attended to?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other questions, concerns, or issues?

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### **SUPPORT PLAN REVIEW AND REVISION**

Based on details above, what individuals will need to be informed of changes? (ie. Use of gender affirming names, access to facilities, shifts in student records, etc.)

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How will this plan be monitored? \_\_\_\_\_

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How will student, family, school go about revising or making additions to the plan if needed?

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What follow ups will need to take place following this meeting?

<b>Action Item</b>	<b>Responsible People</b>	<b>Timeline</b>

Date / Time of Follow-up Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

## Why is a Gender Support Plan Necessary?

The purpose of a Gender Support Plan is to create a common understanding of how a student's authentic gender will be accounted for across the course of the school day. A Gender Support Plan also provides instruction for how a student will be supported by members of the school staff.

School staff, caregivers (if appropriate), and the student should work collaboratively as a team to create the document. School representatives who participate on the planning team may include the school's principal, assistant principal, the school counselor or social worker, and if desired another adult designated by the student. The process for creating the plan may take several forms. Involved parties may spend time completing section of the plan and then come together to review and discuss shared agreements and opportunities to enhance clarity. Alternatively, the planning team may work through the document together while addressing various needs of the student. The plan will address issues of student privacy, safety, preferred names / pronouns, as well as expectations for facilities usage, and participation in extracurricular activities.

Decisions regarding how to approach completing the planning process may be influenced by multiple factors such as the student's age, personality type and emotional state, the amount of familial support, and the school's organizational structure. These things should be taken into consideration at the outset of the planning process.

Members of the planning committee should expect some level of ambiguity in the process and keep in mind that each plan represents a unique document, meant to meet the needs of each individual student. The Gender Support Plan is not meant to be a "one size fits all" document and should be approached with the level of flexibility needed to create conditions for non-binary and transitioning students to thrive in their school setting.

Lastly, the Gender Support Plan is a living document, meaning it should be reviewed at agreed upon time periods to ensure the processes for student support are being implemented with fidelity. The action planning section at the end of the document should be used to track items that may require additional follow up.

### **Relevant Resources**

- [GLSEN: Model Local Education Agency Policy on Transgender and Nonbinary Students](#)
- [Gender Spectrum: Using the Gender Support Plan](#)
- [Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction: Gender Inclusive Schools](#)
- [Schools in Transition: A Guide for Supporting Transgender Students in K-12 Schools](#)
- [US Dept. of Education: Examples of Policies and Emerging Practices for Supporting Transgender Students](#)
- [Michigan Organization on Adolescent Sexual Health: LGBTQ Youth Inclusivity Toolkit](#)
- [GLSEN: Safe Space Toolkit for LGBTQIA Youth](#)

# Equity-Focused Professional Learning Plan

## Background

The Center for Equity + Social Justice (CESJ) in Atlanta Public Schools offers equity-focused professional learning to **build the capacity** and **professional stamina** to teach and lead for equity. Each equity-focused professional learning session cultivates the **Six Equity Dispositions** for participants' respective scope of work to identify and disrupt inequities:

<u>Equity Teacher Dispositions</u>	<u>Equity Leadership Dispositions</u>
1 <b>Reflect</b> on personal assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors.	1 <b>Reflect</b> on personal assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors.
2 Act with <b>cultural competence</b> and <b>responsiveness</b> in interactions, decision-making, and practice.	2 Publicly <b>model</b> a personal belief system that is grounded in <b>equity</b> .
3 Confront and <b>alter institutional biases</b> of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with minoritized populations.	3 Act with <b>cultural competence</b> and <b>responsiveness</b> in interactions, decision-making, and practice.
4 <b>Cultivate self-love</b> and knowledge and develop an <b>appreciation</b> and <b>respect for others</b> .	4 Purposefully build the capacity of others to <b>identify</b> and <b>disrupt inequities</b> in the school.
5 <b>Teach</b> about issues of <b>social injustice</b> , social movements, and social change.	5 Confront and <b>alter institutional biases</b> of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with minoritized populations.
6 Encourage students to <b>exercise their voice</b> in the promotion of social change.	6 Create <b>systems and structures to promote equity</b> with a focus on minoritized populations.

**This equity-focused professional learning plan was developed in alignment with—**

- APS 5
- APS Equity Commitments
- APS Equity Leader/Teacher Dispositions
- Principles from [Equity by Design](#)
- Standards for Professional Learning from [Learning Forward](#)

**Evaluation Tools:** [Evaluation Plan Template](#)

[Post-Session Evaluation Form](#)

## Key Equity Skill: Critical Self Reflection

### EQUITY TEACHER & LEADER DISPOSITION 1:

Reflect on personal assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors.

**Foundations Series:** Courses and modules in this section are designed as **foundational learning** for anyone beginning the equity journey. These learning opportunities focus on personal self-reflection to surface personal assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors.

Session Title	Session Description	Objectives	Audience	Details
Equity Leadership Dispositions	Education leaders play a crucial role in identifying and <b>addressing inequities</b> in schools and school systems. To do that work effectively, what do leaders need to know and be able to do? The Leadership Academy developed a list of six <b>research-based leadership dispositions</b> they have found are crucial for leaders to build a path toward creating a school community by, with, and for every student.	<b>Examine and reflect</b> on how our roles in the system contribute to and support inequitable practices	All district and building leaders	<p><b>When?</b> New Employee Orientation 2022; additional dates to follow</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Live</p> <p><b>Facilitator(s):</b> <b>The Leadership Academy &amp; CESJ Staff</b></p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 90 minutes</p> <p><b>Resources:</b> <a href="#">Leadership Dispositions</a></p>
Transformative Pedagogy: Equity Teacher Dispositions	Participants will understand and learn the <b>Key Tenets of Transformative Pedagogy</b> and how to interact with students, and how to treat families – all of it plays a crucial role in how children come to see the world and how they engage with it. Therefore, teachers play a critical role in shaping our future citizens because they have more direct contact with students than any other individual in our sector. In essence, teachers must approach the profession as if they are indeed <b>teaching to change the world</b> and we must leverage the power of our pedagogy to transform.	Learn the foundation of the <b>Transformative Pedagogy, philosophy,</b> which begins with understanding one's identity, values, and biases	All teachers	<p><b>When?</b> New Employee Orientation; additional dates to follow</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Live</p> <p><b>Facilitator(s):</b> <b>CESJ Staff</b></p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 90 minutes</p> <p><b>Resources:</b> <a href="#">Teacher Dispositions</a></p>

<p>Overview of APS Equity Framework-work</p>	<p>The APS 2020–2025 Strategic Plan puts equity at the forefront. To create a caring culture of equity-minded individuals and realize the APS Equity Commitments, this session will (1) review the <b>Six Equity Dispositions</b> for participants' respective scope of work, (2) introduce and define the <b>APS Equity Lens</b> (3) provide a high-level overview of the scope and sequence of the Equity-Focused Professional Learning Plan, which is designed around the <b>Six Equity Dispositions</b>. The goal is to strengthen our professional stamina and build the capacity to identify and disrupt inequities in Atlanta Public Schools.</p>	<p>Learn to use tools for <b>applying an equity lens</b> and supporting the <b>Equity Commitments</b></p>	<p>All district and building leaders</p>	<p><b>When?</b> June 15, 2022, at Summer Leadership Retreat</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Live</p> <p><b>Facilitator(s):</b> CESJ Staff</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 90 minutes</p> <p><b>Resources:</b> APS Equity Framework</p>
<p>Implicit Bias: A Self-Paced Module</p>	<p>This <b>implicit bias course</b>, adapted from the Kirwan Institute, will introduce you to insights about how our minds operate and help you understand the origins of implicit associations. You will also <b>uncover some of your own biases</b> and <b>learn strategies</b> for addressing them.</p> <p>The course is organized around 4 modules that are divided into a short series of lessons, many taking less than 10 minutes to complete so that you can complete the lessons and modules at your convenience. We are delighted that you are starting this process to explore implicit bias and what its operation means for your <b>decisions and actions</b>.</p>	<p>Understand what implicit biases are and how these influence our actions</p> <p>Learn to <b>uncover</b> your biases and learn <b>strategies</b> for addressing them</p> <p>Understand how <b>implicit bias</b> impacts our education system</p>	<p>All Staff</p>	<p><b>When?</b> Pilot in June 2022 Launch in July 022</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Self-paced</p> <p><b>Facilitator(s):</b> N/A</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> Up to 90 minutes</p> <p><b>Resources:</b> -Implicit Association Test -Unconscious Bias in Schools by Sarah Fiarman Dr. Tracey Benson</p>

<p>Implicit Bias Workshop, Part 1: Social Identities and Positionality</p>	<p>Acting with cultural competence and <b>appreciation</b> of and <b>respect</b> for others' cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity begins with deep, critical, and honest <b>self-reflection</b>. Reflection on our <b>social positionalities</b> and identities, both our internal identity (e.g., how we see ourselves and feel inside) and external experiences (e.g., how others see us), helps us understand ourselves and others. In this session, participants will 1) examine their <b>identity markers</b>, 2) reflect on their <b>professional identity</b> at Atlanta Public Schools and its <b>social and personal significance</b>, and 3) imagine ways to create cultures and communities with a strong locus of <b>belonging</b>.</p>	<p>Describe various elements of one's own <b>culture</b> Recognize and critically reflect upon one's own <b>cultural biases</b> Reassess one's own <b>personal perspective</b> when appropriate</p>	<p>All Staff</p>	<p><b>When?</b> On demand <b>Type:</b> Live <b>Facilitator(s):</b> <b>SEL &amp; ELE Teams</b> <b>Duration:</b> 75 minutes <b>Resources:</b> -<a href="#">Who Am I – In The Skin Am In?</a> -<a href="#">Diversity Rounds</a> -<a href="#">The Paseo, or Circles of Identity</a></p>
<p>Implicit Bias Workshop, Part 2: Racial Identities</p>	<p>Acting with cultural competence and <b>appreciation</b> of and <b>respect</b> for others' cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity begins with <b>self-knowledge</b> (Equity Teacher Disposition 2 &amp; 4) but also the awareness of one's self as a racial and cultural being. Centered around Beverly Tatum's work, this session seeks to foster participants' <b>development of a racial identity</b>. The goal is developing a sense of identity that is <b>positive</b> and <b>meaningful</b>, both socially and personally, but not based on assumed superiority. To Kendi (2019), "an antiracist idea is any idea that suggests the racial groups are <b>equals in all their apparent differences</b>—that there is nothing right or wrong with any racial group" (p. ##). With a <b>racial consciousness</b>, we can begin to identify and ameliorate the racial disparities and inequities within APS.</p>	<p>Interrogate educational structures and practices from the standpoint of <b>cultural inheritance</b> Evaluate <b>diverse perspectives</b>, and navigate the ambiguity and <b>complexity</b> that comes with multiple perspectives</p>	<p>All Staff</p>	<p><b>When?</b> On demand <b>Type:</b> Live <b>Facilitator(s):</b> <b>SEL &amp; ELE Teams</b> <b>Duration:</b> 75 minutes <b>Resources:</b> -<a href="#">Talking About Race, Learning about Racism</a> by Beverly Tatum -<a href="#">Stages of Racial Identity Development</a></p>

