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OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Community Schools, Thriving Students

BOARD OF EDUCATION 2017

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June 28, 2017

To: Board of Education

From: Jumoke Hinton Hodge, Board Director

Subject: Appropriation - Office of Equity - Fiscal Year 2017-2017 District Budget

17-1469
MOTION
FAILED
(NOT
ADOPTED)
6/28/17

Action Requested:

Approval by the Board of Education of \$500,000, full-scale funding, to support the development and implementation of the Office of Equity for the 2017-2017 Fiscal Year to move towards a wholly funded Equity model and work to successfully implement same in all schools across the District.

Background and Discussion:

Board Policy 5032 – Equity - was approved by the Board on March 23, 2016 with the express purpose of improving academic and social emotional outcomes of Oakland students. The policy so states in its purpose: “Oakland Unified School District (the "District") students are at the heart of the District's equity policy. In the District, we hold the powerful belief that equity is providing students with what they need to achieve at the highest possible level, and graduate prepared for college, career, and community success.”

The District has approved the build out of the Office of Equity with the approval of job descriptions and specific positions to target African American girl, Latino/a, and Asian Pacific Islander achievement. The Office is committed to multiple areas of social inequities, educational disparities and inequitable practices of oppression, by providing expertise, services and resources that incorporate the intersection of race/ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, national origin, foster youth, contact with juvenile justice and students with disabilities and learning differences.

If the District is authentically interested in interrupting and eliminating these inequities then we must invest in being able to adequately support these aspirations. The Office of Equity currently receives funding from the General Fund at the level of \$1.4 million dollars. This contribution currently only funds partial personnel costs and does not adequately invest in the needed personnel, professional development, curriculum development and programming. Sufficient capacity and resources must be provided to support the completion of the administrative regulations for BP 5032. This work is critical to building a team of equity leaders in education, who can serve as the forerunners of equity theory and praxis across our entire District.

The Office of Equity is fortunate to have the foundational work of the African American Male Achievement (AAMA) department to influence program design and evaluation. Currently, AAMA has been able to leverage philanthropic opportunity for Office of Equity as a result of seven years of secured resources and relationships. The Office of Equity has an opportunity to build on this success, leverage resources and develop a sustainable plan to guide the district.

Further Rationale:

During the 2016-2017 school year, our district has experienced, not unlike other educational systems throughout the nation, an increase of racist acts, intolerant, vitriolic and divisive attitudes. These attitudes have been perpetrated amongst the students and adult community. Oakland schools from elementary to high schools have experienced racist epithets, the targeting and bullying of females, and discriminatory actions against students of Muslim backgrounds. It has also been a year where we have declared ourselves a sanctuary school district. This action and the work that must proceed has not fully been embraced, and some of our responses could appear to demonstrate a lack of will and value in supporting students of diverse identities and backgrounds. Oakland, a city proudly known for resistance, social justice and a commitment to create diverse and inclusive neighborhoods, has been incredibly challenged this year to embody these standards of safety and equity in our schools.

This recommendation is to provide the necessary supports and resources behind these efforts with deliberate intention to actualize equity by addressing training needs of adults who may be surfacing values and beliefs that are not aligned with an equity agenda.

There has been substantial and diverse research and study conducted within and outside the District defining equity and process and practices that creating equity-sustaining environments. The Office of Equity has built a team of leaders in targeted universalism and diversity, and can establish a structure for building capacity within the District to operationalize the work.

BP 5032 explicitly states:

This policy intends to improve academic opportunities for all students and reduce achievement gaps between groups of students, by proactively working to eradicate inequities that perpetuate negative stereotypes about groups of students, marginalize students or staff who seek to disrupt institutional bias, and restrict access to rigorous academic programs for certain groups of students based on race, special education placement, being a designated English Language Learner, and other factors.

Recommendations:

It is my recommendation that the Board direct the Superintendent and the Office of Equity staff to deliver a timeline and plan by December 31, 2017:

- A.) Present initial draft of the administrative regulations associated with Policy 5032
- B.) Develop programming and fund development plans in the areas of African American girl, Asian/ Pacific Islander and Latino/a achievement.
- C.) Finalize Phase 1 of listening campaigns with Asian/Pacific Islander and Latino/a programming
- D.) Address action items in BP 5032
 - (1) a clear plan and timeline for identifying gaps in educational experiences and outcomes and potential root causes for each identified community,

- (2) an implementation plan for programs, practices, and systems that address those disparities,
- (3) an evaluation rubric and accountability standards for measuring success,
- (4) training plans, and,
- (5) an ongoing plan for continuous improvement.

This Amendment should be considered at the time of proposed 2017-2018 budget being reviewed for approval at the June 28th Board of Education meeting.

“Multiple parents expressed concern, around the availability of resources for policy implementation, with teacher preparedness being a main concern. One member said that it felt like an “unfunded mandate”, and another asked, “what about teacher support?” Reactions generally included that the policy has to have more specific language, an implementation framework and a plan to procure adequate resources and allow for their proper allocation, in order to be meaningful” OUSD Parent, Engaging Community Around Equity Complete Report on Equity May 2016. pg 35 The Niam Group

Fiscal Impact: General Fund 2017-2018 Fiscal Year Budget - \$500,000

Recommendation:

Approval by the Board of Education of \$500,000, full-scale funding, to support the development and implementation of the Office of Equity for the 2017-2017 Fiscal Year to move towards a wholly funded Equity model and work to successfully work across the entire schools district.

Attachments: Board Policy 5032 – Equity Policy
Engaging Community Around Equity, Niam Group, May 2016

OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board Policy

Students

BP 5032

EQUITY POLICY

PURPOSE

Oakland Unified School District (the “District”) students are at the heart of the District’s equity policy. In the District, we hold the powerful belief that equity is providing students with what they need to achieve at the highest possible level, and graduate prepared for college, career, and community success. The Governing Board seeks to understand and to interrupt patterns of institutional bias at all levels of the organization, whether conscious or unconscious, that results in predictably lower academic achievement most notably for students of color. Eliminating individual and institutional bias (e.g. race based, identity bias, economic) will increase achievement and graduation rates for *all* students, while narrowing the academic and opportunity gaps between the highest and lowest performing students.

While the primary focus of this equity policy is on race and ethnicity,¹ the District also acknowledges other forms of social inequalities and oppression, including gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, national origin, foster youth, involvement with the dependency or juvenile justice systems, and students with disabilities and learning differences, and how these different forms of oppression intersect. The District is committed to explicitly identifying and addressing all disparities in educational outcomes for the purpose of targeting areas for action, intervention and investment.

The District acknowledges that complex societal and historical factors contribute to the inequity within our District. Nonetheless, rather than perpetuating the resulting disparities, the District will establish administrative regulations to enact this Policy that will include: (1) a clear plan and timeline for identifying gaps in educational experiences and outcomes and potential root causes, (2) an implementation plan for programs, practices, and systems that address those disparities, (3) an evaluation rubric and accountability standards for measuring success, (4) training plans and (5) an ongoing plan for continuous improvement. The Governing Board acknowledges its existing policies and administrative regulations developed to advance equitable outcomes for all students, including without limitation, School Governance and Student and Family Engagement (BP 3625), Wellness (BP 5030), Student Discipline (BP 5144 et seq.), Transgender

¹Targeting race explicitly and examining how it intersects with other forms of inequity, provides a framework which offers an important sociological and historical perspective. (See, Race Reporting Guide by Race Forward (2015), The Center for Racial Justice Innovation, www.raceforward.org.)

Students (BP 5145.3), Quality Schools Development (BP 6005), Parent Involvement (BP 6020), Ethnic Studies (BP 6143.7), and Community Engagement Facilities (BP 7155). Any amendments to these policies and related Administrative Regulations should be made in furtherance of this policy.

This policy intends to improve academic opportunities for all students and reduce achievement gaps between groups of students, by proactively working to eradicate inequities that perpetuate negative stereotypes about groups of students, marginalize students or staff who seek to disrupt institutional bias, and restrict access to rigorous academic programs for certain groups of students based on race, special education placement, being a designated English Language Learner, and other factors.

Students deserve to be educated in environments that respect them as individuals, including their racial and ethnic diversity, thereby facilitating successful academic outcomes. District students must be honored and valued in every classroom by supporting their social, emotional and cultural needs. Some ways that this can be achieved include, without limitation, district-wide emphasis on Social Emotional Learning, hearing and listening to student voices through restorative justice practices, professional learning including on implicit bias and beliefs, , staff recruitment and induction processes, and culturally responsive teaching pedagogy.

LEGAL REFERENCES

U.S. Const. amend XIV, § 1 (Equal Protection)
20 U.S.C. § 1703 (Equal Educational Opportunity)
42 U.S.C. § 2000c et seq. (Desegregation)
42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq. (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964)
42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2 (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964)

3/23/16

Engaging Community Around Equity

COMPLETE REPORT ON ENGAGEMENT AROUND EQUITY BOARD POLICY
PREPARED FOR THE OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
MAY 2016



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**OAKLAND UNIFIED
SCHOOL DISTRICT**
Community Schools, Thriving Students

Table of Contents

Section I: Executive Summary	1
Background	1
Purpose of Engagement Process	1
Process of Engagement	3
What We Heard from Focus Groups and Interviews.....	4
How OUSD Responded to This Feedback	5
Section II: Process Employed	7
Section III: What We Heard.....	11
Focus Groups & Interviews	11
<i>Themes Emerging from All Focus Groups & Interviews</i>	11
Reactions to the Policy Language	11
Reaction: The Policy needs action-oriented language and is too vague.....	11
Reaction: The Policy language should be restructured.....	12
Reaction: The Policy language includes key terms that require definition.	12
Reaction: The Policy language is missing elements.	12
<i>Proposing Policy Language</i>	12
Defining Equity	12
Identified Barriers to Achieving Equity	13
<i>What is Working Well</i>	17
Parent Forum, Board Engagement, and All City Council Meetings	17
From the Desk Survey Responses	18
<i>Defining Equity</i>	18
<i>Identified Challenges and Successes With Promoting Equity</i>	18
How this Relates to Content from the SEFAT Survey	19
Section IV: How OUSD Responded to Concerns about Policy Language.....	20
Section V: Participants’ Priorities for Next Steps	22
List of Questions for Office of Equity	23
Appendix 1: Focus Group Abstracts	25
Appendix 2: Key Quotes from Focus Groups	63
Appendix 3: <i>From The Desk Survey Responses—Additional Detail</i>	75
Additional Answer Analysis	75
Selected Responses/Key Quotes	76
Appendix V: Email Submissions	78
Appendix VI: List of Contacts for Future Engagement Around Implementation	81

Appendix VII: Overview of Equity Policies in Selected School Districts Nationwide84

Implementation & Monitoring Across Select School Districts 84

Specific Examples of School District Equity Policies in Place..... 85

Portland Public Schools 85

Oregon Leadership Network..... 88

Minneapolis Public Schools 89

St. Paul Public Schools 90

Seattle Public Schools..... 92

San Jose Unified School District..... 92

<i>Table 1 List of Community Based Organizations That Provided Input.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Table 2: Focus Group and Interview Question Prompts</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Table 3: Commonly Cited Barriers to Equity Identified By Type of Stakeholder</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Table 4 Policy Language Revisions Responsive to Engagement Feedback</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Table 5: Summary List of Priority Action Items.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Table 6: List of Questions for Office of Equity.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Table 7: Alliance for Girls’ Proposed Revisions to Equity Policy.....</i>	<i>78</i>
<i>Table 8: Email from East Oakland Parent Participant With Additional Feedback About Proposed Equity Policy</i>	<i>78</i>
<i>Table 9: Email from Parent Interested in Providing Feedback.....</i>	<i>79</i>
<i>Table 10: Email from Parent Interested in Providing Feedback.....</i>	<i>80</i>
<i>Table 11: List of Participants Willing to Participate in Future Engagement Efforts.</i>	<i>81</i>
<i>Figure 1: Overview of Engagement Process OUSD Employed to Gather Input.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Figure 2: Diversity of Focus Group & Interview Participants</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Figure 3: Image from Interaction Institute for Social Change Distinguishing Equity from Equality</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Figure 4: Graph Showing Top Critiques/Concerns About the Language of the Proposed Equity Policy</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Figure 5: Definitions of Equity That Emerged From Focus Groups & Interviews</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Figure 6: Equity Within OUSD, Most Frequently Cited Concerns.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Figure 7: How OUSD Currently Promotes Equity</i>	<i>17</i>

Section I: Executive Summary

Background

The Oakland Unified School District (“OUSD”) proposed an Equity Policy (Board Policy 5032) that acknowledges how OUSD will seek to end forms of social inequalities and oppression across multiple demographic groups, including race, gender, gender expression and identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, immigration status, involvement with the dependency or juvenile justice systems, and students with disabilities and learning differences.

The policy’s primary purpose is to close achievement, opportunity, and belief gaps between students from different groups and to address systems issues impacting the persistence of these gaps in achievement. The Equity Policy will join a handful of other existing school district equity policies nationwide. School districts across the country are increasingly recognizing the need to eliminate educational inequities and institutional bias if they are to give all students the opportunity and support to reach their potential. By codifying equity guidelines in equity policies, organizations like OUSD are working toward ensuring that all students are able to graduate and to be college, career and community ready.

This policy has its roots in OUSD’s Strategic Plan, Pathway to Excellence. During the 2014-2015 school year, a Strategic Plan Equity Sub-Committee met to review other school districts’ work around equity nationwide, develop a first draft of an equity policy, and present this first draft to the Superintendent. After review and revision, OUSD then brought this initial draft of a policy before the Board of Education for a first reading on August 12, 2015. OUSD brought a revised policy before the Board of Education for a second reading on March 23, 2016. The Board of Education voted unanimously to adopt this revised policy on March 23, 2016. This Comprehensive Report documents the process that we, The NIAM Group, undertook in partnership with OUSD to engage stakeholders through focus groups and interviews around this Equity Policy and the input gathered through that engagement process.

Purpose of Engagement Process

Before bringing this policy to the Board of Education for a second reading and vote, OUSD wanted to engage critical stakeholders, including students, parents, staff, teachers, administrators, community partners, and the Board Directors, about the proposed policy, gather reactions to its language and structure, and gather community perceptions of how terms like “equity” should be defined. To do this, OUSD undertook a multi-pronged approach to engaging community around equity, generally, and around the proposed policy, specifically. First, the District developed an Equity Survey with Panasonic Foundation and administered this survey to 1,801 employees in Fall 2015. Next, the District embedded opportunities to engage around equity with students, parents, and the community at large through four large forums: two meetings with the All-City Council, one Parent Forum with the Superintendent, and one breakout session during a Board

Community Engagement Meeting. Finally, OUSD hired The NIAM Group (led by Malo Hutson, Ph.D., MCP, who specializes in equity and social justice research) to conduct a series of focus groups and interviews with multiple stakeholders District-wide. Dr. Hutson and his team used these focus groups and interviews to gather input about the proposed policy. OUSD chose to use a third-party, rather than its own staff, to conduct focus groups and interviews to allow for candid conversations in small group settings (or in individual interviews). Additionally, OUSD promoted an online survey about equity, open to the public, embedded in the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday *From The Desk of the OUSD Superintendent* letter focused on equity. These combined efforts allowed OUSD to gather input from approximately 2,175 individuals District-wide. (See Figure 1 below.)

