TOOLKIT: SYSTEMIC IMPLEMENTATION OF EQUITY

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HANOVER RESEARCH

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INTRODUCTION

This toolkit is intended to support district leaders and equity committee members in guiding initial conversations around equity and supporting the district's first steps in prioritizing equity across the district. This toolkit includes guiding questions for initial critical conversations about systemwide equity and profiles districts that have successfully implemented these strategies with fidelity. In the development of this toolkit, Hanover reviewed the current literature on best practices, practical recommendations, and actionable strategies of systemwide equity integration. This toolkit:

✓ Presents an overview of common definitions of equity;

✓ Provides strategies that district leaders can implement as they introduce an equity mindset across the district and start aligning decision-making with equity goals; and

✓ Includes tools, resources, and guiding questions to support district leaders in implementing and integrating an equity mindset systematically.

UNDERSTAND EQUITY

This section provides an overview of common definitions, types, and components of equity.

Define Equity

Districts achieve educational equity when they provide all students with the resources and conditions necessary to realize academic excellence across all valued indicators of success.[1] Notably, equity differs from *equality* in that equity is "achieved when all students receive the resources they need so they graduate prepared for success after high school."[2] Equality, on the other hand, is "achieved when students are all treated the same and have access to similar resources."[3] The Education Writers Association provides a concrete analogy to understand equity and equality:[4]

> Consider how a loaf of bread might be divided among six people: If the guiding principle was equality, each person would get a slice that was the same size. But if the goal was equity, the loaf would be divided based on each person's individual needs and what would be best for the group as a whole.

Further, educational equity involves access, process, and outcomes. All students must have access to supports and resources to help them achieve their academic goals. Processes at the school and district level should also be appropriate, fair, and move beyond simply treating all students the same way. Finally, all students should be "provided educational experiences that ensure the achievement of certain uniform goals and objectives."[5] For example, if a district's goals include preparing all students for college and career, the district should ensure that all students receive the *supports they need* to meet that goal rather than just providing all students with identical supports and resources.[6]

These and comparable definitions are promoted across a wide array of organizations and collectives affiliated with primary and secondary education. Yet, more importantly, leaders of education policy and practice emphasize the importance of ensuring equity as it applies to *all students with different identities*. According to the National School Boards Association (NSBA), for instance, public school districts must "ensure that all students have the knowledge and skills to succeed as contributing members of a rapidly changing, global society, regardless of factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic background, English proficiency, immigration status, socioeconomic status, or disability."[7] Given these objectives, policies defining equity for the educational success of all students must recognize the meaning of *student diversity*. The NSBA writes:[8]

> Diversity is a multidimensional, broadly inclusive concept that acknowledges and embraces the richness of human differences. Attention to diversity is part and parcel of any meaningful conversation about improving the educational experience and outcomes for all students.

Subsequently, the NSBA encourages school boards to clearly define diversity and the various identities it encompasses. Accordingly, district policies typically include the following when outlining diversity and practices for equity: race, ethnicity, sex, socio-economic status, neighborhood, language status, special education needs, academic performance and potential, record of achievement, community or civic engagement or interest. Of course, the inclusion of student identities into a district's definition of diversity should remain flexible and responsive to the student population and key priorities for future goals.[9] Notably, students may face multiple compounded inequities. Figure 1.1 on the following page presents examples of ways in which existing inequities—such as socioeconomic, cultural, or linguistic inequities—may influence educational performance.

Figure 1.1: Existing Inequities and Their Effect on Public Education

SOCIETAL INEQUITY

Minority students may be disadvantaged by preexisting bias and prejudice in American society, with both conscious and unconscious discrimination surfacing in public schools in ways that adversely affect learning acquisition, academic achievement, educational aspirations, and post-graduation opportunities. While not always the case, inequity in education is most commonly associated with groups that have suffered from discrimination related to their race, ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, class, gender, sexual orientation, or disabilities.

SOCIOECONOMIC INEQUITY

Evidence suggests that students from lower-income households, on average, underperform academically in relation to their wealthier peers, and they also tend to have lower educational aspirations and enroll in college at lower rates (in part due to financial considerations). In addition, schools in poorer communities, such as those in rural or disadvantaged urban areas, often have comparatively fewer resources and less funding, which can lead to fewer teachers and educational opportunities as well as outdated or dilapidated school facilities.

CULTURAL INEQUITY

Students from diverse cultural backgrounds may be disadvantaged in a variety of ways when pursuing their education. For example, recently arrived immigrant and refugee students and their families may have difficulties navigating the public-education system or making educational choices that are in their best interests. In addition, these students may struggle in school because they are unfamiliar with American customs, social expectations, slang, and cultural references.

FAMILIAL INEQUITY

Students may be disadvantaged in their education due to their personal and familial circumstances. For example, some students may live in dysfunctional or abusive households, or they may receive comparatively little educational support or encouragement from their parents (even when the parents want their children to succeed in school). In addition, evidence suggests that students whose parents have not earned a high school or college degree may, on average, underperform academically in relation to their peers, and they may also enroll in and complete postsecondary programs at lower rates. Familial inequities may also intersect with cultural and socioeconomic inequities. For example, poor parents may not be able to invest in supplemental educational resources and learning opportunities—from summer programs to test-preparation services—or they may not be able to pay the same amount of attention to their children's education as more affluent parents—perhaps because they have multiple jobs, for example.

PROGRAMMATIC INEQUITY

School programs may be structured in ways that are perceived to be unfair because they contribute to inequitable or unequal educational results for some students. For example, students of color tend, on average, to be disproportionately represented in lower-level classes with lower academic expectations (and possibly lower-quality teaching), which can give rise to achievement gaps or "cycles of low expectation" in which stereotypes about the academic performance of minorities are reinforced and perpetuated because they are held to lower academic standards or taught less than peers.

STAFFING INEQUITY

Wealthier schools located in more desirable communities may be able to hire more teachers and staff, while also providing better compensation that attracts more experienced and skilled teachers. Students attending these schools will likely receive a better-quality education, on average, while students who attend schools in less-desirable communities, with fewer or less-skilled teachers, will likely be at an educational disadvantage. Staffing situations in schools may also be inequitable in a wide variety of ways. In addition to potential inequities in employment—e.g., minorities being discriminated against during the hiring process, female educators not being promoted to administrative positions at the same rates as their male colleagues—students may be disadvantaged by a lack of diversity among teaching staff. For example, students of color may not have educators of color as role models, students may not be exposed to a greater diversity of cultural perspectives and experiences, or the content taught in a school may be culturally limited or biased—e.g., history being taught from an exclusively Eurocentric point of view that neglects to address the perspectives and suffering of colonized countries or enslaved peoples.

INSTRUCTIONAL INEQUITY

Students may be enrolled in courses taught by less-skilled teachers, who may teach in a comparatively uninteresting or ineffective manner, or in courses in which significantly less content is taught. Students may also be subject to conscious or unconscious favoritism, bias, or prejudice by some teachers, or the way in which instruction is delivered may not work as well for some students as it does for others.

ASSESSMENT INEQUITY

Students may be disadvantaged when taking tests or completing other types of assessments due to the design, content, or language choices, or because they have learning disabilities or physical disabilities that may impair their performance. In addition, situational factors may adversely affect test performance. For example, lower-income students who attend schools that do not regularly use computers may be disadvantaged—compared to wealthier students with more access to technology at home or students who use computers regularly in school—when taking tests that are administered on computers and that require basic computer literacy.