Professional Book Clubs	Professional book clubs support life-long learning. See the list of potential books <a href="#">here</a> .		All Staff	<b>When?</b> On demand <b>Type:</b> Live <b>Facilitator(s):</b> CESJ Staff with Cross-functional Support <b>Duration:</b> 60 minutes
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<b>Key Equity Skill: Developing Cultural Competence</b> Cultural & Linguistic Responsiveness				
EQUITY TEACHER DISPOSITION 2 & EQUITY LEADERSHIP DISPOSITION 3: <b>Act with cultural competence and responsiveness in interactions, decision-making, and practice.</b>				
<b>Session Title</b>	<b>Session Description</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Details</b>
The Key to Your Equity-Focused Communications Strategy is in Your DNA	Having an equity-guided communications strategy is key to moving forward any strategy.	Learn how to leverage the <b>power of mass communications</b> to shift your team and <b>organizational culture</b> toward a <b>focus on equity</b> .  Learn how to develop an <b>effective messaging strategy</b> that ensures that <b>every stakeholder</b> , internal and external, is on the same page with regard to the organization's <b>equity-focused</b> goals and objectives.	All Staff	<b>When?</b> Summer Leadership Retreat 2022 <b>Type:</b> Live <b>Facilitator(s):</b> <b>Dr. Baker-Jones</b> <b>Duration:</b> 75 minutes <b>Resources:</b> – TBD

<p>Teaching &amp; Leading with Cultural Competence</p>	<p>The APS Social-Emotional Learning team often cites Dr. James Comer of the Yale Child Study Center: “No significant learning can occur without a significant relationship.” At the heart of relationships is a sense of <b>connection</b>. Sometimes, however, connection is blocked by perceived differences that lead us to label, compare, and judge, rather than observe, appreciate, and respect. This session explores <b>cultural competence</b>, defined as “the ability to understand, appreciate and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different from one’s own” (DeAngelis, 2015, p. 64), as a <b>critical competency</b> for educators, leaders, and school staff. Using resources from The Leadership Academy, this session 1) develops a working understanding of <b>cultural competence</b> and responsive cultural competence in participants’ respective positions and 2) provides <b>practical tools</b> to build a culturally and linguistically affirming district.</p>	<p>Interpret educational phenomena within a <b>cultural context</b></p> <p>Consider educational norms and practices treated as universal that are actually <b>culturally situated</b></p> <p>Harness the power of <b>cultural and linguistic diversity</b> as a source for innovation</p>	<p>All Staff</p>	<p><b>When?</b> Summer Leadership Retreat, June 2022</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Live</p> <p><b>Facilitator(s):</b> ELE Team and Academics</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 90 minutes</p>
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<p>Beyond Safe Schools: Affirming Schools for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Students, Families, and Staff</p>	<p>Many conversations around supporting LGBT people involve safe spaces, but how can we move beyond safety into <b>affirming, brave, and celebratory spaces</b> for LGBT students, families and staff? During this session participants will go through equal parts 101-workshop and masterclass – something for everyone – and walk away with specific, actionable tips to take back to their schools. Ever wondered how to respond when someone comes out to you? Don't know how to respond when someone says, That's so gay!? Want to know how to make your curriculum more inclusive? Explore all these questions and more.</p>	<p>Learn specific, actionable steps to <b>create affirming</b>, brave, and celebratory spaces.</p>	<p>All staff</p>	<p><b>When?</b> Beyond Tolerance Conference 2022 &amp; On-demand</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Self-paced on ELIS</p> <p><b>Facilitator(s):</b> Dr. Jared Fox, Iris for Districts</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 60 minutes</p> <p><b>Resources</b> - TBD</p>
<p>Cultivating Environments of Affirmation Belonging for LGBTQIA + Students</p>	<p>Through intersectional and trauma-informed lenses, we will examine statistics, and the subsequent impact of bias, prejudice, and/or discrimination within schools; identify risks that LGBTQIA+ youth face on a day-to-day basis; and review strategies for implementation to improve the general climate of schools,</p>	<p>Review strategies for implementation to improve the general climate of schools.</p>	<p>All staff</p>	<p><b>When?</b> Beyond Tolerance Conference 2022 &amp; On-demand</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Self-paced on ELIS</p> <p><b>Facilitator(s):</b> Amanda Erickson, Kaleidoscope Youth Center</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 60 minutes</p> <p><b>Resources</b> - TBD</p>

<p>PFLAG: Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth</p>	<p>In this session, we will discuss how to be an ally for the LGBTQ community. We will start with important definitions and terminology to build a strong foundation for allyship. What do all those letters mean and how do you speak and interact with respect? What is the relationship between gender identity and sexual orientation? Why is “coming out” a process and not a one-time event? The second part of the session will focus on active allyship for the LGBTQ population. What can you do in your daily interactions to show support for and provide a safe place for students? What practical steps can you take to put your allyship into action?</p>	<p>Learn important <b>definitions</b> and <b>terminology</b>.</p>	<p>All staff</p>	<p><b>When?</b> Beyond Tolerance Conference 2022 &amp; On-demand</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Self-paced on ELIS</p> <p><b>Facilitator(s):</b> Ann Vitale, Co-president of the PFLAG Atlanta Board</p> <p><b>Duration</b> 60 minutes</p> <p><b>Resources</b> -TBD</p>
<p>Microcredentials: Diversity, Equity, and Cultural Competence (DECC)</p>	<p>Diversity, equity, and cultural competence (DECC) is integral to being a skilled and informed educator. In today’s global and interconnected society, educators must constantly grow in their ability to teach culturally diverse students and groups.</p>	<p>Learn about <b>culture</b> and its predominant impact on individuals and groups of people. To <b>expose and address inequity</b> in the educational system To <b>collaborate purposefully</b> with individuals and groups from other cultures</p>	<p>All Educators</p>	<p><b>When?</b> Ongoing</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Self-paced</p> <p><b>Facilitator(s):</b> National Education Association</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 15 hours per microcredential</p> <p><b>Resources</b> -<a href="#">Register here.</a></p>

<p>Microcredentials: Supporting LGBTQIA+ Students</p>	<p>This microcredential stack is designed to help educators understand how to create a safe and inclusive classroom environment for LGBTQ students. You also explore how to advocate for LGBTQ policies for students and co-workers. You will have the opportunity to learn and use proper and <b>respectful terminology</b> as well as design lesson plans that are inclusive of LGBTQ students. You will also have the opportunity to learn about <b>intersections of race, gender and sexual orientation</b> and use this knowledge to create a positive classroom community of learners.</p>	<p>Learn strategies for supporting LGBTQIA+ students by creating a safe space and a <b>culture of inclusivity</b></p>		<p><b>When?</b> Ongoing <b>Type:</b> Self-paced <b>Facilitator(s):</b> <b>National Education Association</b> <b>Duration:</b> 15 hours per microcredential <b>Resources</b> -<a href="#">Register here.</a></p>
<p>Professional Book Clubs</p>	<p>Professional book clubs support life-long learning. See the list of potential books <a href="#">here.</a></p>		<p>All Staff</p>	<p><b>When?</b> On demand <b>Type:</b> Live <b>Facilitator(s):</b> <b>CESJ Staff</b> with Cross-functional Support <b>Duration:</b> 60 minutes</p>

## Key Equity Skill: Developing Your Equity Lens, Capacity, & Stamina

### EQUITY LEADERSHIP DISPOSITION 4

Purposefully **build the capacity** of others to **identify** and **disrupt inequities** in the school.

### EQUITY LEADERSHIP DISPOSITION 5:

**Teach** about issues of **social injustice**, social movements, and social change.

Session Title	Session Description	Objectives	Audience	Details
Developing your Equity Lens and Stamina	This session offers participants an opportunity to analyze and reflect upon a variety of realistic case studies related to <b>educational equity and social justice</b> , and practice the process of paying disciplined attention to the <b>experiences and perspectives of historically marginalized populations</b> , while considering a range of contextual factors, <b>checking their own biases</b> , and making immediate- and longer-term decisions about how to create and <b>sustain equitable learning environments for all students</b> .	Develop <b>empathy</b> by examining the ways in which <b>racism, sexism, homophobia and heterosexism, class inequities, language bias, religious-based oppression, and other equity and diversity concerns affect students, teachers, families, and other members</b> of our school communities everyday.	All Staff	<p><b>When?</b> TBD</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Live</p> <p><b>Facilitator(s):</b> <b>Dr. Baker-Jones</b></p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 90 minutes</p> <p><b>Resources:</b> -TBD</p>
Setting the Conditions for Critical Reflection & Conversation	Equity is the path to excellence. When the conditions are right, all children can find success. Similarly, to engage in transformative dialogue about equity and social justice, we must also get the conditions right by first building <b>psychological safety</b> and <b>trust</b> to create <b>BRAVE spaces (tool here)</b> in which we can take risks and fully listen. The goal of this session is to 1) engage participants in <b>group norm setting</b> . 2) establish <b>listening protocols</b> for both vulnerability and accountability, and 3) examine how personal assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors impact our work (Equity Teacher & Leadership Disposition 1) through the discussion of the Implicit Association Test (IAT).	Learn a tool for creating the <b>conditions and common language</b> for regular BRAVE conversations around equity	All Staff	<p><b>When?</b> TBD</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Live</p> <p><b>Facilitator(s):</b> <b>Dr. Baker-Jones</b></p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 75 minutes</p> <p><b>Resources</b> <a href="#">Workshop plan</a></p>

