AUBURN SCHOOL DISTRICT
Collective Equity Organizational Analysis

Collective Equity Organizational Analysis (CEOA) Team
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CORWIN'S COLLECTIVE EQUITY ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS TEAM

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Collective Efficacy

The Collective Equity Organizational Analysis reports the analysis findings as they apply to the collective rather than each building's finding as the district should work collectively to create equitable learning environments for all.

How does our relationship to our collective influence our effectiveness as culturally relevant practitioners? Culturally fortified learning environments move us from isolation to cooperation, from only seeing windows to experiencing mirrors, from product driven to purpose driven, from individualism to collectivism, and from self-regulation to self-actualization. By being open to and honoring the diverse backgrounds, life experiences, and identities of the adults in the collective, we gain a better appreciation of those differences in our student population(s), and consequently our ability to succeed as a practitioner is augmented. Yet even with the best intentions, sometimes teams experience limited to no success in transforming their learning community. When faced with evidence of limited or no impact, we lose our motivation to see our well-crafted plans to the end. The hard truth is that, in the absence of tangible evidence of improvement, we become demoralized, we lose momentum, and our work is hijacked. However, some teams are able to face these challenges and overcome inertia. Typically, these are teams with a high sense of *collective efficacy.*

In order to have collective efficacy across a community, we must first have self-efficacy as individuals. "Self-efficacy is a personal judgement about how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with perspective situations" (Bandura, 1982, p. 122). When we truly believe our actions lead us closer to meeting our goals, we move closer to collective efficacy. "Collective teacher efficacy refers to a staff's shared belief that through their collective actions, they can positively influence student outcomes, including for students who are disengaged and/or disadvantaged" (Fisher, Frey, & Smith, 2020, p. 4). Learning communities with high teacher collective efficacy demonstrate the following characteristics: optimism that all students will learn, confidence in their abilities to reach and teach all students, and the stamina to be committed to success (Bloomberg & Pitchford, 2016).

However, for teams to experience sustained impact in equitable learning environments, collective teacher efficacy alone will not get the job done. There must be an interaction between credibility and teacher collective efficacy. Credibility in organizations is present when the adults are believable, convincing, and capable of persuading all members that they can be successful in the learning community (Fisher et al., 2020). And to go even further, credibility in transformative equitable learning environments is fostered through a combination of trustworthiness, honesty, competence, and commitment as perceived by members of the learning community. Credibility with an equity lens requires the realization and validation of the prior historical experiences of the learning community, especially in communities serving Black,

Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). When members of the collective demonstrate efficacy and credibility with a laser-like focus on equity, their ability to mitigate patterns of disparity and oppression of voice, value, and agency increases exponentially.

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Introduction

Analysis Team

The Corwin Collective Equity Analysis Team was asked to evaluate the current landscape of equitable practices present in the Auburn School District. Collective Equity is defined as "shared responsibility for the social, cultural, academic, and emotional fortification of students and adults that enables everyone to achieve their goals and aspirations on their own terms (Hollins-Alexander & Law, 2022, p. 9). The purpose of the Collective Equity Organizational Analysis (CEOA) process is to identify current strengths, opportunities for improvement, and recommended next steps to strategically inform the continuous enhancement of Auburn School District's system of equity practices. The CEOA took place over four days in March 2022. Biographical sketches of the CEOA team are located in Appendix A of this document.

Background & Context

Auburn School District (ASD) currently enrolls 17,000+ students in a 62-mile area bridging King and Pierce counties, and services approximately 75,000 residents in Auburn, Algona, Pacific, Lake Tapps and unincorporated areas of King County in Washington State. ASD began its equity journey in the summer of 2015 with Dr. Gary Howard's Deep Equity professional learning support. A four-year plan was developed with a cohort model training approach for building teams to support staff across each school. Sixty-six teams consisting of more than 500 certificated and classified staff participated over three years. The three initial goals of the training included establishing equity teams in each building, developing common definitions and language of our equity work, and providing professional learning to school staff. Corwin's ongoing professional development for educators such as Deep Equity, PLC+, and Equity in Action, as well as the Youth Equity Stewardship (YES) program for students, has supported ASD's journey to develop better systems and practices to impact student learning.

ASD's continued equity work included the development of their racial equity board policy followed by the creation of the Committee on Racial Equity (CORE Team). The CORE Team developed the following district equity statement:

> *" Equity is each student having an educational experience in which they are seen and valued for who they are now, while developing their full academic and social potential to prepare them for the future they choose."*

Wanting a tangible way to visualize what the components of equity "look, feel, and sound like", the district developed its "Equity Mountain" with the leadership of the Director of Equity, Family Engagement, and Outreach. The Mountain creates a visual representation of campsites where the various components of equity development can occur. The Mountain shows connections between the journey and the role of the seven principles of culturally responsive practice which are grounded in the district racial equity protocol. Auburn School District maintains committed to raising achievement for all students, eliminating racial disparity and disproportionality, and ensuring all students graduate ready to succeed in a racially and culturally diverse local, national, and global community.

Purpose of Analysis

The goal of a CEOA process is to evaluate the degree to which educational organizations are effectively implementing equitable practices for all members of the learning community while simultaneously building the capacity of individuals and enhancing systems to focus on the social, cultural, academic, and emotional fortification of all stakeholders to achieve their goals. CEOAs allow for strategic analysis and alignment of equity-related efforts across the organization. Further, they allow district and school-level leaders and staff to understand practices, policies, strategies, and structures that create equitable opportunities for all. This information gathered can be used to explore current trends within and across districts and schools, as well as what specific strategies and practices can be implemented to reach equity goals.

High-quality evaluation is at the core of the CEOA process. Evaluation is the determination of an object's value, merit, or work (Scriven, 1991). Broadly defined, evaluation is the identification, clarification, and application of defensible criteria to determine the object's value related to those criteria (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011). Evaluation of professional learning activities, then, can be defined as "a systematic, purposeful standards-driven process of studying, reviewing, and analyzing data about a professional learning program gathered from multiple sources to make judgments and informed decisions about the program" (Killion, 2018, p. 8). Auburn's ongoing equity-focused professional learning efforts are the focus of investigation in this evaluation.

Key Stakeholders

The primary stakeholders of this CEOA include the Director of Equity, Family Engagement, and Outreach as well as the Auburn School District Cabinet Members, students, certificated staff, classified staff, administrators, and families. Such stakeholders are and should be directly involved in decision-making and are collectively responsible for continuous improvement in equity practices. Additional stakeholders impacted by Auburn's collective equity work include district and school partners, school board members, and community members.

Analysis Design

The purpose of this analysis was to determine to what degree Auburn School District has developed a system of equity practices for all stakeholders as well as how that system can be improved. The section of the report includes the evaluation approach used, the evaluation questions that were answered, and the methods used to collect data for the current CEOA.

