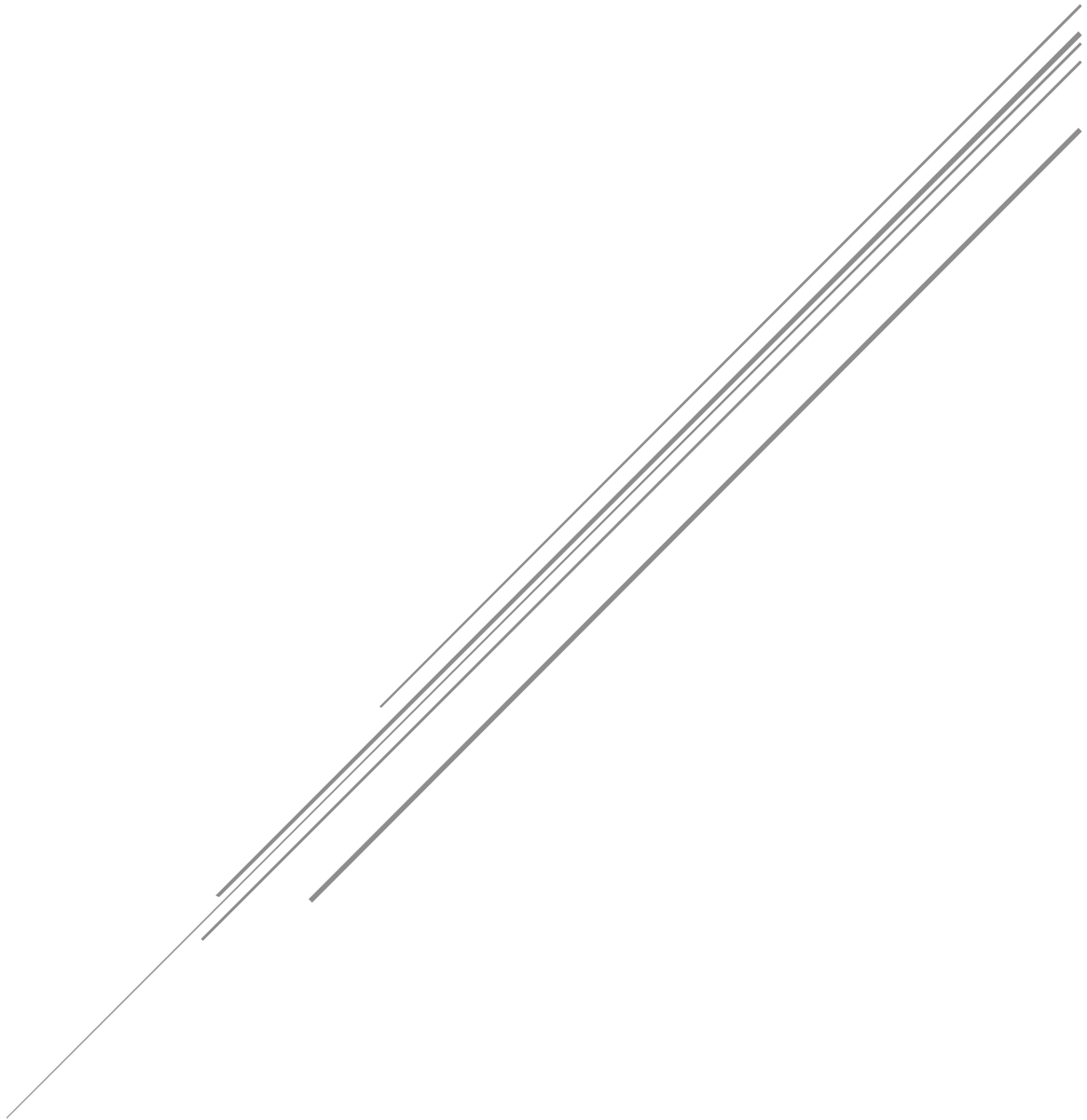


AUBURN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Collective Equity Organizational Analysis: Executive Summary



Collective Equity Organizational Analysis (CEOA) 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.