LINGUISTIC INEQUITY

Non-English-speaking students, or students who are not yet proficient in English, may be disadvantaged in English-only classrooms or when taking tests and assessments presented in English. In addition, these students may also be disadvantaged if they are enrolled in separate academic programs, held to lower academic expectations, or receive lower-quality instruction because of their language abilities.

Source: Glossary of Education Reform[10]

Understand the Components of Equity

The California Department of Education (CDE) lists four dimensions of equity that districts should address to implement equity systematically. These dimensions are resource distribution, education programs, school climate, and achievement;[11] each of these dimensions overlaps with guidelines promoted by the National Education Policy Center (NEPC) for measuring school quality and inclusivity.[12]

RESOURCE DISTRIBUTION

According to the CDE, resource equity "addresses the distribution of, and access to, high-quality administrators, teachers, and other school personnel; funding; high-quality materials and equipment; technology; facilities; and community resources or partnerships."[13] Fair access to resources in the classroom and effective educators is crucial to ensuring that each student has the opportunity to succeed academically. Districts should outline how resources related to basic district goals, general school administration practices, financial management, support services, and personnel will be made available to all students, particularly given their specific needs.[14]

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Across the nation, students of color and low-income students overwhelmingly face social disadvantages that pose challenges to their education, especially in comparison with their more privileged peers.[15] Socially disadvantaged students often have less access to educational resources and are concentrated in less rigorous courses with poorer instruction regardless of academic ability. This disparity causes students to remain segregated within schools as they advance in their educational pathways and reproduces inequalities based on social background.[16] Indeed, gaps in academic achievement and graduation rates continue to persist across race and income because of these inequalities.[17]

To address these gaps, districts may outline policies for programmatic equity, defined as "the policies and practices that lead to student participation in curricular and extracurricular courses, programs, or other activities, as policies and practices relate to student selection, enrollment, support, assessment, and completion."[18] It is critical that schools and districts articulate policy goals and strategies for eliminating disproportionate and unequal access to programs, high-level curricula, and other educational services.[19]

Policies should also outline how families will be provided with opportunities for meaningful engagement with education programs, their development, and implementation.[20]

School Climate

School climate, including student-student and educator-student relationships, is important for building supportive environments and enhancing students' learning outcomes.[21] "One of the fundamentally important dimensions of school climate is relational and involves how 'connected' people feel to one another in school," write Jonathan Cohen and his coauthors in a review of research on school climate.[22] On the whole, studies show that students learning in positive, engaging, and safe school climates are more likely to experience increased academic engagement and motivation, better socio-emotional health, improved academic outcomes, and a decline in riskier behaviors.[23] Given the connections between climate and students' well-being, it is important that schools and districts articulate an equitable approach to creating and sustaining positive learning environments. Overall, "School climate equity addresses student engagement, academic and other supports for students, and safety," writes the CDE, and "[…] Effective school leaders ensure that every student enjoys a schooling experience that is conducive to learning and thriving, with school leaders providing everything students need in order to achieve academically."[24]

Achievement

In addition to the above dimensions for policy equity, schools and districts must emphasize equitable instructional practices and access to supports with the aim of achieving high academic outcomes across different student groups. "Achievement equity addresses the academic outcomes and performance of all students on all indicators" in which policy outlines inclusive strategies for meeting the diverse needs of all students.[25] As such, districts should determine barriers students may face to academic achievement, the seriousness with which the district aims to eliminate those barriers, and how the school or district proposes to measure progress towards equity in academic achievement and the reduction of achievement gaps.[26]

🗒 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Why Equity Matters in Education** is a video from Education Northwest that describes how equitable practices promote student outcomes.

- **Ensuring Educational Equity for All Students** is a video from The Leadership Conferences that describes the importance of equitable educational practices in preparing students for college and career.
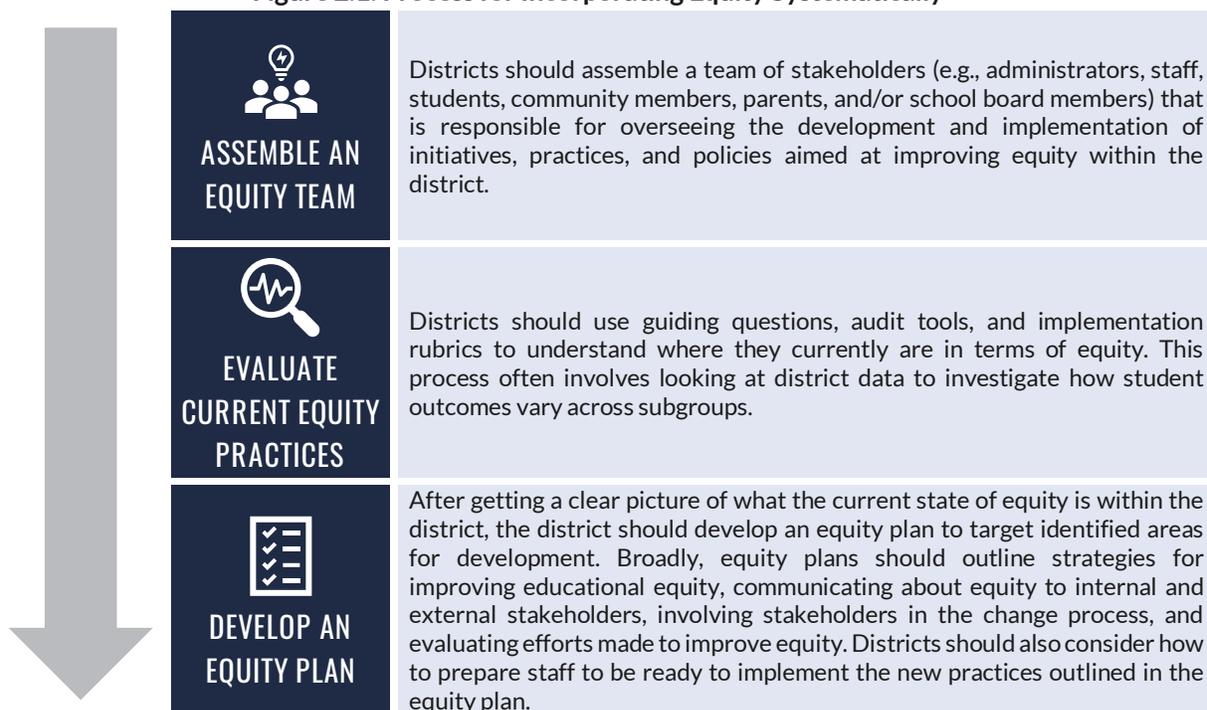
INCORPORATE EQUITY SYSTEMICALLY

This section provides strategies district leaders can implement as they introduce an equity mindset across the district and start aligning decision-making with equity goals. Further, this section includes tools, resources, and guiding questions to support district leaders in implementing and integrating an equity mindset systemically.