Evaluation Approach

The evaluation questions to be answered first required the determination of the degree to which Auburn School District has developed a system of equity practices that support all stakeholders. The second part of the CEOA addressed the ways in which the system of equity practices might be improved to more effectively meet the needs of all stakeholders. The evaluation approach recommended to best answer the above questions was a combination of management-oriented and expertise-oriented methodologies. Specifically, Stufflebeam's CIPP Evaluation Model was the management-oriented approach used (Stufflebeam, 2001) blended with a participant-oriented evaluation focus and an ad hoc expertise-oriented review conducted by the analysis team (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011).

Evaluation Questions

After significant consultation and collaboration with Auburn's Director of Equity, Family Engagement, and Outreach, the following questions were identified and addressed in this analysis:

1) To what degree has Auburn School District developed a system of equity practices for all stakeholders?

   a. To what degree are culturally fortifying organizational practices evident?
   b. To what degree are culturally fortifying instructional practices evident?
   c. To what degree has equity-focused professional learning been effective?

2) In what ways might Auburn School District improve its system of equity practices for all stakeholders?

   a. What are the facilitators of equitable practices?
      i. What equity assets exist?
   b. What are the barriers to equitable practices?
      i. What equity challenges exist?

Data Collection Methods

A mixed-method field study framework was used for this analysis. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were identified as appropriate to collect the information necessary to conduct this evaluation. Specific sources of data included focus groups with students, certificated staff, classified staff, school- and district-level administrators, district leaders, and parents. A classroom walkthrough tool was developed and used to gather real-time observational data regarding the implementation of culturally responsive classroom practices.

Results

In order to gather information for the purposes of this analysis, the CEOA team developed and administered an equity analysis classroom walkthrough tool. The analysis team also conducted focus groups with students, certificated staff, classified staff, school- and district-level administrators, district leaders, and parents. In this section, the CEOA team will describe the results gathered from these data collection methods.

Classroom Walkthrough Tool

The *Equity Analysis Classroom Walkthrough Tool* was developed specifically for this CEOA and is based on Deep Equity's Seven Principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching (Howard, 2015, See Appendix B). Each of the seven principles was broken down into two related "look-fors" under each domain (i.e., principle). Data from the *Equity Analysis Classroom Walkthrough Tool* were entered into a database and descriptive statistics were run on all 14 items. See Appendix C for the tool and its specific items.

Items 1A - 7B on the tool captured the degree to which each culturally responsive practice was evidenced during each classroom visit using a 4-level response scale. The data were then converted to a 4-point numeric scale for data entry and analysis.

> N = No Evidence Observed (1)
> L = Little Evidence Observed (2)
> S = Some Evidence Observed (3)
> G = A great Deal of Evidence Observed (4)

Demographics

The *Equity Analysis Classroom Walkthrough Tool* was utilized in 143 classrooms in four high schools, four middle schools, 15 elementary schools, and one online school (grades 1-12) across Auburn School District over a three-day period. Ten minutes was the average time analysis team members spent in each classroom to complete the tool. Some schools prepared a schedule of classrooms for team members to visit, while other schools allowed team members to randomly select classrooms during their visit. Data were collected in real-time during the classroom visits, with one copy of the walkthrough tool used to capture information for each classroom. The walkthrough data were then entered into an electronic database.

Data Analysis

Given the exploratory nature of this analysis and the customized walkthrough tool developed for this district, ASD has yet to develop a standard for an "acceptable" degree to which these practices should be observed in classrooms and across schools. Therefore, it is recommended that the Director of Equity, Family Engagement, and Outreach and the team should interpret these as baseline data to use to develop professional learning strategies and action plans for equitable transformation. It was hypothesized that practices reflective of domains 1-3 would be evidenced to a greater degree than those of domains 4-7, given Auburn's professional learning focus on those "Front Porch Practices." As indicated in Table 1, mean scores for domain one (*Students are affirmed in their cultural connections*) and domain two (*Teachers are personally inviting*) are slightly higher than the other five domains, but not to a significant degree. However, domain three (*Learning environments are physically and culturally inviting)* was noted as a relative weakness. The average domain score ranged from 2.21 to 3.05, demonstrating only slight variability across the seven domains. An additional relative weakness was noted in domain 7 (*Interactions stress collectivity as well as individuality*).

Table 1. *Equity Analysis Classroom Walkthrough Domain Averages*

EQUITY ANALYSIS CLASSROOM WALKTHROUGH DOMAIN AVERAGES
N = 143

4 = A Great Deal of Evidence Observed
3 = Some Evidence Observed
2 = Little Evidence Observed
1 = No Evidence Observed

Values by domain:
- 1. Students are affirmed in their cultural connections. — 2.88
- 2. Teachers are personally inviting. — 3.05
- 3. Learning environments are physically and culturally inviting. — 2.45
- 4. Students are reinforced for academic development. — 2.61
- 5. Instructional changes are made to accommodate differences in learners. — 2.65
- 6. Classroom is managed with firm, consistent, loving control. — 2.52
- 7. Interactions stress collectivity as well as individuality. — 2.21

Scale (y-axis)

Domains (x-axis)

Table 2 includes item response counts or the degree to which each of the 14 items was evidenced during the 143 classroom walkthroughs on the 1-4 scale. As indicated in the graph, 39% or more of the classrooms visited demonstrated either "a great deal of evidence" or "some evidence" of all 14 culturally responsive practices. Seventy-eight percent of classrooms reflected either "a great deal of evidence" or "some evidence" on item 1A (*Students are treated as individuals and are provided with equal access to learning resources*), noting a relative strength across classrooms visited. Item 2B (*Teachers create an environment of warmth by greeting students by name and creating immediacy toward all students*) also revealed a relative strength, whereby 75% of classrooms visited had either "a great deal of evidence" or "some evidence" in this area.