<p>Looking at your MTSS Process through the Lens of Equity</p>	<p>In this session participants will take an experiential journey through the <b>Culturally &amp; Linguistically Responsive MTSS Implementation Rubric</b>, and learn how to use the tool to assess the extent to which they are <b>implementing the MTSS process with fidelity and equitably</b>. This workshop offers participants how to <b>systematically</b> incorporate the use of Data, Curriculum and Instruction, and Whole Child &amp; Interventions to <b>improve student achievement</b> and <b>engagement for ALL students</b>.</p>	<p>Learn best practices in Equity-Focused RTI, with a focus on <b>Culturally &amp; Linguistically Responsive Response to Intervention</b> within the district's current <b>Multi-Tiered System of Supports</b> Implementation Protocol</p> <p>Practice using effective and versatile strategies to <b>ensure fidelity of the MTSS implementation process</b></p>	<p>Individuals responsible for monitoring school-level fidelity of RTI</p> <p>All leaders/ staff supporting MTSS process and all teachers</p>	<p><b>When?</b> Educator Conference July 11-14-2022</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Live</p> <p><b>Facilitator(s):</b> <b>Rhonda Hudson &amp; ELE Team</b></p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 90 minutes</p> <p><b>Resources</b> <a href="#">Equity MTSS Framework</a></p>
<p>Overview of APS Guidelines for Teaching Controversial Issues: A Toolkit for Equity and Empowerment</p>	<p>As educators, we are charged with creating engaged citizens who uphold our democratic and pluralistic ideals. – Dr. T. Baker-Jones. Therefore, teachers will <b>facilitate crucial and courageous discussions</b> with students around issues that may be perceived as controversial. This session will be an overview of the district toolkit for teaching controversial issues. It will review key APS policies (teaching controversial issues, equity, etc.) and APS guidance (equity dispositions, commitments, and goals) to ensure that everyone has the tools to implement equity in the classroom. The toolkit provides the rationale and suggested resources that will help teachers ensure <b>equitable teaching practices</b> that allow all students to be seen, valued, and respected.</p>	<p>Encourage <b>risk taking</b> and create space for others to have <b>open dialogue</b> about race and hard-to-discuss topics.</p> <p>Bolster <b>confidence</b> to engage in conversations about <b>equity</b> and <b>access</b>, in the face of risk and pushback</p>	<p>All Staff</p>	<p><b>When?</b> Beyond Tolerance Conference 2022 &amp; Self-paced On demand</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Self-paced on ELIS</p> <p><b>Facilitator(s):</b> <b>Gina Tyson-Devoe</b></p> <p><b>Resources</b> - <a href="#">Board Policy IKB</a> - <a href="#">Toolkit</a></p>

<p>Equity-Centered Critical Friendship Institute (ECCFI)</p>	<p>Equity-Centered Critical Friendship (ECCF) is offered as a 4-day immersive institute or as an 8-week institute during which participants encounter what it looks, sounds, and feels like to be a part of a community of practitioners fiercely committed to educational equity and excellence.</p>	<p>Develop new understandings of <b>individual</b> and <b>collective identity</b></p> <p>Learn strategies for <b>community-building</b> and reflection through <b>facilitated</b> protocols and open discussions</p> <p>Practice skills needed for participation in and facilitation of equity-centered, collaborative practices</p>	<p><a href="#">CREATE Partner Schools &amp; CLL Staff</a></p>	<p><b>When?</b> -June 6-9 OR -July 18-21</p> <p><b>Type:</b> Live</p> <p><b>Facilitator(s):</b> <b>CREATE Teacher Residency</b></p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 28 hours</p> <p><b>Resources</b> -<a href="#">Create Teacher Residency Program Overview</a></p>
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## Key Equity Skill: Developing Yourself As An Equity Champion

EQUITY LEADERSHIP DISPOSITION 5 & EQUITY TEACHER DISPOSITION 3:

**Confront and alter institutional biases of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with minoritized populations.**

### Micro-Credentials

Host	Description	Audience	Details
National Education Association	NEA offers “stacks” of microcredentials on equity-related topics, including Supporting LGBTQIA+ Students and Trauma-Informed Pedagogy. For example, the Diversity, Equity, and Cultural Competence (DECC) stack offers six different microcredentials, including Exploring and Unpacking Bias, Diversity, Equity and Cultural Competence, Creating Equitable, Asset-Based, and Student-Centered Learning Environments.	All district staff	<b>Cost:</b> Free for NEA members; \$75+ for non members  Please see information below for steps necessary to receive district micro credentialing.  See here for course offerings: <a href="#">HERE</a> .
BloomBoard	BloomBoard microcredentials and micro-credential-based pathways, including Foundation to Attending Equity and Leadership for Equity, have been approved for graduate credit with university partners. BloomBoard also offers micro-endorsements, which consist of multiple, individual micro-credentials representing a discrete set of competencies needed for certification in a given topic. Micro-endorsements can be combined into different programs such as Master’s degrees, certification, or state-recognized endorsements.	Teachers and staff that support teachers	Contact the Office of Equitable Learning Enrollments for enrollment information.

# Equity-Focused Micro-Credentialing

## Introduction

The Center for Equity + Social Justice (CESJ) in Atlanta Public Schools believes it is important to maintain an **equity-focused professional learning** system that **enhances student learning** and **supports educator practice**. Micro-credentialing is one important element of the CESJ's professional learning offerings.

Micro-credentials are a digital form of certification indicating **demonstrated competency and mastery** in a specific skill or set of skills. To earn micro-credentials, educators identify competencies they want to master and complete the requirements to demonstrate mastery. Micro-credentials represent a new and innovative form of **personalized professional learning** developed to support the professional practice of educators.

**micro-credential**  
[noun: mahy-kroh-kri-den-shuhls]

1. Proof of mastery of a specific area of professional development:  
*If you're an NEA member, you can earn micro-credentials at no cost to you or your school.*

→ Sign up at [NEA.org/micro-credentials](https://www.nea.org/micro-credentials)

## The Micro-Credentialing Process

Micro-credentials are a **competency-based digital form of certification**. They can be issued for formal and informal **professional learning experiences** that support educators developing skills and acquiring knowledge to improve professional practice that supports student success. The highest quality micro-credentials are grounded in **research** and **best practices**. Micro-credentials can be developed by nonprofit and for-profit entities or developed by educators.

*Step 1:* Choose an **organization** or **institution** that will award the micro-credential (e.g., National Education Association, etc.). If not one of the approved organizations (below), please **complete the Equity-focused Micro-credential Course Inquiry Form** to the CESJ for review and pre-approval.

*Step 2:* Identify a **competency** to develop (e.g., [culturally responsive teaching](#); [unpacking bias](#); etc.) and then engage in a set of activities to deepen knowledge and skills.

*Step 3:* Submit **evidence of mastery** (e.g., portfolio, artifacts, etc.) to a certified assessor.

*Step 4:* Upon successful completion, submit the earned **digital badge** that represents the achieved micro-credential to the Center for Equity + Social Justice.

Once reviewed, CESJ will submit it to Human Resources for record. *Note: The digital badge should not be used interchangeably with micro-credentialing. Doing so will diminish the seriousness of the micro-credentialing concept in professional learning.*

## Equity-Focused Micro-Credential Options

Unlike sit-and-get certifications, the following micro-credentials are awarded based on **demonstrated mastery** of the subject matter:

## Approved for Teachers:

- **BloomBoard:** All BloomBoard microcredentials and micro-credential-based pathways, including Foundation to Attending Equity and Leadership for Equity, have been **approved for graduate credit** with university partners. BloomBoard’s microcredentials are created by educators, based on research, and designed to meaningfully improve teachers’ instructional practices.

BloomBoard also offers **micro-endorsements**, which consist of multiple, individual micro-credentials representing a discrete set of competencies needed for certification in a given topic. Micro-endorsements can be combined into different programs such as **Master’s degrees, certification, or state-recognized endorsements.**

## Approved for All Staff:

- **National Education Association:** NEA offers over 175 micro-credentials created by educators for educators. NEA micro-credentials are grounded in research and best practice and designed to be personalized, flexible, and performance based.
  - ☒ **NEA’s [Equity-Focused Offerings](#)**

## Resources

- “[Micro-credentials for Teachers: What Three Early Adopters Have Learned So Far](#),” Jenny DeMonte: <https://www.air.org/resource/report/micro-credentials-teachers-what-three-early-adopters-have-learned-so-far>
- “**Micro-credentials for Impact: Holding Professional Learning to High Standards**,” Learning Forward: <https://learningforward.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/micro-credentials-for-impact.pdf>
- “**Micro-Credentials: Driving Teacher Learning and Leadership**,” Barnett Berry and Karen [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SHrT36HSPVI65jCzwzWRqGCCadBbhw\\_0/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SHrT36HSPVI65jCzwzWRqGCCadBbhw_0/view?usp=sharing)

# Equity Practices in Professional Learning<sup>67</sup>

Effective equity-focused professional learning results in equitable and excellent outcomes for all students when educators understand students' historical, cultural, and societal contexts, embrace student assets through instruction, and foster relationships with students, families, and communities. This document builds on the Equity Practices standard developed by Learning Forward by integrating best practices and frameworks in use by Atlanta Public Schools to ensure excellent and equitable learning environments.

## The Equity Practices

Educators engage in professional learning that helps them create high-quality learning experiences for all students, honoring all the aspects of identity that students bring to the school. Educators build capacity to serve the whole child, deepening their understanding of who their students are and how their life experiences and identities impact what they need at school. Educators learn to recognize each student's strengths and personalize learning to maximize impact on a range of student outcomes.

Educators who plan, facilitate, and design professional learning at the system and school level hold primary responsibility for creating job-embedded, collaborative learning so educators understand and apply inclusive practices in the contexts where they serve students, whether in classrooms or other learning environments. Educators at all levels have responsibility and agency to support their colleagues in developing, improving, and practicing equity strategies and in their own development and use of new practices with students.

Following are the main constructs of the Equity Practices standard.

### **Educators understand students' historical, cultural, and societal contexts.**

Educators learn about contextual aspects of student identity and experience, increasing their knowledge of local, national, and global history and culture as well as contemporary implications so they understand better the experiences and needs of the students, families, and communities they serve. To meaningfully serve their students, educators are responsible for understanding the history of community members and families in their national or local context, and in particular how that history shapes what their students and communities experience today within and beyond education.