The process of implementing equity systemically and sustainably across a district involves effective leadership, a safe and supportive environment, family and community engagement, effective educators, and student access and opportunity. Districts must develop systems that allow the individuals involved in each of these elements to work together to produce systemic change related to equity.[27] Further, the process of systemic change in a district involves the following broad steps:[28]

- Assessing the readiness and capacity of individuals tasked with leading the systemic change effort;
- Assembling a leadership team to lead the systemic change effort;
- Involving other critical stakeholders;
- Developing a new system or structure to meet the goals of the systemic change effort; and
- Implementing the new system or structure and revising as necessary.

Figure 2.1 presents Hanover's proposed organizational process for incorporating equity systematically across a district. This process encompasses many of the above-mentioned elements and procedures for systematic change. More specifically, districts should begin by assembling an equity team to oversee equity-related initiatives, practices, and policies. Districts should then evaluate their current equity policies and practices, taking stock of their current state and areas for improvement. Upon completing this audit of current policies and practices, districts can then develop an equity plan that targets the areas for improvement.

Figure 2.1: Process for Incorporating Equity Systematically

ASSEMBLE AN EQUITY TEAM	Districts should assemble a team of stakeholders (e.g., administrators, staff, students, community members, parents, and/or school board members) that is responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of initiatives, practices, and policies aimed at improving equity within the district.
EVALUATE CURRENT EQUITY PRACTICES	Districts should use guiding questions, audit tools, and implementation rubrics to understand where they currently are in terms of equity. This process often involves looking at district data to investigate how student outcomes vary across subgroups.
DEVELOP AN EQUITY PLAN	After getting a clear picture of what the current state of equity is within the district, the district should develop an equity plan to target identified areas for development. Broadly, equity plans should outline strategies for improving educational equity, communicating about equity to internal and external stakeholders, involving stakeholders in the change process, and evaluating efforts made to improve equity. Districts should also consider how to prepare staff to be ready to implement the new practices outlined in the equity plan.

Source: Hanover's synthesis of sources included in this report.

Assemble an Equity Team

Districts should assemble an equity team to oversee the development and implementation of practices and policies designed to improve equity within the district. Equity teams are groups of engaged and committed stakeholders who "collaborate around equity issues, potential equity issues, or proactive ways to engage stakeholders about future challenges arising from inequities."[29] Equity teams function to:[30]

- Eliminate inequities and disparities in student achievement;
- Foster a safe and healthy school climate;
- Promote an inclusive culture that engages and draws on the assets of students, families, staff, and community members;
- Foster leadership development; and
- Encourage conversations about equity and social justice.

The Oregon Leadership Network at Education Northwest developed the **Equity Leadership Team Protocol**, presented below, for districts to reference when forming an equity team and supporting their functions. The protocol consists of five steps: getting started, selecting team members, structuring the team, setting the focus, and leading for equity.[31]

📄	Equity Leadership Team Protocol

Description: By following this protocol, districts can form effective and collaborative teams of stakeholders whose central aim is to further the efforts of improving equity in schools. Once the group is formed and functioning, the equity team can begin tackling projects such as equity evaluation, equity planning, and proposing an equity policy.

1. GETTING STARTED

To successfully launch an Equity Leadership Team, organizers should take the following steps:
- Gain administrative support;
- Secure necessary resources (time for staff to meet, meeting location, refreshments);
- Access possible assistance needed (OLN, neighboring district, consultants);
- Actively recruit members (consider diversity, role group, advocates);
- Focus first on team development (identifying the appropriate people to serve on the team);
- Develop agreements, protocols, and/or norms;
- Develop a plan for learning, actions, and accountability;
- Focus on changing some practices, structures, or systems; and
- Celebrate early successes.

2. SELECTING TEAM MEMBERS

- Team members may include administrators, certified staff, classified staff, students, parents, community members, or school board members.
- Members should reflect the race/ethnicity and national origin diversity of the community; represent perspectives based on gender and differing ability levels; and be inclusive of a broad socio-economic range.
- All participants should have a relationship with or some connection to the school community.

3. STRUCTURING THE TEAM

Guidelines for structuring the equity team include:

- There is a clear unity of purpose;
- The group is self-conscious about its own operations;
- The group has set clear and demanding performance goals;
- The atmosphere tends to be informal, comfortable, relaxed;
- There is a lot of discussion in which virtually everyone participates;

- People are free to express their feelings, as well as their ideas;
- There is disagreement, which is viewed as healthy;
- Most decisions are made at a point where there is general agreement;
- Each individual carries his or her own weight;
- Criticism is frequent, frank, and relatively comfortable; and
- The leadership of the group shifts from time to time.

4. SETTING THE FOCUS

There are ten high-leverage equitable practices that can guide the team's initial conversations:

- Engaging in self-reflection and growth for equity;
- Developing organizational leadership for equity;
- Constructing and enacting an equity vision;
- Supervising for improvement of equitable teaching and learning;
- Fostering an equitable school culture;
- Collaborating with families and communities;
- Influencing the sociopolitical context;
- Allocating resources;
- Hiring and placing personnel; and
- Modeling ethical and equitable behavior.

5. LEADING FOR EQUITY

Developing leadership for equity is foundational. Shared leadership is key and requires creating multiple opportunities for leadership among team members, staff, students, families, and community members. Potential leaders are vital members in terms of decision-making and change. When choosing a facilitator for the team, there are pros and cons in selecting district leaders to serve in that role:

Pros:
- ✓ May have respect and trust among team members;
- ✓ May have strong facilitation skills;
- ✓ May lead with cultural humility; and
- ✓ May have a strong sense of urgency.

Cons:
- ✖ May not embrace the need for adaptive change;
- ✖ May not have facilitation skills;
- ✖ May not have a sense of urgency; and
- ✖ May need to be a learner/supporter and not leaders of the work.

Choosing co-facilitators who represent different perspectives can reflect the inclusive nature of an Equity Leadership Team.

Source: Education Northwest[32]

💡 DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT: CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG SCHOOLS (NC)

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) in North Carolina recently decided to create a Community Equity Committee to support its ongoing equity initiatives. The committee includes parents, students, and representatives from local educational, faith, and community organizations. These stakeholders are charged with "[reviewing] and [discussing] CMS data and programs in order to monitor progress toward equity."[33] The idea is that the committee will serve as "thought partners in and community advocates for equity," and will provide input on the district's future equity efforts.[34]

DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT: CHANDLER UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT (AZ)

Chandler Unified School District (Chandler USD) in Arizona hired a Director of Equity and Inclusion to lead the district's equity initiative, called the Deep Equity Initiative.[35] The district is focused on improving equity in academics and discipline. The newly hired Director stated three areas in which the district needed to focus to improve its equity:[36]

- Teachers need to reflect on their implicit biases and beliefs about people of different backgrounds;
- The district needs to review its policies and practices to see how its disciplinary practices might be inequitable and identify how it could strive for more objective discipline; and
- The district needs to review its curriculum and instruction to identify areas in which the district could offer more equitable instruction.

The Director of Equity and Inclusion plans to create an equity advisory board to lead the implementation and evaluation of initiatives around these three areas. Further, each school in the district has an equity team that will be trained on recognizing implicit biases and fostering educational equity. The Director of Equity and Inclusion would also like to "start a film and lecture series about diversity and equity" and develop "an annual equity institute for teachers and the public."[37]

Evaluate Current Equity Practices

Reflect Using Guiding Questions

An equity lens or equity-focused guiding questions may assist districts in making decisions that support equitable outcomes. For instance, districts may consider how a policy or practice affects student sub-groups and whether a policy or practice might have any unintended negative consequences.[38] District leaders can use the **Guiding Questions on Educational Equity**, presented below, to reflect on their current understanding and conceptualization of equity and equity work in the district.