Table 2. *Equity Analysis Classroom Walkthrough Item Response Counts*

Equity Analysis Walkthrough Data N=143

Legend: Great Deal of Evidence Observed | Some Evidence Observed | Little Evidence Observed | No Evidence Observed
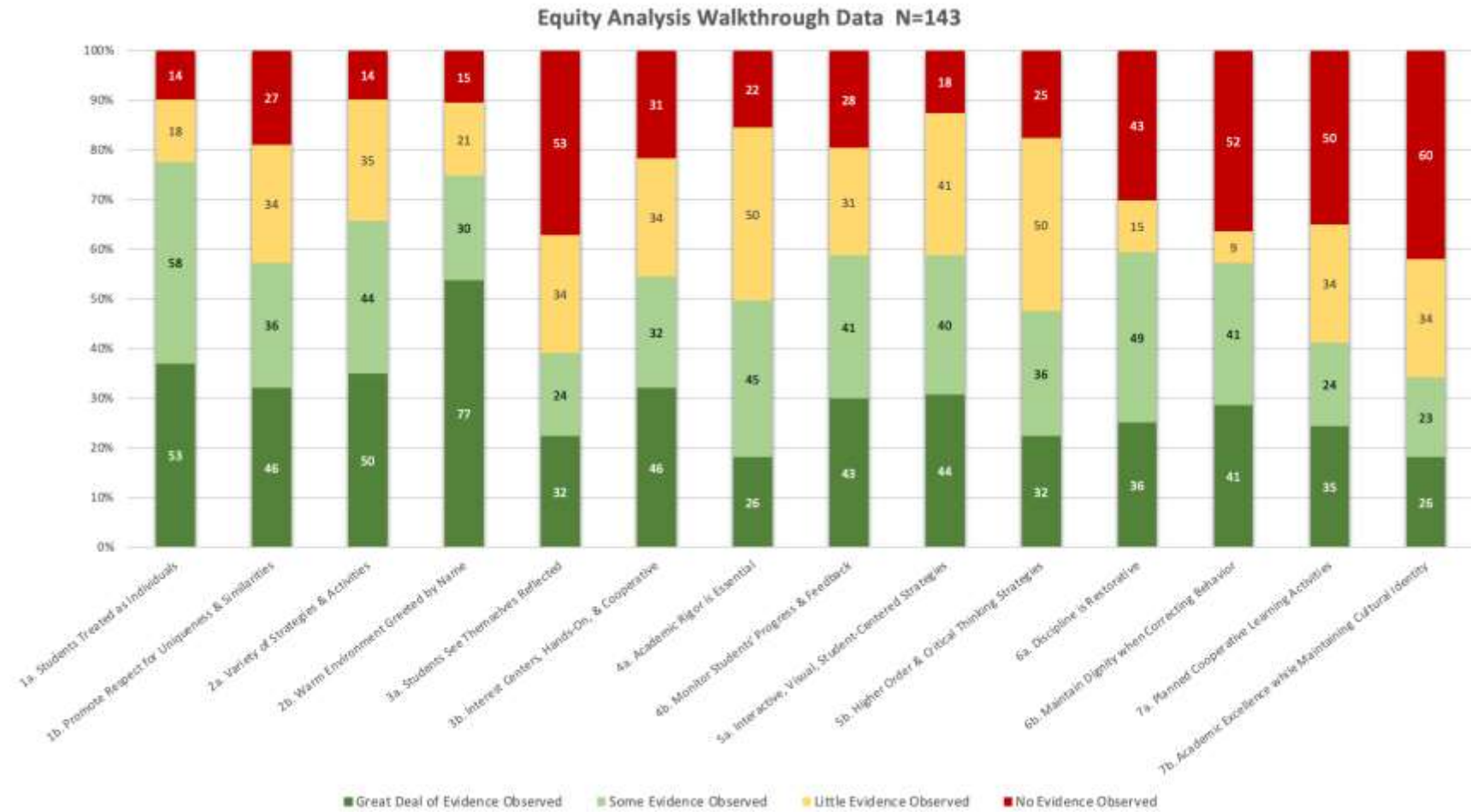
Conversely, "no evidence observed" was reported in 30% or more of the classrooms visited for the following five items: 3A (*Students need to see themselves and their cultures respectfully reflected through pictures, displays, artifacts, the inclusion of different languages, multicultural curriculum considerate*), 6A (*Discipline is restorative and educative rather than punitive*), 6B (*Be respectful and maintain the human dignity of the student when correcting inappropriate behavio*r), 7A (*Teachers plan for cooperative learning opportunities*), and 7B (*Promote academic excellence while maintaining the cultural identity of your students*). While the reader should review these data with a degree of caution due to the inherent limitations of brief classroom observation data collection, the robust nature of the large sample size (*n* = 143) suggests confidence in the general patterns of strengths and areas for improvement as evidenced in classrooms across the district.

Focus Groups

During the course of the CEOA team's visit, the team members conducted focus groups with a variety of stakeholders to gather information to answer the evaluation questions collaboratively developed with Auburn's Director of Equity, Family Engagement, and Outreach. Therefore, focus group questions and follow-up prompts were developed to elicit specific information to answer the evaluation questions. In order to minimize social desirability bias from all participants, we explained that the purpose of the focus groups was to learn as much as possible from their experiences to inform district and school-level improvement in equity practices and encouraged honest conversations and responses. We also ensured participants that their responses would not be used to evaluate them, nor would their specific responses be tied to their names or other identifying information.

Focus group interviews took place in 24 schools (four high schools, four middle schools, 15 elementary schools, and one online school) as well as at the district office on Friday, March 4th, Monday, March 7th, and Tuesday, March 8th. School-level focus groups included the following stakeholder classifications: Students, Certificated Staff (including teachers, specialists, counselors, coaches, administrators), and Classified Staff (including office staff, liaisons, custodians, cafeteria staff, resource officers, bus drivers, and paraprofessionals). One to 15 focus groups took place in each school visited. Auburn District Leadership (district-level leaders, cabinet members, superintendent, school board members) were also interviewed. Further, parent focus groups took place on Saturday, March 5th, 2022, that included a total of 18 parents/family members of Auburn School District students. See Appendix D-G for the focus group protocols that include the high-level questions and potential follow-up prompts.

The following provides a summary of the relevant themes that emerged from the focus group interviews by the stakeholder group, as well as salient paraphrasing and direct quotes from participants to illuminate the findings.

Certificated Staff*

To what degree has Auburn School District developed a system of equity practices for all stakeholders?

The majority of certificate staff interviewed reported that Auburn School District has been demonstrating a strong commitment to this work overtime, but still has a way to go with regard to building equitable organizational and instructional practices for all stakeholders. Examples of such district-level commitment included ongoing professional learning on Deep Equity and Culturally Responsive Practices, student participation in the YES! Program, creating and distributing Auburn's Equity Mountain and Racial Equity Protocol, development of Affinity Groups, as well as highlighting issues of equity directly within the district's School Improvement Plan (SIP). However, it was clear that school-level commitment, expectations, and buy-in for this work varied both within and across schools within the district.

Certificated staff reported a sense of frustration with the current equity-focused professional learning offered. One frequently mentioned frustration included too much focus on "big-picture" and "surface-level" concepts and not enough "practical classroom strategies" to "move from the what to the how" of the work. Administrators and staff reported wanting specific learning goals/targets and success criteria for this work, with practical tools, strategies, and ongoing modeling and coaching to support this work.

While many staff members reported that they appreciated the expectations of and support for school-level equity teams, others reported discouragement with the lack of participation in these efforts - or participation by the same few individuals each time. Others reported a great deal of support from school-level administrators, whereby many organize equity-focused book studies, time for conversations in professional learning communities and staff meetings, as well as support for individual teachers' professional development. However, frustration emerges when the same small few engage in these efforts, which leads to discouragement and a sense that other staff members are not supportive - or even resistant -

to this work. Some staff members reported feelings of isolation, lack of support, and hostile working environments based upon dimensions of identities that are part of minoritized communities. Others expressed feeling "deflated," with a lack of agency and efficacy in their experience, which inhibits the efficacy of the collective. Certificated staff members indicated that some voices are suppressed based upon positions and structures of power and privilege.