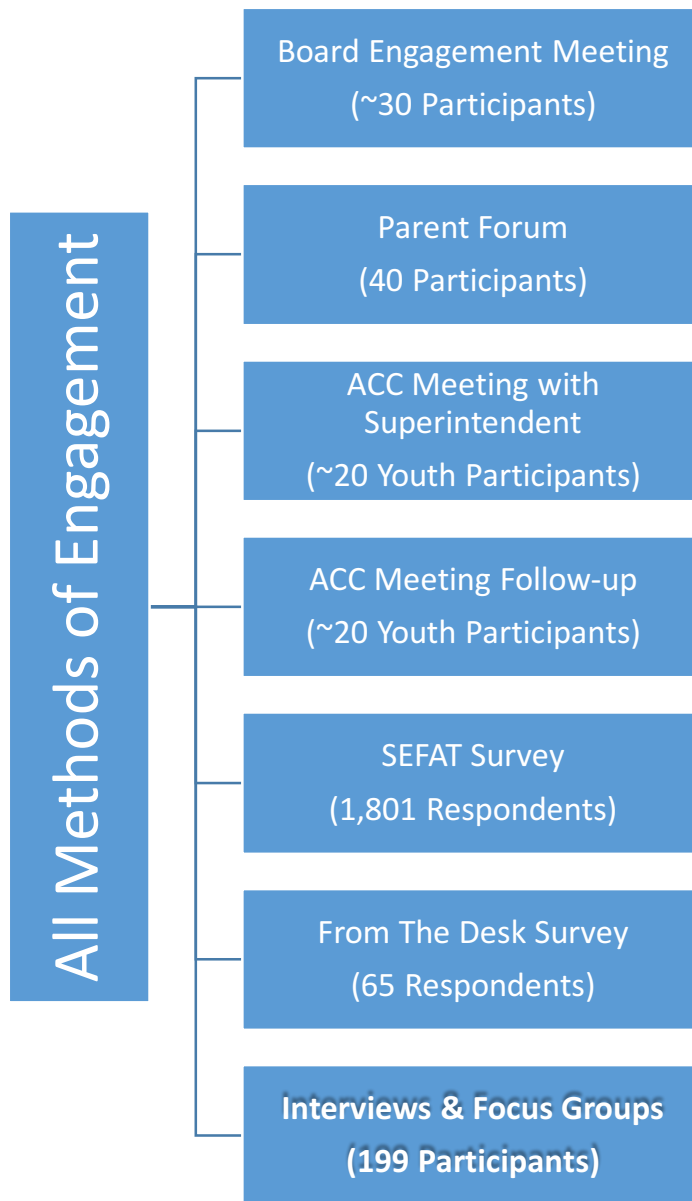


Figure 1: Overview of Engagement Process OUSD Employed to Gather Input

Process of Engagement

Between November 2015 and March 2016, we were able to convene focus groups and interviews with a diverse group of key stakeholders across the District. (See Figure 1 below.) Participants included high school students (with the African American Male Achievement Initiative (AAMAI), Latino Men and Boys (LMB), Asian Pacific Islander girls, foster youth, LGBTQ students of color, and Latina girls), parents (across five SRAs, including ELL of Spanish, Vietnamese, and Arabic speaking households), staff (from OUSD’s Nutrition Services, OUSD’s Custodial Services, and SEIU members), administration (members of UAO), teachers (from OEA and two separate teacher interviews), and all seven Board Directors. We asked questions to solicit reactions to the proposed policy, individual perceptions and definitions of “equity” and “equitable outcomes” as defined through both personal experience and experience with a particular school site, and experience with OUSD as an entity or organization, where appropriate. Section II of this Comprehensive Report provides greater detail about the engagement process.

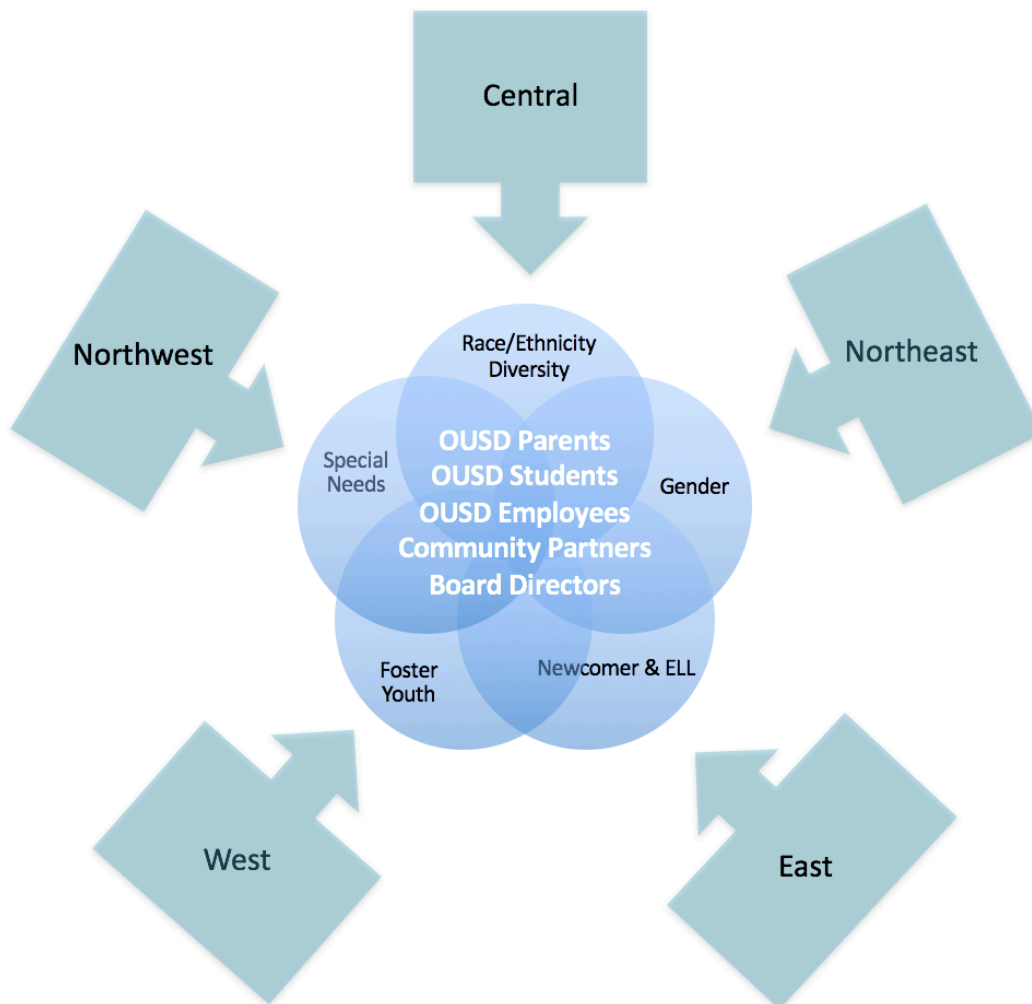


Figure 2: Diversity of Focus Group & Interview Participants

What We Heard from Focus Groups and Interviews

Certain themes consistently emerged from focus groups and interviews that addressed both the language within the policy as well as how participants defined equity and what priorities the participants felt should be accomplished with this Policy. The most dominant themes that emerged were:

THE POLICY OVERALL IS TOO VAGUE AND NEEDS ACTION-ORIENTED LANGUAGE: For many, the policy did not offer a clearly stated purpose, philosophy or overall “action” item. Common questions were “What is this for? What will it do? Who is this for? How does this differentiate itself from other equity work, or build on or improves on other equity work within the District?” (Community Partners, Parents, Teachers, Administrators, Staff, Students)

THE STRUCTURE IS CONFUSING: Many observed that while the policy seemed to focus on race and ethnicity, without excluding other criteria, it failed to clearly state this until the last paragraph. Participants also observed that the proposed policy offered no specific course of action to support the purpose, until the second to last paragraph where it offered very specific examples. (Community Partners, Parents, Administrators, Students)

THE INCLUDED KEY TERMS REQUIRE DEFINITION: Focus group participants responded that the proposed policy used terms like “institutional bias” without adequately defining these terms. The policy failed to fully address intersectionality, which for many stakeholders is very important to address in an equity policy that is going to be inclusive and purports to be more than a race and ethnicity policy. Some expressed concern that the language was inaccessible. (Community Partners, Parents, Administrators, Students)

THERE ARE MISSING ELEMENTS: Stakeholders observed that the memorandum stated that the policy is intended to both eradicate inequities throughout the organization and close achievement gaps, but that the proposed policy did not include any language that directly referenced the roles that various adults (teachers, administrators, staff) within the organization have in impacting student achievement, or the need to address equity in hiring practices, staffing, and professional development. A common theme across multiple focus groups was that resolving inequitable outcomes for students meant directing attention at the adults. (Parents, Community Partners, Staff, Administrators)

PROPOSED LANGUAGE/DEFINITION OF EQUITY: The majority of stakeholders defined “equity” as “meeting students where they are” to become college, career and community ready and asked for language that directly embodied that concept. (Parents, Community Partners, Administrators, Teachers, Students) This mirrored feedback from multiple Board of Education Directors. Participants referencing this definition often referenced the image from *Interaction Institute for Social Change* when providing a definition. (See Figure 3 below.) One high school student said, “You need equity to get to equal.” Some participants defined equity in terms of process and access. Others equated equity with equality.

Multiple priorities for outcomes associated with the policy also emerged. Some common themes included emphasis on:

ENSURE EQUITABLE RESOURCE DISTRIBUTION: Some stakeholders made general comments asking for OUSD to review resource distribution while others asked for specific outcomes (review of the “Z” factor, ensure that funding follows students, and review and possibly change PTA fundraising methods).

EMBED “UNLEARNING OPPRESSIVE BEHAVIORS” INTO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Many participants across multiple demographic groups asked for teachers, staff, and administrators to be equipped to improve school site environments through professional development and training. Many students and teachers asked that teachers not only reflect the demographics of the students but that teachers be trained and equipped to understand the cultural experiences of the students within OUSD.

ESTABLISH AN OUSD EQUITY OFFICE: Many participants asked for OUSD to create an Office of Equity to address these issues and manage complaints. (OUSD has, in fact, created an Office of Equity with Christopher Chatmon as the Deputy Chief of that office.)

EXPAND ON WHAT WORKS: Many participants asked that OUSD build on and expand programs that appear to be working (such as AAMAI), and/or expand access to professionals (such as family engagement staff and translation staff) for more groups/newcomers to the District. Other participants commended OUSD for its data collection efforts, but asked that OUSD do more to disseminate findings in an accessible manner to the public.

CREATE A MULTIDIMENSIONAL EDUCATION EXPERIENCE: Some participants acknowledged the development of a multi-ethnic curriculum, but many asked that OUSD prioritize creating a more inclusive and intersectional curriculum that encompassed more than just ethnic/racial differences, that addressed social and emotional learning, interpersonal teacher/student relationships, and facilitated creating a safe and tolerant learning environment.

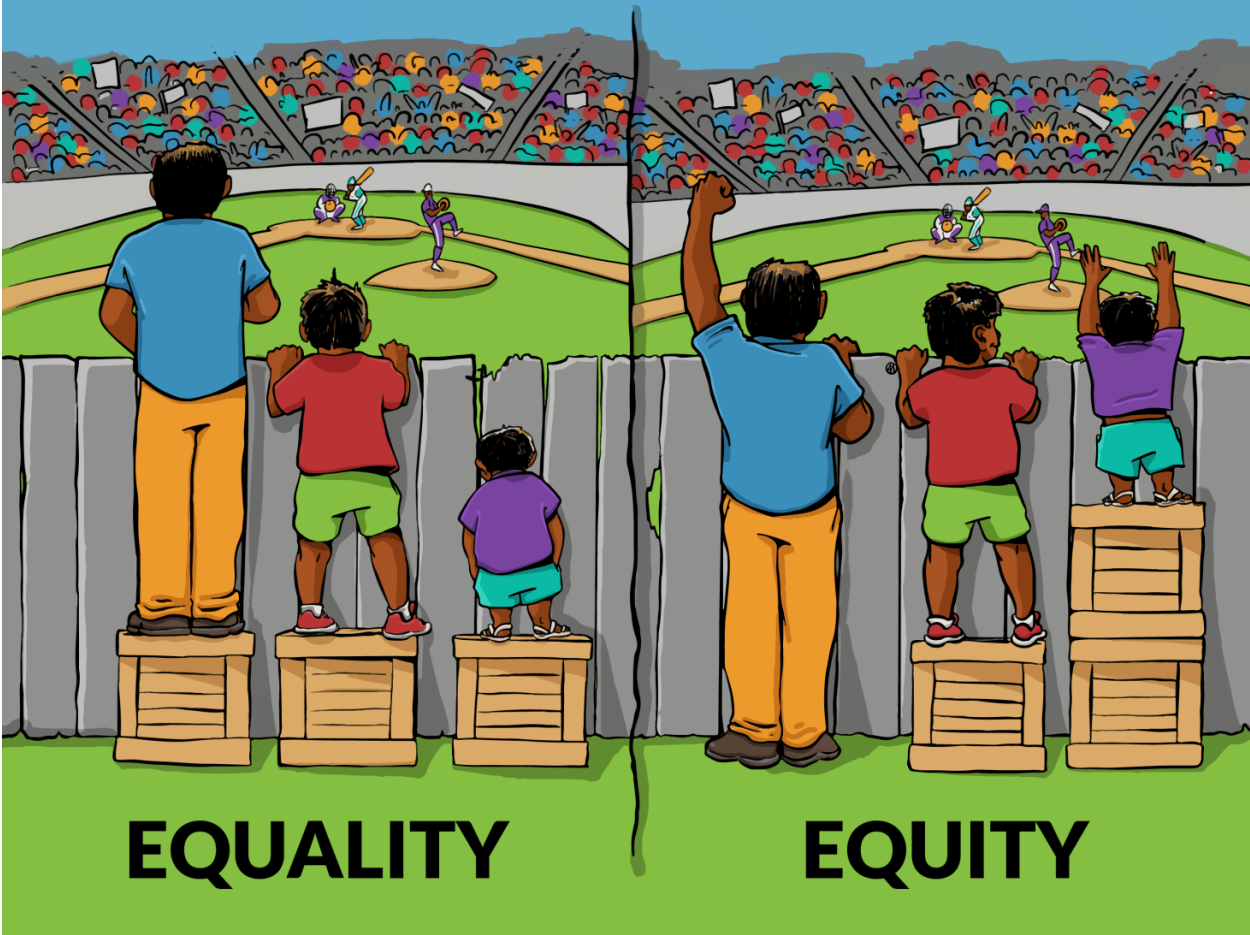
Sections III of this Report provides a summary of the input we were able to gather through these focus groups and interviews, as well as a summary of the input provided through the *From The Desk of the OUSD Superintendent* survey. The Appendices provide additional detail about this input and include both focus group discussion abstracts, key quotes, additional analysis of the *From the Desk* survey responses, and input provided by email.

How OUSD Responded to This Feedback

Beginning in late February 2016, OUSD worked to revise the policy language to be responsive to concerns raised by engagement participants. Table 4 in Section IV provides greater detail about the ways in which OUSD revised the language of the Equity Policy

before its adoption so that the policy language would be responsive, where possible, to the concerns raised by students, teachers, staff, community partners and parents. In March 2016, OUSD identified three (3) organizations that it would move forward with as Equity Partners for the next stage of this work, to allow OUSD to develop a complete implementation plan and a set of administrative regulations. OUSD also created an Office of Equity, with Christopher Chatmon as the Deputy Chief of that office.

Figure 3: Image from Interaction Institute for Social Change Distinguishing Equity from Equality



Section II: Process Employed

This section provides detail about the engagement process specific to soliciting input around the Board Policy 5032 through focus groups and interviews, only. This engagement process began in November 2015. Before speaking with students, parents, and staff, before the close of 2015 the Deputy Chief of Community Schools and Student Services worked with us to convene two meetings with key community partners and stakeholders to co-construct the engagement process. In these two meetings, participants from several community organizations provided their immediate reactions to the proposed policy, reviewed our draft questions for different stakeholders, and provided input on strategies for accessing students and parents of specific demographic groups. (Some of these same participants later participated in a focus group.) We refined our focus group question prompts in these working sessions. (See Table 2 below.)

After this initial work, in order to convene the focus groups in a timely manner, we continued to solicit contacts from the District employees and community partners that participated in these initial meetings, and drew on their networks for focus group participants. Table 1 below shows which community partner organizations assisted with convening focus groups, and which organizations sent representatives to participate in focus groups. Most of our focus group participant contacts came from OUSD personnel and/or through the initial community partner engagement efforts in November and December of 2015. We also contacted previous OUSD related contacts from our own database, based on their capacity to aid in the convening of a focus group. We followed up with all contacts by email and telephone.

In all, we were able to complete interviews and focus groups with 199 individuals representing multiple stakeholders between late December 2015 and early March 2016. We were able to hear from individuals with diverse relationships with OUSD, including students, staff (including Nutrition Services and Custodial Services classified staff), teachers, administrators (including Principals), parents, community partners, and School Board Directors. Among the 199 focus group participants and interviewees, consultants spoke with 64 students, 56 parents, 16 community partners (representing several community-based organizations that work directly with OUSD to improve outcomes for students, and the City of Oakland Mayor's Office Director of Education), 10 classified staff members, 26 other staff members or administrators at various levels (including principals and central office administrators), 19 teachers, and all seven School Board Directors. We coordinated three of the 27 focus groups through union contacts, specifically SEIU, OEA, and UAOS.