Educators explore the complexities of how students' identities affect their lives and their contexts for learning. They seek to understand how all aspects of students' lives impact their opportunity and access to effective schooling, including family or caretaker and living situations, home language, socioeconomic conditions, and physical, emotional, and mental health details.

Educators engage in professional learning to understand racism, colonization, misogyny, poverty, ableism, and other barriers that prevent adults' and students' access and opportunities to learn. The content of educator learning fosters exploration of what those barriers mean and how they impact adult and student learning. Educators gain skills and practices to eliminate these and other barriers to learning at whatever level they serve.

<sup>67</sup> Adapted from National Education Association and Center for Great Public Schools

Educators collaborate to deepen their knowledge about the students, adults, and communities they serve. Teams of educators increase their impact by committing to collectively develop the knowledge and skills to serve each student in their spheres of influence, leveraging individual strengths, sharing knowledge and successes, and together bearing the responsibility for a diverse range of equity practices.

In continually examining their own experiences and biases as specified by the Teacher and Leader Equity Dispositions, educators move beyond reflection by shifting practices, monitoring impact, and sustaining the critical work of talking openly with colleagues and students about such topics as race, culture, and class.

## **Educators practice culturally responsive knowledge, attitudes, and skills to improve the success of diverse students.**

Culturally responsive professional learning allows teachers to bridge the gap between instructional delivery and diverse learning styles to establish continuity between how diverse students learn and communicate and how the school approaches teaching and learning. Villegas and Lucas (2002) posited that helping teachers develop the following six characteristics would prepare them to be culturally responsive:

1. **Socio-cultural consciousness:** A teacher's own way of thinking, behaving, and being are influenced by race, ethnicity, social class, and language. Prospective teachers must critically examine their own socio-cultural identities and biases in the context of the inequalities culturally diverse segments of society experience. They must recognize discrimination based on ethnicity, social class, and skin color and inspect and confront any negative attitudes they might have toward diverse student groups.
2. **Attitude:** A teacher's affirming attitude toward students from culturally diverse backgrounds significantly impacts student learning, belief in themselves, and overall academic performance. By respecting cultural differences and using curricular and instructional practices related to the cultures of their students, schools and classrooms become inclusive.
3. **Commitment and skills:** A teacher's role as an agent of change confronts barriers/obstacles to those changes and develops skills for collaboration. As agents of change, teachers assist schools in becoming more equitable over time.
4. **Constructivist views:** A teacher's contention that all students are capable of learning requires building scaffolding between what students already know through their own experiences and what they need to learn. Constructivist teaching promotes critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and the recognition of multiple perspectives.
5. **Knowledge of student's life:** A teacher's learning about a student's past experiences, home and community culture, and world in and out of school helps build relationships by increasing the use of these experiences in the context of teaching and learning.
6. **Culturally responsive teaching:** A teacher's use of strategies that support a constructivist view of knowledge, teaching, and learning assists students in constructing knowledge, building on their personal and cultural strengths, and examining the curriculum from multiple perspectives, thus creating an inclusive classroom environment.

## **Educators embrace student assets through instruction.**<sup>68</sup>

A critical dimension of leveraging professional learning to achieve equity in schools is recognizing the importance of building all educators' knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions to personalize teaching in consideration of each student's culture, identity, interests, and needs.

Educators develop skills and practices to create culturally relevant, responsive, and sustaining instruction as well as to attend to the social and emotional aspects of the classroom experience. Professional learning leaders therefore prioritize not only understanding what culturally relevant or sustaining teaching looks like but also providing opportunities for educators to explore and apply such teaching practices with feedback and support.

Professional learning that increases educators' capacity to recognize and embrace aspects of students' identities as assets rather than deficits enables them to create culturally sustaining instruction and classroom environments. When educators shift to a strengths- or assets-based approach, they embrace inclusive practices that build on what students bring to the classroom in terms of experiences, talents, and interests rather than seeing differences as gaps or weaknesses.

Professional learning that increases an educator's capacity to personalize learning based on who students are and how they learn is tightly integrated with the academic aspects of teaching and learning as well as the curriculum and instructional materials in use in a classroom. Educators also address their capacity to recognize and serve students with a range of abilities, often working in partnership with specialized staff to adapt all aspects of teaching to create learning that is rigorous and accessible.

As educators strengthen their capacity to teach to the whole child, addressing all aspects of academic and nonacademic development, understanding the importance of social and emotional learning is critical. Educators learn about the intersection of students' social and emotional skills and academic success and leverage strategies to help students develop such skills.

Educators learn to create classrooms where students have safety, agency, and voice to talk openly about their lived experiences. What educators hear from their students helps them identify areas for further exploration. They learn how to recognize how their own practices encourage or discourage student voice and any patterns in classroom management that are based on and perhaps unintentionally reinforcing bias or misconceptions.

## **Educators foster relationships with students, families, and communities.**

Educators recognize the importance of building their capacity to establish authentic and caring relationships with students, families, and community members. They study the importance of establishing trust and learn strategies to build and sustain two-way communication so students and families experience trusting relationships throughout the education system.

Educators listen to students to understand their interests and needs and establish students' autonomy in influencing the learning and schooling they experience. Educators in positions of leadership at the school and system levels understand a range of approaches, such as restorative justice, for establishing positive learning contexts that support the whole child. They

<sup>68</sup> Adapted from Learning Forward and Region X Equity Assistance Center

also learn approaches related to classroom safety such as alternative disciplinary practices and emotional regulation.

Educators strengthen the capacity to interact with families and caretakers as well as community members so they can draw on essential sources of student information to create relevant learning experiences. Educators who work with families provide essential partnership to parents and caretakers, who are then better positioned to engage fully in their children's education. To build and sustain relationships with all community members, educators increase their capacity to talk openly about brave or controversial topics without using language or stances that are inflammatory or that would serve as barriers to productive collaboration.

Educators turn to local community members and students' families as experts, seeking their partnership and permission to employ such learning designs as shadowing to deepen their expertise. Educators recognize that the instructional materials they use are critical content for discussions and partnerships with families and communities and therefore should be culturally responsive and designed to act as catalysts for improved relationships.

Educators working as family partners can more deeply understand and leverage cultural assets, integrating relevant information into instruction. They are also better positioned to allocate or advocate for particular resources to meet a student's need for specific support, whether that comes in the form of technology tools, learning needs modifications, or health and wellness referrals. Depending on their role in the school or system, educators strengthen their knowledge, skills, and practices to develop and sustain partnerships with community members to support students and their families.

Individual educators are not solely responsible for serving the multitude of student needs that are often identified in the classroom. However, any educator may serve as a primary liaison and champion for a student and therefore needs the capacity and skill to tap the appropriate colleagues to address student needs.

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# Guidance & Approval Process for DEIB Services, Resources, & Materials

## Guidance and Approval Process for Schools/Offices Seeking DEIB Services, Resources, and Materials

### Executive Summary

The objective of this document is to create a process through which APS schools and offices may leverage the expertise of the Center for Equity + Social Justice when considering creating and/or contracting DEIB services from an external consultant, vendor, or internal partner. The goals of this process include:

- To provide guidance to schools and offices interested in conducting equity-focused work or purchasing/contracting for DEIB services, resources and materials; this is inclusive of both external and internal partners or offices
- To establish an approval process when external services or resources are needed that ensures APS consistently benefits from DEIB services, resources, and materials from recognized experts in the field who align with our districts core mission, vision, values and approach towards equity work
- To enhance contract opportunities and to promote regional economic development through the maximum utilization of small, minority and women-owned business enterprises (MWBE).

This process is intended to ensure that any DEIB consultants, vendors, or internal stakeholders tapped for services do so in ways that directly align with Atlanta Public Schools' philosophy of **leading for equity** and the **Six Equity Dispositions** for teachers and leaders. Additionally, it is meant to ensure that district offices and schools benefit from working with local and national experts that understand how to navigate and deliver services in a manner consistent with our standards for service and that are not deemed "divisive" as defined by House Bill 1084, passed by the Georgia Senate.

As subject matter experts in the DEIB field, members of the CESJ team are well positioned to collaboratively define the need and support in the identification of either an internal or external resource or partner to meet that need. Following is a brief protocol to guide the process.

### Protocol

- *Step 1:* Complete the **DEIB Services, Resources & Materials Approval Process Intake Form**. The intake form is short and is designed to collect information about the consultant/vendor/service/resources, scope of services, alignment to APS Equity Philosophy, Equity Guiding Principles and Equity Dispositions, and how the services/resources/materials are best positioned to support the office or school.
- *Step 2:* Completed forms will be routed to the appropriate CESJ subject matter expert for review. If additional information is needed, a member of the CESJ team will reach out for additional information.
- *Step 3:* Following the intake, a team member will contact the potential vendor/

consultant/partner to schedule a 30-minute conversation to best understand their alignment with the CESJ's mission, vision, and demonstrated commitment to equity, as defined by the Equity Dispositions (see chart below).

- *Step 4:* Upon completion of the review, consultants and vendors that meet criteria for alignment with the dispositions will move to the final approval process through sign off by the Chief Equity + Social Justice Officer.
  - Consultants/vendors/partners that reach this level of approval will remain within our approved DEIB service provider list for up to two years.
- *Step 5:* DEIB consultants and vendors who receive final approval are invited to submit a **proposal** that includes their alignment with the **Equity Dispositions** for their scope of work (see chart below). The proposal should include the following:
  - Scope of work
  - Session Agenda
  - Professional biography
  - Cost of service

### **Vendor Registration Process**

Vendors approved to do business with APS will be invited to register using B2GNow. The APS Center for Equity + Social Justice launched **B2GNow**, a new diversity management software, to promote:

- Building a culture that supports a supplier diversity program,
- Automating and streamlining supplier diversity monitoring
- Improving communication with certified firms and prime contractors, and
- Providing access to search for diverse vendors

### **Supplier Diversity in the Center for Equity + Social Justice**

Through this process, APS aims to establish a set of business practices that aim to increase purchases from a variety of suppliers – including local and/or small businesses or organizations led by **historically underutilized populations** – when procuring goods and services.