Guiding Questions on Educational Equity

Description: District leaders can use these guiding questions to facilitate a discussion or individual reflection.

- ➢ What is our current reality?
- ➢ What can we do differently?
- ➢ Where is equity work reflected in our curriculum, instruction, and assessment work? If equity work is not reflected in our curriculum, instruction, and assessment, how are these being affected by the lack of equity work?
- ➢ How does our equity work align with our cycle of continuous improvement?
- ➢ What are our motives for doing equity work? Are we here to "save" students from their deficits? Or, are we here to provide access to educational opportunities that allow students to maintain their individual identities?

Source: Colorado Department of Education[39]

Similarly, district leaders can use the **Equity-Focused Guiding Questions**, presented below, to facilitate their development of an equity lens.

Equity-Focused Guiding Questions

<u>Description</u>: District leaders can use these guiding questions to facilitate a discussion or individual reflection. District leaders should look at district- and school-level data when reflecting on these questions.

PERFORMANCE	➢ What is our performance by school and by student group?
FUNDING	➢ Do all schools have adequate funding? Do funds flow to schools according to need?
CURRICULUM	➢ Do we provide a high-level curriculum in all schools? ➢ Do we offer AP courses and is access open to all? Do our high schools offer course sequences in high-level mathematics from Algebra I to Calculus and in science from Biology to Physics? ➢ Do we provide extra supports to struggling students and have policies in place to make sure they get the benefit of these supports?
STAFF	➢ What are the qualifications of our teaching staff? ➢ Is teacher quality distributed equitably among schools as well as within the school building? ➢ Do all student groups have fair access to the best teachers? ➢ Are teachers well-supported? Do we reward teachers who serve the neediest students?
DISCIPLINE	➢ How do our overall discipline rates compare to other districts? Do we suspend students more often than others? ➢ Are discipline rates similar for all student groups? ➢ Do we have enough school counselors and trained mentors to support students and work in partnership with families?
EVALUATION	➢ Do we monitor our progress? Do we make adjustments when needed? ➢ Are all of our students learning, engaged and on track to graduate college- and career-ready?

Source: Center for Public Education[40]

The Education Development Center (EDC) recommends that districts consider interrelated elements of equity when assessing the current state of equity in a district. Such elements include achievement status, educational opportunities, social-emotional supports, and climate and culture. The EDC provides **Guiding Questions on Interrelated Elements or Indicators of Equity**, presented on the following page, to help districts think through these factors.

Guiding Questions on Interrelated Elements/Indicators of Equity

Description: District leaders can use these guiding questions to facilitate a discussion or individual reflection on the interrelated elements or indicators or equity. District leaders should look at district- and school-level data when reflecting on these questions. The EDC recommends that districts obtain data from district data systems, surveys, focus groups, interviews, and classroom observations.

ACHIEVEMENT STATUS

- How are students performing?
- 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, and which students participate in them?
- What are the teaching and learning conditions?

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORTS

- How is school discipline implemented?
- What social-emotional supports exist for students and who has access to them?
- What policies and practices are in place to address historical and social inequities?

CLIMATE AND CULTURE

- What is the culture of the school and district?
- What practices are in place to support engagement among multiple stakeholders (students, teachers, administrators, families, community members)?

Source: Education Development Center[41]

As a practical example, Washoe County School District in Nevada uses the **Equity Lens Questions**, presented below, to apply an equity lens to its decision making.

Washoe County School District's Equity Lens Questions

Description: District leaders in Washoe County School District use guiding questions to apply an equity lens to their decision making. The district obtained these questions from **Equity 101 – The Equity Framework**, which was published in 2011.[42]

FOR ANY POLICY, PROGRAM, PRACTICE, OR DECISION, CONSIDER:	WHO EQUITABLY BENEFITS FROM OUR:
• What racial/ethnic groups are affected/impacted? • Does the program ignore or worsen existing disparities? • How have stakeholders been involved? • What are the barriers to more equitable outcomes? • How can negative impacts/barriers be mitigated?	• Curriculum decisions? • Teacher hiring and assignments? • Gifted, honors, and AP programs? • Special education and RTI programs? • Extracurricular activities? • Budget decisions? • Accountability measures? • Learning goals/objectives?

Source: Washoe County School District[43]

DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT: DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS (CO)

Denver Public Schools (DPS) in Colorado partnered with Education Resource Strategies (ERS), a non-profit organization, to improve its district-wide equity. The district employed ERS' School System 20/20, "a framework to guide district transformation so that every school succeeds for every student because of the system."[44] The framework involves three steps:[45]

- A **vision** of school system success, comprising key strategies that a district can use to initiate and support transformation.
- A **diagnostic** that includes qualitative and quantitative assessments to help districts measure and track their progress in creating the conditions that promote practices and resource use to support excellent instruction.
- A **process** for reviewing those assessments and collaboratively identifying changes to system conditions and practices that will lead to improved student performance.

This process illustrates the importance of evaluating a district's current equity practices and identifying areas for improvement. DPS focused on four key elements within the School System 20/20 framework: investing in leadership at all levels; recruiting, developing, and retaining high-performing teachers;

> managing high-performing district-run and charter schools; and providing high-quality, differentiated support to schools.[46]

Use Tools to Gather Data on Equity Practices and Policies

To develop effective policies and practices to improve equity district-wide, districts must first obtain and analyze data to understand the current state of equity and the implementation of equity initiatives in the district. Districts can use equity audits, such as the **Equity Audit Tool** developed by the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium presented below, to obtain data to evaluate the current state of equity their schools and classrooms.

Equity Audit Tool

Description: Districts can use **this tool** to conduct an equity audit at the school and classroom levels, which will help districts assess the degree to which school-level policies and practices foster equity. The tool is based on the criteria for an equitable school and classroom, presented below. Further, districts can use the tool to evaluate several constructs. At the school level, the tool includes criteria related to school policy, school organization/administration, school climate/environment, staff, assessment/placement, professional learning, and standards and curriculum development. At the classroom level, the tool includes criteria related to academic placement/tracking and grouping, student leadership and recognition, classroom environment, and instructional strategies.[47]

CRITERIA FOR AN EQUITABLE SCHOOL

An equitable school provides the climate, process, and content which enable students and staff to perform at their highest level. An equitable school ensures successful academic outcomes by providing equitable resources and appropriate instructional strategies for each student. The equitable school:

- Has a clear mission which is committed to equitable access, processes, treatment, and outcomes for all students, regardless of race, gender, national origin (English learners), disability, or socioeconomic status;
- Provides an inclusive visual environment – halls, displays, and classrooms exhibit pictures and information about diverse students and cultures;
- Reflects and works in collaboration with the various socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, language, gender, and disability groups within the school community; and
- Works in partnership with parents, the business community, and civic and community organizations to enrich the curriculum, provide consistently high expectations for all students, and develop supports and opportunities for all students.