We also spoke with students from diverse socio-economic groups attending District-operated schools within each of the Strategic Regional Analysis (SRA) regions, including Central, East, Northeast, Northwest, and West, that self-identified as African American, Latino, Asian-Pacific Islander, and/or White, students that are also foster youth, and students that self-identified as lesbian, gay, queer, or gender neutral. We also conducted focus groups with students participating in the African American Male Achievement and Latino Men & Boys programs. We also made sure that we spoke with OUSD parents that self-identified across multiple racial/ethnic categories from each of the SRA regions, including African American, Latino, Asian or Pacific Islander, and White. Within these

parent focus groups and interviews, we spoke with parents of newcomers (Yemeni families), parents from English-language learner households (Arabic, Spanish, and Vietnamese households), parents of students with special needs, parents from households with more than one student enrolled in District-operated schools, parents from households with students enrolled in both District-operated and charter schools, and parents with students with special needs enrolled in schools outside of the District at the expense of the District.

For each focus group, we supplied at least one separate note taker and facilitator, except in the case of the LGBTQ focus group, where the facilitator took notes. We recorded each focus group for note-taking purposes only, and only if we received verbal authorization from all participants before recording. A handful of participants denied authorization to record, and in those instances we did not record the interviews/focus groups. During the focus groups and interviews, we provided participants with a copy of the proposed policy in their language and then asked the participants to provide us with their initial reaction to the policy language. We then provided participants with some version of the four leading question prompts, depending on the participants' language access and relationship with the District. OUSD community partners, as well as translators, advised that some focus groups should not be asked questions about the term "equity" as it would be somewhat unfamiliar to the group and challenging to translate. Still, we always employed question prompts to solicit first impressions of the policy, definitions of equity where possible, and experiences of equity and inequity within the District and across school sites, and priority outcomes for the policy. For instance, for students we used prompts that asked students about their perceptions of fairness within their school site and for personal experiences of fairness at their school site, but with community partners familiar with equity work we asked them to describe their perceptions of equity and detail what the District is doing/needs to do to promote equity.

Table 1 List of Community Based Organizations That Provided Input

Participating CBOs	Focus Group/Interview Participant	Assisted with Convening Focus Group	Meeting Participant
Alliance for Girls			
American Indian Child Resource Center			
Banteay Srei			
Bay Area Parent Leadership Action Network			
Black Organizing Project			
Californians for Justice			
Dimensions Dance Theater			
East Bay Asian Youth Center			
Girls Inc. of Alameda County			
Greater New Beginnings			
Love Never Fails			
Oakland Community Organizations			
Oakland Kids First			
One Circle Foundation			
The Unity Council			

Table 2: Focus Group and Interview Question Prompts

<p>Questions for Stakeholders Familiar with Equity Work</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What do “equity” and “equitable outcomes” mean to you? How do you personally define these terms based on your life experience? 2) What do you feel is needed to strengthen or bolster programs and strategies meant to promote equity and equitable outcomes at your school site? 3) What are some of the gaps or challenges that you see at your school site? 4) Given that the District is developing an equity policy, in your opinion, what should the priority outcome(s) of this policy be? Specific examples?
<p>Questions for</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do you identify yourself and your culture?

<p>Stakeholders unfamiliar with Equity work and Limited English Proficiency</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Do you feel like your student’s school experience has embraced and supported your student, and your community’s identity and culture? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Please provide examples of how you feel your student is supported and included. b. Please provide examples of how you may have felt your student has been unsupported, or excluded in any way. 3. How do you define the word fair? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What are the things you think that your student’s school, teachers, or staff at school, have done that are good at treating you fairly? b. What are the ways that you think your school environment could be more fair? Or more accepting? Please give some examples of how you have felt that the school environment was unfair and why.
<p>Questions for Staff Participants</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do “equity” and/or “fairness” mean to you? How do you personally define these terms based on your life experience? 2. Given your position within [department] and your overall experience working for OUSD in general: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Please provide examples of how you feel supported or included and treated fairly. b. Please provide examples of how you may have felt unsupported or excluded in any way or treated unfairly. 4. Given that OUSD is developing an equity policy, in your opinion, what should the outcome(s) of this policy be? Specific examples? 5. What do you feel is needed to strengthen or bolster programs and strategies meant to promote “equity” and/or “fairness” within OUSD?

Section III: What We Heard

Focus Groups & Interviews

The interviews and focus groups with parents, teachers, staff, community partners, and in some instances Board Directors, collectively presented themes around the language and structure of the policy, and how equity should be defined. We provide a summary of themes that emerged from all groups collectively.

Themes Emerging from All Focus Groups & Interviews

Reactions to the Policy Language

While many people responded favorably to the District proposing an equity policy, some had questions about the purpose of the policy, and others had comments and critiques to offer about the language of the policy. Graph 1 below illustrates the most common concerns we heard about the language of the proposed policy. For example, the reaction that the policy language needs “action oriented” language emerged as a theme in 16 different focus groups.

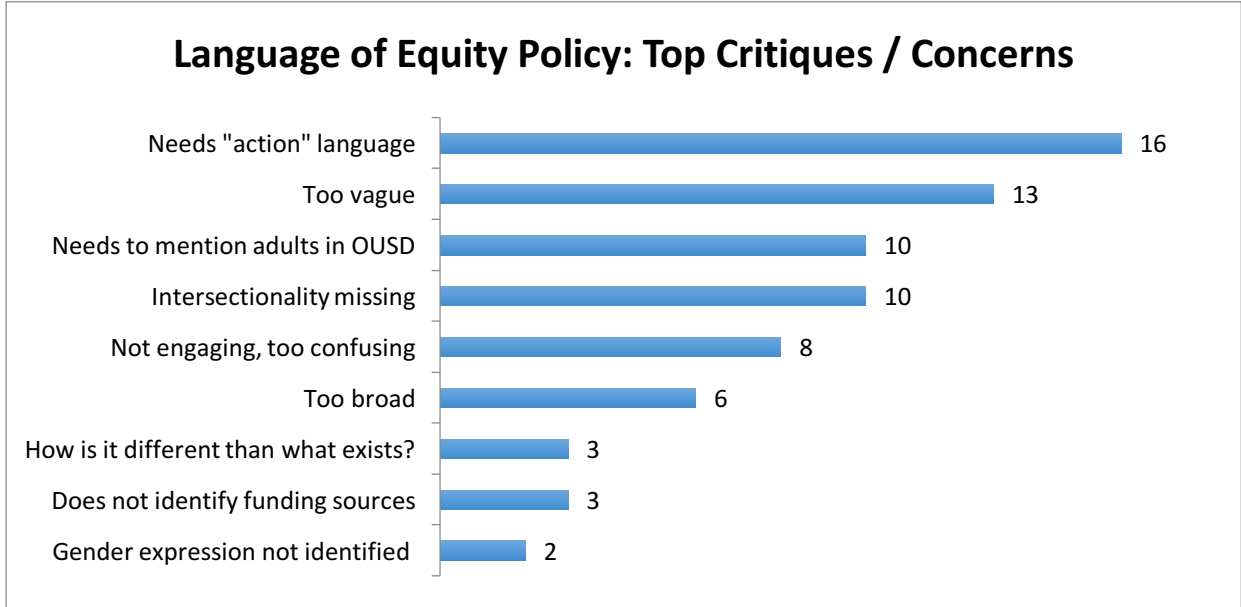


Figure 4: Graph Showing Top Critiques/Concerns About the Language of the Proposed Equity Policy

Reaction: The Policy needs action-oriented language and is too vague.

The most common reaction we heard was that the proposed policy needed some type of clearly stated purpose, philosophy or “action” item and/or that the policy was too vague. Common questions were “What is this for? What will it do? Who is this for? How

does this differentiate itself from other equity work, or build on or improve on other equity work within the District?” (Community Partners, Parents, Teachers, Administrators, Staff)

Reaction: The Policy language should be restructured.

We also heard that the policy structure was confusing, as it seemed to focus on race and ethnicity without excluding other criteria, but fails to state this until the last paragraph. The policy offers no specific course of action to support the purpose, until the second to last paragraph where it offers very specific examples. (Community Partners, Parents, Administrators)

Reaction: The Policy language includes key terms that require definition.

Focus group participants responded that the policy uses terms like “institutional bias” without adequately defining these terms. The policy fails to fully address intersectionality, which for many stakeholders is very important to address in an equity policy that is going to be inclusive and purports to be more than a race and ethnicity policy. Some expressed concern that the language was inaccessible. (Community Partners, Parents, Administrators)

Reaction: The Policy language is missing elements.

Stakeholders observed that the memorandum stated that the policy is intended to both eradicate inequities throughout the organization and close achievement gaps, but that the proposed policy did not include any language that directly referenced the roles that various adults (Teachers, Administrators, Staff) within the organization have in impacting student achievement, or the need to address equity in recruiting and hiring practices, staffing, and professional development. A common theme across multiple focus groups was that resolving inequitable outcomes for students meant directing attention at the adults. (Parents, Community Partners, Staff, Administrators)

Proposing Policy Language

During the focus groups and interviews, participants discussed their reactions to the language of the policy as well as how they would refine, improve upon, or change the policy language. In this context, participants offered definitions of equity and reflections on their own experiences that informed the definitions that they proposed.

Defining Equity

While the focus groups and interviews did not reveal a consensus around a definition of equity, the majority of interviewees and participants defined equity as meeting individual student needs to allow all students to become college, career, and community ready, or “meeting students where they are at.” Some asked for language that directly embodied that concept while explicitly not conflating “equity” with equal. (Parents, Community Partners, Administrators, Teachers, Students). This mirrored feedback from most of the Board of Education Directors.

The second most dominant definition of equity to emerge was defining equity in terms of process, or fair and equal access to programming, quality schools, quality teachers, and other services needed to lead to equitable outcomes. Some participants and interviewees that also focused on defining equity in terms of process did so in the context of starting with the definition of meeting different students’ individual needs discussed above, while a few focused mostly on process and notions of equality and fairness. Figure 5 below shows some of the most common definitions we heard for the term “equity.”

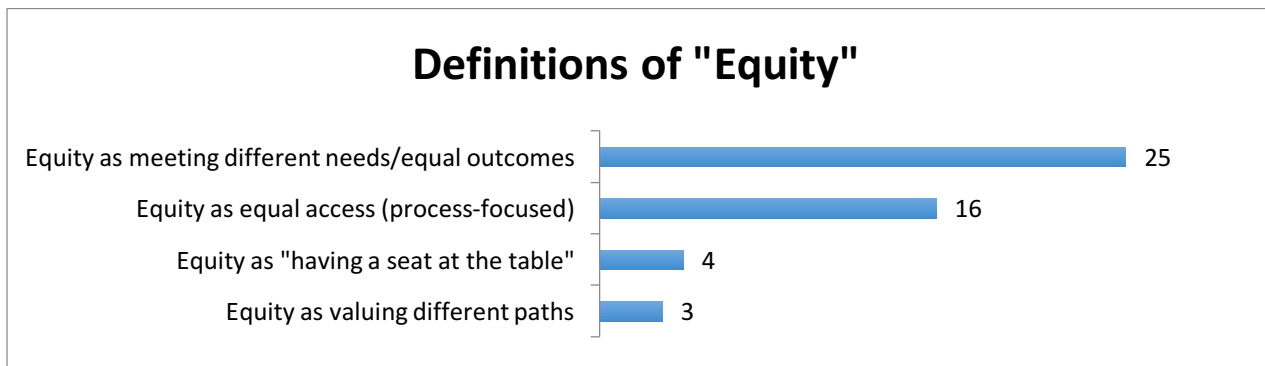


Figure 5: Definitions of Equity That Emerged From Focus Groups & Interviews

Identified Barriers to Achieving Equity

During focus group meetings and interviews, participants and interviewees offered their experiences within and with OUSD to help illustrate how they defined equity. Participants and interviewees often related these experiences as barriers to achieving equitable outcomes within OUSD. The focus groups and interviews revealed approximately 37 categories of concern/identified barriers. Figure 6 lists the most commonly cited concerns and provides information about frequency. Table 3 indicates which stakeholders are concerned about which concerns, by identifying the types of stakeholders that raised the concern.

We grouped some of the various barriers participants and interviewees identified into broad categories for ease of analysis. For example, nearly all parents and student groups of color expressed concerns about the quality of some teachers within OUSD although these concerns took various forms. One student spoke to a teacher’s qualifications to teach a particular subject, “I have a teacher who has a degree in history but they make her teach English . . . she is a good teacher but it is hard for her because doesn’t know what she is doing.” Other students spoke to the lack of cultural sensitivity exhibited by teachers, “There are a lot of teachers that are not culturally competent. They don’t know what’s going on with the student. They already have a bias against students, who they are, what they do.” And others spoke of the capacity for teachers “to connect with” students. These various comments are grouped as commenting on the quality of teachers, while the second comment is also grouped with other comments from parents, staff, and students about lack of training around equity and cultural sensitivity among OUSD staff, generally.

Certain concerns were typically raised together. For example, for students and parents of color, the topic of integrating cultural sensitivity into both the professional development of staff was coupled with the desire to see more teachers that look like them. As one student stated, OUSD should hire more "black and brown" teachers not only to improve the level of cultural competence among teaching staff, but to inspire students: "If there is an African American teacher the students [meaning African American students] would want to get to his level." Related priorities for many parents and students included seeing their culture and identity fully integrated in the curriculum in a consistent and meaningful way.

Another example is how some students connected the need for the curriculum to be culturally sensitive with the need for additional equity and cultural training for all teachers and staff. Of particular concern for students of color who self-identify as LGBTQ was how current efforts to discuss various identities, including race/ethnicity, gender expression, and sexual orientation, and how these identities intersect, are inadequate. As one student stated, "A lot of times, when it comes to teaching about intersectionality, everyone is worried about making other people uncomfortable, trying not to make white people uncomfortable – but they have to feel uncomfortable. If we are serious about equity, and making us feel safe here, and it is not a joke, then it is critical for them to learn about us too and not just themselves." Other students reported being asked to self-identify and then to speak on behalf of their "group."

Also important, what we cannot illustrate with graphs is how certain topics may not have emerged among many groups, but still emerged as critical issues for specific racial/ethnic demographic groups. For example, African American, Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, and White parents and students expressed concerns that teachers and school staff treat students and families differently based on race/ethnicity, and that teachers and staff lack cultural sensitivity, or there is inadequate training in this particular area. African American, Latino, and Asian/Pacific Islander students and parents also expressed concern that their culture was inadequately represented in the curriculum. In stark contrast, *only* Asian-Pacific Islander students, and community partners that worked with these youth, expressed concern that their demographic group was "invisible" or inadequately represented in OUSD's ongoing dialogue about racial equity.

If we group stakeholders by their relationship to OUSD (student, parent, employee, community partner, or Board Director) we can also see which concerns or identified barriers emerged in conversations with which groups (and in some cases, among some members of every group). Table 2 lists all of the categories of identified barriers that came up in interviews and focus groups, and which groups of stakeholders raised the issue or concern. While this does not provide information about frequency of the concern coming up in focus groups, it does show how diverse groups of stakeholders identified similar concerns.

