

CDE Equity Toolkit

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	4
Introduction	6
Understanding Self	7
Understanding Others	7
Understanding Context	7
Implementation	7
Evaluation	7
Understanding Self	13
What can I learn in this section?	13
• Blind Spot 1: Culture Informs Bias	15
• Blind Spot 2: Bias-Based Beliefs	15
• Intersectionality: A Navigational Mirror for Improved Responsiveness & Bridging Divides	15
Blind Spot 1: Culture Informs Bias	15
Blind Spot 2: Bias-Based Beliefs	16
Color-Evasiveness	17
Deficit Thinking	17
Poverty Disciplining	19
Microaggressions	20
Intersectionality: A Navigational Mirror for Improved Responsiveness & Bridging Divides	22
Understanding Others	26
What can I learn in this section?	26
Identifying Systemic Barriers	27
Historically excluded groups From “Equity & Inclusion,” 3rd, 2nd, 2st eds.City of Ottawa and City for All Women Initiative (CAWI)	28
Community and Family Engagement	29
Understanding Context	31
What can I learn in this section?	31
Naming Our Current Reality	32
Colorado Demographics/Data	35
Avoiding Confirmation Bias	35
Put on Your Equity Lens (Guiding Questions)	36
Datasets	36
Understanding Policies and Possible Changes	37
Federal and State Statutes	37
Federal Law	37
Colorado Law	37
School District Policy	38

General Policy Changes and Best Practices	38
Student-Based Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Best Practices	38
Behavioral and Sense of Belonging Support Best Practices	39
Technology Support Best Practices	39
Gathering Information	40
Guiding Questions to Help Gathering/Understanding Your Community	40
Surveying Your Community	40
• Examples of Student Survey Questions	40
Implementation	42
Assessment Questions	42
Where to begin?	44
Entry Point 1: Implementing a current plan with an equity mindset	44
Entry Point 2: Designing a future improvement plan with equity in mind	45
Establishing Partnership and Inviting Investment	48
Inviting Investment – Equitable Partnership and Communication Plans	49
Funding Equitable Improvement Work	50
Additional Resources	50
Family Partnerships	50
Culturally Responsive Teaching within Best, First Instruction	50
Reflection & Evaluation	51
What can I learn in this section?	51
Continuous Improvement Evaluation Process	51
Resource Appendix	53
Cultural Synchronization Questions	63
Gathering Information from Your Community and Families (going deeper)	63
Examples of Questions to Survey Your Community	63
Examples of Student Survey Questions	64
Examples of Family/Caregiver Survey Questions	64
Examples of Teacher/Faculty Survey Questions	65
Increasing Participation in Feedback (Tips)	65
Community engagement is critical to success because:	66
General Policy Changes and Best Practices	69
Teacher Recruitment Best Practices	69
Student-Based Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Best Practices	70
Behavioral and Sense of Belonging Support Best Practices	72
Technology Support Best Practices	73
Going Deeper with Implementation	73
Responding Immediately to Racial and Other Bias-Based Incidents	73
An example process for restoring community after bias-based incidents.	74

Family Partnerships	75
Culturally Responsive Teaching within Best First Instruction	76

Acknowledgments

The Colorado Department of Education and the School Quality and Supports Division would like to thank the following for their contributions and tireless efforts toward the revision and completion of the 2023 Equity Toolkit for Administrators:

- Leaders and Members of the CDE All Means All Group
- Members of the Equity Taskforce
 - Christina Adeboye-Sullivan
 - Robert Beauchamp
 - Joanna Bruno
 - Adrienne Cruz
 - Rhonda Haniford
 - Darcy Hutchins
 - Nazanin (Nazie) Mohajeri-Nelson
 - Nelson Molina
 - Michael Ramirez
 - Jessica Stroope
- Webpage and Communication Development
 - Acacia Madorin
 - Jeremy Meyer
 - Bridgett Dailey
 - Emily Owen
 - Yazmine Patino
- Parents and Families who responded to the surveys conducted by our WestEd Partners
- School and District Leaders who participated in the Focus Groups conducted by WestEd
 - Christine Hendricks, Principal, Tavelli Elementary School, Poudre School District
 - Wendy Birhanzel, Superintendent, Harrison School District
 - Maggie Pacino, Principal, McClave Elementary School, McClave School District
 - Elin Curry, Director, Cedar Middle School, DSST Network, Denver Public Schools
 - Lourdes (Lulu) Buck, Coordinator of Equity & Engagement, Student Services, St. Vrain Valley School District
 - Christie Imholt, Executive Director of District Policy and Strategy at Aurora Public Schools

This toolkit was prepared in partnership with the Western Educational Equity Assistance Center (WEEAC) at WestEd, which is authorized under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Equity Assistance Centers provide technical assistance and training to school districts, tribal and state education agencies to promote equitable education resources and opportunities regardless of race, sex, national origin or religion. The WEEAC at WestEd partners with Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, and Attendance Works to assist Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Colorado, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawai'i, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

The contents of this toolkit were developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government.

Introduction

Dear Educators,

Imagine a school where ALL the children are loved and challenged, where the educators are empowered and where families and communities are seen as critical partners. Each of us is uniquely positioned to create a learning environment that honors the talents and gifts of each student so that they are prepared to thrive in their careers, in their homes and in their greater communities. This toolkit has been designed to give school leaders the tools and resources needed to capitalize on those unique strengths that foster supportive and effective relationships wherein the community works together to mitigate barriers to success. We designed this toolkit to support you and your community as you further build a learning environment where every student and every educator is supported to find success.

As educators, we have the trusted responsibility to ensure that all our students thrive. We work hard to ensure that our students are challenged through rigorous learning experiences that are worthy of their effort and are relevant to the skills they need to succeed in careers and life. Each day, educators across Colorado are developing their students' talents, expanding their students' interests and creating the conditions for all students to be successful. The work you do each day is truly inspiring!

At the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), we know this work is complicated. There are many perspectives throughout the state and nation on how best to create a learning environment for all students to find success. We also know that schools are often seen as a "central hub" of the community often with diversity in race, ethnicity, culture, identities, socioeconomics, language, religion, sexual orientation, gender, ability and much more.

Each day, school leaders are collaborating and genuinely engaging their greater school communities to support their students' unique needs and aspirations. This toolkit, designed to support that important work, consists of five sections: 1) Understanding Self, 2) Understanding Others, 3) Understanding Context, 4) Implementation and 5) Reflection and Evaluation. We designed the resources to provide you with actionable support you can use as you engage with your students, their families, your colleagues and the greater school community.

Thank you for engaging in this work, thank you for being champions for your students, and thank you for creating learning environments where every student can thrive! The CDE is committed to supporting you through your school districts and schools in the important endeavor of creating quality learning environments and experiences for all students and their families.

Dr. Rhonda Haniford, Associate Commissioner, School Quality and Support, Colorado Department of Education

How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to provide user-friendly information and resources to support school and district leaders in centering equity in their work to support positive outcomes for the students they serve. We are all in different phases of our equity journey, and that's OK. You are already off to a great start because you are here, you are reading, and you are open. We hope this toolkit supports you on your quest to create welcoming environments where all students and families feel a sense of belonging and all students are supported to achieve success. This toolkit is organized into the five sections listed below.

Understanding Self

Understanding Self is a key component to understanding the root causes of a range of inequities at the school and district levels – inequities that prevent members of the school community from feeling safe, like they belong or have value. Each of us are made up of a variety of nuanced perspectives, and as leaders, it is important that we reflect on who we are.

Understanding Others

As leaders, once we have interrogated and are aware of our own biases, thoughts and actions (see Understanding Self section), it is important that we understand and examine the current and historical experiences of others. Our lived experiences shape the way we see others and consequently requires continued reflection. Understanding others helps to build trust and connection across differences. It also allows us to learn more about people's experiences beyond the surface level and helps us foster true understanding.

Understanding Context

The Understanding Context section includes voices from the field through examples, illuminating differences between students, laws/policies that impact students and how these aspects impact learning and self-development. This section also includes naming our current reality, school-based policy best practices, different datasets to review with an equity lens, gathering data from community, family, staff and students, examples of survey questions and tips to increase feedback participation. As leaders, we are uniquely positioned to foster a sense of belonging for students and families and understanding the context within which we work is imperative toward that end.

Implementation

The Implementation section is where the journeys, reflections and actions described in the Understanding Self, Understanding Others and Understanding Context sections come together to inform a concrete, student-focused and equity-informed action plan. This section, in particular, focuses on how the toolkit can strengthen the school and district planning processes, such as the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) process.

Evaluation

The Evaluation section provides guiding questions that can help evaluate how well and how equitably any actions taken by the school or district, including throughout the course of creating and implementing the UIP, worked. The guiding questions in this section draw from key considerations laid out across all sections of the toolkit. The evaluation process will likely prompt you to revisit different sections of the toolkit depending on your reflections and responses.

Ways to Use This Toolkit

There are multiple ways to use this toolkit, with a few outlined below. Ultimately, we hope that you leverage the information in the ways that best support your endeavors to support students' success.

Starting with Self

Because effective leaders are reflective and self-aware, we strongly encourage you to begin with the Understanding Self section. Mitigating your own biases and building your own reflective practice is the foundation of equity work and will make you a stronger leader of others in this work.

Going Deeper

Equity is a broad topic that can and should be incorporated into all aspects of leadership. In the same regard, organizing all that information can be overwhelming, especially for leaders who are simultaneously addressing multiple priorities. This toolkit provides an outline of initial resources to support you in this work. However, if you feel you are further along in your equity journey or who wish to further explore a particular topic, this toolkit provides a Resource Appendix and links to other resources to provide more in-depth content and study.

Targeted Support

As leaders, we often are pulled to address multiple priorities in an urgent manner. This toolkit allows you to begin with the section or topic that is more important for you. As you explore the content and resources aligned to your needs, the toolkit will provide links to additional aligned information that can further supplement and support the area you are exploring.

Following the Data

If you are unsure where to start in the toolkit, the self-assessment can help identify the best place to start. Reflect on each statement, and respond with Always, Frequently, Occasionally, Rarely or Never. The statements are organized by section, and you might consider beginning with the section where you receive more Never or Rarely comments.

As a How To Manual: From Start to Finish

The toolkit can also be used as a how to manual, by navigating through each section sequentially. By exploring the sections as a learning series, each section can be used to build the foundation for diving into the work outlined in the five sections.

Cultural Proficiency Framework (Developed by the Center for Culturally Proficient Educational Practice)

The Cultural Proficiency Framework helps leaders excel in their professional work using culturally proficient tools. Four tools of Cultural Proficiency combine to provide a framework for analyzing your values and behaviors, as well as your school's or agency's policies and practices. This toolkit uses this framework as a starting point regarding culture and further applies the mindsets, concepts and tools to include additional factors of difference such as gender, language, ability, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status. Tools included in this framework are described below with links to more in-depth resources to support administrators and other educators to increase access and opportunity for all members of the educational community.

The 4 **Tools of Cultural Proficiency**

- **Essential elements** of Cultural Proficiency serve as standards for developing culturally healthy values, behaviors, and policies/practices.
 - Assessing Cultural Knowledge
 - Valuing Diversity
 - Managing the Dynamics of Difference
 - Adapting to Diversity
 - Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge
- **Overcoming Barriers** to Cultural Proficiency provides persons and their organizations with tools to overcoming resistance to change.
 - Resistance to Change
 - Systemic Difference in Access
 - Unawareness of need to adapt
 - A sense of entitlement
- **Guiding Principles** of Cultural Proficiency serve as an introduction for a person or organization to identify their core values as they relate to issues of diversity. The guiding principles counteract the Barriers and demonstrate how the diversity of students informs professional practice by responding to student learning needs.
 - Culture is a predominant force in society.
 - People are served in varying degrees by the dominant culture.
 - People have individual and group identities.
 - Diversity within cultures is vast and significant.
 - Each cultural group has unique cultural needs.
 - The best of both worlds enhances the capacity of all.
 - The family, as defined by each culture, is the primary system of support in the education of children.
 - School systems must recognize that marginalized populations have to be at least bicultural and that this status creates a distinct set of issues to which the system must be equipped to respond.
 - Inherent in cross-cultural interactions are dynamics that must be acknowledged, adjusted to and accepted.
- **The Continuum** provides language to describe unhealthy and healthy *values, beliefs, and behaviors* of persons and *policies and practices* of organizations. The continuum can also help you assess your current state and project your desired state.
 - This describes unhealthy practices moving toward healthy practices.

- The healthy practices are informed by the guiding principles and are developmental in nature.
- The Continuum references both personal and organizational practices.

[The Conceptual Framework](#) is a graphic organizer that summarizes how the above tools relate to one another and how they serve as a resource for productive dialogue around individual and organizational needs.

Based on “Cultural Proficiency, A Manual for School Leaders, 4th Ed.,” [Randall B. Lindsey](#), [Kikanza Nuri-Robins](#), [Raymond D. Terrell](#) and [Delores B. Lindsey](#), 2019.

GOING DEEPER! Additional resources related to the Cultural Proficiency Framework:

Responsibilities of Culturally Proficient School Leaders (considering each Essential Element)

Role	Assess Culture	Value Diversity	Manage the Dynamics of Difference	Adapt to Diversity	Institutionalize Cultural Knowledge
Teachers: Observe and instruct	<p>Assess our own culture and its effect on students.</p> <p>Assess the culture of the classroom.</p> <p>Support students in discovering their own cultural identities.</p>	<p>Teach all subjects from a culturally inclusive perspective.</p> <p>Insist on and model classroom language and behaviors that value differences.</p>	<p>Use conflict as object lessons.</p> <p>Teach students a variety of ways to resolve conflict.</p>	<p>Learn your own instructional and interpersonal styles.</p> <p>Develop processes to enhance them so that they meet the needs of all students.</p> <p>Help students to understand why things are done in a particular way.</p>	<p>Teach students appropriate language for asking questions about other people's cultures and telling other people about theirs.</p>
School Site Administrators: Lead and supervise	<p>Assess the culture of the school, and articulate the cultural expectations to all who interact there.</p>	<p>Articulate a culturally proficient vision for the school.</p> <p>Work with educators and staff to establish standards for holding one another accountable for the vision.</p>	<p>Provide training and support systems for conflict management.</p> <p>Help faculty and staff learn to distinguish between behavioral problems and cultural differences.</p>	<p>Examine policies and practices for overt and intentional discrimination, and change current practices when appropriate.</p>	<p>Model and monitor schoolwide and classroom practices.</p>
District Administrators: Implement policy	<p>Assess culture of the district and the administrator's role in maintaining or changing it.</p>	<p>Provide guidelines for culturally proficient practices and establish standards for appraisal.</p>	<p>Provide resources for developing and establishing new conflict management strategies, including culturally</p>	<p>Assess policies and propose changes when appropriate.</p>	<p>Propose and implement culturally proficient policies.</p>

			specific mediation techniques.		
Parents and Community: Articulate expectations	Share with school personnel parent and community perceptions of the school's culture and practices.	Elect board members who represent cultures in the community.	Discern and point out to school personnel the nature and source of conflict when it occurs.	Identify policies and practices that need changing.	Serve as resources to the formal school leaders.
School Board Members: Set policy	Assess the cultures of the district and the board and the effect of those cultures on the community.	Establish standards for culturally proficient practices.	Articulate the need and value for culturally specific conflict management and mediation.	Review and change policies as the student population changes to maintain culturally proficient environment	Establish all policies from a culturally proficient perspective.
Classified Employees or Leaders: Support site and district functions	Assess culture of employees as support personnel and connections to community.	Demonstrate value for diverse community through inclusion and celebration of diversity.	Provide training and support for awareness of cultural appreciation and conflict management.	Adapt to diverse work styles, languages, and cultural changes in community. Celebrate newcomers.	Model culturally proficient, inclusive practices and behaviors. Create and support professional learning teams.

Responsibilities of Culturally Proficient School Leaders" recreated from Lindsey, Robins, Terrell, and Lindsey(2019). *Cultural Proficiency, A Manual for School Leaders, 4th Ed.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin,p 150-151.

Understanding Self

Understanding Self is a key component to understanding the root causes of a range of inequities at the school and district levels – inequities that prevent members of the school community from feeling safe, like they belong or have value. This section of the toolkit supports you in achieving the following:

- Developing the capacity to notice your behaviors and thoughts and those of others
- Thinking and theorizing about what you notice, getting more information and developing explanations for what’s happening, why it’s happening and what needs to be done about it
- Acknowledging historical inequity for some groups and one’s place (as a beneficiary)

What can I learn in this section?

Take the assessments below to evaluate where your strengths and opportunities for improvement lie when it comes to reflecting on your lived experiences, mitigating your biases and understanding how both shape your leadership.