CRITERIA FOR AN EQUITABLE CLASSROOM

An equitable classroom reflects the overall school environment and is characterized by:

- An inclusive climate and visual environment;
- Multicultural and culturally responsive pedagogy, curricula, and materials;
- A wide variety of instructional strategies to meet differing learning styles and backgrounds;
- Utilization of student funds of knowledge and outside resources to provide diverse tools, strategies, and role models;
- Availability of extracurricular activities to enrich the curriculum and provide multicultural experiences;
- Active outreach to and substantive involvement of parents/families from all groups in varied aspects of the educational program, both planning and instructional; and
- Recognition of multiple intelligences and student strengths through academic opportunities, honors, leadership roles, and creative options.

Source: Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium[48]

Additionally, EDEquity developed a **Systemic Equity Implementation Rubric**, presented below, that districts can use to guide and evaluate their systemic implementation of equity. Districts can use this rubric to "engage in explicit dialogue that will lead to clear objectives and actions for the improvement to be implemented."[49]

Systemic Equity Implementation Rubric

Description: Districts can use this rubric to assess their systemic implementation of equity-related policies, practices, and initiatives over time. Districts should adapt the indicators to fit their needs, but all indicators should be observable and measurable.[50] EDEquity also provides the following instructions for using and adapting the implementation rubric:[51]

> The implementation rubric should be used for new and current instructional initiatives and/or strategies. District and school teams should identify an instructional area to be implemented or to assess the level of implementation of a current instructional focus with a culturally conscious focus. The implementation team should include teachers that will support and monitor the implementation of the stated improvement. The rubric will support coherence, congruency and commitment to implementing the intended improvement.

> When you begin to build an implementation rubric, describing the quality indicators on the attached template, the team needs to begin with level 3. At level 3, describe the indicators that would specifically identify that your team is proficient at the basic implementation level. Then proceed to level 4 and describe the indicators that would specifically identify that your team is at an advanced level and into deep implementation. The team can then fill in the indicators for level 2, followed by level 1 and level 0.

LEVEL 4: DEEP IMPLEMENTATION

- Development of an equity policy
- Revision of policy to reflect closing the achievement gap
- Equity questions in hiring practices
- District-level equity team
- Identify persons or departments to progress monitor the equity initiative
- On-going workshops on equity
- Equity summits – by similar school clusters
- Allocation of resources (human and fiscal) to support the equity initiative
- Explicit internal and external communication system

LEVEL 3: BASIC IMPLEMENTATION

- Established equity quality indicators
- Distribute equity training – district administrators & principals
- Provide socioeconomic data by race
- Superintendent participates in equity training
- Schedule book study/article reads
- Allocation of resources (human and fiscal) to support the equity initiative
- Equity action in strategic planning
- Equity goals embedded in a single school plan for increased student achievement
- Identification of 2 or 3 equity goals
- Instructional coaches participate in equity trainings
- Principals can clearly communicate about the equity initiative

LEVEL 2: PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

- Equity is not embedded with instructional goals
- Training once or twice a year
- Principal training without district personnel
- Aggregate data analysis
- Equity is embedded in "ALL student" language
- Equity is discussed when a problem arises
- Principals have limited intention to communicate district position on equity

LEVEL 1: MINIMAL IMPLEMENTATION

- Limited training in equity
- No clear person responsible for monitoring the equity initiative
- Language on subgroup achievement in literature to the community
- Misaligned actions
- Equity staff hired due to situational crisis

LEVEL 0: NO EVIDENCE

- No equity-related language in district documents
- No district equity initiative
- Principals cannot clearly articulate the district's equity initiative
- No means to monitor progress subgroup achievement

Source: EDEquity[52]

As a practical example, Seattle Public Schools uses a **Racial Equity Analysis Tool**, presented below, to determine if its "existing and proposed policies, budgetary decisions, programs, professional development, and instructional practices are likely to close the opportunity gap for specific racial groups in Seattle Public Schools."[53]

Racial Equity Analysis Tool

Description: Districts can use this tool to determine whether their proposed and current policies, programs, and practices support educational equity.

1. SET OUTCOMES AND IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS

- What does your department/division/school define as racially equitable outcomes related to this issue?
- How will leadership communicate key outcomes to stakeholders for racial equity to guide analysis?
- How will leadership identify and engage stakeholders: racial/ethnic groups potentially impacted by this decision, especially communities of color, including students who are English language learners and students who have special needs?

2. ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS IN ANALYZING DATA

- How will you collect specific information about the school, program, and community conditions to help you determine if this decision will create racial inequities that would increase the opportunity gap?
- Are there negative impacts for specific student demographic groups, including English language learners and students with special needs?

3. ENSURE EDUCATIONAL AND RACIAL EQUITY/DETERMINE BENEFIT OR BURDEN

- What are the potential benefits or unintended consequences?
- What would it look like if this policy/decision/initiative/proposal ensured educational and racial equity for every student?

4. EVALUATE SUCCESS INDICATORS AND/OR MITIGATION PLANS

- How will you evaluate and be accountable for making sure that the proposed solution ensures educational equity for all students, families, and staff?
- What are the specific steps you will take to address impacts (including unintended consequences), and how will you continue to partner with stakeholders to ensure educational equity for every student?

Source: Seattle Public Schools[54]

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- The **Racial Equity Tool** is a worksheet from the Puget Sound Educational Service District that helps districts evaluate whether their policies and practices adhere to best practices for racial equity including promoting collaboration and engagement; assessing community conditions; and expanding opportunity and access for students, families, and staff.

- Districts can use the **Policy Equity Analysis Tool** from the Great Lakes Equity Center to determine the extent to which their policies support educational equity.

Develop an Equity Plan

Understand the Components of an Equity Plan

After evaluating current equity practices and policies, districts should use the information from their equity reflections and audits to create an equity plan that addresses the district's specific needs. Equity plans provide districts with actionable steps the school communities can take to improve equity practices and to eliminate institutional inequities.[55] The Colorado Department of Education provides an **Equity Plan Development Checklist**, presented below, that contains recommended action items that equity teams should address and include in district equity plans.

Equity Plan Development Checklist

Description: Districts should ensure that each of the items listed below in the checklist are addressed in conversations prior to drafting the equity plan.

GOALS FOR IMPROVEMENT OR CHANGE	❑ Address the emotional aspects of equity, racism, and discrimination ❑ Integrate educational equity throughout the entire curriculum and school climate ❑ Identify areas for change needed to achieve equity ❑ Determine how to evaluate progress
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS AND STAFF	❑ Develop cultural competence and cultural proficiency ❑ Examine biases, norms, and values ❑ Work on school goals for improvement or change
COMMUNICATION STRATEGY	❑ Determine audience – students, school personnel, parents, community ❑ Encourage open dialogue and honesty ❑ Articulate goals and messages ❑ Clearly define roles and responsibilities ❑ Use purposeful conversation
STRATEGIES TO RESOLVE A SPECIFIC DISCRIMINATION EVENT	❑ Acknowledge the incident and determine the impact on the parties involved ❑ Contact parents and use purposeful conversation regarding the incident ❑ Whole school discussion on causes/impacts ❑ Larger community discussions
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT	❑ Make parents feel welcome at school ❑ Include parents to give them ownership of the equity plan ❑ Share research showing increased academic achievement of children whose parents are involved in their school ❑ Communicate regularly on the progress of the plan in school newsletters
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	❑ Invite community leaders to discuss issues and goals ❑ Engage the community as a problem-solver ❑ Include community members to build their ownership of the equity plan
EVALUATION	❑ Determine how to assess whether goals and objectives are being met ❑ Develop a timeline ❑ Create benchmarks

Source: Colorado Department of Education[56]

Similarly, the Texas Education Agency publishes a list of **Equity Plan Success Criteria**, presented below, that districts can use to draft and revise equity plans. The criteria cover five areas: engaging with stakeholders, reviewing and analyzing data, conducting a root cause analysis, selecting strategies, and planning for implementation. The criteria are part of the Texas Education Agency's **Equity Toolkit**, which outlines the process districts should take to develop an equity plan and provides tools to support districts in implementation of equity practices.