Table 3: Commonly Cited Barriers to Equity Identified By Type of Stakeholder

Commonly Cited Barriers to Equity	Groups/Interviewees that Identified Barrier				
	OUSD Students	OUSD Parents	OUSD Employees	Board Directors	Community Partners
Improve communications	X	X	X		X
Improve language access/provide translation	X	X	X	X	X
Inequitable District funding distribution	X	X	X	X	X
District funding should follow student		X	X		X
Teacher factors	X	X	X	X	X
Quantity of teachers	X	X			
PTA Fundraising / parent political influence & inequitable outcomes		X		X	X
Lack cultural sensitivity among staff/teachers	X	X		X	X
Racial/Ethnic/Class Segregation within District/School Site	X	X	X		
Treatment/outcomes based on race/ethnicity	X	X	X		X
Treatment/outcomes based on gender	X	X	X		X
Treatment/outcomes based on sexual orientation*	X	X	X		
Treatment/difficulties faced because of special education needs		X	X	X	X
Treatment/difficulties faced because of religion	X		X		
Invisibility/lack of incorporation of group into dialogue about racial equity	X			X	X
Inadequate representation of demographic in teachers/administrators/PTA	X	X	X	X	X
Inadequate integration of culture/identity into curriculum	X	X			X
Quality of facilities	X	X	X	X	
Quality of food	X				
Inadequate training within OUSD around equity and cultural sensitivity	X	X	X	X	X
Lack of District transparency			X		X
Insufficient / ineffective engagement (family, student, staff, etc.)	X	X	X	X	X
Inadequate health / mental health services		X	X	X	X
Failure to build on CBO work					X
Poor pay for District staff	X	X	X		
Need professional development for staff	X	X	X	X	
Need to expand support services beyond Title I schools		X	X		
Under-attention to newcomers		X	X	X	X
Racial equity efforts limited to race, esp. African Americans, should be broader				X	X
Lack of libraries & librarians	X	X			
Need to strengthen partnerships with city & community		X	X	X	X
Conflict between interests of different racial groups	X	X		X	X
Insufficient exposure / naming of biases	X			X	X
Transparency around school assignment	X	X	X	X	
Conflict of interest with individualized education plan process	X		X		
Isolation from other families	X				X
Need to strengthen Union/District Relationship			X		

Some focus group participants coupled discussion of certain barriers to achieving equitable outcomes District-wide with discussion of how to transform the identified barrier into an opportunity to promote equity. For example, multiple focus group participants shared their belief that District resources skew toward supporting high-performing schools, which are typically located in higher-income neighborhoods (and therefore also have greater access to external funding sources, like PTA fundraising). In this context, several parent focus groups spoke of the difference in PTA capacity to fundraise depending on where a school is located, and how that plays a role in the quality of education at different school sites. Parents from more affluent school sites, however, also discussed how PTA fundraising could potentially become a funding resource to benefit students District-wide if schools site PTAs were required to fundraise in partnership with schools with less fundraising capacity, or were required to contribute PTA funds to a “collective pot.”

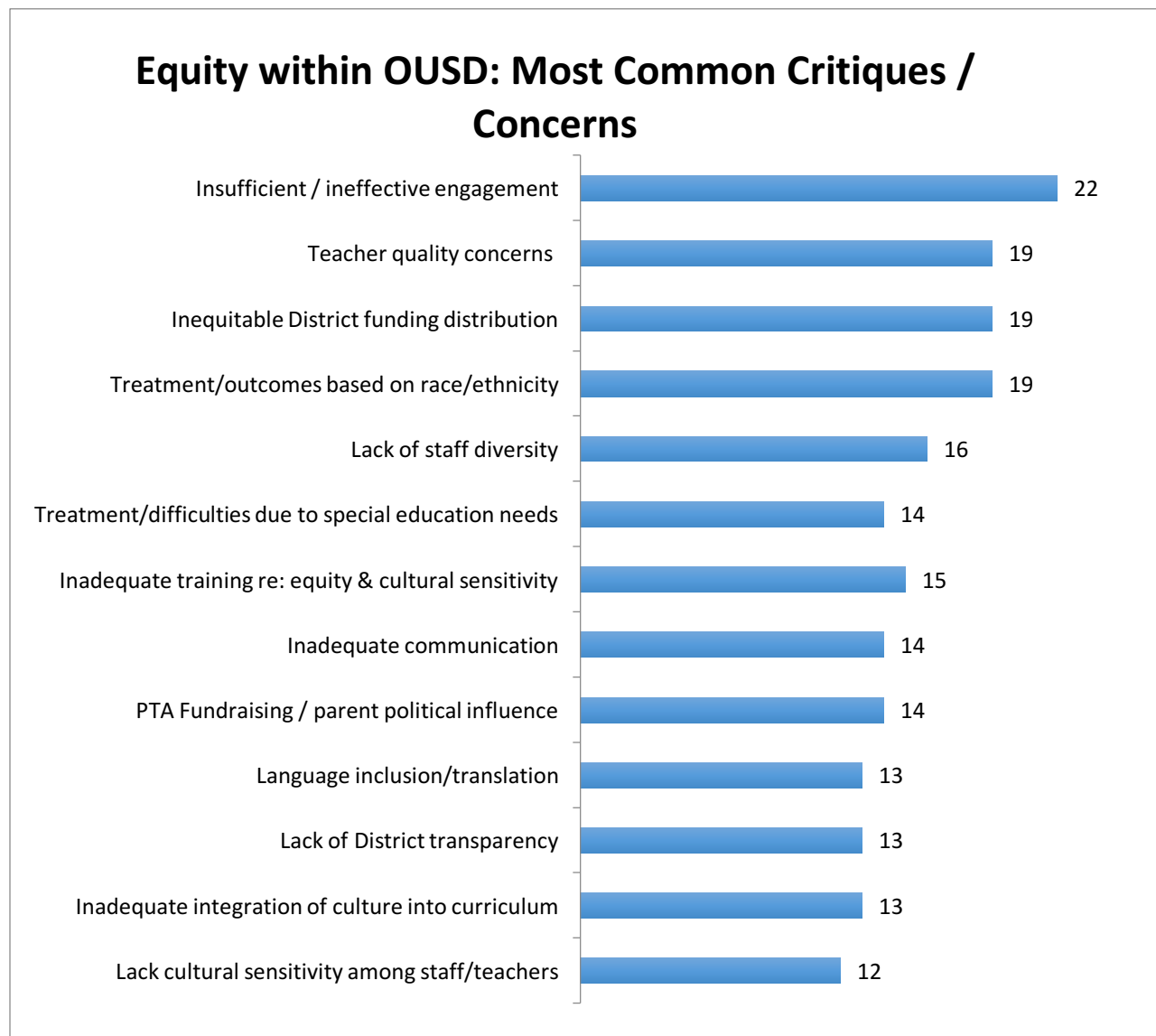


Figure 6: Equity Within OUSD, Most Frequently Cited Concerns

What is Working Well

Many focus group participants and interviewees praised the African American Male Achievement Initiative (AAMAI) work and the Latino Men and Boys work, and asked to see more initiatives mirror these efforts across multiple demographics. (Students, Parents, Community Partners, Administrators, Board Directors)

Figure 7 below provides a breakdown of the most common ways participants reported seeing OUSD currently promoting equity.

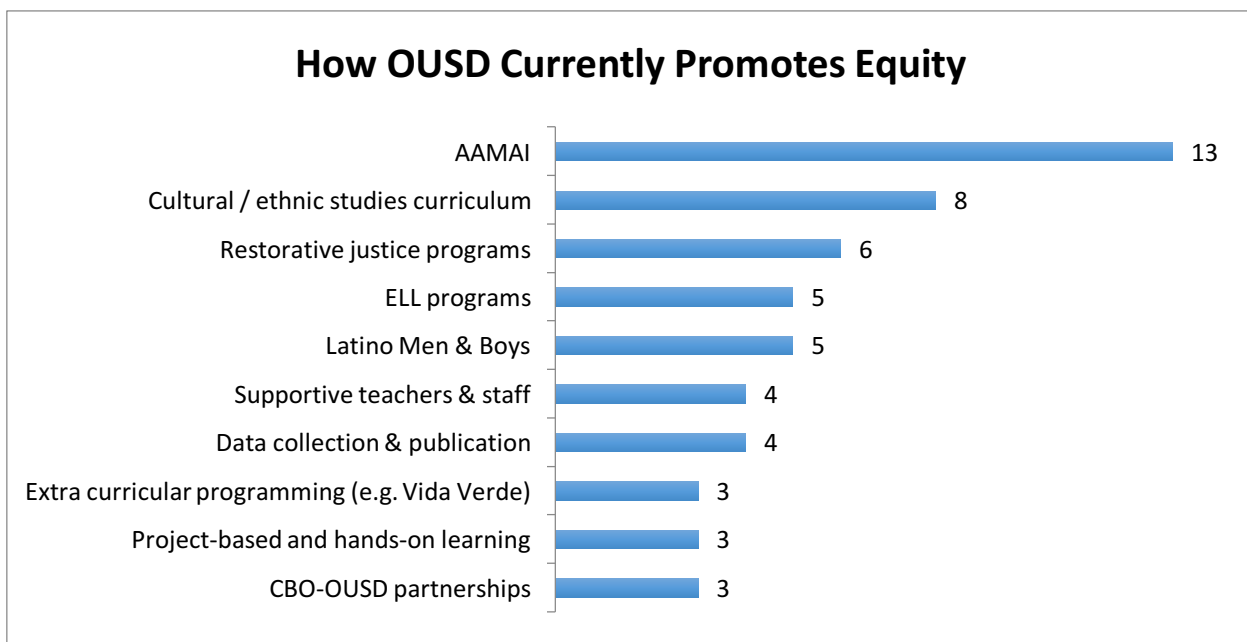


Figure 7: How OUSD Currently Promotes Equity

Parent Forum, Board Engagement, and All City Council Meetings

The engagement around the proposed Equity Policy also included OUSD-directed engagement efforts around the concept of what OUSD could do to promote equity. These events included the February 6, 2016 Parent Forum with the Superintendent in District 6, a breakout session during the January 25, 2016 Board Meeting, and two All City Council forums on November 19 and December 10, 2015. We observed some of these events.

These forums did not involve analyzing the language of the proposed policy directly, or asking participants the set of questions asked within focus groups and individual interviews. These forums did involve, however, some direct discussion of how OUSD could define, prioritize, and achieve equity district-wide. We analyzed the notes from these meetings to see where the conversation and comments related to the proposed policy.

Within these forums, participants expressed definitions of equity that defined equity in two ways, first in terms of meeting different students' needs to achieve equitable outcomes and second in terms of an "equal" process, focusing on fair and equal access to quality instruction and programs. Across these forums, the quality of instructors and

District communications emerged as the most frequently cited examples of potential barriers to achieving equity district-wide. The next most frequently mentioned items related to the need for increased training within OUSD around equity and cultural sensitivity, increased transparency in decision making (including budgeting) and increased engagement.

From the Desk Survey Responses

This engagement effort also included an electronic survey sent out on January 18, 2016 to recipients of the *From The Desk of the Superintendent* communication. The questions on this survey were similar to the questions we asked within focus groups and interviews. We did not interact directly with respondents, and were unable to determine from every response whether the respondent was a parent, student, teacher, staff member, or community partner, or what part of the City the respondent lived in and/or which school site (if any) the respondent had a relationship with. Because of this we analyzed the information gleaned from this survey differently and do not attempt to extract common themes from specific groups. In all, we analyzed 65 discrete, non-replicated survey responses returned to the questions sent out on January 18, 2016. This provided 260 opportunities to provide feedback (as there were 4 questions per survey).

Defining Equity

Not unlike the input collected through focus groups, interviews, and engagement meetings described above, a distinct divide emerged between respondents who described “equity” and “equitable outcomes” as defined by “equal” treatment, and those who felt equity is about “leveling the playing field.” This debate manifested in the topic of resource distribution amongst schools. Some respondents felt that schools should receive “equal” resources (distributed according to enrollment), while others favored providing more resources to lower-performing schools. Additionally, while some respondents advocated for ensuring that all students have access to the same resources, opportunities, and support, others argued in favor of providing higher-need/under-privileged students with additional resources and support. Five respondents raised the concern that directing additional resources to high-need student groups may effectively decrease resources and worsen outcomes for all other students. Of the total sample of 65 survey respondents, 20 provided responses that centered around providing “equal” treatment to promote equity, while 19 provided responses that prioritized providing differentiated treatment that directed the most concentrated support toward highest-need students.

Identified Challenges and Successes With Promoting Equity

Language inclusion emerged as a major theme, both for students and their families. Some cited ESL programs as an example of the District is already doing well in terms of promoting equity, while others suggested that ELL students are one of the groups the District most frequently leaves behind. Similarly, some cited the hiring of more multi-lingual staff as an example of how the District is working to improve communication and increase family inclusion, while others noted that the District lacks adequate multi-lingual

services. Several respondents noted that translation for families at all District meetings would be an essential next step in improving inclusion.

Increasing the number and quality of **counseling services** was another key topic. Most respondents who discussed the need to prioritize counseling services referred specifically to health and nutrition counseling (7 respondents), though others described college counseling as a particularly high-priority need (4 respondents). Within the discussion around hiring and retaining **high-quality teachers**, respondents specifically pointed to paying teachers higher salaries, and offering expanded professional development opportunities, and reducing reliance on volunteers and teaching assistants as ways to improve teacher quality and increase teacher retention rates. Establishing **equity training** for OUSD staff at all levels as well as for parents (especially parent leaders in PTAs) appeared in two responses. A third respondent suggested incorporating equity into curriculum to train students how to act to promote equity as well.

Several responses centered around the influence of **PTAs** at school sites. Several respondents mentioned that equity training will be essential for PTA members so they, as leaders within the OUSD community, can effectively promote equity; several others mentioned that PTAs are more influential and better able to marshal resources in wealthier areas, which leads to inequitable outcomes.

Throughout the responses, there exists some confusion of “equal” and “equitable” treatment. For example, one respondent advocated for “focus[ing] resources on the schools that have traditionally been under-served,” yet in his/her following sentence defined equity as “Equal availability of and access to resources for all persons.” This confusion indicates the need for equity training not just for OUSD staff, but also for the broader OUSD community, including families and students.

How this Relates to Content from the SEFAT Survey

OUSD also administered an equity survey in partnership with the Panasonic Foundation. 1,801 OUSD staff, or 37.6% of staff, took this survey, including 970 Teachers, 134 School Leaders, 133 Instructional School Support staff, 178 Non-instructional School Support staff, 57 Cabinet/District leadership personnel, 85 Central Office Instructional Support staff, 178 Central Office Non-Instructional Support staff, and 4 School Board Directors. More than half of all respondents were teachers, and about three out of four respondents were school-based. OUSD’s overall score from this survey, which asked 12 questions relating to equity, indicates that OUSD staff perceives that OUSD has some level of understanding of what will promote equity, but that OUSD would have to take intentional action to implement systems changes to be able to break the links between race, poverty, and educational outcomes. The OUSD SEFAT team plans on continuing to engage participating employee groups and the Board around the SEFAT data to encourage deeper discussion of results, implications for their work and the work of the district.

Section IV: How OUSD Responded to Concerns about Policy Language

OUSD took the the input provided through these engagement efforts and made modifications to the language of the proposed policy. OUSD also completed the Request for Qualifications process for Strategic Equity Partners and at the time of this writing, had identified three potential equity partners through that process. OUSD also created an Office of Equity, led by the new Deputy Chief, Office of Equity, Christopher P. Chatmon.

The new Deputy Chief Chris Chatmon will lead the next phase of work, in partnership with strategic equity partner(s), and various District stakeholders, to develop the implementation plan and draft the administrative regulations for the Equity Board Policy. OUSD plans to return to the Board of Education with a plan and implementation timeline in Winter/Spring 2017.

Table 4 shows which aspects of the adopted Board Policy language is responsive to concerns and issues raised during the engagement process.