Statement	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Occasionally (3)	Frequently (4)	Always (5)
I am aware of my own social identities (e.g., race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, ability, language, sexuality, etc.).					
I actively listen to the viewpoints of those with a social identity different than my own.					
When students and families from my school or district share their concerns about practices, policies or procedures, I investigate the impact of those practices, policies or procedures on the historically marginalized populations in my school or district.					
I recognize when my cultural upbringing impacts the beliefs I hold about historically marginalized communities.					
Part of the vision for my school(s) stems from a desire to equip all students with everything they need to excel.					
I believe a student’s competency is more than their assessment score.					
Students from marginalized populations are just as likely as students from non-marginalized populations to demonstrate positive learning behaviors.					

I believe that students need to learn about the experiences of various cultures in order to have a high-quality education.					
I am open to learning about how students and families with different cultural and social identities than my own experience my school(s).					
I am open to challenging my assumptions about different cultures.					
I believe in forming relationships with all students and families to create an inclusive learning environment and increase participation and engagement.					

Success – you have completed the assessment for Understanding Self!

Scoring:

Because we are all on this learning journey and can never “arrive,” we strongly encourage you to read the entire Understanding Self section from start to finish in the pages that follow. However, if you find it more helpful to start with content that aligns to your scores, please see the guidance below.

If most of your answers were “Always” and “Frequently,” the section on Intersectionality is an optimal place to start. If most of your answers were “Occasionally,” consider reviewing the tables and questions in Blindspot 2. If most of your answers were “Rarely” and “Never,” we recommend starting at the beginning of Understanding Self as the most helpful entry point.

Have you ever wondered:

- Why do some students and families feel isolated?
- Why do some students and families feel unsafe, while others feel safe and are not thriving?
- What, if anything, is preventing access to opportunities?
- How can you turn your school environment around for the better?

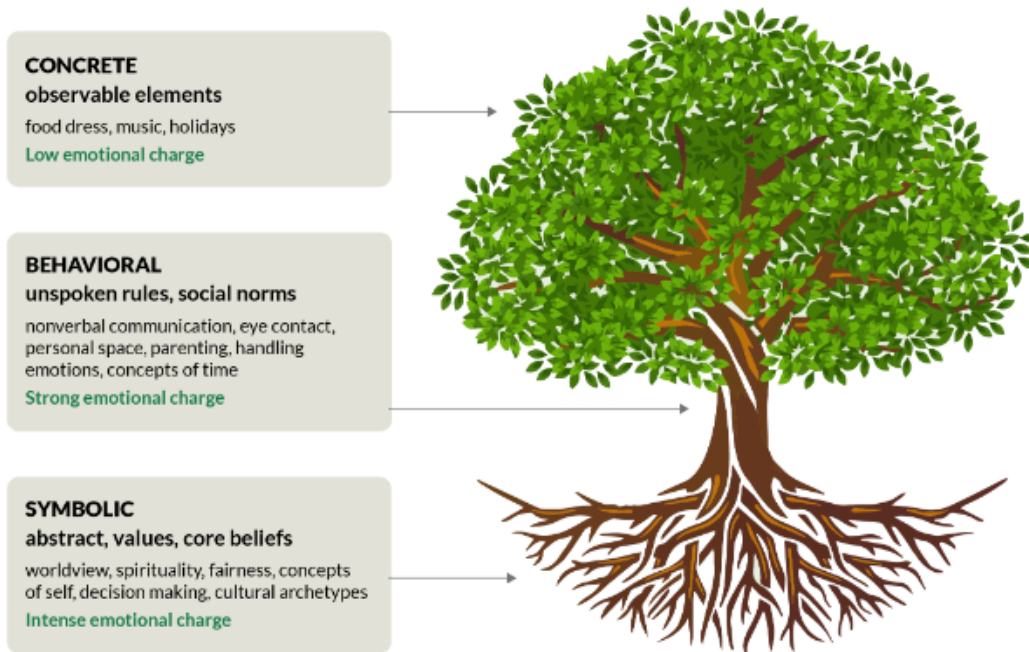
The questions are complex and can have a number of different answers. However, what we do know is that school and district leaders cannot make huge cultural shifts on their own. They must take place in collaboration *with* the school community (Four domains for rapid school improvement). The input and feedback of those around us and our commitment to attending to it is what supports necessary change. A key component of being able to ask better questions and obtaining better answers is being able to recognize our **subconscious “blind spots.”** And just like a car, using mirrors at various angles helps us understand where we are in relation to our students and families and thus, minimizes harm, enhances safety and allows for improved responsiveness when it comes to the learning needs of our students.

In this section, we will begin to explore some of the blind spots that can be addressed directly *by you* as school and district leaders.

- Blind Spot 1: Culture Informs Bias
- Blind Spot 2: Bias-Based Beliefs
- Intersectionality: A Navigational Mirror for Improved Responsiveness & Bridging Divides

Blind Spot 1: Culture Informs Bias

When thinking about culture and upbringing, the question is not if culture has impacted your beliefs about the groups of people represented by the students and families in your school(s), but to what extent. Zaretta Hammond’s culture tree below can help us understand this.



At the roots of the tree, we find our beliefs, values, worldview and how we see ourselves. These were all learned from people we know and love, such as our relatives, friends, teachers and spiritual leaders, as well as our own personal lived experiences – even from movies and television shows.

The tree trunk reflects how we behave as a result of these symbols.

And the very top of the tree are the leaves. And while they can seem small and somewhat inconsequential, they hold great insight into what gets celebrated, acknowledged and/or expressed (Hammond, 2015).

The Culture Tree prompts us to ask ourselves important self-awareness questions, such as:

- Base of the tree
 - How do I see myself?
 - How do I see historically marginalized communities? What informed that perspective? Entertainment? Media? Other?

- o What is my worldview about how people move up in this world and who has the best chances of doing that?
- o Do I see some people as deserving and others as undeserving?
- o Do I see some people as more valuable/important than others?
- o What is my philosophy about school and how schools should look, operate, function? What about the educational system?
- Tree trunk
 - o Who are the types of students/families I get along with? How do they act?
 - o Who are the type of students/families I hold in high esteem? How do they conduct themselves?
 - o Who are the students/families that I don't approve of/look down on? How do they act?
 - o Are there certain situations in which I feel uncomfortable interacting with students/families from a targeted or historically marginalized group? If so, in which cases? Why?
- Leaves
 - o What do I consider assets? Deficits?
 - o What types of attire, food, literature and other artistry do I celebrate or prefer?
 - o What attire, food, literature and artistry do I deem acceptable, "a classic" or aspirational?
 - o Is there anything from the four categories above that I find distasteful or insignificant? If so, what?
 - o Do my responses reflect a heavy leaning or preference toward some groups over others?

Now, return to the answers you gave in the Trunk and Leaves sections. *What experiences, beliefs, or values informed those responses?*

Are your cultural beliefs reflected in your school(s)' practices, regulations or procedures?

Might your cultural beliefs give some families in your school (or schools) a distinct edge over others?
Consider the following areas adapted from the Intercultural Development Research Association's Six Goals of Equity:

- Access & Inclusion – who's more likely to get a "seat at the table" and be heard? Who benefits?
- Treatment – does everyone feel welcomed, respected, supported and valued?
- Supports – whose needs are taken into consideration?
- Resources – are budget and personnel aligned with the needs of the populations reflected in the learning community?
- Information & Technology – do students have what they need in order to thrive in today's world?

Our answers can reflect *the extent* to which our cultural upbringing and reinforced social experiences over time have cultivated subconscious biases.

Going Deeper: Review the scenario, [Principal I.J.'s Story](#). What connections do you see to Blind Spot 1?

Blind Spot 2: Bias-Based Beliefs

Color-evasiveness, deficit thinking, and poverty disciplining are bias-based beliefs that have a particularly pronounced effect on inequitable outcomes in schools, particularly because they are “educational beliefs that project ideas of cognitive and behavioral ability and capacity” (Fergus, 2017). Additionally, they convey a single standard of achievement and one norm of conduct while simultaneously shunning differences and overlooking the assets therein (Milner, 2020).

<u>Color-Evasiveness</u>	
Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Color is not seen; cultural lived experiences are irrelevant (Bonilla-Silva, 2013 and Fergus, 2017).
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individualism ● Centering/prioritizing norms of the dominant culture (Milner 2020), including norms around hairstyles, literature, holidays
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leads to dismissal of assertions of systemic racism and systemic inequities which reinforces deficit thinking, poverty disciplining, and systemic inequities (Fergus, 2017) ● Culture, values, practices of school members not a part of the dominant culture are devalued, marginalized, ignored and/or “problematic.” (The Continuum CCPEP.ORG, n.d.) ● Invalidates lived racial experiences of students of color (Milner, 2020) ● Cultural background and experiences of the student body are minimally reflected or not considered when determining curriculum or drafting policies and procedures. ● Can result in students reliving traumatic experiences because of a lack of cultural sensitivity (Fergus, 2017) ● Conversations about discriminated groups, systemic inequities and social justice are avoided or penalized. ● Culture of fear, disappointment, tokenization or segregation (Milner, 2020) ● Students experience microaggressions* (Fergus, 2017) ● Missed opportunities to: (1) see the whole child; (2) learn about the students’ racial identities as well as their own and how it impacts what is taught; (3) broaden students’ horizons so they see themselves and their culture’s contributions to the curriculum as well as other culture’s contributions; and (4) prepare students to live and work in a diverse world (Milner, 2020).

<u>Deficit Thinking</u>	
--------------------------------	--

Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Certain groups of students/families/cultures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ do not care about their student’s academic performance. ○ aren’t naturally smart or capable of high academic achievement. ○ are not going to score high, if English is not their first language. ○ If they didn’t test well, they’re not going to do well in the class or successfully handle the curriculum. <p>(Milner, 2020, Valencia, 2012, and)</p>
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Credibility of limited experiences or interactions with students from certain cultural groups ● Using “leaves” or “trunks” as indicators of likelihood of student academic achievement ● Patterns that fit personal lived experiences ● The validity of one standard or limited measures to assess genius, talent and academic capabilities <p>(Milner, 2020)</p>
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Students with disabilities are presumed to not be capable [simply because] they’ve been identified as having a disability. And as a result, may not have access to the same opportunities as their peers” (CDE Office of Improvement Planning, et al). ● “Assumes a denial of values that supports education...[which] allows for abdication of [educators’] responsibility for connecting with students and families (CDE Office of Improvement Planning, et al). ● Students feel overlooked, lowered self-esteem ● “Other-imposed” self-fulfilling prophecy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pygmalion Effect. The Pygmalion Effect is a type of “other-imposed” self-fulfilling prophecy that states the way you treat someone has a direct impact on how that person acts (Schaedig, 2023). In other words, if we as educators expect certain actions from certain students, we are more likely to treat them in such a way that can lead to the anticipated actions. The students’ actions do not necessarily occur because we were right, but rather because of an internalized attitude the student adopted about themselves as a result of the ways we consciously or subconsciously treated them. ● Lowered expectations in the classroom; increased “busy-work” ● Lack of inclusive or rigorous curriculum ● Disproportionately low numbers of people of color in honors or AP classes ● Students experience microaggressions* (Fergus, 2017) ● Missed opportunities to learn what students know and build on their cultural assets in order to develop learning opportunities that challenge students <p>(Milner, 2020)</p>

<u>Poverty Disciplining</u>	
Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Low-income students/families, particularly those experiencing generational poverty: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack morals, good manners, and/or the ability to avoid self-destructive behavior ○ “Cannot follow directions” ○ “Defensive, victimized, emotional” <p>(Payne, 2003)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Don’t take responsibility for their actions or success ○ Are less motivated or less inclined to succeed ○ Don’t take school seriously <p>(Soss et al., 2011)</p>
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Meritocracy ● Compliance, assimilation to white dominant culture / “middle class norms” <p>(Milner, 2020 and Payne, 2003)</p>
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A tendency to look at and interact with students experiencing poverty through the lens of deficit-based thinking ● Assumption that low-income students will be disruptive, disobedient and disrespectful (Payne, 2003) ● Hyperfocused expectation that the poor students will act in a deviant way (Payne, 2003) ● Educators default to harsher treatment for students of low-income families rather than wealthier peers (Payne, 2003) ● Increased risk of segregated learning environments due to special education referrals (Milner, 2020) ● Student internalized feelings of not being good enough or wondering if they’ll ever going to be good enough <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Other-imposed” self-fulfilling prophecy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pygmalion Effect. ● Students experience microaggressions* (Fergus, 2017) ● Missed opportunities to: (1) learn more about students, families, and staff that make up your school/district learning community(ies); (2) develop trusting and engaging relationships with them; and (3) build on student, family, and community assets.

Reflection

Which bias-based beliefs are at play in your school or district? Use the graphic organizer to gather evidence.

Bias-based Belief	Evidence (consider evidence at the classroom, grade-level and school level)
-------------------	---

Color-evasiveness	
Deficit thinking	
Poverty disciplining	

Microaggressions

In each of the bias-based beliefs covered above, microaggressions were noted as an impact of educators' conscious and subconscious beliefs and values; but perhaps we can also think about them as byproducts

of our beliefs - small manifestations of what we think that show up in our interactions with students, families, and colleagues. According to Nadal, “**microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental actions (whether intentional or unintentional) that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to members of oppressed or targeted groups, including: people of color, women, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and Plus persons, persons with disabilities, and religious minorities (2014).**”

Microaggressions take the form of microassaults, microinsults and microinvalidations. Those who use them tend to think nothing of them or view them as inconsequential, thus viewing complaints of the oppressed or targeted groups as being “too sensitive.” However, the impact of microaggressions can be very serious. Let’s look at a few examples taken from the [College of DuPage library](#):

Microassaults are overt and conscious-explicit or subtle slights and insults expressed to marginalized groups. Microassaults can be:

- Verbal (e.g. name-calling and the use of epithets)
- Nonverbal (e.g. behavioral discrimination such as crossing the street or clutching a handbag in the presence of certain individuals)
- Environmental (e.g. offensive signs, posters, or other visual displays)

Microinsults are often covert and unconscious, meant to tear down a person’s identity through insensitive comments and the use of stereotypes. Examples include:

- Ascription of intelligence (e.g. unintelligent or smarter than average based on appearance or accent)
- Assumption of criminality (e.g. guarding belongings more carefully when around certain groups or expressing fear of certain groups)
- Assumption of immorality (e.g. assuming that poor people, undereducated people, LGBTQ people, or people of color are more likely to be devious, untrustworthy, or unethical)
- Making judgments about belonging (e.g. assuming people are foreign or don’t speak English well because of their appearance; questioning someone’s membership status such as “you don’t look disabled” or “you don’t seem that gay to me” or “if you were Jewish, wouldn’t you do x?”)

Microinvalidations are often covert or unconscious and used to cancel the thoughts, feelings, and lived experiences of marginalized individuals. Examples include:

- Denial of racial reality (e.g. dismissing claims that race was relevant to understanding a student’s experience)
- Denial or devaluing of experience or culture (e.g. ignoring the existence, histories, cultures of groups of people – assuming that others are like you)

While all the interactions noted above can occur within a brief period of time, recurring instances of microaggressions can result in depression, anxiety, trauma, and/or intense psychological distress (Nadal, 2014).

Reflection

Consider the following vignette from Chapter 2 of Fergus' book, *Solving Disproportionality and Achieving Equity: A Leader's Guide to Using Data to Change Hearts and Minds*. Do you notice any microaggressions? If so, what type(s)? Who might be impacted as a result? How?

During a classroom observation of middle school English language arts, the teacher wanted to have the students practice the concept of compare-and-contrast using a Venn diagram. The teacher drew on the board a Venn diagram and then wrote "U.S. Citizen" in the left circle and "illegal immigrants" in the right circle. The students were then asked to describe the two groups. The following are the words offered by the students: "U.S. Citizen" -- *belongs here, born here, speaks English, gets help from the government, birth certificate, and nice neighbors*; "Illegal Immigrants" -- *doesn't belong here, born in another country, speak[s] Spanish and are loud, can't get help from the government, no papers, sometimes not nice neighbors, and your family helps you a lot*. After the students shared these perspectives, the teacher focused on practicing the compare and contrast skill.

For additional examples of microaggressions, see:

[21 Racial Microaggressions You Hear on the Daily Basis](#)

[Addressing Microaggressions in the Classroom](#) (includes response approaches)

Intersectionality: A Navigational Mirror for Improved Responsiveness & Bridging Divides

As conveyed in the previous sections, "driving" without knowing our blindspots can leave those around us vulnerable to mental and physical harm while perpetuating the very inequities we deeply wish to change. So, how do you advance on this equity journey? How do you create learning communities that enable all children to flourish and each family the security of knowing you will do right by their child? You have already taken the first steps by assessing your learning opportunities and taking the time to expand your awareness.