The goal of the Center for Equity and Social Justice's **supplier diversity** efforts are to **eliminate discrimination** against businesses on the basis of race, color, national origin and gender; to monitor and remedy, as appropriate, the effects of past and present discrimination; to promote **full, inclusionary contracting practices** within the District and encourage full and open competition in the Atlanta Public Schools' procurement and purchasing activities; to enhance contract opportunities for all and to promote regional economic development through the maximum utilization of **small, minority and women-owned business enterprises (MWBE)** including:

- Asian American and/or Asian Pacific
- Black or African American
- Veteran or Service-Disable Veteran Business Enterprise
- Hispanic and/or LatinX
- Indigenous
- LGBTQIA+
- Women-owned businesses

**To complete the vendor registration process on B2G, please visit the Business Diversity Management System.**

**Center for Equity + Social Justice Contacts:**

- **For student and family-facing DEIB training:**
  - Dr. Emily Watson, Coordinator of Equity-Focused Professional Learning,
    - Email: [Emily.Watson@atlanta.k12.ga.us](mailto:Emily.Watson@atlanta.k12.ga.us)
  
- **For staff-facing DEIB training:**
  - Carina Windom, Coordinator of Workplace DEI
    - Email: [Carina.Windom@atlanta.k12.ga.us](mailto:Carina.Windom@atlanta.k12.ga.us)

Teachers <u>Equity Teacher Dispositions</u>	Leaders <u>Equity Leadership Dispositions</u>
1 <b>Reflect</b> on personal assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors.	1 <b>Reflect</b> on personal assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors.
2 Act with <b>cultural competence</b> and <b>responsiveness</b> in interactions, decision-making, and practice.	2 Publicly <b>model</b> a personal belief system that is grounded in <b>equity</b> .
3 Confront and <b>alter institutional biases</b> of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with minoritized populations.	3 Act with <b>cultural competence</b> and <b>responsiveness</b> in interactions, decision-making, and practice.
4 <b>Cultivate self-love</b> and knowledge and develop an <b>appreciation</b> and <b>respect for others</b> .	4 Purposefully build the capacity of others to <b>identify</b> and <b>disrupt inequities</b> in the school.
5 <b>Teach</b> about issues of <b>social injustice</b> , social movements, and social change.	5 Confront and <b>alter institutional biases</b> of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with minoritized populations.
6 Encourage students to <b>exercise their voice</b> in the promotion of social change.	6 Create <b>systems and structures to promote equity</b> with a focus on minoritized populations.

## Our Systems: **Centering** Stakeholder Voice & Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement

- Culturally Responsive Stakeholder Engagement Planning Tool
- Equitable Family Collaboration: Co-Design Circles Method
- The APS BRAVE Spaces Program
- Protocol for Navigating BRAVE Conversations
- BRAVE Discussion Norms
- BRAVE Discussion Protocol
- BRAVE Centering Protocol

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# Culturally Responsive Stakeholder Engagement Planning Tool

This step-by-step guide is based on thousands of hours of dialogue with diverse leaders, teachers, and stakeholders from various organizations and schools. It offers school and district leaders reflective questions and thoughtful considerations, in demonstrating cultural competence in the planning and development of racially conscious and culturally responsive stakeholder engagement opportunities. To implement this tool with fidelity, it is recommended that you appoint someone on your team to be the owner of this document and process.

Step	Guiding Questions	Considerations	Reflections & Actions - Use the examples on page 146 for ideas
<b>1. Determine the nature and type of engagement</b>	<p><i>What is the event or engagement?</i></p> <p><i>What is the purpose of the event (information/ awareness, focus-group, problem solving, decision-making)?</i></p>	<p>As you identified the purpose of the event also consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Which organizational value(s) is this information/decision/ problem grounded in?</li> </ol> <p>Given the purpose, think through the best format and structure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Informational meetings should be short and can take a town-hall or panel style format. Allow time for Q&amp;A and feedback.</li> <li>2. Problem-solving and decision-making events should allow for smaller group discussions and</li> <li>3. With any event, there should be a way to capture the feedback and follow-up on key action items should occur promptly.</li> <li>4. Reflect on past engagements, and consider your "Dos &amp; Don'ts." What worked and did not work in the past?</li> <li>5. When structuring the event consider to what extent are roles and responsibilities defined in order to emphasize equity and accountability?</li> </ol>	

<p><b>2. Create Goals and Outcomes</b></p>	<p><i>Why do you want stakeholders to engage <u>and</u> what's in it for them?</i></p> <p><i>What do you want to accomplish? What is the desired outcome?</i></p>	<p>Define what you want to accomplish.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Which organizational values do you want the outcome to be grounded in?</li> <li>2. Are we beginning from a mindset of <a href="#">involvement vs. engagement</a>?</li> <li>3. What's most important for the stakeholder, the school, and/or office to make sure happens as a result of the engagement?</li> <li>4. What will the stakeholder get out of engaging?</li> <li>5. What assumptions are we making about the needs and wants of our stakeholders? How do we learn what's important to all of our stakeholders?</li> </ol>	
<p><b>3. Identify Target Audience</b></p>	<p><i>What stakeholders do you need to most engage with to meet your goals?</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Which different groups will be impacted by the information/problem/decision and how?</li> <li>2. When engagement is planned for "all" stakeholders without specifically considering our stakeholders from historically marginalized communities, we are likely to continue to marginalize the stakeholders we need to most engage with.</li> </ol>	
<p><b>4. Understand the Barriers to Engagement</b></p> <p>Structural Barriers Worksheet</p> <p>Translation and Language Interpreter Request Guidelines</p> <p>Support for the Hearing Impaired</p>	<p><i>What are the barriers to effectively engaging with the target audience?</i></p> <p><i>Have you secured accommodations necessary for targeted stakeholder groups (i.e. translation and language interpreter services, accessibility and access, assistance for the visual or hearing impaired, etc.)</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Often, meeting organizers plan, "as usual" from a dominant cultural lens, and then try to fit their stakeholders from historically marginalized communities into the plan.</li> <li>2. Begin with a discussion about barriers (accessibility, language, technological, geographic, etc.), perceived and actual, for the target stakeholder groups.</li> <li>3. Consider ways in which we might be creating barriers with our perceptions, behaviors, practices, and policies.</li> <li>4. It makes sense for marginalized stakeholders to be skeptical and distrustful. Anticipate this and fight the urge to defend.</li> </ol>	

<p><b>5. Create the Engagement Plan</b></p>	<p><i>How can we effectively reach our audience with our engagement plan?</i></p>	<p>Your engagement plan will look differently depending on the goal and target audience.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does the plan (activities, interactions) pay attention to language and power dynamics between staff and stakeholders, and between stakeholders from different socioeconomic, educational, and racial backgrounds? (i.e. What is your staff's ability to navigate differences of power and privilege as they work with vulnerable families and communities?)</li> <li>2. How will you validate our stakeholders from historically marginalized communities? How will you intentionally gauge responses from stakeholders of historically marginalized communities?</li> <li>3. Have we targeted and diversified our engagement strategies to ensure that we reach stakeholders who are typically not engaged?</li> <li>4. Does this engagement build relationships, bridge conflicts, and create a deeper sense of community or understanding? Will the engagement value the sovereignty of choice or unique wisdom of our stakeholders?</li> <li>5. For problem-solving &amp; decision-making engagements, have you ensured that the voices and perspectives of the people experiencing the problem are involved in the process? Does the engagement address impacts for the communities the decision impacts?</li> <li>6. How will you capture data on stakeholder feedback, next steps, etc. during the engagement?</li> </ol>	
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<p><b>6. Create an effective communication strategy</b></p> <p>How to Create a Culturally Responsive Flyer</p> <p>Considerations For Writing Documents to a Diverse Community</p> <p>Considerations for Creating Culturally Responsive Presentations</p> <p>Creating Culturally Responsive PowerPoints</p>	<p><i>Does your target audience know the engagement is for them?</i></p> <p><i>Are your materials accessible to all audiences (translation and ability status)? Is it eduspeak and jargon-free?</i></p> <p><i>Does your meeting format and timing allow for effective and inclusive engagement of, and feedback from, the audience?</i></p>	<p>Outreach must be tailored to your target audience in order for your message to be effectively received, and acted upon.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are we providing access to the information for our target stakeholder?</li> <li>2. Does our outreach plan include multiple forms of communication? Have we targeted and diversified our outreach strategies to ensure that we reach stakeholders who are typically not engaged?</li> <li>3. Are messages (written/verbal) free of jargon and acronyms?</li> <li>4. Mix text and graphics to help convey the information</li> <li>5. Relevant languages</li> </ol>	
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**7.  
Evaluate**

Did the interaction meet the goal(s) and was it worth it to our stakeholders, especially those from historically marginalized communities?

It is necessary to evaluate if stakeholders considered your event or engagement an effective use of their time. Feedback can be used to inform and improve future planning. You may also choose to use the information to respond to feedback directly or create a FAQ for distribution.

1. How will you evaluate stakeholder satisfaction?
2. How will you measure the impact of your engagement strategy?
3. Was your communication strategy effective? Did you reach your target audience(s)?
4. Did you account for progress check points and ongoing feedback loops?
5. For problem-solving and decision-making engagements, have you thought through ways to create a more equitable division of impact? What are you learning about impact on stakeholders along the way?
6. Did your engagement deepen a sense of community and relational trust?
7. Does your implementation plan allow for ongoing learning and flexibility as new dynamics and feedback emerge? How?
8. What is iterative in your implementation plan (e.g. allowing for emergent participation, co/re-design, etc)?