Table 4 Policy Language Revisions Responsive to Engagement Feedback

Proposed Board Policy 5032 “Equity Policy” Revisions			
Language from First Reading	Revisions / Additions to Policy for Second Reading	Location in Text	Responsiveness of Revision
N/A	"In the District, we hold the powerful belief that equity is providing students with what they need to achieve at the highest possible level, and graduate prepared for college, career, and community success."	Par. 1, sent. 2	Acknowledges that students start from different places, and need different forms and amounts of support to reach equivalent outcomes
N/A	"The Governing Board seeks to understand and to interrupt patterns of institutional bias at all levels of the organization..."	Par. 1, sent. 3	Responds to requests for the District to define terms like "institutional bias" while also recognizing that part of the District's equity work will be to unpack the complexity of institutional bias before working to resolve it.
"While the primary focus of this equity policy is on race and ethnicity, the District also acknowledges and will seek to end other forms of social inequalities and oppression, including gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, immigration status, foster youth, and students with disabilities and learning differences."	"While the primary focus of this equity policy is on race and ethnicity, the District also acknowledges other forms of social inequalities and oppression, including gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, national origin, foster youth, involvement with the dependency or juvenile justice systems, and students with disabilities and learning differences, and how these different forms of oppression intersect"	Par. 2, sent. 1	Foregrounding these statements about other forms of inequities by moving them up to the second paragraph emphasizes the comprehensive policy focus; responds to requests for acknowledgement of intersectionality; responds to requests for more complete reference to gender-related forms of oppression
"...the District will address and overcome these inequities and the institutional bias which exists throughout the organization, thereby providing all students the opportunity to graduate and be	"...the District will establish administrative regulations to enact this Policy that will include: (1) a clear plan and timeline for identifying gaps in educational experiences and outcomes and potential root causes,	Par. 3, sent. 2	Responds to requests for the Policy to establish clear action items

<p>college, career and community ready.”</p>	<p>(2) an implementation plan for programs, practices, and systems that address those disparities, (3) an evaluation rubric and accountability standards for measuring success, (4) training plans and (5) an ongoing plan for continuous improvement. The Governing Board acknowledges its existing policies and administrative regulations developed to advance equitable outcomes for all students, including without limitation, Wellness (BP 5030), Student Discipline (BP 5144 et seq.), Transgender Students (BP 5145.3), Quality Schools Development (BP 6005), Parent Involvement (BP 6020), Ethnic Studies (BP 6143.7), and Community Engagement Facilities (BP 7155). Any amendments to these policies and related Administrative Regulations should be made in furtherance of this policy.”</p>		
<p>“This can be achieved by hearing and listening to student voices through restorative justice circles, regular morning meetings with students, and culturally responsive pedagogy.”</p>	<p>“Some ways that this can be achieved, include without limitation, hearing and listening to student voices through restorative justice practices, professional learning including on implicit bias and beliefs, staff recruitment and induction processes, and culturally responsive teaching pedagogy.”</p>	<p>Par. 5, sent. 3</p>	<p>Responds to requests for increased engagement, retains mention of restorative justice, references equity & cultural competency in education, training, and hiring practices.</p>

Section V: Participants’ Priorities for Next Steps

During the engagement process, participants not only provided feedback about the proposed policy but also discussed what they perceived to be priorities for the District in terms of outcomes. Table 5 provides a short list of action items derived from the focus groups and interviews. With some exceptions, participants phrased the action items in general terms.

Table 5: Summary List of Priority Action Items

ACTION ITEM	GROUPS WANTING ACTION ITEM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement staff and teacher trainings around cultural inclusion, tolerance, recognizing and addressing bias, and implementing disciplinary procedures 	Students, Staff, Community Partners, Teachers, Administration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a multidimensional education experience that prioritizes inclusive and intersectional curriculum, social and emotional learning, interpersonal teacher/student relationships, and a safe and tolerant learning environment 	Students, Staff, Community Partners, Teachers, Administration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address inequitable school funding issues (e.g., review the “Z” factor, address inequitable PTA fundraising) 	Parents, Staff, Community Partners, Administration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand translation services, including the number of translators, types of languages translated, and types of documents translated, and expand engagement efforts with ELL families 	Teachers, Parents, Community Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make District gathered data more accessible to the public, including to community partners, ELL families, and other stakeholders 	Community Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase access to accelerated classes for all students, especially those from marginalized groups 	Students, Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement efforts to increase engagement, especially around issues that directly affect individual school sites 	Students, Parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a bridge between the District and OUSD families, by increasing communication efforts and implementing programs that facilitate increased family participation in their student’s education 	Parents, Community Partners

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize access to District programs, like AAMAI, LMB, restorative justice, and community circles, and partnerships with CBOs, like Girls Inc., which promote safe spaces and feelings of inclusiveness 	Students, Community Partners, Administration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a plan that retains high quality teachers and stems the tide of high teacher turnover 	Students, Teachers, Parents, Administration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address current structural inequities within the District, including the staff pay structure and the temp-permanent employee path 	Staff, Administration, Community Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize hiring employees that are representative of the community 	Students, Staff, Community Partners, Administration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement an Office of Equity that will field equity related grievances 	Staff, Administration, Parents

List of Questions for Office of Equity

Focus group participants and interviewees also asked questions about how the policy would be implemented. We have extracted those questions that are best directed to the new Office of Equity from our notes and placed them in the table below.

Table 6: List of Questions for Office of Equity

QUESTION	GROUPS ASKING QUESTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What types of measures will there be to ensure accountability for implementation and compliance with the equity policy? 	Students, Community Partners, Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where are the resources coming from to fund the Office of Equity? 	Parents, Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the Office be accessible to all OUSD employees? 	Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the Office field complaints from staff, as well as students? 	Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the Office of Equity address complaints? 	Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will they address the inequitable PTA fundraising structure? 	Parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What will the Office do about the inequitable pay structure within the District? 	Staff

QUESTION	GROUPS ASKING QUESTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the Office of Equity include an arm dedicated to hearing staff complaints and conducting job audits? 	Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the Office be structured? 	Parents, Staff

Appendix 1: Focus Group Abstracts

After each focus group, or group interview session, the facilitator reviewed both the written notes from the focus group and/or the recording of the focus group for the purpose of creating an abstract, or data memorandum summarizing the discussion. These abstracts highlight the major themes that came up in the discussion without attributing any opinion or statement to any individual participant.

STUDENTS

AFRICAN AMERICAN MALE STUDENTS

Fairness in school:

The students unanimously agreed that there was a lack of fairness around the curriculum in schools, and they explicitly addressed wanting more comprehensive education around African American history and culture. The students highlighted a lack of culturally responsive curriculum, with one student stating, “In history class, they don’t teach you about black history. They are not going in depth... They speak a lot about European history.” They expressed a frustration with the lack of time and material given for African American history, outside of the history of slavery. A couple of students linked the lack of culturally responsive curriculum to the prevalence of negative stereotyping within schools, especially among teachers.

The conversation around fairness was also framed in the context of student-teacher relationships and the effect that negative stereotyping has on those relationships. Students expressed that they felt as though teachers targeted them because the teachers were influenced by preexisting stereotypes about African American students. As well, the students reported feeling a racial bias in classrooms. They agreed that African American students were given disproportionately harsher punishments, when compared to white and Asian students, and there were overwhelming feelings of favoritism for non-African American students in the classroom. One student expressed a feeling that the system was failing black boys, and recognized a need for cultural/societal equity. “It’s going to have to be groups like this that sets aside children who have been through so much, we need that extra help and time.”

To help equalize fairness in schools, students suggested having teachers more representative of the community and of student demographics, by stressing the importance of having local and minority teachers. As well, they conveyed the need for more groups like AAMAI, and they felt as though the District needed to expand these types of services to reach more students. All of the young men conveyed gratitude and support for AAMAI and programs like it. Additionally, the students communicated a need for cultural training for teachers, a culturally responsive pedagogy, more socially relevant curriculum, a more progressive approach to punishment (including counseling) and mandatory ethnic studies classes, to improve fairness experienced in schools.

LGBTQ-African American tensions:

The students described an existing tension between LGBTQ students/teachers and African American students. This was a prevalent theme throughout the conversation. The young men said that there was a lack of exposure and a lack of conversation about each group's respective struggles, which created tension between the two groups. A couple of students conveyed frustration at what they described as an appropriation of the Civil Rights Movement to extend to LGBTQ individuals. Some students were openly upset with the double standard of derogatory language use, noting that teachers, especially LGBTQ teachers, would harshly condemn the use of derogatory terms to reference LGBTQ students in classrooms, but these same teachers did not reprimand students when they used the term "nigga." Towards the end of the conversation, one student expressed feelings that the burgeoning LGBTQ rights movement is hindering his pursuit of equitable treatment in the classroom.

Self-Identification:

The students offered varying self-identifications, outside of black, including an emphasis on royal roots, utilizing terms like "descendants of pharaohs" and "kings." These alternative identifications emphasize the power of terminology and the impact that classification can have on self-image. The terms were also reflective of a reality and a curriculum that the students felt is not readily accessible within the District.

ALL CITY COUNCIL STUDENTS (GROUP A)

Defining fairness:

The students defined the concept of fairness in terms of understanding people's backgrounds and meeting them where they are. One student noticed that "everyone doesn't sit on the same bar," and another student expressed the importance of "understanding everyone's experience/background."

Cultural/ethnic/racial programs:

The students all saw great value in cultural/ethnic/racial programs and initiatives that are currently underway within the District. With the group being composed of two Latinas, one African American male, and one multicultural student, they stressed the importance of these programs and initiatives. In addition, the students expressed their satisfaction with curriculum that was relevant to their lives and experiences. One student in extended day program (EDP) classes communicated the importance of learning about cultural and social issues and being able to mentor other students about these issues, especially since they impact their everyday lives. Another student attested to the great impact that the African American Male Achievement Initiative (AAMAI) has had on his life, stating that classroom curriculum should have the same substance as these programs, which would make the curriculum more impactful. The Polynesian Club, the Multicultural Club and the Newcomer program were all mentioned as important inclusive spaces that promote cultural/ethnic tolerance and understanding. The students all showed interest in having more of these programs/initiatives in schools, especially intertwined in the curriculum.

Inclusive and trusting school environment:

These students all expressed the need to create an inclusive and trusting school environment, in order to increase student outcomes. To accomplish this, the students suggested a number of different solutions, but changing the student/teacher dynamic was a top priority. One student mentioned that right now, teachers and students rarely interact, aside from class time, and interactions within the classroom are often very distant and disconnected, with teachers not even saying “good morning.” Students communicated the necessity to improve upon this existing dynamic in order to foster trust and to create an investment in their students, which they believed would lead the teachers to seeing the full potential of their students and pushing them to succeed. To promote better student/teacher relationships, the students proposed (1) teacher trainings on race/ethnicity/culture, (2) trainings on how to deal with students from disadvantaged backgrounds, (3) trainings to support new student learning methods, (4) creating student/teacher classroom agreements, and (5) hiring teachers that are from the community and hiring teachers that genuinely want to interact with their students.

In addition to changing the student/teacher dynamic, students wanted to see more intervention at the administrative and staff level. One student suggested that students be included in larger decision making at the school, citing student engagement as a key component of improving equity. One previous enrollee at Fremont, recounted the prevalence of inappropriate conduct between staff/administration and students, which culminated in a school-wide protest. The student believed that engagement and trainings are necessary to diffuse these situations. And, along those lines, a couple of students suggested administrative training on handling escalating situations with students and student fights.

Along with a change in the school environment, changing the curriculum to be more multicultural, especially to celebrate more African/African American culture, was highlighted as a way to create a more inclusive environment. There was a decided agreement that there is a great need for more multicultural and multidimensional education that supports students’ total well-being, through addressing their cultural, ethnic, racial, social and emotional needs.

ALL CITY COUNCIL STUDENTS (GROUP B)

Defining fairness:

To this group of students, the concept of fairness was defined by equity, as one student said fairness is, “Equity- giving everyone what they need in order to get where they need to be.” Another student said that they would define fairness “in the same way as equity is, being in the same place as other students.” However, one student found the jargon confusing, expressing that the difference between equality, equity and fairness is confusing.

Lack of cultural/ethnic/racial support:

The group expressed that there was a lack of cultural/ethnic/racial support in classrooms, but they noted that some schools had programs that supported these issues. However, the students conveyed the importance for all schools to have support around these issues- ideally formatted within the classroom curriculum. One student commented that they have such a small school size that they are unable to have specific cultural programs but expressed a need for such programs in all schools. The student also said that there are programs for physical activity but often cultural learning is overlooked, even though it is an integral part of learning about difference and tolerance. As well, the students communicated a need for classroom curriculum that promoted social-emotional learning and that promoted “actual deep conversations, so you actually learn more things.”

School relationships:

The students expressed experiencing difficult relationships with teachers, administrators and staff, based on perceiving there to be bias and a lack of fairness within the school site. A couple of students brought up racial profiling by teachers, administrators and staff as cause for the inequities at their school sites. Unequal punishment because of race was a concern for one student. “They can be really hard on African American boys... I feel like they go a lot harder on those students.” Another student made a connection between a lack of cultural competence and the school to prison pipeline, explaining that “they don’t know what’s going on with the student, they already have a bias against students... They automatically target... and they get in trouble... get expelled... possibly go to jail.” The students conveyed other concerns focused around biased false accusations, and the resulting disciplinary record, affecting the experience of fairness and equal opportunity in schools. One girl stated that she was once falsely accused of stealing a book, and now teachers and other students look at her differently. Students expressed that once you have a disciplinary record or even a false accusation, security increasingly harasses them and teachers do not give them the same attention or opportunities that they give more “well-behaving” students. One student said that there is a security guard at school that just likes to mess with people, and he often interferes with the learning environment. The student felt as though this disruption affects the possibilities of the students’ learning. In addition, the students felt that many teachers did not practice fairness. When asked, “How many teachers, staff, people at the school treat you fairly,” one student answered, “one percent.” A couple of students communicated that their teachers had favorite students and would treat them better than others. And, one student communicated that “There are only a few select teachers and staff that are down for the students.” The same student expressed that there are staff and teachers that “just push you off,” when you ask for help, and there are teachers that pick on and target students.

Higher level actions:

In order to create a more equitable environment, the students expressed a need for action and intervention at the administrative level. A couple of students stated that there needed to be a fairness standard and accountability for all teachers, staff and administration dealing with students. Additionally, one student suggested having transparent processes for dealing with student-related situations, so that everyone knows that everyone is being dealt with in the same manner. All of the students mentioned that teacher/staff/administrative trainings were essential for creating an equitable environment. And, the students brought up trainings on cultural

competency, security and sensitivity as essential to creating inclusive schools. One student also expressed the necessity for local hiring, in order to create open and trusting relationships between student and teachers/staff/administration. And, a couple of the students expressed that all schools needed to prioritize inclusion and diversity in all classes, especially AP classes, and ensure equal financial/resource support for all academic subjects to create an equitable learning environment.

ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER FEMALE STUDENTS

Initial reactions to the policy:

The language of the proposed policy did not engage this group of students. Instead, the students offered a definition of equity that would allow each student to get “what you need in life” and referenced the image used to differentiate equity from equality (involving three individuals trying to watch a baseball game while standing on boxes).

Equity and school environment:

The students also defined their idea of equity and equitable outcomes within the specific context of their school environment. They expressed frustration with the frequency of having substitute teachers, and inadequate resources. They believe that there is inequitable spending around sports, and that the school spends money on the football program, and prioritizes sports facilities for boys but not girls. They also referenced high teacher turnover, high turnover in administrators, frequent use of substitute teachers, and connected these events to lower academic outcomes. They communicated concerns about not being adequately prepared for college, and in particular, not having teachers that they connected with or could rely on for letters of recommendations. Students expressed a desire for additional resources beyond the basic curriculum, namely a more holistic curriculum that would better prepare them for college and transition out of high school and into adult life, and the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy. Their comments reflected recognition of class and racial segregation among schools District-wide, a sense that there is a widespread perception that some schools where white students enroll are “better” although that is not necessarily true, and that there is a relationship between the gentrification of the City and school demographics. They expressed that they believe that there should be universal free lunch, recognizing that even families that do not qualify for free or reduced lunch are still struggling because of the high cost of living in Oakland. They posited that the high cost of living in Oakland might be contributing to the inability for OUSD to keep teachers. Finally, they commented on the importance of having quality facilities and a nice learning space.

FOSTER YOUTH STUDENTS (ALL MALE, MULTIPLE RACIAL/ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS)

Defining equity and equitable outcomes:

“Everyone is treated fair, same consequences for same action.”

“Everybody, no matter, age, gender, age, disability, should all have the equal opportunity to learn.”

How the District can promote equity (and what it needs to do better):

Participants in both foster student focus groups expressed feeling that students are treated differently within the District based on their race / ethnicity. One student reported he would give his school a “C” grade in terms of treating all students equally. Specifically, one student said, “I go to a predominantly Asian school. It is very racially biased...our math teacher gives more attention to [Asian] students than others.” Another described having witnessed situations where “3 kids walk into a room, an Asian, a white kid, and an African American. If one of them smells like weed, it is automatically assumed it is the African American.”

The same student also described experiencing biased disciplinary practices within OUSD, saying “...if some people walk in late it’s ok, but that’s not the case for everyone. Not saying it’s because I’m African American...but it could be. The teacher only does it with the problem kids – if I walk in with the quiet kids, then I’m on time.”

Participants described issues with teachers and principals treating students with “disrespect” and meting out unwarranted punishments based on assumptions about students rather than based on actual poor behavior.