Our next step will be to develop ways of thinking about ourselves and members of our school learning community(ies) that enable us to build the competencies that foster understanding, trust, relationship, dialogue, respect, compassion, and action. Using an identity wheel is a helpful aid in this process.

Review the circle below.



(Identity | LBGTIQ Intersect, n.d.)

First look at the inner circle, represented by the blue pie-cut shapes.

Think about how you describe yourself or how you might be identified by others.

- Then, ask yourself if you have felt powerful or powerless as a result of those identities? Was access or opportunity blocked because you hold that identity?
- Or, for some of those same identities, did you feel like access or opportunity was something you rarely, if ever, had to consider?
- Are there any instances where how you self-identify is different from how others identify you?
- What other feelings come up for you either because of how you've identified yourself or because of how others identify you?
- Did any of those identities cause you to feel shut out, ignored or not taken seriously?

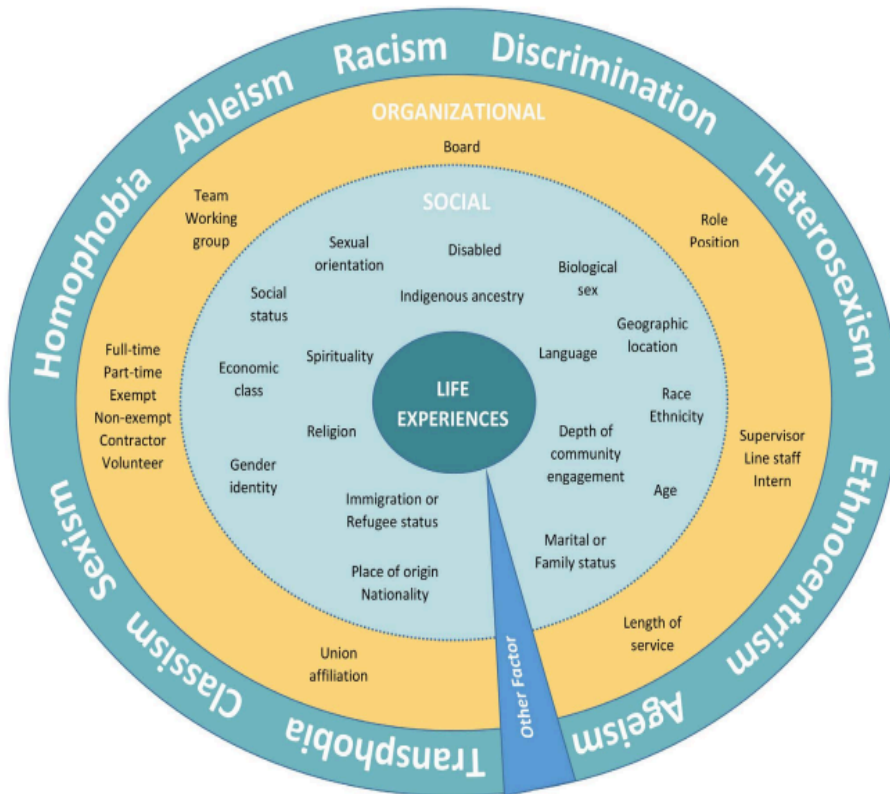
Next, look at the outer circle and all the areas bordering the blue pie-cut shapes. Listed are the many other identities we carry on a day-to-day basis.

- Consider the same questions as before.
- Did any of those identities ever make you feel like your value or your culture's value was in question?
- Do you find the topic of one of those identities makes you feel like you are in a high-stakes situation?
- Do you feel immense pride when you think about those identities? What has society said about that identity that makes you feel pride?
- Do any of those identities make you feel judged, ashamed, not good enough?

By continually reflecting on the identity wheel and the preceding questions, we realize that people from very different backgrounds can have similar feelings. By acknowledging that, we become more receptive to what is said or shared, which enables us to be willing and effective **active listeners** (de Guzman et al., 2016). Through **active listening**, you can affirm that those you work with and serve have lived experiences just as valid and real as your own. As an active listener, you're better able to hear the heart

of the message shared with you from school community members because of a lack of resistance or defensiveness that allows for you to focus on what is said, ask questions when you don't understand and provide an answer, if requested.

Let's look at another version of the identity wheel.



(The Nonprofit Association of Oregon, 2018)

In the third ring from the center, we see several organization-based categories.

- Which, based on your identities, give you an advantage? Disadvantage?
- Were there certain rules you didn't know about that prevented you from fitting in? Were you excluded? Segregated?

Finally, look at the outermost ring.

- Have you ever experienced discrimination in any of those areas as a result of your identities? If so, which area(s)? How did they treat you? What was the impact?

For many of us, the exercise above revealed some incredible opportunities and accomplishments that have been a source of pride. However, there were also considerable challenges or barriers we had to overcome. For some of us, they were discriminatory, and yet for others, those discriminatory practices contributed to serious inequities in our lives, such that we may still be trying to overcome the impact or wonder if we ever will.

Diving deep into our identities and probing our experiences can help open the door to understanding when students and families share their lived experiences and the impact particular processes or

practices have on them. Although you can never completely walk in their shoes, becoming conscious of your own struggles as a result of your identity can help you empathize and become more sensitive to – or discerning of – the impact of a stance, action or policy at the school or district level. This is **effective engagement** – the second component in cultural competence. In the third component of cultural competence, school and district leaders engage in **productive dialogue** with community members where both learn from each other (de Guzman et al., 2016). We will further elaborate on communication methods in the next section, Understanding Others.

Reflection

Think about the insights you’ve gleaned as a result of analyzing identities. What changes can you implement in your interactions with all students and families to create a safe, inclusive, and equitable learning environment? What one change can you commit to making today?

Going Deeper: Review [Principal I.J.’s Story](#). What would you recommend she do to change the experiences of students and families at her school?

For additional information about developing competencies:
[Culturally Responsive Teaching: A 50-State Survey of Teaching Standards](#)

We recommend retaking the [Understanding Self](#) section of the [Self-Assessment](#) after completing this section to see areas where you may have shifted.

Links to other sections

[Introduction](#)
[Understanding Context](#)

[Understanding Self-
Implementation](#)

[Understanding Others](#)
[Reflection and Evaluation](#)

Understanding Others

Once a leader has interrogated and is aware of their own biases, thoughts and actions (see [Understanding Self](#) section), it is important that they understand and examine the current and historical experiences of others and work to understand the lived experiences of students, families, board and community members whose identities might differ from theirs.

In this section, information and resources will be shared to accomplish the following goals:

- Acknowledging historical inequity for some groups and one's place (as a beneficiary)
- Considering a situation from the perspective of those who have been excluded
- Understanding that inequity in schools is a microcosm of inequities in society
- Understanding how student identity (i.e., cultural, SES, ability, etc.) can influence learning and success
- Perceiving culture as an asset and strength
- Using inclusive practices to respectfully engage key stakeholders across differences

What can I learn in this section?

Take the assessments below to evaluate where your strengths and opportunities for improvement lie when it comes to understanding the people you are serving, especially those who might have different identities and lived experiences than you do. [Likert Scale](#): Never (1), Rarely (2), Occasionally (3), Frequently (4), Always (5)

Statement	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Occasionally (3)	Frequently (4)	Always (5)
I seek opportunities to learn about the cultural practices in our school community, including staff, families and students.					
I strive to understand how inequity in my school(s) relates to inequities in society.					
I strive to be aware of groups that have been historically excluded in our school. I strive to be aware of groups that have been historically excluded in our district. I strive to be aware of groups that have been historically excluded in our community.					

I perceive culture as an asset and strength.					
I actively work to avoid the trap of “knowing what is good” for someone else.					
I strive to understand how cultural identity can influence learning and success.					
I strive to understand the inequities that exist within my school. I strive to understand inequities that exist within my district. I strive to understand the inequities that exist within my community.					
I strive to notice the structural barriers that contribute to the exclusion of groups.					
I work to build my capacity to effectively lead diverse school communities.					
Students are underperforming because their families are not taking advantage of the existing school opportunities.					
I strive to implement change that benefits my school’s underrepresented families.					
I worry about my school’s learning community getting distracted by things like race, faith, attire or hairstyles so I try to remove anything that highlights differences from the school’s environment.					

Scoring:

Because we are all on this learning journey and can never “arrive,” we strongly encourage you to read the entire Understanding Others section from start to finish in the pages that follow. However, you can also start with the content that aligns to your scores.

If most of your answers were “Always” and “Frequently,” the section covering “Community and Family Engagement” is an optimal place to start. If most of your answers were “Rarely” and “Never,” we recommend starting at the beginning of Understanding others with “Identifying Systemic Barriers.”

Identifying Systemic Barriers

When we see people treating each other unfairly, we may think that just by addressing the behavior, the problem is addressed. However, making the problem about individuals’ behavior alone does not address the context in which the behavior is operating. We need to look beyond the surface to see what else is going on, because like an iceberg, 90% of what is happening is underwater and out of our view. That is, defined behavior expectations are critical to change, but we need to look at the structural problem to identify built-in mechanisms that support current behaviors in order to create new paths (policies, processes, practices) that will sustain change in a system. From the “Equity & Inclusion Lens Guide. 3rd Ed.” 2018; 2nd Ed.,2015; 1st Ed., 2010. City of Ottawa and City for All Women Initiative (CAWI)

What are the systemic barriers experienced by students, families and staff in your community?	What data supports this? Go to Understanding Context for resources using an equity lens with data.

Check assumptions From the “Equity & Inclusion Lens Guide. 3rd Ed, 2018; 2nd Ed., 2015; 1st Ed., 2010. City of Ottawa and City for All Women Initiative (CAWI)

Considering a situation from the perspective of people who are or who have been excluded is a key step in promoting equity and inclusion. It is an ongoing learning process for everyone.

- **What assumptions do I have about various groups?**
- **What assumptions might members of various groups have about other groups (i.e., teachers and students, families and teachers, the board and school staff)?**

Historically excluded groups From “Equity & Inclusion,” 3rd, 2nd, 2st eds.City of Ottawa and City for All Women Initiative (CAWI)

There are specific groups or identities who have been historically excluded in an ableist, white, male-dominated, heterosexual society that favors urbanism. It is important to remember that there is diversity within each of these groups. All groups are not at risk of exclusion in every context. You may identify other people who have been historically excluded in a given context or in the work you are doing. This list is not intended to be all-encompassing. The way a group of people chooses to identify themselves can and will expand beyond the groups described below. Each of us could identify with more than one group. It is this intersection of who we are that affects how we experience our workplaces and the communities and geographic regions where we live.

- Native & Indigenous People
- People Living in Poverty
- People of Color

People with Disabilities
 LGBT2SQIA+ people
 Immigrants & Refugees
 Older Adults
 Minority Religious Groups
 Women
 Youth
 Who Else?

Reflection

Probing Questions	Evidence
What has been the experience of historically excluded groups in your school/district? What data do you have to support this?	
In what ways have members of these groups been meaningfully included in discussions and decisions? meaningfully included in discussions and decisions?	
What policies or practices [policies or practices] have contributed to their exclusion?	
Who is accountable for making changes that ensure inclusion?	

Go Deeper!

[Go to the Resource Appendix for more guiding questions to help you understand others.](#)

Community and Family Engagement

Understanding Others involves engaging the community and families you serve in conversations and decision-making. Research has shown that more will be accomplished if schools, families and communities work together to promote successful students. (Joyce Epstein, Johns Hopkins University, National Network of Partnership Schools)

The steps to create a Community Engagement Plan are simple and direct.

1. The first step is to identify your current reality and build goals to address this reality.
2. Invite participation from those who are impacted by the education system, and invite volunteers, consumers and partner agencies to participate in the design and implementation of the campaign.

Engaging the community supports the dialogue and actions necessary for objectives to be realized.

Click here for more on why engaging the community is critical to student success!

Five Guiding Principles for Involving Parents in Schools (Comer and Haynes)

Providing opportunities for engaging parents will not be successful without a mindset that sees families as equal partners and seeks true genuine collaboration. Comer and Haynes provide five guiding principles for involving families in schools.

1. A no-fault approach, focusing not on who is to blame, but on what can be done
2. Coordination and cooperation among all adults concerned with the child's best educational interests
3. Decision by consensus whenever possible
4. Regular meetings representing the entire school community
5. Active involvement of parents

Click here for Community Engagement Checklist

Click here to make a Community Engagement Action Plan

Click here for action steps for educators

Guiding Questions:

1. *In what ways is our school welcoming already?*
2. *What immediate steps can we take to make our school even more welcoming?*
3. *What steps can we take to involve more community and parent stakeholders in our school improvement work?*

Unified Improvement Planning (UIP) Connection

Think about one of your school's or district's UIP Priority Performance Challenges. How is the challenge experienced by groups that have historically been excluded in your school, district and community? How can these student groups and their families be brought into the creation and implementation of Major Improvement Strategies and any action steps to collaboratively solving this challenge?

Links to other sections

Introduction
[Understanding Context](#)

[Understanding Self-Implementation](#)

[Understanding Others Reflection and Evaluation](#)

Understanding Context

The Understanding Context section is designed to help readers and users understand differences between students, laws/policies that impact students and how these aspects impact learning and self-development. This section also includes naming our current reality, school-based policy best practices, different datasets to review with an equity lens, gathering data from community, family, staff and students, examples of survey questions and tips to increase feedback participation. This section has several goals.

- You will understand more background on the laws and policies that support equity-based decisions at schools.
 - You will understand the data landscape across Colorado and what data to look for within schools to best understand differences.
 - You will better understand how student identity and differences can influence learning and success.
-

What can I learn in this section?

Take the assessments below to evaluate where your strengths and opportunities for improvement lie when it comes to understanding the context you're working in. [Likert Scale](#): Never (1), Rarely (2), Occasionally (3), Frequently (4), Always (5)

Statement	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Occasionally (3)	Frequently (4)	Always (5)
I strive to serve all students in my school community based on their individual needs.					
I strive to understand the structural inequities in my school. I strive to understand the structural inequities in my district.					
I strive to understand inequities that exist within the larger educational system. I strive to understand inequities that exist within society as a whole.					
I strive to address inequities in my school.					

I strive to address inequities in my district.					
I strive to address inequities that exist within the larger educational system.					
I strive to address inequities that exist within society as a whole.					
I understand how to best serve all students in my school community(ies) based on their needs.					
I see the structural inequities in my school/district and the methods and beliefs through which those inequitable practices are upheld.					
I believe that inequities in school are a reflection of larger inequities in the educational system and society as a whole.					
I don't think there is much I can do when addressing inequities in my school or district.					

Scoring:

Because we are all on this learning journey and can never “arrive,” we strongly encourage you to read the entire Understanding Context section from start to finish in the pages that follow. However, you can also start with the content that aligns to your scores.

If most of your answers were “Always” and “Frequently,” the section covering “Colorado Demographics/Data” is an optimal place to start. If most of your answers were “Occasionally,” “Rarely,” and “Never,” we recommend starting at the beginning of Understanding others with “Naming Our Current Reality.”

Naming Our Current Reality

When students are encouraged to embrace and celebrate their cultural identities in educational settings, they experience a positive impact on their self-esteem, motivation and engagement with learning. Studies have shown that students who have a strong cultural identity are more likely to feel a sense of pride in their heritage, which fosters a [greater sense of confidence in their academic abilities](#) and willingness to participate actively in the classroom.

When students feel like they belong in their school environment, they experience a greater sense of connectedness with their peers, teachers and the overall school community. This sense of belonging reduces feelings of isolation and loneliness, and creates an inclusive atmosphere where students can thrive academically and emotionally.

Schools that prioritize fostering a sense of belonging also see a decline in absenteeism and disciplinary issues, as students are more likely to be engaged and motivated to attend classes regularly.

Context Activity

Review the circles in the image below. The first three circles are a visual insight into unintended consequences. By looking at the placement of circles that differ, we see marginalization, tokenization and segregation. The culture in those circles can be marked by an “us” versus “them” mentality, particularly in interactions between students and educators and educators and families. And psychological safety is compromised at varying levels due to assaults, insults and invalidation, which may or may not be met with support from school or district leadership. In these three circles, the focus is on “othering.” Fear, mental and physical insecurity, lowered expectations and “self-fulfilling prophecies” of lower achievement and higher discipline infractions flourish there.

Conversely, the final circle – “Inclusion” – is a state of intentionality where school and district leaders consciously override deeply ingrained implicit biases and stereotypes at the thought, action and appreciation levels. Assets across all cultures are now recognized, norms are co-created with the school community, and beliefs about all students are affirming. The consequences are also intentional: students and families feel welcomed, spaces are inclusive, and all are encouraged and given adequate supports and opportunities to thrive.