Executive Summary

This report summarizes the findings of an analysis 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. Specifically, 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.

Data Collection and Analysis

Two data sources were used within a mix-method field-study framework 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.

Classroom Walkthrough Tool

In order to gather information for the purposes of this analysis, the CEOA team developed and administered an equity analysis classroom walkthrough tool. 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. Average walkthrough data demonstrated only slight variability across the seven domains of culturally responsive practices reflected in the tool. Thirty-nine percent or more of the classrooms visited demonstrated either “a great deal of evidence” or “some evidence” of all culturally responsive practices. Seventy-eight percent of classrooms reflected either “a great deal of evidence” or “some evidence” that *students are treated as individuals and are provided with equal access to learning resources*, a relative strength across classrooms visited. Further, *teachers create an environment of warmth by greeting students by name and creating immediacy toward all students* also revealed a relative strength across classroom visits, whereby 75% of classrooms had either “a great deal of evidence” or “some evidence” in this

area. Conversely, “no evidence observed” was reported in 30% or more of the classrooms visited in the following areas:

- *Students see themselves and their cultures respectfully reflected through pictures, displays, artifacts, the inclusion of different languages, multicultural curriculum considerate*
- *Discipline is restorative and educative rather than punitive*
- *Be respectful and maintain the human dignity of the student when correcting inappropriate behavior*
- *Teachers plan for cooperative learning opportunities*
- *Promote academic excellence while maintaining the cultural identity of your students*

Taken together, classroom observations revealed modest and variable evidence of culturally fortifying instructional practices/culturally responsive practices within schools across the district.

Focus Groups

The analysis team also conducted focus groups with students, certificated staff, classified staff, school- and district-level administrators, district leaders, and parents. 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.

Discussions with the focus group participants revealed a number of strengths related to Auburn School District’s equity-focused activities as well as ways it can improve its systems of equity practices for all. In general, certificated staff reported that Auburn School District has been demonstrating a strong commitment to this work overtime. 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, and development of school equity teams. While equity-focused professional learning is offered, certificated staff reported the need for practical strategies for classroom and school level implementation, specific goals and success criteria for

this work, and district support for ongoing coaching and modeling towards clear expectations. Many staff members reported that equity-related professional learning is often perceived as voluntary, and recommended providing the resources (time, financial compensation) to ensure all staff are engaged in and understand the importance of this work. Many classified staff reported noticeable growth in development of equity practices over the last few years and noted receiving an invitation to participate in the focus groups as evidence of this. However, many certified staff reported feeling like “second class citizens” compared to certificated staff due to barriers in communication with leadership and school meetings occurring during non-paid hours.

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. Students reported they would like to see all staff members embrace and implement equity practices – not just certain teachers. High school students noted having a variety of clubs as a strength, while recommending more trained adults on campus (i.e., counselors, psychologists) to support the mental health issues of students. Students also recommended hiring more diverse adults that are representative of the student population.

Parents overwhelmingly reported the need for improved communication structures with school and district employees. They reported frustration with not knowing how to get their questions answered and being “targeted” by schools once they bring up an issue or advocate for their children. While some reported completing surveys in the past, they did not receive the results of those surveys or understand how the data were used. Parents appreciated the Equity Mountain and the Racial Equity Protocol but questioned why they had not seen or heard of these efforts before. Further, many parents shared specific illustrations of a lack of both shallow and deep cultural knowledge to support all dimensions of identity across the district.

District leaders reported an intentional effort to recruit and hire diverse administrators and staff members as well as required equity-related training for staff as a strength of their system. 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. District leaders reported providing clearly defined goals, success criteria, and expectations for implementation of culturally responsive practices in classrooms as a timely next step. Finally, they noted a need for multidirectional communication loops among district leaders, administrators, staff, students, and families.

Conclusions

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 participants, 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.

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.

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.