One participant noted that the District should hire more “black- and brown-skinned” teachers to promote equity. He said that teachers are currently “all Caucasian.” Another student agreed with him, and said “we will feel more comfortable...seeing more diverse teachers.” The students expanded the point by suggesting that better matching staff/teacher demographics to student demographics could help inspire and empower students of color to succeed in school and beyond.

Participants also expressed concerns that the education they are receiving is not as high-quality as it should be. They said that the level of rigor is low, that some students are “treated like we are slower” and given “3rd and 4th grade homework” as high school students.

Speaking specifically about foster students, one participant said that issues exist around school assignment that make it difficult for students to succeed. He suggested that students be able to go to their “home” school, meaning the school that is closest to their home, to minimize long commute times to and from school.

What the District is already doing well to promote equity:

Students noted several programs, including “Manhood” and “Fly” at Bridge, as examples of where they feel included and supported. One student cited his school’s incorporation of Civil Rights history into the curriculum as a positive example. Another said, “Back in 4th grade, it was Cinco de Mayo and my teacher was Asian. We were talking about Cesar Chavez, he said that

Cesar Chavez went through the same thing as Martin Luther King, [Jr.] He taught us how other races were connected like Mexicans and blacks.”

However, another student said that the District does not do a good enough job of educating students about racial equity issues, specifically citing his school’s failure to incorporate teaching about Black History Month into the curriculum.

Several participants mentioned their experiences as members of sports teams as examples of instances where they feel students are not treated in relation to their race/ethnicity, and where they personally feel supported and included.

LATINA FEMALE STUDENTS

Defining equity and equitable outcomes:

The girls defined equity in terms of being equal across the board, having equal amounts and resources, people getting what they need/fulfilling what they are lacking, and by framing it against inequity, stating that “we do need a good environment to work with and be in.”

Where does inequity show up in the District?

For these students, the most critical place that inequity stood out was in teacher turnover. One girl expressed that there is high teacher turnover, and as a result, students do not get a personal relationship with their teacher. This is especially damaging because students are unable to build the social and support networks that come with having veteran teachers, especially when it comes to getting recommendation letters and guidance through the college application process. Additionally, the turnover produces ill-equipped and underprepared teachers, who often do not have command of their students or classroom. One student communicated, “It’s really bad. But, the students have control over the teacher, making it difficult for those who want to learn.” And, they voiced the need for quality teachers that are personally invested in them. “It’s important that a teacher that’s been around can understand students beyond what they learn, knowing their personal life. It’s someone they can reach out to.” The girls hinted at the idea that a school site is not just a place to learn, but it is a place to be supported and nurtured. Students feel that teachers are supposed to partake in that process, but the current teacher turnover is inhibiting those critical relationships from forming. To support teachers, students suggested the District give them social skills/cultural literacy training, better pay, and training for career advancement.

District efforts at creating equitable outcomes:

The girls named the partnership with Girls Inc. (which empowers young women, teaches them social and life skills and exposes them to other cultures), African American Male Achievement Initiative (AAMAI), Ethnic Studies classes, classes that promote real world experiences, and college prep, as sites where they felt that the District was trying to create equitable outcomes.

How the District can promote equity in the future:

To promote equity in the future, students suggested the District (1) create better feedback pathways for students, so that they can give more active feedback on teachers and curriculum (without the power dynamic of trying to talk to a teacher about their curriculum), (2) have SAT prep and assistance for all students, (3) create equitable pathways to college, (4) create a better system for students to have their voices heard, (5) increase access to Ethnic Studies classes, and (6) improve teacher quality through retention and hiring enthusiastic teachers.

Also, students suggested that equity work be part of the mandated curriculum, as opposed to program partnerships. The students saw equity work and cultural exposure as not only an important part of learning, but as a more enjoyable subject, than the traditional academic subjects. One student said that it would give them more motivation to go to school, while another said, “It’s a good experience for everyone, and no one should miss out on it.”

LATINO MALE STUDENTS STUDENTS

Defining equity and equitable outcomes:

Participants offered several different interpretations of “equity.” One participant said, “I define it as equal. Where there is no difference in the way people are treated.” Another said, “Fair is more of a personal concept. Everyone has a different definition.” A third began his explanation by saying “Everyone is exposed to different things” (though his answer did not provide further insight into his understanding of “equity”).

How the District can promote equity (and what it needs to do better):

One comment from a participant in the Latino Men and Boys focus group may illustrate how the tendency for better-performing schools to attract better teachers manifests in the day-to-day school environment. The LMB participant reported that his Spanish teacher “was not even fluent,” and wondered “how is it that she gets hired on the first place.” The participant went on to describe the consequences: he had gotten into a conflict with the teacher after “question[ing] her authority,” and she “tried to embarrass me in front of the whole class.”

A participant said that he did not believe any of his teachers have been racist, but immediately followed this statement by saying he wonders why he has sometimes received lower grades than his classmates for doing the same quality work. This may demonstrate differential treatment based on race / ethnicity. Another participant reported that he has seen students treat one another differently based on the “color of their skin.” Both comments support the suggestions of other focus groups and interview subjects that the District act to expose and address bias, and to enact District-wide education and training about how to promote equity.

What the District is already doing well to promote equity:

These students offered personal anecdotes that evidence the importance of teachers in promoting equitable outcomes. When asked about if they feel accepted and supported at their school, the

student participants spoke exclusively about their experience receiving support from teachers. This supports the arguments made in other focus groups and interviews that the District should work to maintain and improve teacher quality.

These students pointed to restorative justice as an example of how they see their school practicing fairness and promoting equity. Participants also suggested that community circles are an effective tool for promoting equity, and recommended that the District “do them more.”

Participants spoke about the importance of creating support systems like the Latino Men and Boys group at every school so that “everyone” can feel “part of a community.”

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANS, QUESTIONING (LGBTQ) STUDENTS (MALE & FEMALE, MULTIPLE RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPS)

Initial reactions to the policy:

This group of students felt as though the policy was more of a statement of goals, than an actual policy, and they believed that it needed to be more of a proposal, with an actual implementation framework and actionable items. While most of the students seemed to think that the policy was a good idea, without these additional items, the students referred to it as “very surface.” A couple of students expressed that there needed to be more explicitness around unconscious prejudice and how it would be recognized and addressed. They noted that it would be a difficult task for people to recognize their own prejudices because prejudices and bias are learned at such a young age and are quickly and deeply internalized. One student recognized that it is, “[a] process of re-teaching people how to act and then also like for people to keep doing it, which is difficult.” The students agreed that there needed to be consequences for students that did not comply with the equity policy and an accountability measure to ensure that staff and administration would punish those that violated the policy. They did not define what type of punishment would be appropriate, but they were clear that accountability was important to them.

Defining equity and equitable outcomes:

Equity was defined in terms of getting what one needs to be at the same place as others. “Equity recognizes that certain things need to be done for certain groups because of our past, not having equality.” Another recognized that “it is about what each individual group needs to be successful. [One] can’t assume that everyone needs the same thing.”

The students also defined the term equity by exploring the inequities within an honors program at their school. Students wondered why more people of color were not encouraged to enroll in the program and were discouraged by the lack of diversity within the program. One student said, “But, also it makes me wonder like why other students of color aren't doing [this program] and it may have to do with this stigma of like the definition of [the program].” Being one of the only students of color in an honors class resulted in this particular student having to constantly defend herself against critiques and attacks on her opinions. She found the experience to be very isolating and oppressive, and she felt that because she was one of only two black students, she

was often designated as the “validator” for statements about black culture. These sentiments were echoed across the room, by others in different classes who felt marginalized because they would speak up and try to add a different point of view to the curriculum or because they felt as though they were the spokesperson for their entire race. Students felt discouraged by the inequity within the curriculum (teaching “white men’s history”), and that was compounded by the constant feeling of having to defend their points of views from teachers and students, when they would try to add something to, or comment on, the lesson.

Culturally inclusive curriculum, cultural training, student engagement and diversity:

These students prioritized a culturally inclusive curriculum, which emphasizes social justice, ethnic history, queer history, intersectionality and the inclusion of marginalized groups, as a means to achieving equity. They were aggravated by the essential non-existence of queer history or exposure in history classes, noting that homosexuality and bisexuality were prevalent throughout ancient Greek culture- but that was never mentioned during the history class when the class focused on ancient Greek history and culture. Additionally, the students were critical of the lack of racial and ethnic history, stating that they only got black history during black history month. This group stressed that there was a connection between safety in school and the representation of these themes within the curriculum. “We need to include marginalized groups into these text books. Want a safe environment for kids? We need to include them.”

Students also expressed frustration with the variability of educational standards and options within the District. They communicated that they felt as though students from the “rich white kids schools” got more cultural education than those from schools with actual diversity. They also conveyed their frustration that all students are not similarly prepared for high school. They felt that kids get more advanced classes at more well-resourced middle and elementary schools, particularly local private schools, better enabling them to enroll in advanced programs in high school when entering OUSD for the first time.

Not only changing the curriculum, but also expanding the reach of cultural training for staff, teachers, and administrators was critical for these students. These students reported feeling constantly attacked and feeling as though they needed to fend for themselves because teachers and staff are constantly pushing white history and a “straight” agenda. In order to create a safe space for equity to flourish, the students felt that people that interact with students every day need to be trained and knowledgeable, not ignorant. Students stressed that teachers have to be on the forefront of progressive and inclusive education to create equity in the classroom, and many students felt that was sorely lacking.

Student engagement, as a pathway to create safe spaces, was also a major theme throughout the conversation. The students highlighted the issue of the designation of a gender-neutral restroom, which was a men’s restroom with a new sign covering up the old sign. They did not change the space or tell anyone why it was there, why they put it up or even when they put it up. The students could not tell if it was a joke, a genuine effort, or a stab at appeasement. This upset these students because they felt as though this was an opportunity to create a real safe space on campus for those who would use a gender-neutral bathroom. But instead, the administration usurped the restroom from the boys and did not educate anyone about the purpose of a gender

neutral restroom or the intent behind creating one. Boys seemed territorial about the re-designation of the restrooms, and since there was no education behind it, no one understood why they were necessary and why this was happening. The students were frustrated with the Administration throwing away an opportunity to create safe spaces and an inclusive teaching moment.

PARENTS

CENTRAL PARENTS (MULTIPLE RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPS)

Initial reactions to the policy:

The members seemed to appreciate the spirit of the policy, with one member expressing great concern about the “inequity that I see in schools,” but they were generally pessimistic about the implementation of the policy and its lack of specificity. One member of the group, a school site administrator, commented, “I agree with the goals wholeheartedly...but also because it is so broad, I’m not sure what to do with this.” Multiple parents expressed concern, around the availability of resources for policy implementation, with teacher preparedness being a main concern. One member said that it felt like an “unfunded mandate”, and another asked, “what about teacher support?” Reactions generally included that the policy has to have more specific language, an implementation framework and a plan to procure adequate resources and allow for their proper allocation, in order to be meaningful.

Defining equity and equitable outcomes:

Perspectives around equity and equitable outcomes were kept to broad concepts, rather than personal narratives, as the group attempted to figure out how to frame their perspectives/definitions from a privileged position. This led to equity and equitable outcomes being defined by tangible markers (resource allocation, college admissions, test scores) rather than feelings of inclusiveness or other social/emotional markers. “When they’re talking about equitable outcomes, they’re talking about the number that take AP classes, graduate, go to college. All these things should be the same. An equitable outcome is that the percentages of kids doing something is the same or virtually the same.” One parent felt as though inequity within the District was measurable by the differences across schools. Equity for that parent was when “every school in Oakland is one that I would be happy to send my kids to, and all schools are the same.” Equity in this conversation focused around sameness and fairness in achievement rates, but what was missing was the lens of equity as inclusion and creating inclusive environments. While talking about cultural exposure, one parent expressed, “It’s not only the kids of color, but it is also the kids that don’t have color... I tend on the side of European education, but I would like the kids to be aware of what is happening with people of color.” While that parent focused on their child’s exposure to issues that affect students of color, their student’s exposure took precedence over the resolution of the issues, seemingly because of a lack of personal exposure to issues of inequity. In that same vein, one parent suggested getting students to examine their own roles in social inequity. And while personal reflection is a good step, chiefly absent was discussion of systemic issues.

Implementation:

A major theme throughout the conversation was concern about implementation, most notably how the aims of the policy and its effectiveness would be measured and who would be held accountable. In terms of measuring the effectiveness of the policy, one participant worried about a quantitative data system being employed to assess performance. She expressed she had seen many issues with such a system in the past, especially in a small school where small numerical fluctuations can have tremendous impact on performance reviews. Additionally, a couple of parents expressed interest in having a qualitative assessment for the outcomes of the policy, which charts a specific student and their success over time. Accountability, for the implementation of the policy, was a big issue for a couple of the members, with two members suggesting it originate as a statement of belief and eventually move into becoming a policy. A parent asked, “Can we make steps to it eventually becoming a policy? I see it being dumped on the schools.”

Resources as a pathway to equity:

Another major theme during the conversation was proper resource allocation as a pathway to equity. When one parent pushed back against the notion that absenteeism at their school site was race related, another parent retorted that the only way the school knew why its students were absent was because that school had a manageable caseload in an area that doesn’t experience the type of chronic absenteeism that other schools see. In a conversation dominated by the logistical implications of the equity policy, resource allocation as a response to data gaps emerged as a pathway to equity for this committee. “At Franklin, they have resources that we don’t have, but they are doing great things with them. That’s when systemically this whole thing is working. That’s the level of accountability that we need to work for.”

Frustration with District’s use of time and resources on consultants:

It was clear that the group was unhappy about the District’s use of funds to hire consultants and the constant intrusiveness of being assessed. One parent stated, “I am flabbergasted by the level of resources being used to get feedback on this policy, which is some lofty ideas and words.” Another member expressed that “Oakland loves to collect data. We are assessed and reassessed. We are told to make sure that informs our instruction. Not clear on what that means, and it takes so much time to assess.” And the group expressed little faith that their input will have any actual weight in the future. “To have us yammer on, what are we really changing here?”

EAST OAKLAND PARENTS (AFRICAN AMERICAN)

Initial reactions:

The parents’ initial reactions to the policy included that it had too much rhetoric (rendering it inaccessible), was very broad (covering too many demographics), was too focused on color to be a true equity policy, lacked context and relevant case studies, lacked a plan for resource

acquisition and allocation, lacked an implementation plan and did not address relevant factors outside of school, like support at home. The parents agreed that there had to be some real resources to implement the policy, and that it could not just rely on parents volunteering, since so many parents are single parents and/or working multiple jobs. These parents also noted there had to be some measures to keep teachers accountable for policing the policy in schools.

Definition of equity and equitable outcomes:

The group agreed on the definition of equity as “leveling the playing field” or giving people what they each needed to reach the same outcomes. The group framed their definitions of equity within the context of student support. The emphasized that equity meant that every student should come out with the same educational outcome, but the means to get that student there will differ on their background. Meeting not only differing educational needs, but also addressing social-emotional needs, like trauma intervention, was a priority for the group. Meeting the differing needs of children in special education, having more arts programs, having more qualified teachers and retaining them, having anti-bullying policies and having a culturally inclusive curriculum were seen as some additional ways the district could promote equity for students.

District credibility:

One major theme that emerged throughout the conversation was that the District needed to solidify its credibility in the community, especially the African American community. The parents expressed a real distrust of leadership and their direction, stressing disconnect between their lofty/personal goals and what’s actually happening at the school sites. There was a shared sentiment that the administration was not working to eradicate the inequities across school sites, especially when looking at the resources of hills versus flatlands schools. In order to make the policy actionable, relevant and impactful, the group stressed that there needed to be community buy-in, which could only happen if there was buy-in to the District’s leaders.

Priority outcomes:

Priority outcomes for the policy included (1) having more qualified teachers, (2) developing a more culturally inclusive curriculum, (3) mandating more parental involvement, (4) engaging students on a personal level and (5) educating and nurturing the whole child. The parents in this group really stressed creating a bridge between schools and homes, noting that a lot of what happens at home impacts the students’ performance in school, and vice-a-versa. Parental involvement (especially finding innovative ways to increase parent engagement), meeting the social-emotional needs of students and having more personal interactions with students were brought forward as solutions to this issue. It was clear that the parents wanted engagement and to build a bridge between the school (staff, teachers, administrators), the District, the community, students and parents.