Another key distinguishing feature here is that unlike its predecessors, Inclusion does not focus on fear or othering, or assumptions based on labels. Rather, Inclusion focuses on our practice. In other words, are we underserving our families? If so, who? And how? Problem-solving mode now takes the focus off students and families and onto how we have thought about policies and procedures, supports, curriculum and instruction, and resource allocation.

Curiosity and continuous self-reflection here are key. We begin going outside ourselves and our usual peer group for all the answers. Instead, we turn to the school community members we serve and ask for both input and feedback, reflecting thoughtfully on how to use the input and feedback before taking action.

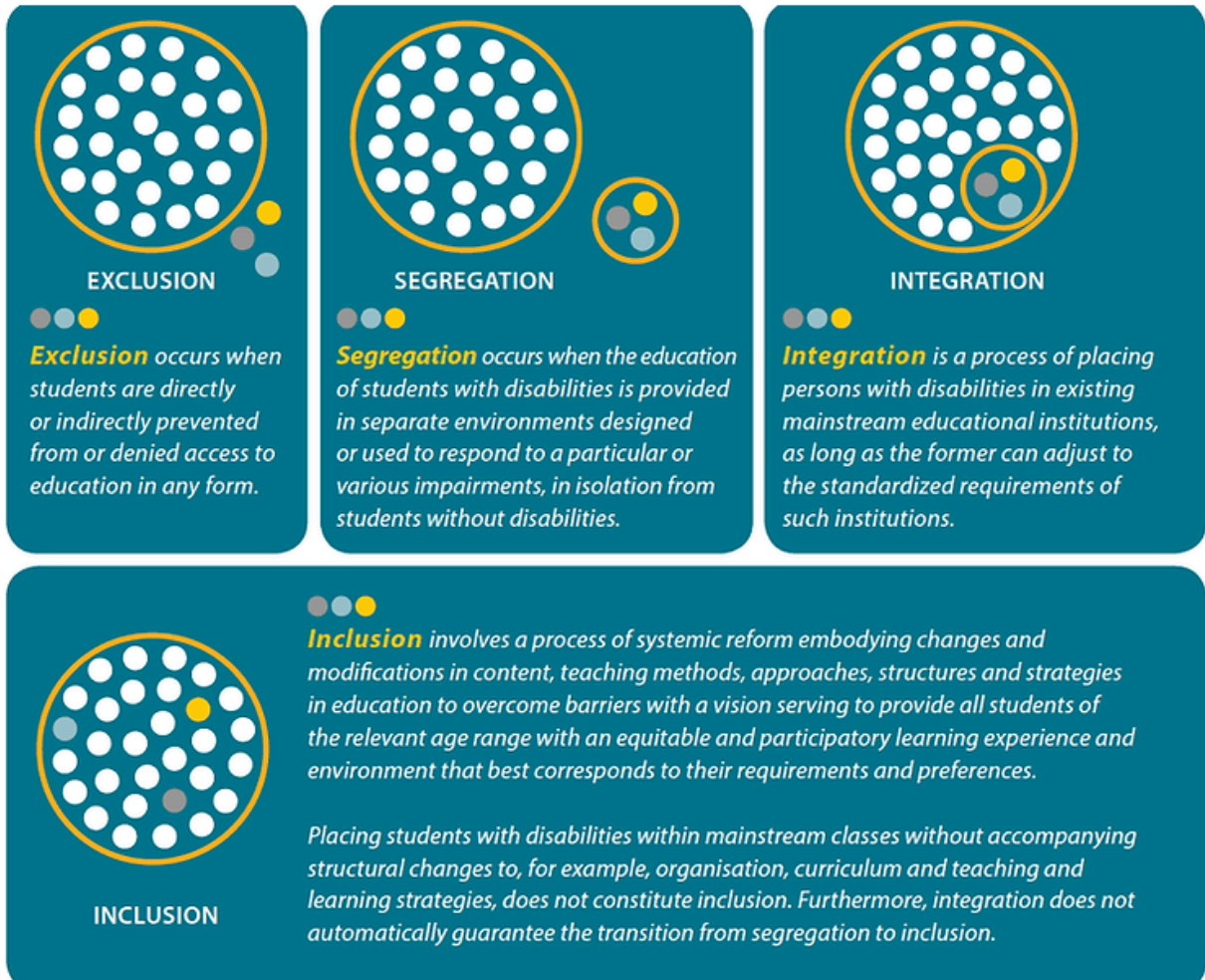


Image retrieved from: [A Summary of the Evidence on Inclusive Education](#)

Context Reflection

Use the table below to reflect on the current reality of your learning environment.

Which circle(s) reflect the culture of your school community?	What factors are contributing to your current school environment? What would the experiences of students and their families be as a result?

Reflect on the context of your school to help generate evidence of success and opportunities.

Prompts: Consider evidence at the classroom, grade level, content area and school level.

Evidence of students embracing and celebrating their cultural identities	Opportunities for students to embrace and celebrate their cultural identities

Prompts: Consider evidence from students, teachers, families and staff.

Evidence that students feel a sense of belonging	Opportunities for students to feel a sense of belonging

Next Steps

1. Discuss your reflections with others to gain their perspectives and augment your evidence. What was confirmed? What was challenged?
2. Examine data that might reflect areas of strength or opportunity. What data supported your reflections? What data was surprising?

When exploring local data, it is important to consider comparison points. The next section provides guidance on exploring and considering data.

Colorado Demographics/Data

When reviewing data to explore trends and differences among student populations, it is integral to take into account differences in income levels, racial backgrounds and academic performance, etc.

Inequity can manifest in various ways and prevail in the data differently. For example, by analyzing data on low-income and high-income students, one may uncover disparities in access to educational resources and opportunities. Low-income students might face challenges such as limited access to integral courses, remediation, tutoring or extracurricular activities, which can hinder their academic progress and [overall development compared to their high-income counterparts](#). Similarly, when examining data across different racial, ability or cultural groups, disparities may arise in disciplinary actions, academic achievement, representation in advanced courses, graduation/dropout/truancy rates, etc.

Identifying areas of drastic differences is vital in data analysis as it pinpoints where resources and attention are most urgently needed and what areas of improvement exist. This could include significant discrepancies in standardized test scores, graduation rates, SAT scores, attendance or participation in advanced placement courses. By recognizing these disparities, schools can target specific interventions and allocate resources strategically to promote greater equity and foster an inclusive learning environment.

Avoiding Confirmation Bias

Avoiding [confirmation bias](#) in the classroom, where teachers might hold biases about certain students, is key for creating an equitable and inclusive learning environment. To mitigate this bias, educators should focus on [self-awareness](#), regularly reflect on their beliefs/attitudes and actively challenge any biases they may uncover. This also pertains to reflecting on data related to specific student groups, as the next section dives into. Fostering open communication with students, where students share their thoughts, can also help teachers better understand each student's unique strengths and challenges.

The following data tables/dashboards depict a few key ways to look at data from your school or in your district, and also allow for opportunities to make some cross-school/district comparisons to see what equitable actions/changes may need to be made. Before looking at the data, consider the following questions:

Put on Your Equity Lens (Guiding Questions)

1. Which populations are underrepresented in your school/district? What **patterns of academic achievement or metrics do you see within these populations?**
 - a. Are **students with exceptionalities** (those identified as having a disability, or gifted and talented) overrepresented or underrepresented in your school/district?
 - b. [What are some common beliefs, misconceptions or stereotypes about specific demographic groups in your school/district?](#)
2. What are the **different attendance levels, graduation rates and proficiency levels** of student groups? Which outcomes do you find surprising?
 - a. What **policies or practices may be related to these disproportionate outcomes?**
3. What **can you learn from other districts or schools** that have similar demographics and student groups as yours?
4. What are the **demographic differences between your school/district's students compared to staff?**

[Resource: Link to Note Taking Worksheet](#)

Note: It would be beneficial to look through these datasets and use the Note Taking Worksheet in a collaborative way with colleagues to discuss data differences among students and policies that impact those differences.

Datasets

- [Financial Transparency Comparison Tool](#)
- [District and School Level Race/Ethnicity/Lunch Eligibility Data](#)
- [Graduation Data Dashboard](#)
- [Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism Data](#)
- [Discipline Data \(Suspension/Expulsion\)](#)
- [Dropout Rate Dashboard](#)
- **Student Data**
 - [Kindergarten School Readiness Data](#)
 - [Math, ELA, Spanish, SAT Proficiency by School/Demographics](#)
 - [District and School Dashboard | CDE \(state.co.us\)](#)
 - [Healthy Kids Colorado Survey](#)
- **Staff Data**
 - [Personnel Turnover Rate by District and Position Categories \(XLSX\)](#)

- [Principal and Assistant Principal by Gender and Race \(XLSX\)](#)
 - [Count of Teachers by District, Ethnicity and Gender \(XLSX\)](#)
 - [Student-Teacher Ratios by School \(XLSX\)](#)
 - [Student-Teacher Ratios by District \(XLSX\)](#)
 - [Counselor, Psychologist, Social Worker, Registered Nurse Position to Student Ratios \(XLSX\)](#)
-

Understanding Policies and Possible Changes

Across Colorado and the nation, there are numerous examples of equity-driven policies. ***In many cases, equity work, is not a “nice to have,” it’s the law.*** The following sections explore **federal/state statutes** that support equity work and **specific school/district-based policy examples** and models to learn from.

Federal and State Statutes

The CDE is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination in relation to race, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status or disability in admissions, access to treatment or employment in educational programs or activities it operates.

Federal Law

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 **protects individuals from discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin in any program or activity that receives federal financial assistance** from the Department of Health and Human Services. Specific discriminatory actions prohibited under Title VI include:

- Providing services more limited in scope or lower in quality
- Limiting participation in a program

The Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 requires districts, schools and public charter schools to take action to overcome academic and linguistic barriers to students’ equal participation.

Plyler v. Doe: Right to Attend Free Public School of 1982 was a Supreme Court case that dictated that public schools **may not deny admission to a student** during initial enrollment or at any other time **on the basis of undocumented status**.

For more general information on nationally protected classes in education, such as American Indian and Alaska Native students, English Language Learners, students with disabilities, etc., [please see this federal resource](#).

Colorado Law

Colorado prohibits discrimination in the areas of: **race, color, age, physical/mental disability, national origin, religion/creed, ancestry, retaliation, sex, marriage to a**

coworker, sexual orientation and marital status. The Colorado Civil Rights Division works to assure that all persons are afforded the equal protection of the law.

School District Policy

An important starting point for school districts in the prevention of civil rights concerns is the issuance of comprehensive policies based on current laws prohibiting discrimination within all programs and activities. Such policies place staff, students and the public on notice regarding expectations and also provide standards for taking action when problems arise.

Fairness and equity in policymaking is done with intention. **Policymaking bodies must pay close attention to the impact of their policies and play an active role in ensuring that both their intent and impact are consistent with a community's expressed values.** The measure of accountability and assessment are whether policies and rulemaking advance a shared agenda of fairness, opportunity and access.

Examples of Best Practices

The following list has examples of equity-based approaches to policies that districts or schools have implemented and why. Click on the links below to go deeper with additional resources and information.

[General Policy Changes and Best Practices](#)

- o Policy Inventory Audit
- o Socioeconomic-Based School Assignment
- o Culturally Responsive Curriculum
- o Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum
- o Empathy Interviews
- **Teacher Recruitment Best Practices**
- **Recruitment and Retention Incentives**
- **Grow-Your-Own Programs**

[Student-Based Multi-Tiered System of Supports \(MTSS\) Best Practices](#)

- **Personalized Learning**
 - o Project-Based Learning
 - o Extracurricular Activities and Clubs
 - o Attendance Supports
 - o Trauma-Informed Attendance Policies
 - o Culturally Responsive Attendance Policies
 - o Incentive-Based Attendance Programs
- **Community Partnership Initiatives**
 - o Flexible Attendance Policies
 - o Transportation Assistance

- o Early Warning Systems
- o School-Home Communication
- **Supplemental Instruction**
 - o Response to Intervention (RTI) Framework
 - o Assistive Technology Integration
 - o Transition Services (High School to Workforce)
 - o Parental Involvement and Advocacy
 - o Multilingual Learners Student Support
- **Academic Support for Students Facing Academic Challenges**
 - o Universal Screening
 - o Early Intervention Programs
 - o Summer Learning Opportunities
 - o Extended Learning Time
 - o Addressing Disparities in Resource Allocation
- **Academic Support for Students Not Being Challenged in School**
 - o Accelerated Learning Programs
 - o Subject or Grade Skipping
 - o Gifted and Talented (GAT) Programs and Infusion in Classrooms
 - o Early College Programs
 - o Competitions and Olympiads
 - o Virtual Learning Opportunities
- **AP and High-Demand Course Support**
 - o Pre-AP and Preparatory Programs
 - o Financial Support for AP Exams
 - o Virtual AP and High-Demand Course Options

Behavioral and Sense of Belonging Support Best Practices

- **Elimination of Zero-Tolerance Discipline Policies**
 - o Restorative Justice Practices
 - o Trauma-Informed Practices
 - o Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
- **Wraparound Services**
- **Supporting LGBTQ+ Students**

Technology Support Best Practices

- **One-to-One Technology and Mobile Wi-Fi Initiatives**
- **Digital Equity Grants and Collaboration with Community**
 - o Leveraging E-Rate Program (a federal program that supports schools and libraries in obtaining affordable telecommunications and internet access)
- **Digital Literacy Training**
- **Extending Technology Access Hours**

Unified Improvement Planning (UIP) Connection

Using the list provided, choose a [dataset](#) to explore your school or district (i.e., student achievement data, staff demographic data, financial data). Looking at the data, what might that information suggest about what *systems* contribute to equity or performance challenges in your school or district?

Which of the [school district policies](#) listed above could you add into your UIP to help remove barriers you see in the data?

Gathering Information

An important aspect of understanding your context is gathering information from the families and communities you serve. Surveys are one way to collect this information. Soliciting feedback during scheduled meetings (parent/teacher conferences, parent/teacher association meetings, school board meetings) throughout the year is another way to collect data. Below are equity-focused guiding questions to help you gather information and understand your community, examples of questions to include in pulse check surveys and tips on increasing community participation in feedback.

Guiding Questions to Help Gathering/Understanding Your Community

1. Will your **data gathering plan** (surveys, data review, etc.) **identify specific areas where you may unintentionally limit equity and inclusion?**
 - a. Example: **safety, accessibility, affordability, cultural specificity, family responsibilities, access to decision-making, racial profiling, etc.**
2. What **current statistics would help you understand systemic barriers** and inequities?
3. **Who should be included** in different types of feedback opportunities?
4. **Who should have access to specific data** on the school and feedback collected via surveys?
5. **How will you report back the findings** and next steps to the people who were involved in feedback?

Surveying Your Community

Surveys should occur throughout the year to ensure progress and/or new insights are captured (beginning of year, midyear, end of year and pulse checks based on current needs). The following questions are categorized by the intended audience of the survey question. Click on the link to view sample questions and for tips to increase participation.

- [Examples of Student Survey Questions](#)
- [Examples of Family/Caregiver Survey Questions](#)
- [Examples of Teacher/Faculty Survey Questions](#)
- [Increasing Participation in Feedback \(Tips\)](#)

Unified Improvement Planning (UIP) Connection

Surveying community members can itself be an important source of data to identify root causes and part of UIP work. Community surveys can also help schools and districts better understand the academic and demographic [datasets](#) collected across the state and what Major Improvement Strategies to implement.

Links to other sections

Introduction

[Understanding Context](#)

**[Understanding Self-
Implementation](#)**

**[Understanding Others
Reflection and Evaluation](#)**

Implementation

Shaping mindsets and implementing policies and practices that are equity- and inclusion-focused is primarily an adaptive, rather than a technical, challenge. As such, these actions require broad partnership and investment, collective action, and continuous learning and improvement cycles. The Colorado MTSS framework can guide the implementation planning process and build the structures necessary for continuous improvement.

[Colorado Multi-Tiered System of Supports \(COMTSS\)](#) is a prevention-based framework using team-driven leadership and data-based problem solving to improve the outcomes of every student through family, school, and community partnerships, comprehensive assessment, and a layered continuum of supports. Implementation science and universal design for learning are employed to create one integrated system that focuses on increasing academic and behavioral outcomes to equitably support the varying needs of all students.

Using systems level thinking to equip staff, teachers, and families will ensure that all students are afforded the opportunity to obtain an equitable education to succeed academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally over their lifespan.