> **LEARN MORE**
> **Equity Plan Intro Roadmap** is a video from the Region 18 Education Service Center that describes the Texas Education Agency's recommended process for developing equity plans.
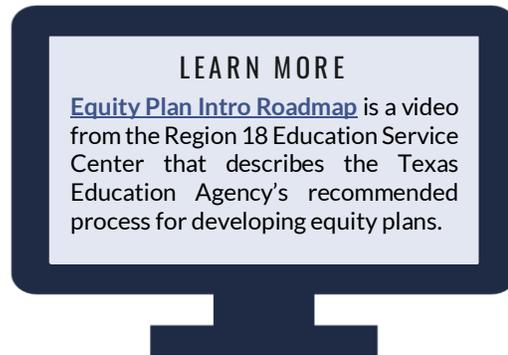
Equity Plan Success Criteria

Description: Districts can follow these criteria when drafting and revising equity plans.

STEP 1: ENGAGING AND COMMUNICATING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

❏ Provide evidence throughout the equity plan that multiple stakeholders were involved in the development process

STEP 2: REVIEWING AND ANALYZING DATA

❏ Calculate equity gaps for percentages of out-of-field and inexperienced teachers for both low-income and students of color in a clear and correct manner utilizing previous year's data
❏ Define effective teaching using appropriate, measurable data including teaching performance, student learning and student engagement
❏ Provide qualitative conclusion(s) on the effective teaching equity gap calculation that is directly aligned to the district definition of effective teaching

STEP 3: CONDUCTING A ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS

❏ Provide a problem statement that is aligned to the findings in the equity gap analysis of out-of-field, inexperienced, or effective teaching
❏ Provide a problem statement with a focus on the challenge of attracting, supporting, or retaining effective, experienced, and in-field teachers in the highest need campuses serving low-income and students of color
❏ Provide at least one root cause that is aligned to the problem statement as it relates to attracting, supporting and retaining excellent teachers

STEPS 4: SELECTING STRATEGIES

❏ Select strategies that are directly aligned to the root cause analysis
❏ Select strategies that are measurable and evidence-based
❏ Select strategies that are viable within the district's specific context

STEP 5: PLANNING FOR IMPLEMENTATION

❏ Select benchmarks that are directly aligned to the selected strategies

❏ Select benchmarks that are viable within the district's specific context
❏ Select benchmarks that are measurable

Source: Texas Education Agency[57]

💡 DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT: HAMILTON-WENTWORTH DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD (CANADA)

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) in Ontario, Canada developed an **Equity Guide** to help its schools foster educational equity. The guide covers the following areas: school climate/physical environment, leadership, school-community partnership, curriculum, student languages, assessment, counseling and support, and harassment and bullying prevention. For each area, HWDSB developed:[58]

- A guiding principle that outlines the work to be done in the area;
- The theory and context underlying the guiding principle;
- Guiding questions to facilitate an examination of the school's practices as they related to the guiding principle; and
- An organizer that displays the expected outcomes and their associated strategies to be implemented, relevant initiatives, and relevant resources.

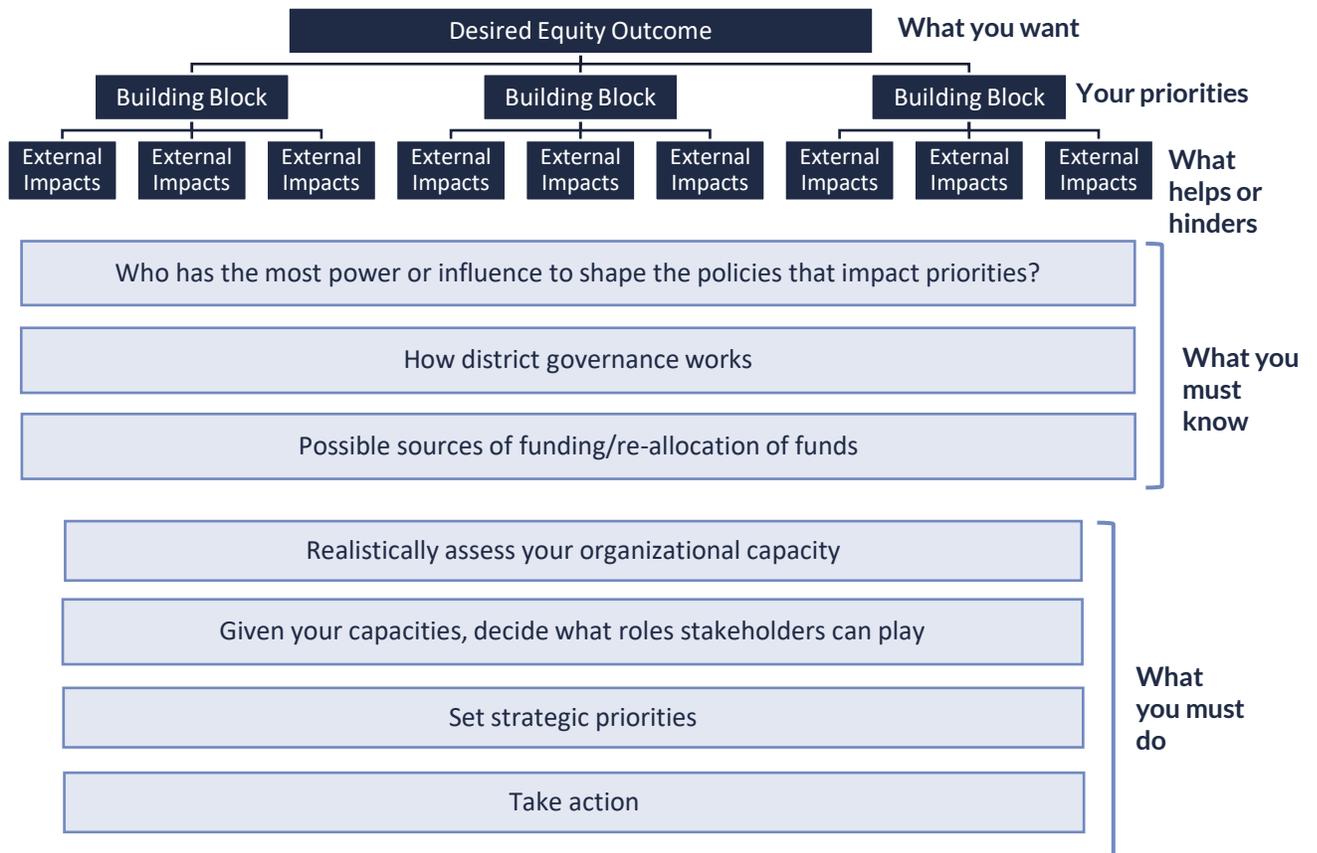### 💡 DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT: BETHLEHEM AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT (PA)