Many certificated staff members discussed a perceived disconnect between what the district assumes is occurring in schools related to this work and what is actually occurring. "Just because the district says it should be happening doesn't mean it is," said one teacher. Others reported wanting more of "a district leadership presence" in the schools to communicate ongoing commitment as well as ensure an accurate sense of where the schools are and how to support them better.

In what ways might Auburn School District improve its system of equity practices for all stakeholders?

Certificated staff discussed a number of ways in which their district and schools could improve systems of equity practices, as well as facilitators and barriers to such work. Staff overwhelmingly suggested that equity-related professional learning should no longer be viewed as optional and needs to be mandatory for all involved. Allowing such professional development to be "voluntary" or "self-selected" conveys it more like a "topic of interest" for those who choose to learn more about it, rather than imperative to the core of schooling. Certificated staff also reported the need for additional infrastructure required to do the work, such as data systems that allowed the collection, disaggregation, and analysis to support various groups and subgroups of students to ensure equitable responses to needs. Further, many staff reported that, while getting better, the district and schools need to ensure recruitment and hiring practices of staff reflective of the diversity of the Auburn community.

The issue of time for and prioritization of this work echoed throughout the focus group conversations. "If this is really that important, they [leadership] would carve out the time for it to do it well," said one teacher. A common barrier discussed was a perceived lack of protected time for this work, and "our momentum gets disrupted because you want to do the work, want to do what is right, but that takes time, and all this other stuff comes up." Other barriers reported include equity as a highly contentious political issue, tensions between following the pacing guides and slowing down based on student needs, staff burnout, and discomfort from staff who are afraid to speak up for fear of retaliation or "saying the wrong thing." A smaller but vocal group of teachers reported feeling as though the district leadership cares more about optics rather than actually supporting the teachers with the

tools, time, and expectations to do the work. Specifically, one teacher reported, "they are just putting on a show for you to say they are doing these great things. If we've been doing this for so long, why did we just get our equity posters a few days before you [the equity team] came, and then they told us to put them up in every classroom? It's all talk, no follow-through for us doing the actual work."

*One middle school did not participate in a certificated staff focus group.

Classified Staff*

To what degree has Auburn School District developed a system of equity practices for all stakeholders?

The majority of classified staff members reported that ASD has been doing "a good job" developing a system of equity practices for all but still has room to grow in realizing its vision. Many who have worked in the district for some times have seen "substantial" growth in recent years due to the district's explicit focus on this work. For example, classified staff suggested that a growing number of diverse clubs and library books for students, as well as enhanced cultural representation in the hallways and classrooms as indicators of this growth in equity-related practices. Others were excited to be invited to participate in the focus group process, indicating this is the first time that they have been asked their opinions related to these issues.

However, many classified staff members discussed that, compared to certificated staff, they are viewed as "second class citizens" and feel "invisible" in their schools. "We are an

afterthought here," said one paraprofessional. "We don't understand the decisions made, and we are never asked our opinion, yet we support our students and care about them just as much [as certificated staff]." Other examples of this sentiment include no representation from the classified staff at cabinet meetings, many surveys going out to teachers but not classified staff, and working after hours and at night without lights and heat on at the schools.

Frustration emerged when discussing equity-related professional learning and professional learning support in general. A great deal of focus group members reported a lack of clarity in communication from the district on required versus optional professional learning - citing a recent realization that a seven-hour training they were initially told was optional is actually mandatory. Now, they are "scrambling" to get it done by the due date. And while invited by their principals to attend book studies, PLC meetings, and other staff meetings they would like to attend "to be more a part of the school and the learning," these events often occur during non-paid hours. "If we could get paid for it like teachers do, we would feel more valued and eager [to participate]," said a support staff member.

In what ways might Auburn School District improve its system of equity practices for all stakeholders?

Classified staff shared a great deal of insight regarding how ASD could improve its equity practices for all. One individual said, "stop elevating certificated staff over classified staff. We are all here for the students. Pay us to attend training like others do and communicate with us just like you communicate with them." A paraprofessional reported that their new principal has placed a classified staff member on the school's leadership team, and that "we were so happy - this spoke volumes to us." Others reported that equity training and practices should be mandatory district-wide and that ASD should be hiring a more diverse staff and administrators.

Many reported, "being out of the loop" regarding sensitive student issues and needs regarding communication specifically. For example, one elementary school custodian reported telling a transgender boy that he was entering the wrong restroom on several different occasions. "I just thought the student was confused, but then I found out that he was transgender. I felt awful. I should have been told this, so I didn't make this mistake. Nobody told me." Others reported similar examples of "being the last to know" or finding out crucial information "by accident or on the back end." Classified staff overwhelmingly reported a need for better, more timely communication from both the district and school levels.

*One middle school did not participate in a certified staff focus group.

Students

To what degree has Auburn School District developed a system of equity practices for all stakeholders?

Most students at all grade levels reported feeling a sense of belonging in schools, welcoming staff, and students, and that their culture is celebrated and valued. However, a smaller subset of students reported feeling as though the district and schools were not doing enough to create and sustain equity systems for all students. It seems as though the majority of this variance is due to individual teachers regardless of school location or grade level served. "It all comes down to the teachers," said one high school student. "Some teachers really try to get to know you and make sure they talk about different cultures in classrooms, listen to you, really show they care. Other teachers just don't. Some have even said they are only here for the paycheck." Another said, "there are teachers here who will do absolutely anything for students, and those who will not. It depends on the teacher." Others discussed how teachers are doing a good job introducing and talking about different cultures and diversity, but "it's only surface level, just talk," said one high school student. "Positivity with no support is empty." In other words, they would like to see more teachers, administrators, and students "walk the walk." Most students reported not being familiar with ASD's Equity Mountain, while another student said, "the Equity Mountain is a joke - it's never used."

High school students, in particular, discussed support for a lot of different clubs and organizations for students as indicators of school-based equity practices. Many of the clubs are culturally- or ethnically oriented, and leadership is supportive as long as the students can find an adult sponsor within the school. While this was identified as a strength, students reported that this is not enough. "It should not be the club's responsibility to talk about race and other equity things," said one student. "These [clubs] are all student-led. The school and teachers should be leading these conversations too; it shouldn't be on us."

Elementary and middle school students also reported variability in the degree to which equity practices are evident in their schools. While most reported feeling welcomed, safe, and cared about by their teachers and principals, others described examples of bullying, ableism, racism, sexism, homophobia, and exclusion perpetrated by teachers and students. For example, one third-grade student reported students frequently "tell me to go back to my country. I tell the

teachers, but they don't do anything. Sometimes they want you to handle it on your own." A fourth-grade student reported, "there is a lot of racism here. They make fun of me about my origin." A group of second-grade students shared how a student in a wheelchair gets made "fun of all the time" and cannot "play with us at recess" because the area is not wheelchair accessible.

In what ways might Auburn School District improve its system of equity practices for all stakeholders?