COMTSS includes five Essential Components that create a more efficient and effective system of supports that benefit the outcomes of all students including those in low performing schools:

1. **Team-Driven Shared Leadership:** Teaming processes and structures that focus on distributing responsibility and shared decision-making across and within regions, districts, and schools to effectively design and use systems of training, coaching, resources, implementation, and evaluation.
2. **Data-Based Problem Solving and Decision-Making:** A continuous improvement process used by teams to collect, analyze, and evaluate information to inform decision making at the system and student levels.
3. **Family, School, and Community Partnerships:** Families, early-childhood programs, schools, and communities actively partnering to develop, implement, and evaluate effective and equitable practices to improve educational outcomes for children and youth.
4. **Comprehensive Screening and Assessment System:** A Comprehensive Screening and Assessment System is the coordinated effort of gathering information across multiple measures to support decision making at the system and student level for the whole child.
5. **Layered Continuum of Supports (LCS) (Evidence Based Practices, Instruction, and Interventions):** Ensuring that every student receives equitable whole child supports that are evidenced based, culturally responsive, matched to need, and developmentally appropriate through layered supports.

[Colorado's approach to improvement planning](#) is "that by engaging in a *continuous improvement cycle* to manage performance, districts and schools will be more effective and student outcomes will improve" (Colorado Department of Education Unified Improvement Planning Handbook, April 2023). Specifically, Colorado describes the following four activities:

*

- *Focus* attention on the right things (performance indicators)
- *Evaluate* performance by gathering, analyzing and interpreting data about performance
- *Plan* improvement strategies based on performance data and root cause analysis
- *Implement* planned improvement strategies

What can I learn in this section?

This section of the toolkit aims to support you in implementing continuous improvement cycles with a renewed or sharpened focus on equity toward the following goals:

- Ensuring action is taken (empowering others, initiating change, locating resources) toward creating and sustaining a more equitable and inclusive learning environment
- Designing, refining and implementing policies and practices that respect families' languages, race/ethnicity and neighborhoods and recognize diverse families as partners
- Identifying and breaking down barriers to success for all student populations by creating conditions for underrepresented groups to participate fully while maintaining their cultural differences
- Harnessing aspects of culture to optimize effective teaching, learning and leadership
- Promoting community building to achieve common goals among disparate constituents

Importantly, understanding ourselves, others and the context we work in are essential steps in taking action to effectively solve a challenge. Implementing an equity-focused plan is not possible without first engaging in the work of [Understanding Self](#), [Understanding Others](#) and [Understanding Context](#). Content in all those sections is relevant to the continuous improvement process. Planning and action that happen without work to understand yourself and others in your school community may inadvertently regress equity. If you have come directly to this Implementation section, please refer back to the first three sections before proceeding.

Assessment Questions

Take the assessments below to evaluate where your strengths and opportunities for improvement lie when it comes to implementing equity work. [Likert Scale](#): Never (1), Rarely (2), Occasionally (3), Frequently (4), Always (5)

Statement	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Occasionally (3)	Frequently (4)	Always (5)
-----------	--------------	---------------	---------------------	-------------------	---------------

When designing school policies, I strive to remove barriers to participation for our diverse school communities.					
When complaints of discrimination come to me, I take immediate action to review those concerns.					
When addressing complaints of discrimination, I take immediate action to prevent further occurrence.					
I believe it is my duty to advocate for all students despite potential opposition.					
When making decisions that affect school communities, I create conditions for underrepresented groups to participate fully in the input process.					
I strive to include the strengths of all cultures in my school community.					
I have a vision of what equity looks like in my school/district for all student groups.					
I know how to make my vision of equity for all student groups a reality.					

Scoring:

Because we are all on this learning journey and can never “arrive,” we strongly encourage you to read the entire Implementation section from start to finish in the pages that follow. However, if you find it more helpful to start with content that aligns to your scores, please see the guidance below.

If most of your answers were “Always” and “Frequently,” you may find the “Establishing Partnership and Inviting Investment” a helpful next step. If most of your answers were “Occasionally,” “Rarely”, or “Never,” we recommend starting at the beginning of Implementation and starting at “Entry Point 1” or “Entry Point 2.”

Where to begin?

Regardless of where you and your school are in your current continuous improvement cycle, it is always the right time to infuse equity-based decision-making into work that supports students and school staff. If you are in the midst of implementing an already finalized improvement plan and want ideas for continuing to implement with equity in mind, **Entry Point 1** may be the most helpful. If you are looking

forward to planning your school or districts next strategic improvement plan from scratch, **Entry Point 2** provides more comprehensive guidance and examples.

[Entry Point 1: Implementing a *current* improvement plan with an equity mindset](#)

For administrators who are in the middle of implementing their district or school's UIP or a 90-day plan, Colorado READ Act strategies or any other improvement plan

[Entry Point 2: Designing a *future* improvement plan with equity in mind](#)

For administrators who are drafting or considering future improvement plans

In addition to ongoing, system-level equity work, you may find yourself at **Entry Point 3**, needing a plan to respond immediately to a specific incident of racial harm or other identity-based harm. While we often see harm occurring in schools based on a student's race, harm can occur based on a wide variety of student-identity characteristics. For example, a student may be targeted due to being a native or indigenous person, living in poverty, having a disability, identifying as LGBTQ+, being a refugee or immigrant, speaking a particular language, belonging to a particular religious group or being of a particular sex or gender, among others. These harms can occur during or between classes, outside of school and online via social media. Planning a response protocol ahead of time ensures administration can respond quickly and effectively when an incident arises. Some suggestions for creating a response are available in [Responding Immediately to Racial and Other Identity-Based Harm](#) in the Resource Appendix. After addressing any specific incident that arises, school or district leadership should think about how to address the problematic behavior at a system level, utilizing Entry Point 1 or Entry Point 2.

Entry Point 1: Implementing a current plan with an equity mindset

Start here if you have already finalized or are currently implementing your Unified Improvement Plan or similar continuous improvement plan.

You already have identified Priority Performance Challenges, identified root causes and planned action steps and implementation benchmarks. Even if your school or district did not have equity top of mind when creating the UIP or other plans, these existing plans can still be implemented with an equity lens. You and your leadership team can keep your current actions AND consider doing the following:

1. Be aware of and monitor the mindsets of yourself and your staff, especially about the abilities or inherent qualities of students. Ask, are those mindsets limiting or rooted in [unintentional bias?](#)
2. Consider the major players in this challenge (likely: leadership, staff, students and families). Ask, does [each group understand their responsibilities](#) in helping achieve the collective goals?
3. Examine the students impacted by the action. Ask, are some student groups [overrepresented](#) in this intervention? For example, being identified for Tier 2 or 3 academic and behavioral supports.
4. Observe if attendance is impacting how effective interventions are for students. Ask if some students miss out due to [chronic absenteeism?](#)
5. [Inform or engage families meaningfully](#) at each stage implementing and assessing those actions.
6. If your plans include adding academic interventions, coach teachers to implement academic supports by using a [variety of strategies that are identity-affirming strategies and support every child having access to content while offering that tutoring.](#)
7. If your plans include hiring additional staff, use [inclusive hiring practices](#) that help match diversity of the staff to the diversity of the student body.

8. As you collect impact data, consider what data you may not be collecting, such as [student and family voices](#).
9. Disaggregate any [impact data by student groups](#), if possible, and consider any differences that emerge.

If any of the above library of actions sound like something you want to integrate into your current plans, there are resources available in the corresponding section or in the [Resource Appendix](#). Leaders may not be able to embed all the shifts suggested above midyear. As you review them, identify which can be implemented now and which you can be aware of and consider for future planning.

Entry Point 2: Designing a future improvement plan with equity in mind

Start here if you are creating or beginning to create your school or district Unified Improvement Plan or similar continuous improvement plan and want to develop a plan with equity in mind.

Designing your next UIP or improvement plan with equity in mind involves considering any overarching goals, strategies and actions steps in a way that takes into account data from and values experiences of a variety of students and families. Below are examples and resources to support you in the following:

- Identifying [Priority Performance Challenges](#)
- Identifying [Root Causes](#)
- Identifying Major [Improvement Strategies](#), supported by suggested Action Steps
 - Assess school climate regarding equity and access for all to define needs.
 - Set goals for better serving stakeholders, and create an aligned tool for evaluating progress.
 - Provide professional development staff to develop cultural competence through self-reflection and hearing the voices of those with different experiences than their own.
 - Select curriculum and design instruction to promote Best, First Instruction for all.
 - Engage in a reallocation of resources.

Each example Major Improvement Strategy provided is connected to content in one of the prior sections: Understanding Self, Understanding Others and Understanding Context. In addition, each Major Improvement Strategy is aligned with one of the [Four Domains of Rapid School Improvement](#). (Adapted from: The Center on School Turnaround (2017). Four domains for rapid school improvement: A systems framework [The Center for School Turnaround at WestEd]. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.)

<p>Priority Performance Challenges</p> <p>When considering Priority Performance Challenges, ask:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Does the magnitude of the challenge vary by student group? How? ● What data have you collected to inform the selection of this Priority Performance Challenge that gives a fuller picture of any test score or assessment data (Datasets)?
<p>Root Causes</p> <p>When determining Root Causes, consider:</p>

- Were [family and student voices meaningfully included](#) in this determination? Did the included families reflect the diversity of the school’s or district’s students, families, and staff? Which students or families were not included?
- Are there elements of the [school climate](#) that contribute to this challenge? How do you know?
- Could [biases, deficit thinking](#) or teaching that is not culturally responsive be a factor?
- Could materials or curriculum that are not culturally affirming be a factor?
- How may the root causes for some groups of students differ?
- Could [cultural or identity differences](#) between staff and students be a factor?
- How is the identification process for Tier 2 and 3 in MTSS happening? Is there overrepresentation? Why?
- What [sort of data on school climate](#) could be impacting or is related to this Priority Performance Challenge?
- Where do you spend your money? Do some students benefit more from this money in the form of accessing enrichment activities, more experienced (and higher-salaried) teachers and smaller class sizes?

Major Improvement Strategies	Action Steps
<p><i>Examples of equity-centered Major Improvement Strategies that can be tailored to your specific context</i></p> <p>Assess school climate regarding equity and access for all to define needs.</p> <p><i>If this is one of your major improvement strategies, please review Understanding Self and Understanding Context.</i></p> <p>Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement: Culture & Climate Shift</p>	<p><i>Examples of equity-centered Action Steps aligned to Major Improvement Strategies that can be tailored to your specific context</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership, personnel and students engage in a self-assessment to prompt reflection on personal and community perspectives. Challenge stakeholders to notice what they have not noticed before about how a cultural majority perspective has substituted for the engagement of all stakeholders in decision-making and educational experiences. • Collect and disaggregate data, noting and sharing trends with stakeholders – academic test scores, discipline referrals, suspension/expulsions, students accessing remedial services (e.g., the Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA] programs, special education, etc.) and accelerated learning opportunities (e.g., Gifted and/or Talented Programs, Advanced Placement coursework, dual credit courses, Postsecondary Enrollment Options [PSEO], etc.). • Invite partners to share perspectives and to hear multiple perspectives around what is effectively or not effectively serving students in the community, and place value on diverse voices in decision-making as an opportunity to better serve all in the community. • Intentionally engage voices from various roles within the system (student, family member, staff, taxpayer)

	<p>and voices representing diverse identities with a keen awareness to whose voice is missing, understanding that cultural groups are not monoliths and that individuals can be members of multiple cultural/identity-based groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create opportunities to share stories of harm that have been experienced and concerns that have been invisible or silenced, in public and/or private venues. Invest in experiences that allow stakeholders to build empathy for each other before designing solutions that are ineffective or incomplete.
<p>Set goals for better serving stakeholders, and create an aligned tool for evaluating progress.</p> <p><i>If this is one of your major improvement strategies, please review Understanding Context.</i></p> <p>Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement: Culture & Climate Shift</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create a culture of always asking whose identity is not represented in the learning and whose voice is not represented at the decision-making table. ● Authentically engage stakeholders through languages, a variety of modalities (online or in-person, surveys or focus groups) and during a variety of times (morning, evening, etc.) ● Through diverse stakeholder input, identify priority areas for change needed to value and adapt to diversity so that everyone in the system experiences increased equity in opportunities and outcomes. ● Develop and utilize a rubric or checklist that guides reflection and indicates progress experienced within the system based on access, participation, representation and outcomes. ● Set short-term and long-term goals with timelines and assigned responsibilities across departments to ensure the work is integrated into all aspects of district work and not siloed or allowed to wane.
<p>Provide professional development staff to develop cultural competence through self-reflection and hearing the voices of those with different experiences than their own.</p> <p><i>If this is one of your major improvement strategies, please review Understanding Self and Understanding Others.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Examine biases, norms and values that have been and continue to be present in educational settings, in learning experiences and in expectations which impact an individual's sense of belonging and academic outcomes. In particular, build team awareness to notice and intervene/adjust when language used “others” a person or cultural community. ● Provide training specific to the prioritized areas of progress, continuously seeking input and providing clarity of next steps.

<p>Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement: Talent Management</p>	
<p>Select curriculum and design instruction to promote Best, First Instruction for all.</p> <p><i>If this is one of your major improvement strategies, please review Understanding Others, School Policy Best Practices.</i></p> <p>Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement: Instructional Transformation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Selected curricula represent diverse perspectives, are historically accurate and culturally relevant to the learners being served. ● Students see themselves represented in the curriculum images and content. ● Lesson design promotes student engagement through sharing their knowledge and perspectives, engaging in inquiry and problem-solving, and receiving individualized feedback and support to achieve culturally relevant learning outcomes. ● Enhance students’ ability to “learn how to learn” through questioning, listening, analyzing data and making connections across content. ● Provide, invite and engage multiple cultural and individual perspectives into the learning process
<p>Engage in a reallocation of resources.</p> <p><i>If this is one of your major improvement strategies, please review Understanding Context.</i></p> <p>Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement: Leadership for Rapid Improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Districts can create an intentional pattern of per-student spending across schools through examining how spending-per-student aligns with a school’s socioeconomic profile and adjusting if the pattern is not equitable. ● Districts can promote best practices by using expenditure, academic and socioeconomic data to learn from schools that are doing more with less or improving student outcomes. ● Schools and districts can allocate resources so students who need more get more by examining how current decisions about resource allocation are made and working with key partners to adjust. ● Schools can ensure choices around academic offerings, staffing practices, class sizes and investments in extracurriculars are benefiting the student experiencing the largest opportunity gaps.

Establishing Partnership and Inviting Investment

Adaptive challenges such as implementing diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives or any improvement initiative requires collective action achieved through clear communication and genuine investment from key partners. Additionally, these initiatives may raise questions or concerns from community members that leaders should be ready to respond to.

In building community investment for any plan, it is crucial that:

- Families and other key partners have been included in designing or at least informing the strategy and action steps.
 - For example survey questions related to policies and general school feedback, please see these examples in the [Understanding Context](#) section.
- All partners understand their role and responsibilities in implementing actions and achieving a given set of outcomes.

Inviting Investment – Equitable Partnership and Communication Plans

For any major improvement strategy your school or district selects, even if different than the above, create a communication plan to keep all relevant partners informed of any Action Steps that impact their students. Keeping families in particular informed about goals and actions allows them to know that their priorities and perspectives are being heard.

Community engagement is critical to success in implementing any continuous improvement plan because not only can school personnel not do the work alone, not having community support can create an enormous barrier to change. Alterations in the power relationship between schools and families can create new opportunities, and the involvement of partners brings important local knowledge to guide reforms and increases the likelihood of sustainability. If a school community believes short-term struggle will lead to long-term improvements, they may be more receptive to difficult reforms.

A strong family communication and partnership plan

- Ensures that all partners and audiences are considered in the communication plan for developing and sharing the equity plan.
- Engages the community as a problem solver. [Create an ongoing feedback loop](#) to engage partners in the impact, lack of impact or unintended impact of the equity plan implementation.
- Ensures that development, implementation, progress monitoring and periodic revisions of the plan are communicated to all stakeholders. It is crucial to create a defined plan based on a clear message, with measurable assessments, benchmarks and outcomes.
- [Intentionally creates “pulse checks” \(short surveys, brief interviews, etc.\) to seek feedback throughout the continuous implementation and improvement process.](#)
- Communicates how feedback and suggestions from partners have been incorporated.
- Has effective messengers, so that your message will be received and your audience will be engaged.
- Is kept in partners’ awareness through frequent references in communications, newsletters and remarks.

If you find yourself hearing from the same group of parents consistently, consider adjusting your outreach to include parents who work evenings, speak a language other than English, have limited time to commit, who may have had previous frustrating experiences with school or who may be unfamiliar with the norms of the U.S. school system.