Bethlehem Area School District (BASD) in Pennsylvania developed an **Equity Plan** to commit the district to improve educational equity. The plan includes a series of objectives and associated action steps that the district plans to take to meet its equity-related objectives.[59] Before developing the equity plan, BASD engaged in a comprehensive process of introducing and understanding equity. The following is a timeline of the actions BASD took to draft its equity plan:[60]

1. District leaders established a district-wide goal of eliminating race and family income as predictors of school success by guaranteeing equitable access to opportunities to learn.
2. All administrators explored the concept of equity versus equality in the context of student race and class during intensive summer workshops.
3. All administrators read *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders* and engaged in equity-themed workshops through the school year.
4. Administrators were challenged through reflective exercises to clarify personal beliefs related to improving the educational experience of all children.
5. Subcommittees consisting of district and community stakeholders researched, debated, and recommended equity-enhancing action plans in five key areas: equity research and data, core learning and stretch learning (academic structures), student engagement and personal skill development (student services), professional development, and parent engagement.
6. Each subcommittee's recommended specific action plans were included in the final equity plan.
7. District and community stakeholders reviewed and evaluated the action plan.
8. The action plan was presented and reviewed by the BASD School Board at the end of the school year for implementation in the following school year.

Create a Theory of Change

Districts should include a Theory of Change section in their equity plan that delineates desired outcomes, priorities, external factors that impact success, specific action items, and specifies the scope and function of the equity policy. Theories of Change are tools that districts can use to address issues of inequities. The Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change developed the Equity Theory of Change template, presented in Figure 2.2. This example is just one potential Theory of Change outline; districts may also develop a contextual Theory of Change that best suits their needs.

Figure 2.2: The Equity Theory of Change

Desired Equity Outcome	What you want
Building Block · Building Block · Building Block	Your priorities
External Impacts (×9)	What helps or hinders

Who has the most power or influence to shape the policies that impact priorities?

How district governance works

Possible sources of funding/re-allocation of funds

What you must know

Realistically assess your organizational capacity

Given your capacities, decide what roles stakeholders can play

Set strategic priorities

Take action

What you must do

Source: The Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change[61]

District leaders can use the **Theory of Change Development Guide**, presented below, to implement the five steps from the Aspen Institute's Theory of Change model.

Theory of Change Development Guide

Description: Districts can use this process to evaluate their data, identify areas for improvement, and develop a theory of change. The resulting theory of change should inform the development of the district's equity plan.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY WHAT YOU WANT	***Define Your Desired Equity Outcomes*** The first task is to produce an outcomes statement that specifies the racial or other disparities you would like to reduce or eliminate in a given place and timeframe. This process involves defining, as clearly as possible, the focus of your reform/change effort over the coming months and years.
STEP 2: SET YOUR PRIORITIES	***Identify the "Building Blocks" of Your Racial Equity Outcome*** Unpack the big outcome from Step #1 into smaller building blocks so that you can be focused, realistic, and consistent in your planning and action. These building blocks will be your priorities since they are the essential preconditions for the change you want to see. You should frame them as the policies, regulations, information, resources, or anything else that must be in place, at a minimum, to support the outcome you want.
STEP 3: DETERMINE WHAT HELPS OR HINDERS YOUR BUILDING BLOCKS	***Identify Public Policies, Institutional Practices, and Cultural Representations*** Now that you know where to concentrate your attention fruitfully, you must determine what supports or impedes your building blocks. This step is crucial for deciding the action agenda you will pursue to realize your ultimate goals. Apply a structural racism "litmus test" to each building block. For each one, you must identify public policies, institutional practices, and cultural representations likely to determine whether or not that building block materializes or stays in place.
STEP 4: IDENTIFY WHAT YOU MUST KNOW	***Map the Local Change Landscape*** Now that you know what you want to accomplish and your strategic priorities, you must become familiar with the terrain that you and your colleagues will have to negotiate as change agents. You must understand the politics of change in your district—the "nuts and bolts" of power and governance. Learn how governance works in your school district. Find out where the critical decisions are made and what current and past alliances influence specific issue-areas. Without this knowledge, it will be hard to know where and how to intervene to make a change.
STEP 5: DETERMINE THE ACTIONS YOU MUST TAKE	***Assess Your Capacity, Planning, and Gearing Up for Action*** Now you can see that the work of equity involves taking actions to change or support a specific set of building blocks, most often in collaboration with others. These actions must target those who most influence the characteristics of those building blocks in your school district.

Source: The Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change[62]

💡 DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT: BOULDER VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT (CO)

Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) in Colorado drafted an **Equity Theory of Action** in the 2013-14 school year. The district's theory of action is as follows:[63]

> **If** we believe that culturally responsive and equitable practices will enhance the daily work, environment, and lives of students, staff, parents, families and community members, **then** we must make equity central to our **daily practice and work**.

> **Equity** occurs in our interaction and relationship development with students, staff, parents, families, and community members, and in advancing equitable instructional practices and an inclusive organizational culture. Equity must be the **fundamental work** of the Boulder Valley School District to ensure the success of the entire BVSD community.

The district used the theory of action to draft a mission statement, value statements, and three distinct district-wide goals pertaining to the implementation of equity.[64]

💡 DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT: DALLAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT (TX)

Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) in Texas partnered with Education Resource Strategies to develop its **equity-related theory of action**. The theory of action focuses on four main initiatives:[65]

- Sustainably transforming supports and resources in consistency low-performing schools;
- Launch "new" innovative programs in existing schools with strong instructional foundations;
- Ensure students' equitable access to diverse, best-fit schools—especially low-income students and students living in neighborhoods with fewer school options; and
- Implement a tiered system of supports and autonomies for schools, based on performance and student needs.

For each initiative, Dallas ISD outlined how the completion of the initiative would make progress toward their equity goals. Dallas ISD used the theory of action to determine what changes in resources or processes needed to be made to meet their goals and enhance equity across the district. Resources include people, time, and money. Processes include stakeholder roles, stakeholder mindsets, data and tools, and timelines.[66]

Write an Equity Plan

Districts typically institute equity plans to close achievement gaps between students based on several inequities, which often stem from social, socioeconomic, cultural, or institutional factors. The Glossary of Education Reform, a database created by the Great Schools Partnership, notes that, once districts "identify disparities in educational performance or results," they then attempt to correct these inequities by implementing more equitable practices and programs. This correction may consist of "increasing funding levels, redesigning school programs, teaching students in different ways, or providing comparatively more educational services and academic support to students with greater needs."[67]

Aside from delineating the identities for which equity and fairness apply and closing gaps in achievement, policies for equity should contextualize the importance of upholding such practices. Providing sufficient evidence of equity practices as a means to sustain educational equity can help "enhance the potential legal sustainability of [equity] policies."[68] Figure 2.3 reviews actionable steps school boards may take to define diversity and the importance of maintaining equity in district practices.