Defining yourself/your culture:

The group of parents had varying cultural and personal identifiers, ranging from the broader Latino(a) to specific “Michoacana.” There was an understanding that the parents identified as “Latino(a)” within a multicultural context (as a result of the lack of understanding and exposure about specific cultures), but outside of that context, they identified in a much more culturally/place-specific way. “I’m from Veracruz. Nobody wants to say where they are from. Everyone generalizes because it is a little bit of a taboo. There is a lot to do still so people don’t feel offended.” This group agreed that food and traditions were strong cultural identifiers.

Lack of support for students’ cultures and identities:

The parents felt as though their students did not experience support around their culture and identity. The parents noted that at school sites, there was a lack of cultural celebrations because cultural traditions are often unknown. These parents attributed this to the fact that the different cultures are not exposed to one another, creating a school environment devoid of cross-cultural interactions. One parent recalled a Thanksgiving celebration, where one of the parents would not let their child try their food. The parent expressed that they did not know that “Arab’s did not eat pork” because there were never any cultural or cross-cultural discussions happening. The parents expressed an interest in having cross-cultural exposures to create a more inclusive and culturally vibrant school setting. “I would like to see more celebrations and traditions from different cultures, not only our own.” For these families, when parents and students navigate their own identities through cultural expression and tradition, such as these parents, and there is a lack of cultural celebration at school, it creates a perception of a less-rich educational experience. “In the school we come from, there is no culture to follow. Academically we are doing great, but there is not a cultural connection. A lot of work needs to be done.”

The parents spoke highly of their experience with teachers that supported cultural expression and traditions, and they expressed a desire for more teachers and staff that are culturally competent and open to diverse ideas and traditions. But they showed concern over the discrimination that still exists in schools, especially among the staff. “A person in the office... She did not have the same level of compassion for all.” These parents suggested trainings as a pathway to understanding cultures and traditions.

Defining fairness:

Some of the parents defined fairness around making sure kids got what they needed in order to succeed, and others defined fairness around equal treatment and access for all. In order to make school sites fairer, the parents suggested (1) teaching kids about morality and respect, (2) prioritizing opportunities for special needs children, (3) working with children instead of only punishing them, (4) having equity in educational accessibility, (5) having better and more language translation services and (6) access and improving parent engagement (including having a liaison between the parents and the administration), especially for bilingual households. “They should come and talk to us. They make top down decisions without our consent. They need to facilitate participation in two languages.”

NORTH OAKLAND PARENTS (MULTIPLE RACIAL/ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS, ALL FEMALE)

This parent group approved of the District's efforts to move forward with an equity policy, but questioned both whether this policy was possibly duplicative of what already existed and if not, expressed surprise that the policy did not already exist. They also expressed concern about the absence of action-oriented language. They thought it was good that the language was inclusive, but also noted it was important to recognize the impact of intersectionality of social identities on equity within the District, and in particular, noted how race and special education needs interact within OUSD. Two parents provided examples of how they perceived disparities in services for African American students placed in special education as compared to white students (with white students receiving substantially more services for what appeared to be less intensive needs) and disproportionate placement of African American students into special education. The group collectively defined "equity" as "leveling the playing field" or providing every student what they needed to learn at the highest level, recognizing that different students would have different needs. One parent also defined equity in terms of process, rather than outcomes, emphasizing the need for parents and students to have a "seat at the table" rather than always having decisions made for them. The group also emphasized that equity should mean something more than making sure that all students get what they need to be academically competent, but that any definition of equity should recognize that different students will want to pursue different paths and that these different paths should be equally valued.

The group provided examples of how their own experiences and observations of schools within the District informed both their definitions of equity and what they perceived to be critical issues within the District. In particular, they provided examples that illustrated the difference between resources available at "affluent" versus "low-income" elementary schools within OUSD, and how these differences are apparent at the middle school level. The group agreed that there was a strong need for critical support services at all schools to make sure that every student had access to what he/she needed to succeed combined with a system to hold the District/school site accountable for delivering those services, although they did know what the accountability tool would look like. The group stated positive programs should be expanded district-wide, and that certain support services available at Title I schools (such as student/family engagement coordinator services) should be everywhere to help prevent low-income students/families from being marginalized at non-Title I schools. They commented that teachers needed to be sensitive to the different needs of individual students, but also observed that large class sizes and lack of teaching assistants make that a challenge.

The parents were clear that District policies did not determine all resource differences across school sites. They discussed the relationship of school enrollment trends/performance and location within the City of Oakland, and how some neighborhoods are perceived to be safer with better performing schools than others. They also observed how PTAs function to promote equity/inequity within and/or between school sites. For example, within this group, there were parents that came from school sites with established PTAs well-known for successful fundraising campaigns as well as from a school site with a recently formed PTA that does not have the same fundraising history. The parents from school sites with established PTAs commented on

different practices that either risked excluding some families or promoted increased participation, namely scheduling meeting times during business hours precluding participation from working parents as compared to scheduling meetings on Saturday mornings to increase access. One parent also expressed concern about how PTA fundraising was not used to support School Site Council objectives of closing the achievement gap and promoting equity and diversity. The group expressed concern about the difference abilities of school sites to fundraise, particularly based on the school's location, the impact of this disparity on learning outcomes for students at schools without the same fundraising capacity, and promoted the ideal of students being able to attend school within any neighborhood in Oakland and receive the same learning opportunities. Without prompting, the group brainstormed about potential solutions to this issue, considering ways in which PTAs at certain schools could share fundraising donations with other schools or could contribute to a "collective pot" or "bike rack" of some kind. They also expressed concern that redistribution of PTA resources could drive some families out of the District and into private schools.

PEC PARENTS (WHITE, FEMALE)

During these interviews, the parents shared their observations that issues of equity even for parents with resources (language, social capital, educational level, and financial) with a child of special needs to get free and appropriate resources as there are critical barriers of what is available at the school site and at district level. They shared that the decisions made by individuals who are gatekeepers (such as a resource specialist or similarly situated person) appear to make decisions based on what is available as opposed to what the child needs. This then exacerbates equity for families without these same resources or advocacy skills. They analogized navigating through the special education services program as "it's like going to a restaurant without a menu. [You] have no idea what to do or ask for unless you have gone through it or can observe it."

Another barrier to equity these parents discussed was the problem of isolation for parents in these situations – even for those with ample resources, and participation at the school site, there are serious barriers to creating a supportive network with other parents. They also observed that cultural issues (whether parents are comfortable and in acceptance of a child's needs) act as a barrier to creating a supportive network with other parents. Finally, the parents stated that there is also an issue if you have a settlement agreement with OUSD, you cannot discuss your family's specific experience with others.

These parents also expressed that turnover and staffing issues (case manager to direct services) interferes with creating continuity/relationship building with families with students of special needs – and requires parents to provide that continuity. This demands a lot of extra time and resources. These parents also discussed the intersectionality issue. They expressed that they felt that implicit bias plays a role in identification for services. For example, if a teacher is expecting low performance from a student with brown or black skin, then the learning disabilities might never be identified. They personally felt privileged that their children were identified as having specific needs early on.

These parents felt that OUSD should work at training teachers on implicit bias and cultural bias. They felt that as a community, “we cannot pretend that this issue doesn’t exist. There has to be a time and a place where we all admit that racism exists, and come up with strategies that will counter balance this.”

What has worked well that we could keep learning from?

One parent expressed, “This is vague and has equity implications, but what has helped my family and other families I know, when there is someone from the district willing to look at the whole picture and be flexible about the rules and regulations.” She described this as a “generosity factor” as the teacher must come with resources, and she acknowledged that the capacity for this depends on whether the teacher relates to the family in front of them.

Another parent expressed that it is important that the staff and teachers are honest about limitations, “what can and cannot be done for a family to meet the educational outcomes and needs for a child is really helpful. It’s tough when there are legal barriers to being truthful or honest about what is really available.” She also stated that it was important to recognize the power dynamic that exists in interactions – the vulnerability that attaches to parents with children of special needs. One parent expressed that she would love to see something that was more along the lines of “here is what you will want to know to get the best outcomes for your student – or to see them succeed” rather than simply “rights and responsibilities.” She expressed the value of educating the parents on how to achieve best outcomes for their children.

When discussing what has worked, these parents stated that they have encountered some people from the District who are clearly devoting their lives to helping children and their children have been well-loved by those people. They expressed that OUSD should keep hiring people who are really committed to serving and caring for children.

Another theme that emerged in these interviews was that, as parents within OUSD, they have observed what happens when parent communities can organize politically to get more financial resources to the school, or fundraise. These parents felt though that the capacity to attract resources to sites seems really inequitable. They expressed that Oakland’s neighborhoods are segregated by class, and that creates unequal schooling. They asked whether this policy will address parent fundraising, or whether that was an issue that parent communities would have to take on themselves. From their perspective, school site quality seemed to be attached to whether a school site could fundraise to maintain certain programs.

To promote equity, these parents asked that OUSD appreciate the unique and extreme stressors that attach to families with children with special needs children. When moving towards implementation, these parents emphasized the need for language that speaks to social, emotional and cultural needs.

NORTH/CENTRAL OAKLAND PARENTS (MULTIPLE RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPS, BOTH GENDERS)

Initial reactions to the policy:

The parents thought that the goals of the policy are something that should be focused on at both an institutional and community level. The racial component of the equity policy was especially important to this group of parents, with a few parents underscoring the importance of addressing racial inequity as a means to creating meaningful future opportunities for students. While the goals of the policy were applauded, the parents found the language of the policy inaccessible. One parent questioned, “I don’t know if it is worded in a way that all families will understand it.” And while another parent recognized the alienating quality of the language, they questioned its necessity to make the policy persuasive to Board members. Language was important to this group, and they want to make sure that it is both accessible to parents and non-high level administrators. They also wanted to ensure its overall effectiveness (even if that means using inaccessible language) at the higher level.

Defining equity and equitable outcomes:

The parents defined equity as a broader concept of getting what one needs to move forward in life. One parent defined it as ensuring that there were value and life skills in the materials that their children were learning at school. Another defined it as “equal access to the same things and resources.” One parent defined it as “shifting where the attention is,” so that kids who need the most energy and resources, to deal with inequity, receive them. One member of the group raised the need for not just equity in schools, but equity in the community. They expressed that students’ lives outside of school need to be equitable as well, in terms of the family, the home and their surrounding environment, in order to see truly equitable outcomes.

Barriers to equity:

This parent group identified and chronicled issues that they felt were challenges and/or barriers to equity. Parents expressed concern that “if the school funding system is flawed, then how can students receive the resources they need for equitable outcomes?” The parents stressed that many families do not have extra income to put into more programs or solutions; they need programs to be funded by the District. Parents expressed that as of right now, students are not receiving the services they need (like trauma counseling, social/emotional attention), even though these services are instrumental in addressing the achievement gap. Inequitable school funding, especially inequitable PTA fundraising, was seen as a catalyst of school site inequity, especially as it relates to access to resources, such as programs and support services. The parents saw a necessity for parent involvement in schools, as a way to enhance school resources and invest families in their student’s education. These parents noticed a lack of parent/school interaction that they credited to little communication from the schools to families, parents working inaccessible hours, a high number of single parent households and not having enough opportunities for parents and schools to interact, as a barrier to this end-goal. These parents also stated that a lack of school/district coordination around transferring “problem” students mid-way through the year creates inequitable outcomes for the school, students, and staff. When the district currently transfers “problem kids” they do not provide adequate funding for these transfers, which leads to staff reorganization and disorganization and affects the student’s learning and physical environment. A couple of parents cited enrollment procedures in schools

as a barrier to equity, commenting that white children are more likely to be admitted to primarily white schools, which creates a segregated school district. It seemed as though these parents thought that white families were being given preferential access to information around school options, while minority families were not privileged to the same information. They then surmised that this created a racially, and as a result economically, segregated school district. In addition, white flight was brought up as another contributing factor to segregation within the District.

Priority outcomes for the policy:

Parents expressed particular interest in having a culturally inclusive curriculum, LGBTQ inclusion, special needs program funding, reflective representation of Oakland’s racial/ethnic makeup for staffing and administration, mandatory parent/school engagement, fixing funding gaps (especially around the “Z Factor” and inequitable PTA fundraising), improving access to information around school policies (especially enrollment), having quality teachers (and an equitable standard for teachers), racial training for staff, and racial equity work in general, as priority outcomes for the policy.

NORTHWEST/WEST PARENTS (MULTIPLE RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPS)

Initial reactions to the policy:

These parents were less than convinced of the District’s commitment to the Equity Policy, based on its vagueness, lack of substance, lack of commitment and lack of implementation guidelines. While the end goal, “[it] sort of sounds like we want to end in equity,” was the clearest part of the policy, parents were confused by the means by which the District would get there. Several parents commented on their perception that there was no commitment to the policy- it lacked accountability, goals and implementation. One parent commented, “This feels like something the Board would read and never do anything about.” One of the biggest concerns to parents was OUSD’s own perpetuation of inequities, such as hiring staff that is not representative of the community, showing a lack of respect towards its staff and lower level administration personnel, allowing for a lack of equity among the working conditions of its employees and unequal PTA fundraising. The parents raised issues around addressing teacher pay and inequities within the District, as well as prioritizing a culturally inclusive curriculum. The parents also suggested addressing management and training programs within the policy.

Defining equity and equitable outcomes:

The parents were in agreement that equity is providing students with the resources and opportunities that they need in order to meet a certain level or standard. One parent made it clear that equality, providing equal resources to all students, is not equity, but that equity is providing necessary resources for equal success. The parents agreed that equitable outcomes could only happen if students/parents are met where they are and the gaps in opportunities, access to information, and knowledge are bridged through necessary interventions (such as informing and facilitating all parents through the options process). A given example of an equitable outcome

was if “schools became a place where kids could experience the same opportunities.” However, the parents brought up that because of things like school “shopping” inequities continue to run through the District. Taking advantage of the options process is a task that requires available time and advanced knowledge. Parents wondered how others, without the networks and resources that they have, would know about or take advantage of the options process. As one parent put it, “If you have time, you go on tours of six schools. I have a flexible schedule and could only do three.” Another said, “This shopping experience is an example of how inequity is going to be perpetuated. It’s heartbreaking. Not everyone has the time.” On top of unequal access to the options process itself, schools from the hills are always chosen, leaving a segregated District because of an inequitable process. Additionally, inequitable school funding, via PTA fundraisers, and not pooling funding were seen as huge contributors to school-based inequities.

Other themes:

A couple of other themes showed up throughout the conversation which were related to fostering equitable outcomes. There was an overarching concern about the market trends in Oakland contributing to inequitable schools. And there was a great support of the full-service community school model, with one member saying that it “would create less segregation and we’d be able to bring in all resources from everyone.”

EAST OAKLAND PARENTS (VIETNAMESE ELL BOTH GENDERS)

This focus group was conducted in Vietnamese with a separate translator and a note taker, both of who are fluent in Vietnamese.

Feelings about equity within OUSD:

The parents agreed that there is inequity within the district, particularly evidenced in economic disparities. While the parents acknowledged their understanding of economic inequities, some parents openly displayed a great deal of racial bias during the focus group itself, often referring to African American children as a security threat and as bad people. Throughout the conversation, some parents highlighted the tensions between African Americans and Asians and their distrust of African American males. Looking at cultural equity across the District, one parent expressed interest in having a multi-cultural day that celebrated all kinds of cultures, citing the fact that Chinese New Year is celebrated, but other cultures are often left out.

Throughout the conversation the parents seemed to touch on the notion of segregation in schools, with one father recounting that when he asked his daughter why there were not any white kids at their school, she simply said, “they don’t want to go here.” Another woman spoke about economic segregation in schools stating, “Latinos, Asians, Blacks. If they rich, then they go somewhere else.”

Promotion of family values:

One theme that was discussed at length was the need for the promotion of “family values” in the District. This was defined as a need to discourage early sexual activity, with many of the parents concerned that their children were being exposed to advanced sexual situations in schools (like hugging and kissing in middle school). This concerned the parents, who suggested that schools needed to promote more a more “family values culture” that would discourage sexual behavior in schools. To do this, they suggested separating the age groups in school more, to keep away the older and mature students away from the younger ones.