Students share many ideas on ways to improve systems of equity within their schools and across the district. For example, high school students indicated lack of transportation as a major barrier for students to get to activities that meet before or after school, as well as activity fees that are cost-prohibitive for some. One student asked, "Why don't we have buses or organized transportation for students? We could have older students volunteer to drive and fundraise for costs so these kids can come." Others reported that opportunities for equity in student voice are a barrier, whereby athletes and student leaders are the only ones who are heard. "We need to find ways where everyone is heard and listened to."

Middle and high school students reported the need for more counselors and other adults to support the mental health needs of students. Some high school students, in particular, feel that the counselors, while welcoming, have too much scheduling and paperwork to do to meet the needs of all students. One student reported, "We need more adults that we can talk to. Our counselors are still swamped with college applications and other stuff. We need more adults here. It puts an unwanted wall between our students and counselors because we know they don't have the time." Other students reported wanting to see more adults that look like them. "I would like to see a more diverse administration group," said one middle schooler. "It helps seeing people that look like you. I'd like to see more higher-up administrators that are different looking. This would help with the behavior problems too."

Students reported that they would like to have more classes on multicultural issues. High school students discussed one optional course but would like to see "more classes, to go deeper on these issues, and that all students should take." While gender-neutral bathrooms exist in high schools, the students reported that they are hard to find and not easily accessible. Others reported that while many teachers do a good job with using gender-neutral language and preferred pronouns, others do not. "Teachers can do better," said one student.

Parents/Family Members*

To what degree has Auburn School District developed a system of equity practices for all stakeholders?

While parents were generally grateful to have been invited to the focus group opportunity and appreciated such efforts by the district, many expressed that this is the first time they have ever been asked their opinion on equity issues regarding the schooling of their children. They reported feeling disconnected and frustrated by what one parent called "a nonexistent communication system" between the schools and the families. Parents do not feel like their voices are heard. Knowing how to communicate with teachers and administrators and the

platform to use for this communication is either inconsistent or doesn't exist. Parents discussed not knowing who to call to get their questions answered, especially about services for students with special needs, and being "bounced around and transferred to different people" and "still getting no answer." One parent asked, "why is it so hard to get answers? Why is there no centralized place for parents to get answers to their questions? It's so frustrating. Is it because I'm not asking the right people? Or do the answers just not exist?" One parent said, "the reason I joined the PTA was because I know the access to schools as parents is inequitable. Now they know me, and I get answers. I know I'm privileged because of this." Other parents discussed how equity practices and communication levels are inconsistent and based on the teacher you are assigned. One parent said, "It's the luck of the draw. One year your kid could have a really awesome, highly caring teacher who communicates with you. But then next year, you don't. That is inequitable right there."

Others discussed a lack of transparency and questioned why this was the first time they had ever seen or heard about the Equity Mountain or the Racial Equity Protocol. "This is cool stuff, but since we've never heard of it, it makes me wonder if they are really doing anything about it," said one parent. They also reported wanting to see more diversity in the administration and staff at schools that reflect the students they serve.

Many parents shared specific illustrations of a lack of both shallow and deep cultural knowledge to support all dimensions of identity. For example, one parent spoke of a school's display of various flags from different countries - trying to emphasize and celebrate the diversity of the student population. However, this only addresses surface-level cultural identities and fails to consider a true representation of specific cultures' history, levels of

oppression, and emotions that the flags evoke from students and family members. The parent who shared this example wondered if families or students were involved in discussions about whether or not the flags accurately represented their culture.

In what ways might Auburn School District improve its system of equity practices for all stakeholders?

Parents were eager to share their ideas about how ASD could improve its system of equity practices. First, many expressed that ongoing conversations like these focus groups should be a part of continued, bidirectional communication among parents and school staff. Some referenced surveys that they have received in the past but found them very cumbersome to complete and never heard anything about them again. "Surveys don't get this type of dialogue that we need," said one parent. We need more meetings like this and follow through and follow up on what we've talked about.

Others shared they would like to see more mental health support for their students in schools, as well as training for them as parents on how to better support their children in areas of mental health, bullying, and issues of equity. Additionally, they would like more training on how to help their students at home academically. Finally, others said having "support groups" or affinity groups for parents of similar cultures that include translators.

A barrier discussed by many parents was that they feel negatively "targeted" by schools once they bring up an issue or advocate for their children. "I feel like either I get punished or my kid will if I am seen as complaining about something," said one parent. A sense of fear of retribution or being labeled as "difficult" was a common theme expressed by many parents.

*Given only 18 parents/family members participated in the focus groups, results should be interpreted cautiously in light of the small sample size.

District Leaders

To what degree has Auburn School District developed a system of equity practices for all stakeholders?

Members of district leadership discussed several ways in which they have seen growth in efforts and impact related to ASD's focus on developing a system of equity practices for all stakeholders and discussed areas in which they are falling short. A few reported an intentional effort to recruit and hire diverse administrators and staff members across the district. The past five to six years have been focused on equity issues, and they have established an eight-hour equity professional learning training requirement for all ASD staff.

Many ASD leaders acknowledged that large-scale systems change efforts take a great deal of time and commitment, with one indicating they are still in their "infancy stage" and working on clarity of the vision and purpose of this work across the organization. While they are starting to see the prioritization of this work to varying degrees across schools, common language and understanding of the need are growing. "We need to go deeper," one district leader said, while another indicated, "we need to move from talking about equity to equity in action."

In what ways might Auburn School District improve its system of equity practices for all stakeholders?

ASD district leaders shared ideas for specific strategies to improve implementation efforts and enhance a system of equitable practices for their stakeholders. Specific, actionable items included enhancing the superintendent's and district leadership team's visibility within schools and in the community, finding teachers and staff members doing this well and leveraging their knowledge and skills into ongoing professional learning for others, and providing clear learning goals and success criteria for implementation of this work in classrooms.

Other team members discussed not knowing how the training and support around culturally responsive practices are really "making its way into the classrooms." "Principals do not know what the 'look-fors' are," said one individual. Providing principals and staff with clear expectations for and how to do this work in schools, or the "practical application" of this work, is the next step. Others discussed the need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the equity teams as there currently is a lack of understanding of their purpose and what they should be doing to support equity-related practices. These teams should also include family members for a stronger family and community connection. Others mentioned that although

the Director of Equity, Family Engagement, and Outreach is doing a great job, "this work is too much for one person, and he needs help." Finally, they noted a need for multidirectional communication loops among district leaders, administrators, staff, students, and families. "We communicate but don't receive communication…There is no real feedback system in PL yet," reported one individual.

Conclusions

Based on the results of this analysis and the information presented in this report, the following findings have been developed to answer the evaluation questions posed:

1) To what degree has Auburn School District developed a system of equity practices for all stakeholders?

   a. To what degree are culturally fortifying organizational practices evident?
   b. To what degree are culturally fortifying instructional practices evident?
   c. To what degree has equity-focused professional learning been effective?