Additionally, part of keeping families apprised of major improvement strategies and action steps can be providing information that empowers families to be effective partners in the work. For example, families can support their student attendance at school or at before- and afterschool tutoring sessions and reinforce academic or behavioral supports at home.

It is also important to create investment among staff for actions that promote equity. Leadership should communicate with teachers and other instructional and noninstructional staff the goals of any continuous improvement plan, including key equity goals.

It is possible that some community members or staff will have questions about the importance of investing resources in diversity, equity and inclusion and may be put off by politicized concepts and buzzwords. Planning ahead for how you will respond to these questions is a key piece of creating an impactful communication plan.

Funding Equitable Improvement Work

Implementing these chosen Major Improvement Strategies and engaging families meaningfully along the way may require more money than is in your current budget or may require spending funds in a new way. If this is the case, CDE is a valuable partner to support your school or district in the following ways:

- Identifying and applying for public and private grant dollars
- Effectively blending and braiding current funding sources
- Supporting a formal/required or informal/voluntary Resource Allocation Review to ensure current and future spending decisions align with equity goals
- Providing resources to talk with and engage families and communities in spending decisions

Additional Resources

Click the links below to more deeply explore some of the topics referenced in the Implementation section, including:

[Family Partnerships](#)

- [Research Findings on Family and Community Engagement](#)
- [Resources to Support Family and Community Engagement](#)
- [Resources to Support Partnering with Immigrant and Newcomer Families](#)

[Culturally Responsive Teaching within Best, First Instruction](#)

- [Research and best practices for culturally responsive teaching](#)

Links to other sections

[Introduction](#)
[Understanding Context](#)

[Understanding Self-
Implementation](#)

[Understanding Others
Reflection and Evaluation](#)

Reflection & Evaluation

In this section, the following information and resources will assist you in accomplishing the following goals:

- Using a reflective approach that leads the system and the individuals in it to examine how well needs are being met and then adapt
 - Reflecting on previously established goals, using research, data and other tools to assess if you met them and the factors that supported or challenged success
 - Acknowledging and celebrating goals achieved or significant progress made toward goals
 - Revising goals based on reflection and creating new action plan/next steps
 - Systematizing and institutionalizing knowledge and practices that promote equity
-

What can I learn in this section?

Take the assessments below to evaluate where your strengths and opportunities for improvement lie when it comes to implementing equity work. [Likert Scale](#): Never (1), Rarely (2), Occasionally (3), Frequently (4), Always (5)

Statement	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Occasionally (3)	Frequently (4)	Always (5)
I regularly reflect on what I've learned during Cultural and Linguistic Diversity and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion trainings in order to improve outcomes for those students who are historically marginalized.					
I seek feedback about how I can improve as a leader from others who do not share my social identity or cultural background.					
The amount of time, effort and energy I put into improving my school/district to meet the needs of students, families and teachers are the same – whether they share my social identity or not.					

Because we are all on this learning journey and can never “arrive,” we strongly encourage you to read the entire Reflection and Evaluation section from start to finish in the pages that follow regardless of your score.

If there were prior sections in the toolkit where most of your answers were “Never” or “Rarely” you may want to pay special attention to barriers of success related to that section in the pages below.

Continuous Improvement Evaluation Process

Revisiting the Focus-Evaluate-Plan-Implement cycle, the [UIP Handbook](#) suggests schools and districts engage in the cycle multiple times throughout the year in order to:

- *Evaluate* (or monitor) performance (based on interim measures) and implementation of major improvement strategies (based on implementation benchmarks) at least quarterly
- *Adjust* planned improvement strategies
- *Implement* revised strategies, as needed

This toolkit provides some key guiding questions below that can help leadership teams center equity as they engage in evaluation, adjustment and implementation.

First, *evaluate* and reflect on the process and outcomes for ALL groups.

- *What were you trying to achieve or accomplish?*
- *What data did you use to inform your goal?*
- *What partners did you include in goal setting, planning and implementation?*
- *What went well? Why?*
- *What could have gone better? Why?*
- *What are the benchmark outcomes? Final? What new data exists?*

Then, probe barriers to success in order to inform *adjustments*.

- Barriers related to "[Understanding Self](#)"
 - *How did the lived experiences of you, those on your team and those involved in this initiative support and/or create barriers to progress?*
 - *Were there deficit-based beliefs that impacted success?*
 - *Are environments of exclusion, integration or separation (rather than inclusion) a factor?*
- Barriers related to "[Understanding Others](#)"
 - *Were there particular systemic barriers for certain groups that made progress difficult? How can those be addressed in the future?*
 - *Were the cultural identities of all students considered in an asset-based way in this plan?*
- Barriers related to "[Understanding Context](#)"
 - *Were decisions data driven?*
 - *Were data ever used to support deficit-based thinking about particular groups rather than used to assess current context and barriers?*
 - *Did you pursue some or all necessary policy changes to achieve your goals?*
- Barriers related to "[Implementation](#)"
 - *Did your team do a robust root-cause analysis that considered equity factors?*
 - *Did Major Improvement Strategies align tightly with identified equity-informed root causes?*
 - *Were all planned actions implemented? Why or why not?*
 - *Did you include students, families and staff in implementation?*

Finally, implement revised strategies using knowledge gained from an equity-based reflection. Revisit the Understanding Context section for examples of school and district policies that impact equity and the Implementation section for example equity-centered Major Improvement Strategy and Action Step ideas.

Links to other sections

Introduction
Understanding Context

Understanding Self-
Implementation

Understanding Others
Reflection and Evaluation

Resource Appendix

The Resources Appendix contains additional research, information and examples for each section to support your equity-focused leadership development.

Glossary

Self-Assessment

Going Deeper with the Cultural Proficiency Framework

Going Deeper with Understanding Self

Going Deeper with Understanding Others

Going Deeper with Understanding Context

[Going Deeper with Implementation](#)

Glossary

The following is a glossary of terms and concepts referenced in the toolkit.

- Ableism
 - A set of beliefs or practices at the individual, community or systemic level that devalue and discriminate against people with physical, intellectual or psychiatric disabilities and often rests on the assumption that disabled people need to be “fixed” in one form or the other (Colorado Society of School Psychologists [CSSP], 2019).
- Bias
 - Implicit Bias: Implicit Bias refers to the attitudes, beliefs or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases often manifest themselves in the forms of microaggressions and stereotypes. Everyone has Implicit Bias, but few of us are aware of it and how it impacts our daily experiences. For educators, Implicit Bias may have a negative effect on our students’ behavior and academic outcomes. From [NEA PD Site](#).
- BIPOC Black, Indigenous and People of Color
- Culture
 - School culture refers to the beliefs, perceptions, relationships, attitudes and written and unwritten rules that shape and influence every aspect of how a school functions. The term also encompasses more concrete issues such as the physical and emotional safety of students, the orderliness of classrooms and public spaces or the degree to which a school embraces and celebrates racial, ethnic, linguistic or cultural diversity. (From [Glossary of Educational Reform](#))
 - The languages, customs, beliefs, rules, arts, knowledge and collective

identities and memories developed by members of all social groups that make their social environments meaningful (CSSP, 2019).

- Culture of belonging
 - A culture of belonging, safety and care is a school climate that is welcoming and fosters trust where members of the school community are valued for their rich diversity of experiences and are encouraged to share their views, knowledge and culture. (From [New Mexico Public Education Department](#))
 - Belonging is a sense where one feels appreciated, validated, accepted and treated fairly within an environment. (Willms, 2000; Cobb, 2019).
- Cultural competence
 - Aligning personal values and behaviors and school's policies and practices in a manner that is inclusive of cultures that are new or different from yours and the school's and enables healthy and productive interactions. (From "Cultural Proficiency, A Manual for School Leaders, 4th Ed.," Lindsey, 2019, p. 8).
 - Viewing one's personal and organizational work as an interactive arrangement in which the educator enters into diverse settings in a manner that is additive to cultures that are different from the educator's. (From [Cultural Proficiency website](#) that is currently linked to the toolkit).
 - The ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across cultures. Grounded in the respect and appreciation of cultural differences, cultural competence is demonstrated in the attitudes, behaviors, practices and policies of people, organizations and systems (CSSP, 2019).
- Cultural proficiency
 - Holding the vision that you and the school are instruments for creating a socially just democracy; interaction with your colleagues, your students, their families and their communities as an advocate for lifelong learning to effectively serve the educational needs of all cultural groups. (From *Cultural Proficiency*, 2nd Ed. Lindsey 2019, p. 8).
 - Making the commitment to lifelong learning for the purpose of being increasingly effective in serving the educational needs of cultural groups. Holding the vision of what can be and committing to assessments that serve as benchmarks on the road to student success. (From [Cultural Proficiency website](#) that is currently linked to the toolkit).
- Diversity
 - Diversity* is a description of differences usually based on identities such as race, gender, sexual orientation, class or ability, etc. Diversity does not equal equity and does not always occur intentionally.
 - Talking Points: Diversity can be defined as the sum of the ways that people are both alike and different. The dimensions of diversity include race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, language, culture, religion, mental and physical ability, class, age, education and immigration status.
 - Differences in race, gender, class, ability, etc.
 - Focuses on differences between people
 - Does not always occur intentionally
 - A synonym for variety. A diversity focus emphasizes "how many of these" we have in the room, organization, etc. Diversity programs and cultural celebrations/education programs are not equivalent to racial

justice or inclusion. It is possible to name, acknowledge and celebrate diversity without doing anything to transform the institutional or structural systems that produce, and maintain, racialized injustices in our communities (CSSP, 2019).

- Educational Equity
 - Educational equity means that every student has access to the educational resources and rigor they need at the right moment in their education across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, sexual orientation, family background and/ or family income. (Adopted from The Council of Chief State School Officers.) (From [CDE Strategic Plan](#), p. 9).
- Equality
 - Giving the same thing to everyone
 - Talking Points:
 - Same standards/expectations for all
 - Same expectations across teams
 - Every person is accorded respect and value
 - The effort to treat everyone the same or to ensure that everyone has access to the same opportunities. However, only working to achieve equality ignores historical and structural factors that benefit some social groups and disadvantages other social groups in ways that create differential starting points (CSSP, 2019).
- Equity*
 - When everyone, regardless of who they are or where they come from, has the opportunity to thrive. Equity recognizes that some individuals have an advantage because of their identity, while others face barriers. Unlike equality, which suggests giving the same thing to everyone, equity works to provide opportunities to those facing barriers by providing additional resources to those who do not have these advantages. This requires eliminating barriers like poverty and repairing systemic injustices. (From [CDPA](#)).
 - The effort to provide different levels of support based on an individual's or group's needs in order to achieve fairness in outcomes. Working to achieve equity acknowledges unequal starting places and the need to correct the imbalance (CSSP, 2019).
- Leadership
 - Leadership is a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes. Successful leaders develop a vision for their schools based on their personal and professional values. They articulate this vision at every opportunity and influence their staff and other stakeholders to share the vision. The philosophy, structures and activities of the school are geared toward the achievement of this shared vision. (From "[School Leadership: Concepts and Evidence](#)," T. Bush and D. Glover, 2003, p. 5).
 -
- Marginalization
 - The process that occurs when members of a dominant group relegate a particular group to the edge of society by not allowing them an active voice, identity or place for the purpose of maintaining power (CSSP, 2019).

- Marginalized communities
 - Marginalized populations are groups and communities that experience discrimination and exclusion (social, political and economic) because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions. Marginalization can be understood as persistent inequality and adversity resulting from discrimination, social stigma and stereotypes. (From [Colorado Department of Human Services](#)).
- Historically marginalized students
 - Historically and traditionally marginalized students means English learners, Black and African American students, American Indian and Alaskan Native students, Latino and Hispanic students, Asian and Pacific Islander students, multiracial students, students experiencing poverty, students with disabilities and students who are LGBTQ+. ([Law Insider Dictionary](#)).
- Identity
 - *To be defined*
- Inclusion
 - Inclusion* – What an organization does with diversity to ensure individuals can fully participate. Inclusion intentionally promotes a sense of belonging where people’s inherent worth and dignity are recognized and their abilities, qualities and perspectives are leveraged for the collective good. (From [CDPA](#)).
 - Talking Points:
 - The practice of setting up the conditions so those people who choose to participate in an activity/event/organization are granted access to do so regardless of personal attributes or socioeconomic status
 - Opportunities to fully participate
 - Ensures individuals have equal opportunity
 - Inclusion is transparent and allows all interested parties to participate upon their own choosing
 - A state of belonging, when persons of different backgrounds and identities are valued, integrated and welcomed equitably as decision-makers and collaborators. Inclusion involves people being given the opportunity to grow and feel/know they belong. Diversity efforts alone do not create inclusive environments. Inclusion involves a sense of coming as you are and being accepted, rather than feeling the need to assimilate (CSSP, 2019).
- Intersectionality
 - The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism and classism) combine, overlap or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups. – [Merriam-Webster](#).
- People of Color
 - Political or social (not biological) identity among and across groups of people that are racialized as nonwhite. The term “people of color” is used to acknowledge that many races experience racism in the U.S., and the term includes, but is not synonymous with, Black people (CSSP, 2019).
- Prejudice

- o A preconceived opinion or assumption about something or someone rooted in stereotypes, rather than reason or fact, leading to unfavorable bias or hostility toward another person or group of people. Literally a “prejudgment” (CSSP, 2019).
- Privilege
 - o Privilege is societally granted, unearned advantages accorded to some people and not others. Generally, when we talk about privilege, we are referring to systemic or structural advantages that impact people based on identity factors such as race, gender, sex, religion, nationality, disability, sexuality, class and body type. We might also include the level of education and other factors of social capital under the umbrella of privilege. (From [UMich Inclusive Teaching](#)).
 - o Privilege – A special right, advantage or immunity granted or available only to a particular person or group (Oxford English Dictionary).
 - o Privilege – An unearned benefit or right granted to a person based on membership in a particular social group with dominant identities in social identity categories (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, social class, sexuality, ability and so forth) (Allen, 2011).
- Race
 - o A social and political construction – with no inherent genetic or biological basis – used by social institutions to arbitrarily categorize and divide groups of individuals based on physical appearance (particularly skin color), ancestry, cultural history and ethnic classification. The concept has been, and still is, used to justify the domination, exploitation and violence against people who are racialized as nonwhite (CSSP, 2019).
- Racism
 - o The systematic subjugation of members of targeted racial groups who hold less socio-political power and/or are racialized as nonwhite, as means to uphold white supremacy. Racism differs from prejudice, hatred or discrimination because it requires one racial group to have systemic power and superiority over other groups in society. Often, racism is supported and maintained, both implicitly and explicitly, by institutional structures and policies, cultural norms and values, and individual behaviors (CSSP, 2019).
- Underserved groups
 - o Students from economically challenged communities, highly mobile families, racial minority groups, English learners and students with disabilities. (From [CDE Strategic Plan](#), pg. 9)
- White Privilege
 - o The unearned power and advantages that benefit people just by virtue of being white or being perceived as white (CSSP, 2019).

*Universal Policy Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in State Employment
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VI0xTkfJ2CmVjZrZhik6EpKYyD4vtETM/view>

CSSP (2019). “Key Equity Terms and Concepts: A Glossary for Shared Understanding.” Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy. Available at: <https://cssp.org/resource/key-equity-terms-concepts>

Self-Assessment

Take the assessments below to evaluate where your strengths and opportunities for improvement lie when it comes to the five sections of the toolkit. [Likert Scale](#): Never (1) Rarely (2) Occasionally (3) Frequently (4) Always (5)

Understanding Self

Statement	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Occasionally (3)	Frequently (4)	Always (5)
I am aware of my own social identities (e.g., race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, ability, language, sexuality, etc.).					
I actively listen to the viewpoints of those with a social identity different than my own.					
When students and families from my school or district share their concerns about practices, policies or procedures, I investigate the impact of those practices, policies or procedures on the historically marginalized populations in my school or district.					
I recognize when my cultural upbringing impacts the beliefs I hold about historically marginalized communities.					
Part of the vision for my school(s) stems from a desire to equip all students with everything they need to excel.					
I believe a student's competency is more than their assessment score.					
Students from marginalized populations are just as likely as students from non-marginalized populations to demonstrate positive learning behaviors.					
I believe that students need to learn about the experiences of various cultures in order to have a high-quality education.					

I am open to learning about how students and families with different cultural and social identities than my own experience my school(s).					
I am open to challenging my assumptions about different cultures.					
I believe in forming relationships with all students and families to create an inclusive learning environment and increase participation and engagement.					