Figure 2.3: Steps to Define the Importance of Diversity and Equity in District Policy

- ❖ School boards and other education leaders should ensure that diversity-related policies reflect an inclusive definition of diversity, tailored to specific district and/or school needs. Common factors considered include: race, ethnicity, sex, socio-economic status, neighborhood, language status, special education needs, academic performance and potential, record of achievement, and community or civic engagement or interest.
- ❖ School boards and leaders can enhance the potential legal sustainability of any policies in which educational opportunities or benefits are provided to students (at least in part) based on their race or ethnicity with evidence that establishes:
  - o The specific and compelling interests in diversity that such policies further;
  - o That the design and implementation of such policies is appropriately calibrated, so as to neither over-rely nor under-rely on race and ethnicity as factors in meeting those interests; and
  - o A process pursuant to which such policies are periodically reviewed and evaluated, and where necessary, modified.

Source: National School Boards Association, College Board, and Education Counsel[69]

Further, districts often draft equity-related mission statements, which are included in their equity plan and guide the development and implementation of equity initiatives. Figure 2.4 gives examples of well- and poorly-written equity-related mission statements.

Figure 2.4: Example Equity Mission Statements

WELL-WRITTEN MISSION STATEMENT	POORLY-WRITTEN MISSION STATEMENT
"At Example School District, we believe each student deserves the right to a fair and appropriate education in which her or his race, ethnicity, culture, religion, and abilities will be valued, celebrated, and used as a vehicle during academic instruction. We are dedicated to being proactive in our efforts to implement discipline practices and policies that aim to keep our students in class, receiving access to instruction, and being provided the support to succeed. Likewise, we will identify and correct practices and policies that threaten to perpetuate gaps between discipline, achievement, and access to educational opportunities that benefit students."	"Non-example School District does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, religion, color, national origin, sex, marital or veteran status, disability, or other legally protected status in its programs, services or activities. The district shall provide equal opportunities to all individuals within its geographical boundaries."
RATIONALE	RATIONALE
This example shows a district mission statement with explicit language that makes a clear point to focus on discipline disparities, which illustrates that these are comparable in importance to equity in academic	This non-example is a standard non-discrimination clause but does not go beyond non-discrimination in addressing equity for students. These clauses are important and need to be included in district policies, but they do not identify reducing disproportionate school discipline as a priority.

achievement. This example also describes the ways in which personnel will uphold the district policy.	The policy also fails to describe how to ameliorate disparate outcomes or inequitable treatment of different groups of students.

Source: OSEP Technical Assistance Center[70]

The Center on Great Teachers & Leaders suggests that equity plans be drafted and presented in six separate sections, as depicted in the **Equity Plan Template** below.

Equity Plan Template

Description: Districts can use this template as a guide when developing their equity plans. This template helps districts present all necessary information for public review, as equity plans should be communicated to the entire school district community.

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION
- Provide an overview of the plan, including the current district context and recent applicable state actions, all requirements addressed, and relevant legislation referenced.
- Provide the definition of "excellent educators" that your district will use to identify and address gaps in equitable access to excellent educators.
- Provide an overview of the plan development process, including what specific steps were taken by the district.

SECTION II: 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 and authentic?
- What plans are in place to continue to engage stakeholders as part of an educator 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 III: EQUITY GAPS
- How does your district define 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 IV: 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 metrics did you choose to identify root causes, support chosen strategies, and assess performance in the future?
- What targeted strategies and sub-strategies 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 at the district and school levels?
- How will you monitor the actions of local education agencies to ensure that low-income students and students of color are not taught at higher rates than other students by unqualified, out-of-field, inexperienced, or ineffective teachers?
- 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?

SECTION V: ONGOING MONITORING AND SUPPORT
- What are the mechanisms for ongoing technical assistance, monitoring, and feedback?

- Who will be responsible for ongoing monitoring (e.g., a district committee, including representatives from stakeholder groups)?
- 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 VI: CONCLUSION
- Summarize the main points of each section

Source: Center on Great Teachers & Leaders[71]

Provide Professional Development for Staff

While developing an equity plan, districts should ensure that all district staff are prepared to serve within the new equitable framework. Teachers, staff, and administrators working toward equitable education should "[be] able to recognize that society and societal institutions marginalize certain groups and work to decrease inequities through their work."[72] The Colorado Department of Education's Equity Toolkit for Administrators identifies seven principles that should guide professional development training programs. These principles, which are presented in Figure 2.5, focus on the importance of understanding bias and effective communication.

Figure 2.5: Professional Development Training Principles for Equity Implementation

1	Explore the meaning of equity, cultural competence and cultural proficiency.
2	Recognize that bias exists. Each of us has unique preferences, perspectives and ideas. The blend of our individual patterns in the world creates an essential diversity, without which the world would be a bland place indeed. Our unique perspectives can also interfere with our ability to be impartial and unprejudiced.
3	Recognize that bias impacts our schools and communities each and every day. Many times, bias inhibits progress and growth in school systems. When bias gets in the in the middle of conversations, it becomes a distraction from the real issue at hand – how are we going to provide the best educational experience for our children, who live in our community, so that all children have the opportunity to grow up to be contributing members of this or any society.
4	Acknowledge that biases often surface some tangled roots that underlie many decisions made in our community, such as how to educate children, where to send them to school, and why we separate subgroups of our community.
5	Recognize that every culture has biases related to norms, values, and community. When we view others through our preconceived notions and stereotypes, biases become problematic.
6	Understand that bias is not all bad and is worth taking a look at, to preserve the health of our relationships, cultures, and communities. The challenge is to continue to have deeper conversations about our roots – biases - and their impacts on our behaviors, families, professions, and community. In our schools and communities, honest answers to this question could open many community-building doors. It is important to understand our biases and accept ownership for the outcome of our biased actions.
7	Discuss the integration of equity into the curriculum and school climate.

Source: Colorado Department of Education[73]

Further, Figure 2.6 contains a sample professional development training schedule that supports faculty and staff equity training. This training schedule comprises five distinct sessions in which faculty and staff should participate.

Figure 2.6: Professional Development Equity Training Schedule

SESSION 1

➢ Explore issues of equity in education and related policies.
➢ Deepen collective understanding of culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy theory, highlighting the three tenets of high expectations, cultural competence, and critical consciousness.
➢ Investigate social identity and position.
➢ Discuss connections to culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy within the school.

SESSION 2

➢ Explore examples of how other teachers have taken on the work of culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy.
➢ Deconstruct lessons for bias as a catalyst for exploring curriculum.
➢ Begin to explore the equity continuum and the possibilities for classroom inquiry.

SESSION 3

➢ Identify questions for further inquiry and plot practices within selected tenets of the equity continuum.
➢ Work in grade-level teams to identify areas for curriculum development.

SESSION 4

➢ Visit a demonstration classroom.
➢ Meet with the teacher to familiarize self with teacher and lesson.
➢ Engage in focused observation of practice.
➢ Participate in post-observation with the teacher to analyze lesson, ask questions, solidify learning.

SESSION 5

➢ Reflect and consolidate learning from classroom visits.
➢ Identify next steps for classroom practice.
➢ Build a support network of other like-minded colleagues.

Source: Learning Forward[74]

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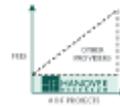200+ analysts with multiple methodology research expertise

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