According to the classroom observation data, perceptions of focus group participants, and the expert analysis of the Corwin team, Auburn School District remains in the early stages of development and realization of a comprehensive, aligned, and robust system of equitable practices for all members of the learning community. While particular strengths were noted by all focus group members, a variety of opportunities for growth were also expressed. Learning community members discussed needed organizational practices related to recruitment and hiring diverse staff members reflective of the student population, professional learning and support focused on "how" to implement equity-related work in schools, and enhanced communication systems among the district, schools, students, families, and community members. Classroom observations revealed modest and variable evidence of culturally fortifying instructional practices/culturally responsive practices within schools across the district. Taken together, ASD's equity-focused professional learning has been fairly effective in communicating commitment, vision, and understanding of the purpose of this work. However, leaders must develop ongoing and intentional job-embedded professional learning and coaching inclusive of clearly defined goals, success criteria, and multi-faceted feedback structures to support equitable transformative practices for ASD.

2) In what ways might Auburn School District improve its system of equity practices for all stakeholders?

   a. What are the facilitators of equitable practices? What equity assets exist?
   b. What are the barriers to equitable practices? What equity challenges exist?

The focus group participants and the CEOA team suggested several ways the Auburn School District can improve its systems of equity practices for all. Structurally, the professional

learning plan can be evolved to include job-embedded modeling and coaching support to enhance practical strategies within the classrooms and schools with ongoing monitoring activities with feedback. The established equity teams can be leveraged to be more focused in their work, with a clearly defined purpose, roles, and responsibilities developed and articulated. ASD's instructional framework can be enhanced to include connections to and expectations for equity practices. Given communication was frequently noted as a barrier by parents, structures for ongoing, bi-directional feedback conversations with families need to be established and prioritized across the district. Further, district-level leadership must prioritize visiting schools frequently to reiterate commitment to equity practices, get an accurate sense of where schools are and where they need to go with this work, and receive feedback from all stakeholders on what is necessary to support and sustain collective equity for all. For a detailed list of suggestions for improvement, see the Recommendations section on page 27.

Limitations

One limitation of this analysis was the extremely small sample size of the parents and family members who participated in the focus groups. Further, classroom observations should always be reviewed with a degree of caution due to the inherent limitations of brief "snapshots" that may or may not reflect ongoing practice. However, the robust nature of the large sample size of classrooms (n = 143) visited suggests confidence in the general patterns of strengths and areas for improvement as evidenced across the district. Another potential limitation of this analysis is the nature of the topic itself. Since the information collected is related to issues of equity, identities, and belonging as well as the related professional learning support provided, participants may have been hesitant to discuss personal matters or share negative experiences or feel pressured to respond in a socially desirable manner.

Recommendations

Based on the data collected during this Collective Equity Organizational Analysis (CEOA), the following are recommendations for improving Auburn School District's equity practices to more effectively meet the needs of staff, students, and learning community members:

1. Continue providing robust ongoing professional learning support to all staff members, with a deliberate focus on practical strategies or the "how" of equity work including continuous progress monitoring with opportunities for specific feedback.
2. Explicitly connect and embed equity practices and expectations into the district's instructional framework with clear and measurable specific outcomes.
3. Provide specific professional learning support to educators focusing on lifting students' social, emotional, and cognitive engagement; aligning culturally fortifying curricular, instructional, and assessment practices; and increasing relevance for students via personal association, personal usefulness, and personal identification.
4. Reignite family and community engagement efforts, and continue ongoing conversations with parents that includes bi-directional feedback loops by conducting quarterly or monthly parent/family gatherings to enhance efficacy of school and family partnerships.
5. Create a system for ongoing executive coaching and transformative coaching opportunities with leaders and teachers.
6. Increase the frequency in which district-level leaders visit schools with a focus on providing vision and encouragement for equity work as well as gather feedback from stakeholders on how the district can continue to support staff and students moving forward.
7. Reconsider the optional (or perceived optional) nature of equity-related professional learning offered to educators, ensuring and communicating some degree of compulsory activities for all.
8. Explore options for additional multicultural, diversity, and equity-focused instructional programming for students of all ages.
9. Clarify the purpose, roles, and responsibilities of equity teams with school-specific implementation plans and measurable outcomes, and include parent/family and student representation in these groups beyond the YES program.
10. Further investigate the perceived hierarchy expressed by classified staff compared to certificated staff, and ensure classified staff are included in the district- and school-level communication, decision-making, and leadership activities.

11. Strategically focus on disrupting implicit bias in the learning community to help and recognize personal biases while disrupting mental models and stereotypes outside of cultural and individual dimensions of identities.
12. Develop executive and building leadership coaching systems to identify practices that lead to and support transformative equitable learning environments through frequency, intensity, and duration of approaches and ongoing accountability.

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Appendices

A. Corwin Collective Equity Organizational Analysis Team Members' Biographical Sketches

Sonja Hollins-Alexander, Ed.D. is the Associate Vice President of Global Professional Learning for Corwin Press. She has been in the field of education for 24 years with 18 of those being in educational leadership at the school, district, and higher education levels. During this time, she has served as a school social worker, teacher, assistant principal, principal, coordinator, assistant director and director of professional learning, and chief of staff in two Metro Atlanta, GA school districts. She has served on numerous United Way non-profit boards in the community and most recently served as the affiliate board president for Learning Forward, GA.

Sonja currently serves on the National Affiliate Leadership Council for Learning Forward. Through her professional journey she has had experiences in Strategic Planning, Organizational Improvement, Policy Development, Stakeholder Communication and Engagement, Grant Writing, Instructional Design, Curriculum Development, and Implementation, Facilitation of Adult Learning, Leadership Coaching, Conference Facilitation and Design, and served as a Quality Assurance Team Member for AdvancED. She is fully engaged in the development and use of Online Collaborative/Instructional Software. She is the author of Online Professional Development through Virtual Learning Communities, Corwin Press (2013).

Nicole Law, Ph.D. is a dynamic and passionate educator who provides relevant professional development to schools and districts across the country as a Consultant with Corwin Press. Nicole focuses her experience to present instruction on Professional Teacher Teams, Leadership Improvement Practices and Structures, Data Analysis Models, School Improvement Practices and Structures, Standards-based Instruction and Design, Metacognitive Teaching and Learning Practices, Strategies for Success in Cognitively Rigorous Instruction and Levels of Depth of Knowledge (DOK), Effective Teaching Strategies for English Learners and Special Education Students, as well as Culturally Responsive and Equitable Teaching Practices. She is the co-author of *The Skill, Will, and Thrill of Reading* (2020) with Doug Fisher and Nancy Frey. And has also co-authored a book on reflective leaders.

Before joining Corwin Press as a Professional Learning Consultant, Nicole served as a principal and curriculum coordinator in the Metropolitan School District of Wayne Township in Indianapolis, Indiana. Her role was focused on supporting administrators, teacher leaders, site coordinators in school improvement efforts. Her experiences have afforded her the opportunity to gain new knowledge and pour an abundance of her energy and passion into her work of coaching, empowering, and developing others. Leadership is Nicole's passion; she has worked with numerous teachers, principals, and district leaders on the implementation of best practices in education.