## Examples

<p><b>4. Understand the Barriers to Engagement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A large group setting is intimidating</li> <li>● Stakeholders have different networks than established groups</li> <li>● The time of meetings are not conducive to many stakeholder or it is difficult to get to</li> <li>● The topic does not connect to the target audience</li> <li>● Stakeholders do not feel comfortable asking questions</li> <li>● Stakeholders feel ignorant when they don't understand the content or the process being used</li> <li>● Stakeholders come from cultures and communities where it would have been considered rude to advocate or question school staff</li> <li>● Stakeholders are fearful of government</li> <li>● Stakeholders worry that their questions will make them seem "Angry" or have consequences for their children.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Create the Engagement Plan</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide opportunities for stakeholder and staff to build connections with each other.</li> <li>● Interactive, interactive, interactive. "Stand and Deliver" never works.</li> <li>● Small groups are always better than large groups.</li> <li>● DO NOT USE EDUCATIONAL and APS language. Even stakeholders who grew up in the United States don't know what terms like MTSS or ACES mean. Translating a document that doesn't make sense in English will not help stakeholders.</li> <li>● PowerPoints need to be simple. <i>Never</i> use a lot of words. Use a picture or a video to express your thoughts.</li> <li>● Handouts and PowerPoints need to be in the language of your target audience.</li> <li>● Greet everyone at the door. Give everyone a nametag.</li> <li>● Decide if your target audience needs childcare to attend? Many schools have aftercare programs that will do child care for you. Others use high school students with adult/staff supervision. <u>Some stakeholders are more comfortable if their children are able to stay with them in the meeting or are at least within sight.</u></li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Create an effective communication strategy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use a combination of flyers, RoboCall &amp; Remind 101 calls, and personal outreach.</li> <li>● Make sure your communication conveys to the stakeholder that the engagement is being organized with their needs in mind.</li> <li>● The message should be parent-friendly and in the perspective of the stakeholder. What will the stakeholder get by this engagement?</li> <li>● Use <a href="#"><i>Writing to a Diverse Community</i></a> to help with your written communication.</li> <li>● Personal calls work best. Enlist stakeholder from the target group to help make calls</li> <li>● Motivate students to encourage their stakeholders to attend. For example, some elementary and middle schools provide ice cream to the grade with the most stakeholder in attendance</li> <li>● Remind stakeholders on the day of the meeting. Some elementary schools put stickers on their students to remind stakeholders about the meeting.</li> <li>● Organize carpools. Some target groups are nervous about coming to the meeting on their own. Others simply do not have transportation.</li> </ul>

# Equitable Family Collaboration: Co-Design Circles Method

**Equitable collaboration** in education calls for a centering of family and community voice in a partnership that honors families and community experiences and expertise as persons most proximal to the issue at hand. An equitable approach to family and community engagement requires positioning families as **leaders** and **codesigners** in solutions and decisions to transform schools to better prepare students for college, career, and life. **Co-design circles** are one method to create a context which allows groups to coalesce around shared narratives and stories and then use those commonalities as the driver to set the north star of the work ahead.

Solutions are a balance of a future-orientation without sacrifice to present-day issues within the community. The groups use stories and perspective to develop a design challenge (typically in the form of a question, “**how might we...**”) for which they ideate and design solutions. Co-design should be viewed as a process focused on *building community* rather than enacting a protocol. Participating families must have leadership roles throughout these collaborations. In practice, leadership may take on the form of recruitment, facilitation, and technical/logistical support.

The codesign process used in this toolkit has four parts:<sup>69</sup>

- 1. Build relationships & theorize around shared issues**
- 2. Design and develop tools, practices, processes, and other solutions that push beyond the status quo**
- 3. Enact or pilot these solutions and collect data on what happens**
- 4. Analyze & reflect on what was learned, in order to revise theories and designs**

#### Relationship Build & Theorize

- Identify and invite diverse stakeholders
- Engage in storytelling and perspective-taking
- Create space for inclusive participation
- Attend to inter-personal dynamics that reinforce power and marginalization

#### Design & Develop

- Engage in multimodal (visual, oral, etc.) and creative activities
- Build with/from the stories and practices of participants
- Address potential harm, limitations, and unintended impacts of designs
- Plan for how you will know if your designs are enacting your theories of wellbeing and justice

#### Enact

- Implement or pilot your designs
- Collect metrics that will help you understand learning or growth (notes, recordings, participant reflections, etc.)
- Allow enough time and space for your designs to be fully enacted

#### Analyze and Reflect

- Collectively analyze data and metrics from implementation
- Allow for sense-making and dreaming over time
- Seek systemic (rather than individual) transformation
- Begin a new cycle of re-design while tracking changes
- Celebrate and honor learning and growth

Retrieved from: <https://familydesigncollab.org/co-design/>

<sup>69</sup> Ishimaru, A. M., Rajendran, A., Nolan, C. M., & Bang, M. (2018). Community design circles: Co-designing justice and wellbeing in family-community-research partnerships. *Journal of Family Diversity in Education*, 3(2), 38-63.

In codesign efforts, equity is identified in the *outcome* of the work as well as embedded in the *processes* leading to the outcome. That is to say, in each interaction – whole group and individual – groups must operate with an intentionality to close educational gaps while being mindful to diminish the effects of intragroup power dynamics and deficit mindsets.

Deliberate pre-design protocols and activities are necessary for efficiency and structure; and intentionally designed data catchers, feedback loops, and in-the-moment discoveries are a means to sustain dialogue and consistently center family voice. The dichotomy of *deliberate flexibility* allows for an authentic and equitable design process which responds to the co-design circles’ iterative, collective learning. One way to maintain deliberate flexibility is to plan for it by utilizing a [Before & After Action Review Tool](#).

The outcomes of these design circles will vary depending on group dynamics, interests and preferences, but could include: new traditions, new cultures of educator/family interactions, new relationships, parent education and advocacy programming, designing for action on items from School Improvement Plans (SIPs), etc.

Below is a sample structure of a co-design circle that can be adapted based on school needs:

Session	Date	Description	Goal
<b>Session #1:</b> Coming Together (+ <a href="#">Before Action Review</a> )		Community members and school staff will engage around the purpose and vision for the work ahead. Participants will establish <a href="#">norms</a> <sup>70</sup> , <a href="#">share personal narratives</a> . <sup>71</sup>	To build relationships and establish a space of trust and safety where all voices are heard and valued.
<b>Session #2:</b> Looking in the Mirror		Community members and school staff will reflect on similarities and differences in their personal narratives. Participants will revisit norms and protocols for norm violations making adjustments as needed. Participants will begin developing a list of hopes and dreams for the school.	To highlight members’ interests and hopes for the school.

<sup>70</sup> While shared values and norms are an important first step in creating the conditions for equitable collaboration, without intentional strategies and protocols to acknowledge and interrupt violations against those shared values and norms, groups run the risk of alienating participants and unintentionally reinstating the very inequities for which they endeavor to design a solution.

<sup>71</sup> There are many models/protocols for sharing personal stories. Here is one example using the “River of Life” protocol <https://lovework.sebrands.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/River-of-Life.pdf>. Consider adding a future orientation where participants begin to think about their hopes for the future.

<p><b>Session #3:</b> Design for Action</p>		<p>Community members and school staff will revisit the list of hopes and dreams and begin to prioritize the hopes and dreams list identifying 1-3 priorities to design for action around.</p>	<p>To develop options to improve goals that are important to the group/school. Examples could be: positive transitions, productive culture, or high-rigor academic experience for all members of the school community.</p>
<p><b>Session #4:</b> Plan for Action</p>		<p>Community members and school staff will revisit priority lists and will identify some of the roadblocks by examining the root causes of the issues.</p>	<p>To complete a <a href="#">root cause analysis</a> of priority areas and begin naming policies, practices, systems that stand in the way of progress.</p>
<p><b>Session #5</b> Plan for Action II</p>		<p>Participants will begin brainstorming an answer to the guiding question of “how might we [accomplish the priority]” and develop a plan of action. Participants should highlight their own <a href="#">funds of knowledge</a><sup>72</sup> and social capital resources as well as identify community resources and potential partnerships to move the work forward.</p>	<p>To develop a plan citing specific actions, resources, timelines and persons responsible.</p>
<p><b>Session #6:</b> Prepare to Pilot</p>		<p>Community members and school staff will define measures of success that are important to the group and will identify sources of data, as well as data collection methods. Intention to map out check-in points, benchmarks, and protocols for making adjustments along the way is important.</p>	<p>To organize for learning as the pilot develops and to strategize around potential challenges that may arise in the work.</p>
<p><b>Session #7:</b> Analyze and Reflect (+ <a href="#">After Action Review</a>)</p>		<p>Community members and school staff will take a look back at the co-design work sessions and the impact on the community.</p>	<p>To review successes and challenges as a source of data for ongoing family and community engagement planning and learning.</p>

<sup>72</sup> For an example of how to recognize and organize family funds of knowledge see Funds of Knowledge Toolkit here [https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/migrantbilingual/pubdocs/Funds\\_of\\_Knowledge\\_Toolkit.pdf](https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/migrantbilingual/pubdocs/Funds_of_Knowledge_Toolkit.pdf)

<p><b>Subsequent Sessions</b></p>		<p>Through an on-going &amp; iterative process, community members and school staff will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A) Enact (or pilot) the initiative and collect data on what happens</li> <li>B) Analyze &amp; reflect on what was learned, in order to revise theories and designs</li> </ul>	
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The above highlights a relational approach to engagement, centered on collective and shared leadership and decision-making. This investment of time and resources enhances a foundation of sustained school-family engagement efforts and will offer space to further grow the bedrock of collaboration: trust and relationships among schools and families.

**Sources:**

***The content of this document is largely influenced by the research, practices and writings from the Family Leadership Design Collaborative team.***

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# The APS BRAVE Spaces Program

## Supporting You In Creating an Inclusive & Equitable Learning Environment

The *BRAVE Spaces Program* helps groups develop relationships, awareness, and skills necessary to engage in productive dialogue around challenging issues. The acronym BRAVE stands for:

- B**-uild coalitions across lines of difference.
- R**-ecognize that your truth may be different from others.
- A**-cknowledge the impact that your statements and/or actions may have on others.
- V**-alue vulnerability and extend the grace to grow.
- E**-nthusiastically champion equity.

We provide trained facilitators, curriculum and coaching. We have formats to accommodate Leadership Teams, Professional Learning Communities, Parents and Staff, and Students and Staff.

### The dialogue process helps participants to:

- Build relationships and empathy across racial and cultural differences
- Develop skills to listen to and to discuss a broad range of racial and cultural experiences and perspectives
- Utilize a framework to identify beliefs, practices, and policies that contribute to racial and cultural disparities
- Develop a vision of what equity looks like for the school, office, or community.