Understanding Others

Statement	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Occasionally (3)	Frequently (4)	Always (5)
I seek opportunities to learn about the cultural practices in our school community, including staff, families and students. (Always is positive)					
I strive to understand how inequity in my school(s) relates to inequities in society. (Always is positive)					
I strive to be aware of groups that have been historically excluded in our school. (Always is positive) I strive to be aware of groups that have been historically excluded in our district. (Always is positive) I strive to be aware of groups that have been historically excluded in our community. (Always is positive)					

I perceive culture as an asset and strength. (Always is positive)					
--	--	--	--	--	--

I actively work to avoid the trap of “knowing what is good” for someone else. (Always is positive)					
I strive to understand how cultural identity can influence learning and success. (Always is positive)					
I strive to understand the inequities that exist within my school. I strive to understand the inequities that exist within my district. I strive to understand the inequities that exist within my community.					

I strive to notice the structural barriers that contribute to the exclusion of groups. (Always is positive)					
---	--	--	--	--	--

I work to build my capacity to effectively lead diverse school communities. (Always is positive)					
Students are underperforming because their families are not taking advantage of the existing school opportunities. (Never is positive)					
I strive to implement change that benefits my school’s underrepresented families. (Always is positive)					
I worry about my school’s learning community getting distracted by things like race, faith, attire or hairstyles so I try to remove anything that highlights differences from the school’s environment. (Never is positive) (Always is positive)					

Understanding Context

Statement	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Occasionally (3)	Frequently (4)	Always (5)
I strive to serve all students in my school community based on their individual needs.					
I strive to understand the structural inequities in my school. I strive to understand the structural inequities in my district.					
I strive to understand inequities that exist within the larger educational system. I strive to understand inequities that exist within society as a whole.					

I strive to address inequities in my school. I strive to address inequities in my district. I strive to address inequities that exist within the larger educational system. I strive to address inequities that exist within society as a whole.					

Implementation

Statement	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Occasionally (3)	Frequently (4)	Always (5)
When designing school policies, I strive to remove barriers to participation for our diverse school communities.					
When complaints of discrimination come to me, I take immediate action to review those concerns.					

When addressing complaints of discrimination, I take immediate action to prevent further occurrence.					
I believe it is my duty to advocate for all students despite potential opposition.					
When making decisions that affect school communities, I create conditions for underrepresented groups to participate fully in the input process.					
I strive to include the strengths of all cultures in my school community.					
I have a vision of what equity looks like in my school/district for all student groups.					
I know how to make my vision of equity for all student groups a reality.					

Reflection

Statement	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Occasionally (3)	Frequently (4)	Always (5)
I regularly reflect on what I've learned during CLD DEI trainings in order to improve outcomes for those students who are historically marginalized.					
I seek feedback about how I can improve as a leader from others who do not share my social identity or cultural background.					
The amount of time, effort and energy I put into improving my school/district to meet the needs of students, families and teachers are the same – whether they share my social identity or not.					

Going Deeper with Understanding the Cultural Proficiency Framework

- [The Conceptual Framework for Culturally Proficient Practices](#)
 - Institutionalizing cultural knowledge
 - [Rubrics](#) for the educational system work to support equitable access and opportunity
-

Going Deeper with Understanding Self

[Developing a Liberatory Consciousness](#)

[Oregon Equity and Inclusion Lens Guide](#)

Going Deeper with Understanding Others

[Cultural Synchronization Questions](#)

What questions might you ask a focal student in an informal one-to-one?

1. What approaches and outreach will help ensure that those who need to be engaged are able to fully participate? How can you create opportunities for people least likely to be heard to ensure they share their specific concerns (e.g., use of multiple techniques such as focus groups and online surveys, types of questions asked, simultaneous interpretation, sign language, anonymous feedback)?
2. Is your team representative of the diversity in the population you are engaging? What steps can you take to ensure you are inclusive of a diversity of perspectives?
3. Which employees, groups or community groups with experience in these specific communities can help you conduct outreach? How are you compensating these outreach partners?
4. Is there a history – between the organization and community, or between communities – that you need to consider? If that trauma exists, how will you address it? How will you ensure everyone is heard?
5. Is the language you use in your promotional materials and communication strategy easily understood by diverse audiences?
6. What steps can you take to remove barriers to your presence where the community gathers for full participation (e.g., dependent care, transportation, safety, language, accessible location, time, multiple formats, avoid religious and cultural holidays, culturally appropriate.)?
7. Is the environment welcoming to participants who may be reluctant to share their views? If not, what can you do to change this (e.g., pair up a new participant with an experienced one to help those new to the process feel encouraged to participate.)? Does the pace, format and language of the engagement accommodate everyone including participants who are least likely to speak up and for whom the information may be new?
8. Are the insights from groups who face systemic barriers and inequities reflected in the report and final product?
9. How will you demonstrate accountability and commit to report back the findings to the full diversity of people who were involved in the engagement activity?

Gathering Information from Your Community and Families (going deeper)

Examples of Questions to Survey Your Community

Surveys should occur throughout the year to ensure progress and/or new insights are captured (beginning of year, midyear, end of year and pulse checks based on current needs). The following questions are categorized by the intended audience of the survey questions.

Examples of Student Survey Questions

- How do you access the internet from home?
- Do you have a family member or supportive adult who helps you with your assignments?
- What challenges do you anticipate this year?
- What goals and aspirations do you have for this year?
- How do you prefer to learn (e.g., hands-on activities, group discussions, individual work)?
- What subjects or topics do you find most engaging and enjoyable to learn about?
- Are there any subjects that you find challenging and would like more support with?
- Are there any additional clubs or activities you'd like to see offered at the school?
- How comfortable do you feel in the school environment, including classrooms, hallways and common areas?
- Is there anything about the school environment that you believe could be improved?
- Do you feel that teachers provide clear explanations and instructions for assignments and projects?
- Do you feel included and respected by your teachers and classmates regardless of your background?
- Do you feel safe and secure at school?
 - Are there any concerns you have about safety or well-being that you'd like to share?
- What changes or improvements would you like to see in the school to enhance your overall experience?

Examples of Family/Caregiver Survey Questions

- Which of the following statements do you most want to be true when you think about your child's school? Select all that apply.
 - My child[ren] and my family feel respected, supported and valued by our school.
 - I receive communications from my school in a language and format that I can access.
 - The teachers at my child[ren]'s school seek to understand my child[ren]'s learning needs.
 - My student has access to grade-level academic content across subject areas.
 - Teachers handle discipline and conflict with my child[ren] fairly.
 - I feel like I am included in important decisions that my school makes.
 - School and district leaders handle conflict and difference productively.
 - My family's culture and beliefs are reflected in and/or respected by school policies (attendance, homework and grading, discipline, etc.).
 - My child[ren] has the technology needed to participate fully in school offerings and complete school assignments.
 - My family's culture and beliefs are reflected in the curriculum.
- What languages are spoken at home? ([Example of a district depicting the 10 most spoken languages](#))
- Are there any barriers you perceive in terms of effectively engaging with the school and your child's education?
- Are you aware of the support services available for students who might need extra assistance due to learning differences or language barriers?
 - Do you believe the support services are enough? If not, what could help?

- Are there subjects or topics you'd like to see included in the curriculum to enhance cultural awareness?
- Do you find the school's approach to managing student absences reasonable and fair?
 - Are there any challenges or concerns you face in adhering to the school's attendance policies?
- Do you feel that the grading policies accurately reflect your child's performance and effort?
 - Are there any changes you would suggest to the current homework or grading policies?
- Do you feel confident that your child is safe from bullying and harassment while at school? If not, how could this be improved?
- Are there specific health-related policies you'd like to see the school address more effectively?
- Are there ways in which parent-teacher communication could be improved to better support your child's success?
- How do you believe the school can better support your child's success and ensure an equitable educational experience?
- Are there any school policies that you believe need revision or improvement?

Examples of Teacher/Faculty Survey Questions

- Do you notice trend differences in student groups when it comes to comprehension and/or academic performance?
 - What supports could help mitigate this?
- Do you feel that the workload expectations are reasonable and manageable? If not, what could be done differently?
- Are there specific areas of professional development you'd like to explore?
- Are there any specific classroom resources you believe are lacking or need improvement?
- Are there any behavioral challenges you're facing in your classrooms?
 - If so, would you provide examples?
- Do you believe there's adequate support and resources for managing student behavior effectively?
- How do you feel about the feedback and evaluation process provided by school administrators?
- What are the main challenges you face in your role as a teacher/faculty member?
- How do you show your students that you value difference and value each of them individually?
- How do you ensure that each student is experiencing more positive feedback than corrective feedback?
- Is there anything you'd like to suggest or address that wasn't covered in the above questions?

Increasing Participation in Feedback (Tips)

- Online surveys should be sent regularly and also available in person through:
 - School-tablet accessible to parents/community who enter the school
 - School-related events (Example: Tablets with survey questions during school athletic events, school performances, etc.)
- Language accessibility
 - Offering multiple language surveys
 - Offering digital literacy training (to families and/or students) to show how family members can access an English survey and change the settings in an internet browser to their preferred language
- Offering in-person opportunities to discuss policies and changes

- Creating an online space in which parents can provide midyear comments/questions related to policy topic areas (example: attendance, grading, etc.) in their preferred language
 - Training and consistency is integral

Community engagement is critical to success because:

- School personnel can't do the work alone.
- Alterations in power relationships can create new opportunities. Sustainability is most likely with key partner involvement.
- Local knowledge can guide reform implementation.
- Cost of not having community support can create an enormous barrier to change.
- If the community believes short-term struggle will lead to long-term improvements, they may tolerate difficult reforms.

Reasons to Engage Community and Families:

1. Decades of research show when families are involved, students demonstrate higher grades, test scores and graduation rates, better school attendance, increased motivation, better self-esteem, lower rates of suspension, decreased use of drugs and alcohol, fewer instances of violent behavior (National Parent Teacher Association).
2. Family participation in education is *twice* as predictive of students' academic success as family socioeconomic status. Some of the more intensive programs had effects that were *10 times* greater than other factors (Herbert J. Walberg in his review of 29 studies of school-parent programs, 1984).
3. School benefits include improved teacher morale, higher ratings of teachers by families, more support from families, higher student achievement, better reputations in the community ("A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement," Anne T. Henderson and Nancy Berla, Center for Law and Education, Washington, D.C., 1996).

School Community and Parent Engagement Checklist:

Does Your School ...

- Display a mission statement committing the work of the school to students, families and the community it serves?
- Reflect an orderly and safe environment conducive to effective learning by students and productive work by staff?
- Display internal and external signs welcoming visitors to the school?
- Use friendly language to describe what visitors should do when entering the school? Have designated parking areas for visitors?
- Employ office staff who are friendly to visitors, provide needed information easily and answer the phone in a way that makes the caller glad she/he has called?
- Set standards of welcoming behavior for all staff and volunteers, including bus drivers, custodians and cafeteria workers?
- Display student academic work throughout the school?

- Display large readable signs with directions to such areas as the library, gym, cafeteria and restrooms?
- Have an identified and furnished workspace for parents and other volunteers? Have a cheerful and suitably furnished waiting area for visitors?
- Have clearly written information available to parents and visitors explaining school philosophy, programs and how a person can be involved?
- Have an outside marquee that is readable from the street and carries notices of meetings, recognition of students/staff/organizations?
- Make it possible for staff to be easily accessible to parents?
- Produce an overall climate that is cheerful and student-centered?
- Ensure that students demonstrate friendly and courteous behavior?

Creating a Community Engagement Action Plan

Action Steps:

- **Create a Community Involvement Plan**
- **Involve key partners.** *Your engagement plan is strengthened when multiple organizations support the work and promote it to their constituencies.*
- **Develop meaningful and memorable messages.** *Messages are the core of what you tell the public about your campaign.*
- **Have effective messengers.** *Messengers convey your message to the public. It is important to have the “right” messenger so that your message will be received and your audience will be engaged.*
- **Invite community members (policymakers, city council, Chamber of Commerce members, local business owners, community resource providers, parents) together for a conversation about any relevant school issue that needs to be addressed.**
 - [See sample survey questions for family/community members](#)
- *Discuss the current reality of the issue and how to work through it as a community. Decide on timelines and outcomes.*
- *Discuss goals and objectives as a school and district with the community.*
- *Engage the community as a problem solver. It is crucial to create a defined plan based on a clear message with measurable assessments, benchmarks and outcomes.*
- *Create planning and implementation groups, and set short timelines with multiple measurable successes.*
- **Articulate your plan of action to all community members and stakeholders with clear communication using the following guidelines:**
 - Step 1:** *Starting with the end in mind, create a communication plan defining your objectives, how they might be accomplished and a timeline for doing so.*
 - Step 2:** *Decide upon an evaluative assessment to be used to determine if objectives were accomplished.*
 - Step 3:** *Be transparent by communicating all parts of the plan with all relevant stakeholders, in writing. Keep this plan in all stakeholders’ awareness by referring to it frequently in communications, newsletters, remarks, etc.*

Action Steps for All Educators:

- Seek out opportunities for [professional development and training in parent involvement](#). Make parents and families feel welcome in the school. Provide a parent/family center for use while at school. Reach out to parents whose first language is not English.
- Learn about the various [ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds](#) of the students and know how to communicate with diverse families.
- Accommodate parents' work schedules when creating parent-involvement opportunities.
- Keep parents informed of their children's performance and school activities by means of notes, telephone calls, newsletters, conferences and meetings.
- Provide opportunities for parents to visit the school, observe classes and provide feedback.
- Develop a [plan to promote teacher-parent partnerships](#) at school.
- Invite parents to serve on school or district committees.

Going Deeper with Understanding Context

Policies and Equity

Policies play a significant role in shaping students' experiences in education. **Policies at the national and state level trickle down to the local education level and impact curriculum changes, standardized testing requirements, teacher-hiring practices, educational technology integration, school choice, school safety and discipline, school funding allocations, boundary changes, teacher evaluations, teacher certification and professional development requirements, school accountability and performance measures, special education policies, among others.**

Education-related policies can have both positive and negative impacts as they shape the educational landscape and determine the opportunities and support available to students. Positive policies can create a conducive and enriching learning environment that fosters academic success, personal growth and well-being. For example, **policies that focus on reducing class sizes can lead to more individualized attention and support from teachers, which can positively impact students' learning outcomes.** Similarly, policies that promote inclusive education for students with disabilities ensure that every learner receives appropriate accommodations and resources to participate fully in the educational experience. Conversely, **poorly designed or inequitable policies can have negative consequences, such as standardized testing policies that place excessive emphasis on test scores may lead to a narrowed curriculum** where teachers focus primarily on test preparation at the expense of critical thinking and intellectual curiosity.

At the national level, and in the state of Colorado, data indicates the following issues significantly impact student development, opportunities and outcomes.

- **Achievement gaps** based on different racial/ethnic groups and low-income students compared to their affluent peers.
- **School funding disparities** often result in lower-income community schools having fewer financial resources despite higher needs among students that require additional financial investments.

- Disparities in **access to quality early childhood education** can disadvantage students with limited access based on their lack of school readiness.
- **School district boundaries** can reinforce racial and economic segregation, which is still an issue when it comes to school choice and differing access to resources.
- **Disproportionate discipline practices** still impact Black and Hispanic students through harsh disciplinary measures, such as suspensions and expulsions.
- **Students with disabilities still face disparities** in access to appropriate support and services in addition to **over-/underrepresentation of certain groups in special education**.
- Students, particularly in underrepresented communities, still have **different levels of access to advanced coursework**, such as AP or honors classes.
- **ELL students still face linguistic and cultural barriers** in the classroom, impacting academic achievement.
- Students still have **differing levels of access to reliable internet and devices** for remote learning, exacerbating existing educational inequalities.
- **Lack of racial and ethnic diversity among teachers** remains an equity issue. Additionally, **schools with the highest needs are more likely to have staff retention issues** and tenure differences.

Policy Best Practices

General Policy Changes and Best Practices

- **Policy Inventory Audit:** This involves reviewing and assessing the various policies and procedures that govern the school's operations, ensuring the relevancy, compliance and equity within them. [Essential Policies in K-12 Schools.](#)
- **Socioeconomic-Based School Assignment:** In some regions, school districts have implemented policies that consider socioeconomic factors in student assignment to schools. By doing so, they aim to create more socioeconomically diverse student bodies, reducing concentrations of poverty in certain schools and promoting educational equity. Although in Colorado, most districts have school choice, which limits access to higher-tiered schools based on constraints such as transportation. Policies related to inequitable practices that hinder school choice should be understood and evaluated. [Discussion Article on Tackling Access Issues with School Choice.](#)
- **Culturally Responsive Curriculum:** School districts have adopted curricula that reflect the diverse backgrounds and experiences of their students. Culturally responsive teaching materials and practices help students see themselves represented in their education and build a more inclusive learning environment. [Culturally Responsive Resources.](#)
- **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum:** Schools have integrated SEL curriculum into their education programs to help students develop social and emotional skills, self-regulation and empathy. These skills can support students in managing their behavior and developing healthier relationships with peers and educators. [SEL Resources.](#)

Teacher Recruitment Best Practices

- **Recruitment and Retention Incentives:** Schools can create incentives to attract qualified teachers, such as offering signing bonuses, providing student-loan forgiveness programs, creating more balanced scheduling shifts or offering competitive salaries and benefits. [Examples of Teacher Incentives.](#)
- **Grow-Your-Own Programs:** Schools can establish partnerships with local colleges and universities to develop "grow-your-own" teacher programs, encouraging promising students from the community to pursue teaching careers and return to the school as educators.