Amanda L. March is Corwin's Professional Learning and Evaluation Leader. In this role, she leads the design, delivery, and execution of the Global Evaluation Framework and instructional design and consultation activities to support high-quality professional learning experiences for all clients. Dr. March's unique area of expertise blends organizational consultation and systems change practices with the design, delivery, and evaluation of high-quality professional learning and evaluation solutions to enhance educator practices and improve student outcomes. She is passionate about supporting leaders in researching, designing, implementing, and evaluating evidence-based professional learning strategies and related tools to build capacity for MTSS at every level of the educational organization.

She began consulting with Corwin in 2018 and joined the Corwin family as a Full-Time Consultant in 2021. Dr. March received her Ph.D. in School Psychology from the University of South Florida, specializing in organizational- and systems-change consultation, program evaluation, professional learning and coaching, and multi-tiered service delivery systems in schools. She is a Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) and received her SSP from Illinois State University. She began her career in education as a building-based school psychologist with the Greater Lafayette Area Special Services (GLASS) in Lafayette, Indiana. Dr. March has also worked as a RtI facilitator and coach, PS/RtI project coordinator, MTSS consultant, and professional development trainer within the public schools. Dr. March is the

author of several journal articles and evaluations, is an active presenter at national/international conferences, and currently serves as the President of Learning Forward Florida (LFFL).

Ti'Gre McNear is a thought-provoking consultant who uses a charismatic and energizing approach that facilitates reflective self-evaluation and collaborative discourse with others. Her knowledge of learning styles leans toward a practical application that allows teachers and students to engage in learning and gain understanding. She facilitates training that develops staff in cultural climate and procedures that promote sustainability and improve performance. As a former teacher, experienced in all grade bands, and on-site Crisis Manager, she was responsible for sustaining the safety and accountability of staff and students, designing lessons consistent with best practices, and training that encompassed organizational values.
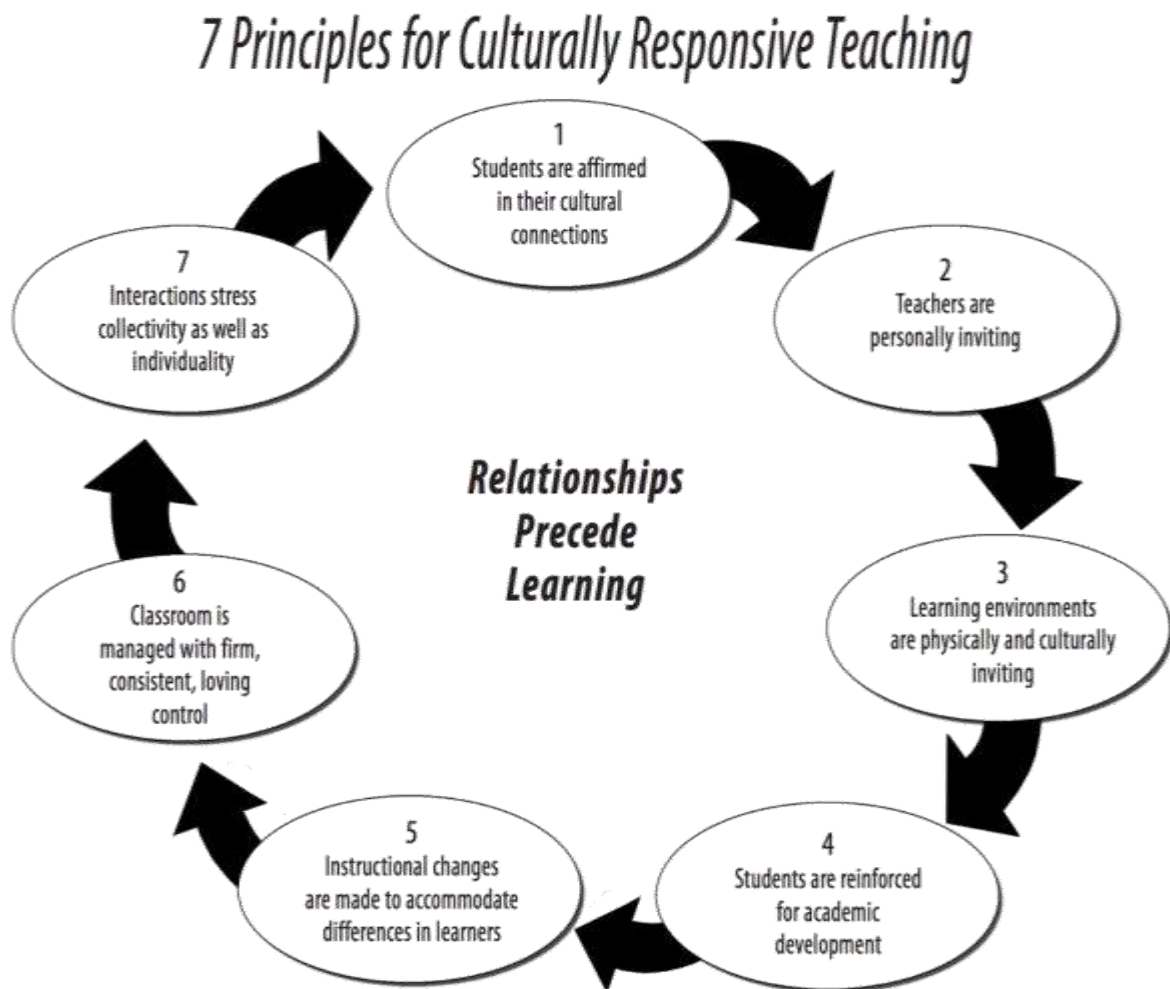
Mary Spencer has dedicated over 30+ years in the educational arena as a Teacher-Leader and School Administrator. As a Teacher-Leader initially and an Administrator during the later years of her professional employment, Mary has had the opportunity to lead many professional departments, implement and develop various educational processes and facilitate countless programs as well as present at leadership conferences. As a retired administrator, she continued to work in education as a Leadership Coach in DeKalb County, Gwinnett County, and Henry County Schools, as an online instructor for Corwin, and as a certified Collaborative/Instructional Leadership Consultant and a certified Visible Learning Consultant with CORWIN. Mary is currently a certified Collective Equity Consultant with CORWIN as well. Mary continues to bring her love for education and her knowledge of educational processes for change to the table. She is a consummate learner, leader, and participant in all processes to improve student achievement through equitable practices.

Lydia Chavira is the Sr. Product Manager for Professional Learning at Corwin. She manages Corwin's equity lines supporting districts and schools to design, build, and maintain culturally fortifying learning environments for all learners. She came to Corwin from a CA County Office of Education where she managed professional learning for (20) school districts, was a facilitator for the new administrator induction program, and served as the liaison for at-risk student programs, including Homeless Education Program, Foster Youth Services, and Migrant Education.