**Contact the Office of Equitable Learning Environments (ELE)**

**APS Center for Equity & Social Justice**

**Ext: 2806**

# Supporting School and Office Leadership Teams<sup>74</sup>

In our most recent curriculum and pedagogies audit, 69% of stakeholders expressed a desire for race and racism to be covered in schools, indicating that it is appropriate to be covered with students and amongst staff. Throughout our engagements (Equity TEAs, Design Team Convenings, Etc.) stakeholders expressed a distrust, lack of confidence, or lack of skills to lead their school, department or division for equity. In addition, staff members have expressed that they do not feel comfortable discussing race with their **fellow leaders**. For example:

- In our recent Curriculum & Pedagogies Audit, **38%** of stakeholders expressed that they do not have the skills to lead their staff in conversations about race, and wished that more system-wide support or more consistency existed across the district to engage in discussions around race. System-wide support would also be appreciated in helping to implement promising practices, structure cross-departmental discussion, initiate training, etc.

The BRAVE Spaces Program supports leadership teams to develop the relationships, structures, and confidence necessary to ensure achievement and performance is not predictable by race and that all students are successful in college, career, and life.

Teams that participate in BRAVE Spaces develop the capacity to:

- Engage in uncomfortable conversations about race
- Examine a broad range of perspectives from different stakeholders
- Identify and address practices and policies that have fostered the achievement gap
- Create a culture in which all practices and policies are developed through a racially conscious and culturally proficient lens.

## **Commitment:**

- Schools commit to a year-long program that begins with two full-day retreats and continues with coaching throughout the year.

## **Formats:**

The BRAVE Spaces Program provides different formats to engage students, parents, staff, and leaders. The process is adapted to meet the specific needs of the school or department.

## **Working with Staff:**

Includes a three-day retreat and coaching sessions.

- Outcomes include helping teams develop the relationships and skills necessary to engage in racially conscious conversations and culturally proficient decision making.
- Teams develop strategies to engage the entire school community in eliminating institutional barriers.

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<sup>74</sup> Adapted from the MCPS Equity Initiatives Unit Study Circles Program

## **Working with Students**

### **Student/Staff BRAVE Spaces**

Retreats and convenings to help students, staff, and administrators have meaningful dialogue about barriers to achievement and school climate and culture. Outcomes include:

- Staff gaining a better understanding of the students' experiences and perspectives on race and school climate.
- Students and staff develop new relationships and talk together about how race and culture impact teaching and learning.

## **Partnering with Parents**

### **Equity-Challenge BRAVE Spaces**

These BRAVE Spaces engage parents, staff, and administration. Outcomes include:

- Creating a committee of diverse stakeholders who develop the relationships, skills, and structures necessary to address racial and cultural barriers to achievement, sense of belonging and/or parent engagement.

### **Spanish Language BRAVE Spaces**

These BRAVE Spaces are facilitated in Spanish and interpreted to English. Outcomes include:

- Strengthened relationships between parents and staff
- New Hispanic/Latino parent committees that engage more parents
- Improved cultural awareness and new strategies and policies for school staff.

### **African American Student Achievement BRAVE Spaces**

These BRAVE Spaces facilitate dialogue with African American parents and school staff. Outcomes include:

- Strengthened relationships between parents and staff
- New or stronger parent relationships, advisory councils, and/or engagement
- Improved cultural awareness and new strategies and policies for school staff.

# Frequently Asked Questions For Organizing A School BRAVE Space<sup>75</sup>

## WHAT DOES THE ACRONYM BRAVE REPRESENT

- The acronym BRAVE stands for:
  - **B**-uild coalitions across lines of difference.
  - **R**-ecognize that your truth may be different from others and challenge your thinking.
  - **A**-cknowledge the impact that your statements and/or actions may have on others.
  - **V**-alue vulnerability and extend the grace to grow.
  - **E**-nthusiastically champion equity.

## WHAT IS THE GOAL OF BRAVE SPACES

- The BRAVE Spaces Program supports leadership teams to develop the relationships, structures, and confidence necessary to lead through an equity lens and examine beliefs, practices, and policies to ensure achievement is not predictable by race and all students are successful in college, career, and life.

## HOW DO WE DECIDE IF WE SHOULD ENGAGE IN BRAVE SPACES OR OTHER FORMS OF EQUITY TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

- BRAVE Spaces complement equity training by focusing on developing the team. Once teams have the skills and structures to be able to talk about race and equity, they are ready to get more professional development that continues to build their capacity.

## WHAT ARE THE EXPECTED OUTCOMES?

- Teams that participate in BRAVE Spaces develop the capacity to:
  - Engage in uncomfortable conversations about race
  - Examine a broad range of perspectives from different stakeholders
  - Identify and address practices and policies that have fostered the achievement gap
  - Create a culture in which all practices and policies are developed through a racially conscious lens

## WHAT IS A LEADERSHIP TEAM BRAVE SPACE?

- Leadership team BRAVE Spaces start as a two-day retreat.
- All leadership team members need to be at both sessions for the entire time.
- The work continues with mini retreats through the year led by the Equity Specialist. These dates need to be secured prior to the retreat. The Equity Specialist and School-Based BRAVE Spaces Coordinator will work with the administration to develop a learning progression.

<sup>75</sup> Adapted from the MCPS Equity Initiatives Unit Study Circles Program

## **WHAT DOES THE EQUITY INITIATIVES UNIT PROVIDE?**

Organizing a BRAVE Space is a collaboration between the school and the Office of Equitable Learning Environments (ELE) in the Center for Equity & Social Justice. The ELE department will provide:

- Two trained facilitators
- All dialogue materials and handouts
- A 30 minute information meeting for participating staff
- Funds for substitutes if needed
- Ongoing support to implement ideas that come up in the retreats

## **WHAT IS THE PRINCIPAL'S TIME COMMITMENT?**

- Assign a staff member to coordinate the BRAVE Space program at the school level and communicate with ELE staff
- Meet twice with the ELE staff to plan out the goal and schedule and again after the retreat to plan next steps
- Participates in the information meeting and all sessions of the BRAVE Space convenings.
- Plan a process for supporting and incorporating action steps
- Engage in a debrief activity with members of the facilitation team to review outcomes

## **WHAT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SCHOOL-SITE COORDINATOR?**

- Provide the Equity Specialist with a list of all the participants and select data
- Arrange for meeting space outside of the school and food (breakfast and lunch)
- Coordinate action steps that result from the BRAVE Space program at the school level.

# Protocol for Navigating BRAVE Conversations

## Brave Conversations: Determining the Why, How, and When to Enhance Transparency, Understanding, and Support

### Brave Conversations Defined

Brave and courageous conversations are important! As the world that we live in becomes more automated, highly virtual, and often contains fewer face to face interactions we are challenged to evaluate strategies that we use to relate to others.

Brave conversations can be defined as discussions that are planned to address differing perspectives, or to develop a shared understanding around a challenging topic, or series of events.

These conversations may center around topics that individuals would otherwise like to avoid, or topics that are viewed as sources of stress or conflict. However, these conversations are often needed to build transparency and clarity. Addressing brave conversations skillfully and with intention can lead to improved trust and communication. Examples of brave conversations include:

Dialogue with a colleague who may have a different point of view than your own

Discussions with an employee, parent, or stakeholder who may appear frustrated or angry

Conversations regarding sensitive topics or subjects that may be unfamiliar to you

Critiquing or providing feedback to a colleague about their work or performance on a task

## Defining the Dilemma: Why Some Conversations Require Courage and Bravery?

When planning to have a brave conversation it is important to consider the reasons or circumstances that have created the perceived or actual problem. There are many root causes to challenging circumstances that may arise between people and having an opportunity for reflection can set the stage for productive dialogue and improved understanding.

Brave conversations require participants to be open and honest about their thoughts, feelings, experiences, and opinions. In many circumstances, participants are afraid of offending others, appearing upset, or sounding uninformed in conversations around potentially contentious topics. It is through sharing honest and heartfelt sentiments, whether or not the participant believes they will be accepted by the group, that participants can begin to transform themselves and help others to engage with new perspectives.

Challenging conversations may often be attributed to:

### Historical Challenges

- Two individuals have a history of unresolved conflict
- A lack of clarity from a prior situation impacts present circumstances
- Historical or present inequities, injustices, or oppression related to race, class, gender, ability, religion, sexuality, etc.

### Strong Emotions

- Feelings and reactions to a prior conversation or incident result in one or both parties developing feelings of sadness, anger, or frustration

### Potential Consequences

- Fear of consequences from prior conduct or a lack of action may lead to the need for confronting an issue
- Fear of being labeled prejudice or racist
- A desire to avoid feelings of guilt, shame, or blame

### Wider Conflict

- Larger scale departmental or community concerns may result in a lack of agreement between individuals or groups

### Relationships

- Challenges arising from communication, expectation setting and feedback in supervisor-employee relationships; colleague to colleague relationships; or teacher or parent/student relationships
- Challenges in relationships between dominant groups and historically disenfranchised communities.

## **Preparing for Brave Conversations: Self-Assessment and Framing**

Prior to engaging in a brave conversation preparation is needed. There are questions for reflection that can assist in considering the objectives and potential outcome of the conversation. Before planning a brave conversation, it will be helpful to ask the following:

- What is the purpose for having the conversation?
- What is the ideal outcome for the discussion?
- What will be accomplished by engaging in the dialogue?

Understanding the purpose and objectives for a brave conversation allows the parties to enter the discussion with a clear end goal in mind. Establishing an ideal outcome can enhance solution-focused problem solving and can lessen the likelihood of conflict or continued miscommunication.

## **Scheduling a Brave Conversation: Timing is Important!**

Timing of a brave conversation can be critical to a successful outcome. Be certain that the conversation is planned and that the other individuals or the group is aware that the conversation will take place. It is important that all parties to the conversation feel comfortable with the timing and location of the discussion. Consider the following points to ensure that timing of the conversation is optimal:

- Self-reflect on these questions:
  - Why is it important to have this conversation now?
  - Is the timing of this conversation appropriate?
  - Will the location of this conversation allow for privacy if needed, and create an atmosphere for open and candid dialogue?
  - What assumptions are you making about the other person?
  - What is required of you to remain open and willing to shift your own mindset during the course of the conversation?
- Take a proactive approach to scheduling the conversation. Do not delay scheduling the discussion to ensure that all parties are able to recall the circumstance at the center of the planned conversation.
- Inform the other party of the planned discussion in advance to allow for proper scheduling and preparation.
- Schedule the meeting in a place that is private and free from interruptions. Utilize meeting rooms that allow for a neutral setting rather than a space used as the primary office or classroom of either party.
- Avoid sitting behind a desk and creating an automatic barrier, or a power-dynamic that creates a sense of hierarchy.
- Schedule the conversation at the end of the day, if possible, to minimize distractions and to create time for reflection.
- Expect to experience some level of discomfort. If a feeling of discomfort does arise, notice it, and avoid disengaging from the conversation at hand.
- Speak truthfully about your feelings, opinions, and experiences
- Anticipate and accept a lack of closure. While there may be a desire for closure, brave conversations around difficult topics may not always result in immediate resolution. Participants should accept that brave conversations are ongoing.