- o [Example of First Generation and Rural Community Recruitment Pipeline to encourage students of color and first generation students to pursue teaching in rural communities \(UC Denver partnership with Denver Public Schools\).](#)
- o [Example of Teacher Pipeline Program stemming for Para-Educators.](#)

Student-Based Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Best Practices

- **Personalized Learning**
 - o **Project-Based Learning:** Implementing project-based learning initiatives can encourage active participation and critical thinking, making learning more relevant and engaging for students.
 - [PBL for ELL Students.](#)
 - [PBL for High School Students.](#)
 - [PBL General Examples.](#)
 - o **Extracurricular Activities and Clubs:** Expanding extracurricular offerings, including clubs and sports teams, can provide students with diverse opportunities to pursue their interests and passions outside of the regular curriculum.
 - [Extracurricular examples.](#)
 - [Club examples.](#)
- **Attendance Supports**
 - o **Trauma-Informed Attendance Policies:** Some schools have adopted trauma-informed approaches to address attendance issues. They recognize that students may face various traumas and challenges outside of school that affect their attendance. By providing counseling services, mental health support and a compassionate approach to attendance, schools can create a more supportive environment that encourages regular attendance.
 - o **Culturally Responsive Attendance Policies:** Schools have implemented attendance policies that consider the cultural backgrounds and circumstances of their students. They recognize that cultural practices and traditions may impact attendance patterns. Instead of punishing such absences, they work with families to find solutions that promote regular attendance while respecting cultural values.
 - o **Incentive-Based Attendance Programs:** Some schools have introduced incentive-based attendance programs to motivate students to attend regularly. These programs may include rewards, recognition or participation in extracurricular activities for students who maintain good attendance records. By positively reinforcing attendance, schools can increase student engagement and reduce absenteeism. It is important to note that culturally responsive attendance policies should still apply and not be replaced by incentive-based attendance programs.
 - o **Community Partnership Initiatives:** Schools have collaborated with community organizations and agencies to address attendance challenges. By involving community members and stakeholders in attendance improvement efforts, schools can create a broader support network for students and families facing attendance barriers.
 - o **Flexible Attendance Policies:** Schools have adopted flexible attendance policies to accommodate students' individual needs and circumstances. This may include allowing students to make up missed work, providing alternative ways to complete assignments or offering distance-learning options during periods of extended absence.
 - o **Transportation Assistance:** Some schools have addressed transportation barriers that may hinder students from attending regularly. By providing transportation assistance, such as bus passes or shuttle services, schools can help ensure that students have reliable means of getting to and from school.

- o **Early Warning Systems:** Schools have implemented early warning systems to identify students at risk of chronic absenteeism. By using data and attendance tracking systems, schools can intervene early and provide targeted support to students who show signs of attendance issues.
- o **School-Home Communication:** Schools have improved communication with families to keep them informed about their child's attendance and academic progress. Building strong school-home partnerships can help identify and address attendance challenges early on.
- **Supplemental Instruction**
 - o **Response to Intervention (RTI) Framework:** RtI is a preventive approach to improving individual outcomes through high-quality universal instruction within a multi-tiered system that connect supports matched to students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs. Key features of RtI include **collaborative teaming across all educational systems** (including but not limited to general, special, compensatory, and gifted education), **a clear problem-solving model with steps and routine, a formal and predictable process to build and implement solutions, decision rules based on data from a variety of formal and informal assessment tools** (including curriculum-based measurement, diagnostic assessment, observation, and validated screening and progress monitoring tools) and Capacity building opportunities for staff to address and remove barriers to implementation, so staff feel competent to implement supports and confident in the plan's ability to achieve intended outcomes. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/rti/response-to-intervention-rti>.
 - o **Assistive Technology Integration:** Schools have implemented policies to integrate assistive technology into the learning environment to universally support all students, while also being uniquely responsive to students with disabilities. This includes providing students with access to devices and tools that enhance their communication, mobility and learning abilities.
 - o **Transition Services (High School to Workforce):** School districts have improved their transition planning and services for students with disabilities as they prepare to move from high school to postsecondary education, employment or independent living.
 - o **Parental Involvement and Advocacy:** Schools have developed policies to enhance parental involvement and advocacy for students accessing supplemental instructional opportunities. This includes providing parents with information about their rights, opportunities to participate in decision-making processes and access to resources and support networks.
 - o **ELL Student Support:** By offering tailored support, schools can help ELL students access quality education, unlock their full potential and contribute their unique perspectives to the learning community. Inclusive education not only enhances ELL students' language skills, it also fosters a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity among all students. For additional information on ELL student policies, [see this CDE resource](#).
- **Academic Support for Students Facing Academic Challenges**
 - o **Early Intervention Programs:** School districts have implemented early intervention programs to identify and support students who are struggling academically at an early age, providing one-on-one tutoring or small group instruction, to prevent the achievement gap from widening.
 - o **Summer Learning Opportunities:** To mitigate summer learning loss, which can disproportionately affect students from low-income families, some schools have established summer learning programs. These programs offer academic enrichment and extracurricular activities to keep students engaged during the summer break and prevent skill regression.

- o **Extended Learning Time:** Schools have extended the school day or added extra days to the academic calendar to provide additional instructional time for below grade level students. This allows educators to cover essential concepts more thoroughly and offer more individualized support to struggling students.
- o **Universal Screening:** Some school districts have adopted universal screening practices to regularly assess the academic progress of all students. Universal screening helps identify students who may need additional support, ensuring that each student receives the instruction matched to their learning needs.
- o **Addressing Disparities in Resource Allocation:** Schools have worked to address resource disparities, ensuring that schools serving below grade level students have access to adequate funding, technology and instructional materials necessary to support their learning needs.
- **Academic Support for Students Not Being Challenged in School**
 - o **Accelerated Learning Programs:** School districts have developed accelerated learning programs to provide challenging and advanced coursework for students who exceed grade level standards. These programs offer opportunities for students to take higher-level classes or participate in enrichment activities that cater to their intellectual abilities.
 - o **Subject or Grade Skipping:** Some schools have revised policies to allow subject or grade skipping for students who demonstrate exceptional abilities in certain areas. This means allowing a student to move ahead in a specific subject or skip a grade level to ensure they are appropriately challenged.
 - o **Gifted and Talented (GAT) Programs and Infusion in Classrooms:** School districts have established GAT programs to identify and serve students with exceptional abilities and talents. These programs offer specialized educational experiences, mentorship opportunities and challenging projects to stimulate advanced learners. Teachers have also been trained to use differentiated instruction techniques, tailoring their teaching methods to meet the diverse learning needs of students exceeding grade level standards. This includes providing more complex tasks, deeper exploration of subjects and individualized learning plans.
 - o **Early College Programs:** Some schools have partnered with colleges and universities to provide early college enrollment options for students exceeding grade level standards. This allows students to take college-level courses while still in high school, earning college credits and experiencing a more challenging academic environment.
 - o **Competitions and Olympiads:** Schools have encouraged above grade level students to participate in academic competitions and Olympiads in various subjects. These events allow students to showcase their talents, compete at higher levels and interact with like-minded peers.
 - o **Virtual Learning Opportunities:** To provide greater flexibility and access to advanced coursework, schools have implemented virtual learning options. Virtual platforms can offer a broader range of subjects and allow students to progress at their own pace.
- **AP and High-Demand Course Support**
 - o **Pre-AP and Preparatory Programs:** School districts have introduced pre-AP or preparatory programs to help students build the necessary skills and knowledge required for success in AP courses. These programs aim to bridge the gap and support students in preparing for more advanced coursework.
 - o **Financial Support for AP Exams:** Some schools offer financial assistance or subsidies to students facing financial constraints, making it more accessible for them to take AP exams.

- o **Virtual AP and High-Demand Course Options:** Schools/districts have offered virtual or online course options to increase flexibility and access, especially for students in rural areas or those with scheduling conflicts.

Behavioral and Sense of Belonging Support Best Practices

- **Elimination of Zero-Tolerance Discipline Policies:** Some school districts have reformed their disciplinary policies to move away from zero-tolerance approaches. Zero-tolerance policies often disproportionately affect students of color and those from low-income backgrounds. Instead, restorative justice practices and positive behavior interventions are adopted to address behavioral issues, focusing on resolving conflicts, building relationships and promoting a supportive school climate.
 - o **Restorative Justice Practices:** Restorative justice focuses on repairing harm caused by misbehavior and building a sense of community through dialogue and problem-solving, rather than punishment.
 - **Trauma-Informed Practices:** Schools have adopted trauma-informed approaches to better support students who have experienced trauma. Understanding the impact of trauma on behavior helps educators respond with empathy and provide appropriate support.
 - o **Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS):** PBIS is a prevention-based framework for organizing evidence-based behavioral supports into an integrated continuum that enhances academic and social outcomes for all students. PBIS policies and practices are implemented to create a positive and supportive school culture that encourages expected and desired behavior and provides instructional approaches to address undesired and problematic behavior. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/mtss/pbis>
 - o **Bullying Prevention:** Please note that repairing harm through mediation should not be used in bullying situations since it often results in re-victimizing the target of bullying.
- **Wraparound Services:** School districts have partnered with community organizations to provide wraparound services for students with behavior issues. These services may include mental health counseling, family support and mentorship programs to address underlying factors contributing to challenging behavior.
- **Support LGBTQ+ Students:** LGBTQ+ students often face unique challenges, such as discrimination, bullying and social isolation, which can significantly impact their mental and emotional well-being, as well as their academic performance. By actively supporting LGBTQ+ students through policies, educational programs and a welcoming atmosphere, schools not only ensure their safety and well-being, but also [affirm their identities and promote a sense of belonging](#).

Technology Support Best Practices

- **One-to-One Technology and Mobile Wi-Fi Initiatives:** School districts have implemented one-to-one technology initiatives and included mobile Wi-Fi hotspots that students can borrow to access the internet from home. This ensures that all students have equal access to digital resources and learning opportunities.
- **Digital Equity Grants and Collaboration with Community:** School districts have secured funding through grants to address digital equity issues in addition to partnering with community organizations to secure technology donations. These funds are used to purchase technology devices, software and internet connectivity solutions for students without access to these tools.
 - o **Leveraging E-Rate Program:** This is a federal program that supports schools and libraries in obtaining affordable telecommunications and internet access.

- **Digital Literacy Training:** Schools have provided digital literacy training for students and parents to ensure that they can effectively use technology for educational purposes. This helps bridge the digital divide and ensures that all students can navigate online learning platforms and resources.
- **Extending Technology Access Hours:** Some schools have extended their technology access hours beyond regular school hours, allowing students to use school technology resources even after the school day ends.

Going Deeper with Implementation

Responding Immediately to Racial and Other Bias-Based Incidents

- [Anti-Defamation League: Responding to Bias Incidents in Middle and High Schools: Resources and Best Practices for School Administrators & Educators](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education: Principles for Creating Safe, Inclusive, Supportive, and Fair School Climates](#)
- [U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service: Preventing and Responding to Bias and Hate Incidents in K-12 Education Settings. A Toolkit for School Communities and Leaders](#)

An example process for restoring community after bias-based incidents.

Purpose: When an incidence of racial or other harm has occurred either in person or through social media, utilize this example Identity-Based Harm protocol.

Focus on Safety First

- Determine and remove any students affected to a safe spot.
- Determine and remove any staff affected to a safe spot.
- Assemble a student support team.
- Assess the need for increased supervision.

First Communication

- Contact the superintendent regarding the issue. Include the director of human resources if a staff member is involved.
- Provide precommunication with staff.
- Call appropriate administrator or staff member.
 - Alert them to the situation.
- For BIPOC families or other families depending on the nature of the identity-based harm
 - Share information, and let them know the investigation is just starting.
 - Stress that this is being taken seriously.
 - Apologize for harm that has been done.
- For accused families
 - Share information, and let them know the investigation is just starting.
 - Share that discipline decisions will be communicated pending further investigation.

Investigate

- Initiate fact-finding to better understand the situation.
 - Documented notes should include statements from affected students and witnesses.
 - Utilize administrator-led standardized questions.

- Collect statements from any and all victims and accused

Second Communication

- Administrator(s) work with the communication team to provide clear and timely communication to necessary partners, families, school staff and district administration
 - Denounce the act: This is unacceptable and does not represent the values of our school.
 - Include translation into multiple languages.
 - Send communication through phone, text and email.
 - Identify places to go for additional information (district/school website).
 - Reference to district policies and the student handbook.
- Provide talking points (two to three bullets) for office staff.

Support impacted individuals

- Building administrator identifies a listening space for conversations to occur.
- Hold healing circles that day or the following day, as needed.
- Involve social workers, counselors, student support-team members, teachers and case managers to support targeted and offended students based on needs assessment for targeted and offended students.
- Support impacted adults through administrative team.
- Support parents through staff and administration.

Rebuild Relationships and Promote Healing

- Determine the next steps of action with additional staff, students, families based on the magnitude of the act.
- Have follow-up activities or responses for classrooms/grade levels/whole school, as necessary, depending upon scope of event.
- Debrief the incident, and reflect on actions taken, actions still needed and proactive work to prevent future harm.
- Meet with family to support student return to school after any discipline removal related to the event.
- Provide restorative circles opportunities that focus on active listening, authentic learning and rebuilding community.
- Seek to restore through the rebuilding of relationships with feedback from community members.
- Develop a safety plan to transition victims and offenders back to their classes.
- Monitor victims and offenders for social and academic needs.

Family Partnerships

Research Findings on Family and Community Engagement

1. Decades of research show when families are involved, students demonstrate higher grades, test scores and graduation rates, better school attendance, increased motivation, better self-esteem, lower rates of suspension, decreased use of drugs and alcohol, fewer instances of violent behavior (National Parent Teacher Association).
2. Family participation in education is twice as predictive of students' academic success as family socioeconomic status. Some of the more intensive programs had effects that were 10 times greater than other factors (Herbert J. Walberg in his review of 29 studies of school-parent Programs, 1984).

3. School benefits of family participation include improved teacher morale, higher ratings of teachers by families, more support from families, higher student achievement, better reputations in the community (A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement, Anne T. Henderson and Nancy Berla, Center for Law and Education, Washington, D.C., 1996).
4. Family involvement leads to feelings of ownership, resulting in increased support of schools. (Low-Income Parents and the Schools: A Research Report and a Plan for Action, Don Davies,. 1988).
5. Families express a genuine and deep-seated desire to help their children succeed academically, regardless of differences in socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity and cultural background. (Mapp, Adapted from the Michigan Department of Education Parental Engagement Policy, 1999).

Resources to Support Family and Community Engagement

- [Colorado Department of Education: Family, School, and Community Partnerships \(FSCP\) Framework: 4 Essential Elements](#)
- [Colorado Department of Education: Promising Partnership Practices](#)
- [Dual capacity-building framework for family-school partnerships \(Version 2\)](#)
- [FrameWorks Reframing Family, School, and Community Engagement](#)

Resources to Support Partnering with Immigrant and Newcomer Families

- [Becoming an Ally: Partnering with Immigrant Families to Promote Student Success](#)
- [Colorado Department of Education: Immigrant Integration Educator Resource Guide](#)
- [Colorado Statewide Parent Coalition: Engaging Immigrant Parents in their Children's Education](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education Newcomer Toolkit: Establishing Partnerships with Families](#)
- [U.S Department of Education and Southwest Educational Development Laboratory Partners in Education A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family–School Partnerships](#)

Culturally Responsive Teaching within Best First Instruction

Research and best practices for culturally responsive teaching

- [Colorado Department of Education: Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Education](#)
- [Colorado Department of Education: Best, First Instruction](#)
- [New York State Education Department: Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework](#)
- [New York University: Culturally Responsive Education Research Fact Sheet](#)
- [University of San Diego: Culturally Responsive Teaching Guide \(+10 Examples\)](#)
- [Culturally Responsive Instruction for Native American Students](#)