B. Deep Equity's Seven Principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching

7 Principles for Culturally Responsive Teaching

1 Students are affirmed in their cultural connections

2 Teachers are personally inviting

3 Learning environments are physically and culturally inviting

4 Students are reinforced for academic development

5 Instructional changes are made to accommodate differences in learners

6 Classroom is managed with firm, consistent, loving control

7 Interactions stress collectivity as well as individuality

Relationships Precede Learning

Creating Culturally Responsive Classrooms, 1997, Shade, Kelly, and Oberg. Order from: APA Order Department, PO Box 92984, Washington, DC 20090-2984

Gary Howard Equity Institutes @2010   www.ghequityinstitute.com

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C. Equity Analysis Classroom Walkthrough Tool

Rating Scale & Evidence Notes

School:_____

Classroom: _____

Grade Level:_____

Subject:_____

N = No Evidence Observed

L = Little Evidence Observed

S = Some Evidence Observed

G = A Great Deal of Evidence Observed

1	Students are affirmed in their cultural connections.	N	L	S	G
	1a. Students are treated as individuals and are provided with equal access to learning resources.				
	1b. Educators provide experiences that promote respect for students' uniqueness as well as the ways they are similar.				
2	Teachers are personally inviting.	N	L	S	G
	2a. Use a variety of instructional strategies and learning activities.				
	2b. Teachers create an environment of warmth by greeting students by name and creating immediacy towards all students.				
3	Learning environments are physically and culturally inviting.	N	L	S	G

			N	L	S	G
	3a. Students need to see themselves and their cultures respectfully reflected through: • Pictures • Displays • Artifacts • Inclusion of different languages • Multicultural curriculum considerate						
	3b. Space is provided for interest centers, hands-on learning styles, and cooperative learning.						
4	Students are reinforced for academic development.		N	L	S	G
	4a. Academic rigor is essential to all teaching and learning.						
	4b. Monitor students' academic progress during lessons and independent work time and provide feedback						
5	Instructional changes are made to accommodate differences in learners.		N	L	S	G
	5a. Teachers use strategies that are interactive, student-centered, visual, and oriented toward discovery and problem-solving.						

		N	L	S	G
	5b. Use a variety of instructional strategies and learning activities that reinforce higher order and critical thinking.				
6	Classroom is managed with firm, consistent, loving control.	N	L	S	G
	6a. Discipline is restorative and educative rather than punitive.				
	6b. Be respectful and maintain the human dignity of the student when correcting inappropriate behavior.				
7	Interactions stress collectivity as well as individuality.	N	L	S	G
	7a. Teachers plan for cooperative learning opportunities				
	7b. Promote academic excellence while maintaining the cultural identity of your students.				

Open-Ended Questions:

1) What are the teachers saying?

2) What are the students saying?

3) What are the students doing?

4) What does the physical environment tell us about the focus?

D. Auburn School District Equity Analysis Interview Protocol: Certificated Staff

1. **To what degree has Auburn School District developed a system of equity practices for all stakeholders?**

   Prompts to facilitate additional discussion:

   a. To what degree has equity-focused professional learning been effective at this school?

   b. To what degree does the school staff provide an inclusive visual environment - halls, displays, and classrooms exhibit pictures and information about diverse students and cultures?

   c. To what degree are data regularly collected, disaggregated, and analyzed in the following areas and by different ethnic groups?
      i.   Course level enrollment?
      ii.   Grade point average/achievement scores?
      iii. Standardized test scores?
      iv.   Student discipline, suspensions, and expulsions?
      v.   Bullying or harassment?
      vi.   Participation in school activities and honors?

   d. To what degree has curriculum and/or instructional strategies been modified as a result of data analysis combined with anecdotal and other information?

   e. To what degree are equity, inclusion, and excellence modeled by all school staff?

   f. To what degree do you feel prepared to work with students who have special learning needs (e.g., ADD/ADHD, learning disabilities, etc.)?

   g. To what degree do you feel prepared to deal with controversial issues such as racism, homophobia, sexism, Islamophobia, etc. when they arise in the classroom?

2. **In what ways might Auburn School District improve its system of equity practices for all stakeholders?**

    Prompts to facilitate additional discussion:

    a. What would be easy to do? What are the facilitators of equitable practices? What equity assets exist?

    b. What would get in the way? What are the barriers to equitable practices? What equity challenges exist?

E. Auburn School District Equity Analysis Interview Protocol: Classified Staff

1. **To what degree has Auburn School District developed a system of equity practices for all stakeholders?**

   Prompts to facilitate additional discussion:

   a. To what degree are equity, inclusion, and excellence modeled by all school staff?

   b. To what degree do professional development opportunities at my school address equity, race, racism, culture, and language?

   c. To what degree is there a culture of belonging for support staff at this school?

   d. To what degree is your voice considered in planning and decision-making at this school?

2. **In what ways might Auburn School District improve its system of equity practices for all stakeholders?**

   Prompts to facilitate additional discussion:

   a. What would be easy to do? What are the facilitators of equitable practices? What equity assets exist?

   b. What might get in the way? What are the barriers to equitable practices? What equity challenges exist?

F.   Auburn School District Equity Analysis Interview Protocol: Students

1. **To what degree has Auburn School District developed a system of equity practices for all stakeholders?**

   Prompts to facilitate additional discussion:

   a. To what degree are there policies and procedures to assure that no student is denied participation in extracurricular or co-curricular activities because of race/ethnicity, language, gender or gender identity, socioeconomics, disability status, or transportation limitations?

   b. To what degree are equity, inclusion, and excellence modeled by all school staff?

   c. To what degree do teachers in this school make intentional connections to students' culture and prior knowledge?

   d. To what degree do materials used in my classroom help me understand and gain exposure to content from diverse perspectives?

   e. To what degree do school staff seek and listen to students' voices when making school decisions?

2. **In what ways might Auburn School District improve its system of equity practices for all stakeholders?**

   Prompts to facilitate additional discussion:

   a. What would be easy to do? What are the facilitators of equitable practices? What equity assets exist?

   b. What might get in the way? What are the barriers to equitable practices? What equity challenges exist?

G. Auburn School District Equity Analysis Interview Protocol: Parents

1. **To what degree has Auburn School District developed a system of equity practices for all stakeholders?**

   Prompts to facilitate additional discussion:

   a. To what degree does the school district provide equitable access, processes, treatment, and outcomes for all students, regardless of race/ethnicity, gender, English Learners, disability status, gender identity/sexual orientation or socioeconomic status.

   b. To what degree does the district work in partnership with parents, the business community, and civic and community organizations to enrich the curriculum, provide consistently high expectations for all students, and develop supports and opportunities for all students?

   c. To what degree are the parents, community members, and businesspeople involved in school planning, support, and governance, representative of the school community?

   d. To what degree is equity, inclusion, and excellence modeled by all school staff?

   e. To what degree does staff consider the culture, practices, and policies to check for exclusive and inclusive practices?

2. **In what ways might Auburn School District improve its system of equity practices for all stakeholders?**

   Prompts to facilitate additional discussion:

   a. What would be easy to do? What are the facilitators of equitable practices? What equity assets exist?

   b. What might get in the way? What are the barriers to equitable practices? What equity challenges exist?