## Inviting Dialogue: Strategies and Steps for Initiating Discussion

Setting the tone and inviting friendly dialogue establishes a platform of success for brave conversations. The ability of individuals to communicate with transparency is greater if an environment supports psychological safety and candor. The following strategies may be used to facilitate dialogue when initiating a brave conversation.

- Thank the other party for meeting; it is essential to show respect and remain professional.
- Share introductions (role, job responsibilities, and relationship to the circumstance), if needed.
- Set norms for the discussion if it is a whole-group discussion related to historical topics of inequity like race, gender, sexuality, etc. Use our [BRAVE Discussion Norms](#) to assist you.
- Briefly explain:
  - Why the discussion is taking place
  - The circumstances that led to the discussion
  - The impact of the situation being discussed
- Frame the objective of the meeting through a simple 1–2-minute statement.
- Use clear and straightforward language so that there is no ambiguity e.g. “I would like to take this opportunity to discuss...”
- After the objectives for the meeting have been shared, and the issues have been described, it is important to invite discussion with the other party.

## Guiding the Conversation: The Art of Asking Questions and Making Impactful Statements

The questions posed during a brave conversation are often the keys for successful dialogue and resolution of conflict. Parties to challenging conversations should be mindful of ensuring that questions are posed in a manner that does not create defensiveness or heighten frustration. Suggestions for question asking and potential question starters include:

- Avoid ‘why’ questions as they can be confrontational and close the discussion down.
- It is critical to focus on the future and moving forward. Avoid keeping the conversation centered on the past.
- Potential questions include:

## Potential Questions to use During a Brave Conversation

Dialogue with a colleague who may have a different point than your own.	Discussion with a parent, employee, or stakeholder who may appear frustrated or angry.	Conversations regarding sensitive topics or subject that you may be unfamiliar with.	Critiquing or providing feedback to a colleague about their work or performance on a task.
<p>Do you feel that we both have the full picture of what occurred?</p> <p>How do you view the situation that brought us here today?</p> <p>Do you mind if I explain why I see this situation differently than you?</p>	<p>How can we each work together to support our needs for resolving this matter?</p> <p>What would you like to happen as we work to resolve this situation?</p> <p>Do you think we are setting realistic expectations to resolve this issue?</p>	<p>I need your help with what just happened. Do you have a few minutes to talk? (Schedule a time in the future if the immediate moment is inconvenient)</p> <p>What is your level of comfort around discussing this topic?</p> <p>How did you first become aware of the role of your own identity (race, gender, sexuality) and its impact on your life?</p>	<p>Do you think there are other reasons that we should consider for why we are here today?</p> <p>What steps can we take to move forward?</p> <p>Is there anything that would prevent this in the future?</p>

- Statements to guide the conversation include:
  - I think we have different perceptions about \_\_\_\_\_, I'd like to hear your thoughts about this.
  - I'd like to talk about \_\_\_\_\_. I think we may have different ideas about how to approach \_\_\_\_\_ (describe the circumstance).
  - I have something that I would like to discuss with you that I think will help us to work together/collaborate more effectively.

## **Point of View and Resolution: Considerations for a Successful Outcome**

Resolving a challenging circumstance is the central objective of most brave conversations. Individuals do not generally wish to remain frustrated, confused, or isolated from positive outcomes and environments. The following steps are strategies for approaching brave conversation with the goal of finding resolution.

### **Centering: Creating the Discussion Environment**

Approach the environment in which the discussion will take place by maintaining a sense of calmness and professional presence. Use deep breathing techniques if needed to calm your thoughts. Be mindful of your tone and volume of voice. Be willing to share with the other party that you are hoping to find resolution through the conversation.

When discussing matters related to inequity or injustice, it may be helpful to implement our district's [BRAVE Discussion and Centering Protocols](#).

### **Inquiry: Allow Curiosity to Guide the Conversation**

Enter the discussion with the goal of gaining a better understanding of the other party's perspective. Seek to ask questions for clarity, rather than declaring your position as absolute fact. Focus attention on listening rather than ensuring that your points are expressed.

### **Acknowledgement: Acceptance and Understanding**

Take time to view the challenging situation from the point of view of the other part. Focus on their statements and the reasons shared for the evolution of the situation. Use statements to affirm your understanding of what the other party is sharing. Use eye contact and body language as tools to reflect a willingness to being open for continued discussion.

### **Advocacy: Sharing Perspectives to Advance Dialogue**

Be open to listening to the perspective shared by the other party and then using the information shared to further clarifying your point. Gauge the conversation by restating your points and perspective, while also allowing the other party to make clarifying points. Recognize that the conflict resolution does not require a right or wrong side, or a winner or losing party in order to be effective.

### **Problem-Solving**

Assume that all parties are coming to the conversation with the goal of finding a solution and improving communication. Focus on action steps that can be taken by all parties in the future to communicate clear and direct expectations. Highlight the positive aspects of the brave conversation before determining the actual solutions. Thank the other party for their willingness to be part of the attempt to resolve the matter.



# District Resources for Assisting with BRAVE Conversations

## Atlanta Public Schools Office of the Organizational Ombuds

Website: <https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/Page/66263>

Deirdre Lynch Smith, Organizational Ombuds

Telephone: 404-802-2745

Email: [deirdre.smith@atlanta.k12.ga.us](mailto:deirdre.smith@atlanta.k12.ga.us)

## Atlanta Public Schools Center for Equity and Social Justice

Website: <https://www.atlantapublicschools.us/domain/16279>

## Atlanta Public Schools Office of Employee Well-Being

<https://sites.google.com/apsk12.org/apsstaffwell-being/home>

Phaedra Brown, LPC, Employee Assistance Counselor

Telephone: 404-802-2368

Email: [phaedra.brown@atlanta.k12.ga.us](mailto:phaedra.brown@atlanta.k12.ga.us)

## Reading Recommendations

[Reynolds, Marcia, \*The Discomfort Zone: How Leaders Turn Difficult Conversations Into Breakthroughs\*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2014.](#)

[Stone, et. al, \*Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matter Most\*, Penguin Books, 2010.](#)

[Courageous Conversations: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools, Corwin Publishers, 2014](#)

[APS Guidelines for Teaching Controversial Issues](#)

[APS District Brave Conversations Norms and Protocols](#)

## Brave Discussion Norms

### Be a positive and polite participant

- Be present, prepared, & engaged
- Remember the One Mic Rule: One person speaks at a time.
- Respect all perspectives. Differences of opinion are a fundamental part of the process.
- Reserve judgment. Remember that thoughts, ideas, and opinions should not be used as a motive for personal attack

### Be an active listener

- Sit in discomfort. Allow yourself to be comfortable with discomfort, to sit through difficult feelings sometimes without feeling the need to rail against them.
- Listen first to understand and be curious about intention. Ask clarifying questions to better understand. Ask others for definitions, evidence, examples, and reasons.
- Stay focused on the topic & purpose of the discussion
- Practice equity of voice. Remember the Rule of Two: Allow two others to chime in before jumping back in.

### Be a reflective learner

- Ground statements in evidence or explain rationale.
- Challenge your thinking, assumptions, and perceived ideas. Practice being open-minded and reserve the right to change your mind.
- Expect and accept Non-Closure. Sit with uncertainty and do not rush to quick conclusions or solutions.
- Speak your truth. Meaning be honest about your thoughts, feelings, and opinions. Ground your comments in “I” statements.

## Brave Discussion Protocol

To achieve equity and social justice, we must embrace life-long learning. We must also commit to unlearning the patterns, ways of working, and thinking that uphold systemic inequities. We must also recognize that social justice is both a process and a goal. The process requires us to remain reflective, critical, and intentional in our words and actions. The goal is to be BRAVE and create BRAVE Spaces.

**This tool and protocol will support us in developing BRAVE spaces in complement with our Equity Dispositions. A BRAVE space is one that calls us to:**

- B**-uild coalitions across lines of difference. Engage diverse voices and viewpoints. Build your equity lens by paying disciplined attention to the experiences and perspectives of historically marginalized populations.
- R**-eserve judgment, recognize that your truth may be different from others, challenge your thinking, ideas and assumptions, and ask questions about intent.
- A**-cknowledge the impact that your statements and/or actions may have on others. Lean into the discomfort this work creates, trust the process, and accept non-closure.
- V**-alue vulnerability, empathize with the diverse experience and perspective of others, and extend the grace to grow.
- E**-nthusiastically champion equity, celebrate success, and continuously reflect on opportunities for growth.

Being BRAVE encourages and allows us to engage in critical dialogue. Maintaining a BRAVE space requires that each person is self-reflective, self-accountable, willing to learn, and open to new understandings.

The following is a protocol that will allow you to engage in brave, courageous or controversial conversations in a way that produces meaningful dialogue and that maintains the dignity and humanity of all those involved.

# Brave Centering Protocol

Reflection questions to ask yourself during an engagement or discussion that requires you to be **BRAVE**.

This protocol should be used in concert with the [BRAVE Discussion Framework](#) and the [BRAVE Discussion Norms](#).

## Step 1:

- Is there an aspect(s) of the *BRAVE Discussion Norms* that is challenging you at this moment?

Allow yourself the space to acknowledge your disposition and emotions at the moment.

## Step 2:

- Is there an aspect of the *BRAVE Discussion Framework* that can counter the challenge(s) you are feeling at this moment?

Or

- Is there an aspect of the *BRAVE Discussion Framework* that resonates with you at this moment?

Select a key phrase from the *BRAVE Discussion Framework* and repeat it twice. The first time is to acknowledge your disposition. The second time is to ground yourself.

Use this affirmation to center yourself and anchor the comments you will share moving forward in this affirmation.

## Step 3:

Repeat Step 1 and Step 2 as needed throughout the discussion

Feel free to center on as many aspects of the *BRAVE Framework* as needed.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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