The group also agreed that ensuring a strong family structure within the home would help contribute a better school environment. “So, if you want the students to be good then you have to first look at the family, then you can focus on the school.” Several parents noted, however, that a lot of parents work, and there needs to be additional support structures at schools (like afterschool programs) to help keep kids safe and in a structured environment.

What the district is doing right/wrong:

The parents were able to come to a consensus that the teachers were a strong point for the District. A couple of parents pinpointed devoted teachers as something that they thought that the District was doing right. Parents were especially happy with the level of engagement that the teachers had with them, citing, “so if we see our children aren’t doing well, then we talk to the teachers. The teachers care at this school.” While the parents were happy with teacher performance, they were disenchanted with the state of the facilities, lack of security/overall safety concerns, lack of student engagement and visible staff/administrative tensions within the classroom. One parent told a story of how one of her child’s favorite teachers was engaged in a verbal argument with the principal in front of the class. This resulted in the teacher’s departure, which angered and upset some of the students.

WEST OAKLAND PARENTS (MULTIPLE RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPS, ALL FEMALE)

Initial reactions to the policy:

While the idea of an equity policy was intriguing to the parents, they soon began to question how something like this would be implemented and effective. One parent tried to understand how the policy could be effective within the current school climate where there are inequitable school sites and parents with fewer resources are already lagging behind. In order to improve the policy, the parents suggested making the policy more explicit, clarifying its intention, creating a plan of action and crafting accountability measures.

Defining equity and equitable outcomes:

The parents defined equity within the school site context, defining it as “everyone deserves access to the same academic [opportunities].” They noted that there is a large variance among the schools across the District, when it comes to funding, quality of education and resources. One parent expressed that if schools were equitable it would not matter where parents

sent their children- they would all end up with the same educational opportunities. As it stands now, the parents agreed that the public school system is highly inequitable and deeply broken.

Broken public school system:

A large part of this conversation centered on the issues with the public school system in Oakland, from inequitable funding to the move to a charter school system. PTA funding was discussed as one of the most inequitable practices that the District is allowing. “They were able to raise 200k-300k in fundraising events for their school. It blows me away that this is a thing. Everyone benefits when everyone does better.” One parent noted that PTA fundraising is able to fund additional staff salaries at some schools, and it is able to fund resources that create advantages for well-connected schools. Pooling PTA funds and evenly distributing them across the district was suggested as a way to address this inequity. The move to bring in charter schools was also seen as practice that makes the system inequitable. “There are companies coming in and helping fund these schools as charter schools. What I think is gonna happen is that half the people who go to the Oakland School of Arts won’t even live in Oakland.” From these parents’ perspective, the propagation of charter schools creates an inequitable process, in which all students cannot get into charter schools because there is simply not enough space. So, “what is supposed to be a good public school ends up being inequitable” because families with the right resources, connections and access end up getting into the “better” schools and the families without all of those advantages are stuck going to the less funded, “unspecialized schools.” One parent thought that while enabling children to apply to different schools across the District was a good idea, it was not fair to everyone. In the end, people are choosing to leave schools because they are not safe or do not provide good education or support structures. But as one parent pointed out, this means that someone else’s child, most likely from a family without resources and already a step behind, will be attending those that are the “worst” schools because they do not have the access and networks to navigate the school selection process. In order to have an equitable school system, all schools have to be good, safe schools with the same programs and advantages. Creating smaller, specialized schools is, in these parents’ opinions, worsening the disparity in education. In order to create this type of equitable environment, funding has to be equitable and there have to be quality teachers that are culturally trained, culturally sensitive and always supportive.

Central Kitchen and community engagement:

These parents stressed the importance for the District to engage the community more often, citing that one of the things they thought that the District was doing right was the Central Kitchen Project and the community engagement around it. “I can’t really think of anything they’re doing right, except the Central Kitchen Project... They seem to want to engage the community. They are putting forth an effort in the past three months.” Properly feeding and nourishing children was also mentioned as a step towards creating equitable outcomes.

Parental involvement and community building:

The parents expressed a desire for schools “to help build a network between the parents and the community.” They described how having a community support system is a way to build better

schools, by connecting the administration, parents, teachers, staff and students and creating a system where everyone is accountable and trusts each other. Right now, the parents perceive that there is a lack of support structures in schools because of the lack of inter-stakeholder interactions. Administration does not talk to the parents. The students are not allowed to question the administration. There are teachers and staff that are biased and not culturally sensitive. And there is no communication or community to support those conversations. Finding a way to create a network, where all are involved, will make for a more resilient school system.

WEST OAKLAND PARENTS (YEMENI PARENTS ELL ARABIC SPEAKING, FEMALE ONLY)

This focus group was made up of women who identified themselves as Yemeni. The focus group was in Arabic and involved translation. The women began the conversation by immediately sharing some of their cultural norms, including the following: unless required, they do not go out after dark for safety. They do not like photos or to be filmed, they preferred to meet with women in an all-female setting, and if men are present then they prefer to sit in their own section. Without prompting, the group was emphatic that these customs were cultural and not tied to religious beliefs. This led them to discuss their experiences that reflect tolerance (or lack of) within their students' school sites. Many of the women shared stories about their children's experiences of being touched, teased, or having their hijab (headscarf) pulled off, but all expressed that at the elementary school level, they felt they could discuss the issue with their child's teacher and that school staff were respectful and responsive. Some expressed that they did not perceive the school sites and staff as fully understanding of their community's culture and identity, but that when they shared information at the elementary school level they do see the school site and staff working to make adjustments. Others expressed comments that they came from school sites in the Fruitvale neighborhood that they felt were very more welcoming, but that the school sites in West Oakland were not as equally welcoming.

Definition of equity/fair:

They defined the concept of "fair" as being able to have translation services, to be able to understand and participate in their children's education. They stated that paperwork, applications, parent-teacher conferences, and large meetings and events should be translated into the languages of newcomers that comprise growing communities within the District. They criticized the lack of communication with families, generally, and the wholly inadequate translation services for larger events (such as the fall call with families in which a translator was unable to do simultaneous translation, or when a translator fails to allow the parents to ask questions). They also said that the District should educate teachers and staff and students about their culture, and that if the District needs more information the parents can educate it. They provided the work that a local hospital has done to increase communication, listening, and translation as a good benchmark for success in this area.

Examples of personal experiences with/at school sites:

Many in the group expressed that the majority of their concerns about lack of cultural sensitivity are tied to the middle school and high school contexts. Specifically, one mother shared a story of how students would call her daughter a “terrorist” if/when the school alarm would go off. Her daughter would tell her that the students were “joking” but that she did not seek this as a joke. This woman was visibly bothered by this story even as she was relating it. When asked about how frequently this occurred, she stated that it was very frequent. Another parent also expressed that there is a backlash against their children when the media reports certain types of events [related primarily to terrorism, or other violence]. For example, she reported that when someone called her daughter’s school and said that there was a bomb at the school, the students looked at her girls. They expressed that at the high school level, there is no intervention from adults when students tease their children. The parents expressed that their children do not want them to intervene, however.

The parents also expressed concerns about their children being placed into programming without adequate preparation. Specifically, the parents were concerned that their children were being placed in classes that did allow them to succeed academically because the school fails to adequately address the impact of language barriers, and perceives low performance to be lack of interest or lack of ability, when in reality it is a language barrier issue. They stated that they thought separate classes for newcomers would be ideal. The parents also pointed out that the school sites fail to consider their background when determining what level to put the kids in. One mother explained that in Yemen, they did not all have money to put their children in school. So some of their children are illiterate in Arabic as well. The mothers collectively expressed that children with these circumstances, particularly older children, need additional support to learn to read. One mother provided an example of her nine-year old daughter who gets only one hour of ESL support a day, and is increasingly frustrated and depressed because she is not getting what she needs and has trouble with reading and writing. They said if the children do not get this type of support, they are simply “there to be there.”

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

COMMUNITY AND NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING GIRLS

Overall takeaways:

Participants in the focus group expressed a desire for greater clarity in the Equity Policy language and implementation process. Specifically, they suggested establishing a clear definition of “equity,” well-defined action items, and a clear timeline for implementing the Equity Policy as critical next steps.

In addition to clarifying the definition of equity, participants said that the policy should more directly address the role of OUSD adults in promoting equity. Participants said all adults within the OUSD system (particularly teachers) will be critical to supporting the equity policy, and stressed that the policy should place any onus on adults rather than on struggling students.

Participants also stressed that the policy should better include intersectionality, given that identities, biases, and experiences are not neatly divided along traditional race/gender lines.

Defining equity and equitable outcomes:

Participants agreed that “equity” is closely tied to equal opportunity, but that creating equal opportunity looks different for every student (given different starting points and an un-level playing field). Participants agreed that agreeing that pursuing “equity” means “meeting people where they’re at.” Participants also stated that because equity means many different things to different people, engaging a diverse community to create a clear definition of “equity” will be a critical first step in building the Equity Policy.

How the District can promote equity (and what it needs to do better):

Participants introduced the concern that OUSD leadership is male-dominated, and that more female leadership within the District would better serve equity.

Members agreed that greater public access to data is necessary. Participants said that OUSD’s data collection is already good relative to many other school districts, but that the District does not put enough effort into putting collected data back into public view.

Participants said that improving OUSD communication and data sharing with community partners (especially CBOs) would help to support equity.

Participants highlighted the need for more individual-level attention for students within the District to identify and target students most in need of support. Participants also suggested establishing benchmarks against which to measure student progress to facilitate individualized support. Participants expanded this point into a discussion about whether measuring educational outcomes is the right place to focus, given the District’s already robust measurement of educational outcomes in other arenas.

Participants also stated that the District is not dedicating enough attention to special education students.

What the District is already doing well to promote equity:

Participants indicated that pilot programs including AAMAI and LMB are examples of what the District is already doing well in terms of supporting equity. Participants felt the District should “find out” what these programs have in common that makes them effective to enable successful replication. Participants also said the District should encourage the establishment of more formalized systems of inter-program sharing between student groups of different races / ethnicities.

Participants also pointed to the District’s efforts around restorative justice as an example of existing equitable practice. Participants indicated that OUSD’s existing partnerships with local community-based organizations are an example of what the District is already doing well in

terms of promoting equity. Data collection, too, is an area where the District is doing well, said this focus group, though they also indicated that the District can improve in communicating data back to the community.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS FOCUS GROUP

Overall takeaways:

The Community Partners feel that OUSD is already doing “a lot of great stuff” around supporting and promoting equity, but is falling short in its day-to-day implementation of equity-oriented policies and programming. The Community Partners suggested that the District focus additional attention on special education, ELL, and high school students to most effectively promote equitable outcomes District-wide.

Defining equity and equitable outcomes:

One member of the Community Partners focus group commented that within OUSD, a widespread lack of understanding of the difference between equity and equality is impeding effective implementation of District efforts to promote equity.

How the District can promote equity (and what it needs to do better):

The Community Partners stressed the importance of identifying and naming implicit biases that exist throughout the District, and then taking steps to ensure adults within the District understand the lived experience of how students experience bias. Providing equity training and education for District teachers and staff will be a critical component of exposing and addressing biases, the Community Partners emphasized.

The Community Partners indicated that insufficient training and support has produced a culture of reliance on ineffective, punitive methods of discipline. Teachers and leadership must be better trained on how to handle crisis situations effectively, and to understand the traumatic situations that often undergird students’ tendencies to act out. The demographic mismatch between OUSD staff and students is partially to blame for this existing shortcoming. The fact that OUSD staff do not come from the same communities as their students creates underlying cultural competency issues and trust barriers between students and staff (the Community Partners described mental health counseling as one area that is particularly negatively affected by this problem).

Resource distribution was a major discussion topic during this focus group. The Community Partners repeatedly described how District resources skew toward supporting high-performing schools, which are typically located in higher-income neighborhoods (and therefore also have greater access to external funding sources, like PTA fundraising). Recognizing and correcting this resource bias will be critical to promoting equity. The Community Partners recommended

increasing transparency around student assignment, resource allocation, and access to external sources of funding (e.g. PTA fundraising).

Language inclusion also emerged as a dominant theme in this focus group. The Community Partners noted that ELL students and their families are among those left farthest behind, and indicated that this is due to the District's allocation of insufficient resources to language inclusion efforts. Several suggestions the Community Partners offered around increasing language inclusion include hiring more multi-lingual staff, providing services and information in multiple languages, providing translation for families at meetings, and offering parent assessments in multiple languages (the Community Members specifically recommended Spanish-language assessment opportunities)

According to the Community Partners participants, although OUSD has a relatively robust history of engaging the OUSD community and collecting community feedback (particularly from students), the District has not yet established an effective feedback and implementation loop for integrating collected information into policy. Moreover, although the group felt that the District's efforts to collect and publish data (e.g. through OUSD.org) are real, commendable, and improving, they feel that greater transparency is necessary to achieve more equitable outcomes.

What the District is already doing well to promote equity:

The Community Partners expressed strong support for the AAMAI and LMB pilot programs, and indicated that expanding and replicating this work should be a priority.

The Community Partners also highlighted CCPA advisories, which bring staff and families together in small groups to support individual students, as effective tools for increasing family engagement and improving outcomes for students.

In several instances, the Community Partners pointed out areas where the District has made some forward progress in promoting equity, but they emphasized that the District needs to greatly expand its efforts in these areas. For example, the District's existing efforts around data collection and publication, family and student engagement, and support of equity-oriented pilot programs like AAMAI and LMB are commendable, said the Community Partners, but that the District should provide far greater support in all these efforts. Further, ongoing implementation of programs that emphasize project-based / hands-on learning, language inclusion, and community service are all examples of where the District is already doing some work to promote equitable outcomes, but also where it needs to do much more.

EDUCATION STAKEHOLDER CABINET FOCUS GROUP

Initial reactions to the policy:

The participants agreed that the policy has to be more actionable and clearly defined, and needs more context and explicitness. One participant raised the concern that the policy needed to be more explicit in terms of language and scope. “There needs to be a very clear definition of what equity means within the parameters of what the District can do- not what it cannot do.” Another was concerned that the District needed to be explicit about the background of systemic bias, recognizing that the District did not create it but that it trying to address it. There was a consensus that the policy had to be more explicit with whom it is trying to reach, how it will be laid out (real implementation time frames) and what realistic and obtainable goals, with a detailed and actionable plan, it wanted to prioritize. One participant emphasized the need for language to address direction for operational departments, but all expressed a need for an implementation/action plan, which reaches across the whole district.

Aside from the language of the policy, members of the group were concerned about how this policy might actually address getting kids equitable outcomes. One member posed, “How do we make sure that these kids get these opportunities or not? So when certain kids get screwed because they are in certain schools with certain teachers, this doesn’t address that.” A couple of members wondered how this policy would help create a level playing field, noting that the District has to address the LCFF issue, the charter/special education issue and create real solutions for confronting bias. A couple of members suggested using data to help create a foundation, but the members agreed that the policy had to go further than just being grounded in outcome data. It had to be a policy that was internally reflective of the missteps within the District already, and it had to have enough teeth to fix those issues.

Defining of equity and equitable outcomes:

The group agreed that equity means “leveling the playing field” and “providing people what they need to be at a fairly comparable place as to others.” One participant emphasized that equity in this policy should be related to high student outcomes for all students and ensuring that differential student needs are taken into account to ensure these outcomes are attainable. While one participant agreed with equity as “leveling the playing field” at a student level, they emphasized that at the higher institutional level, it also meant ensuring that all people are treated the same way. One participant mentioned the need for a specific definition of equity, within the policy, stating, “Oakland is a city in which that definition needs to be clearer. There is a lot of misunderstanding around this.”

What the District is doing right/could do better:

The group highlighted (1) the specialized efforts around African American boys and girls and Latino boys, (2) restorative justice circles, (3) ethnic studies requirements in high schools/forward thinking about race and curriculum, (4) Nicole’s ELL work, (5) Curtiss’s deliberate outreach to community organizations, (6) Oakland Promise, (7) integration of student board members, and (8) having a bold Superintendent that wants to talk about/address equity, as things that the District is doing right.

In terms of what the District could do better, a few themes emerged from the discussion: city partnerships, special education and creating trust. Participants expressed the need for partnerships with the city and larger key organizations based in Oakland, like Kaiser, Uber and Salesforce and being able to integrate them into the JPA to improve outcomes in Oakland. Building on the limitations of the District and partnering with other entities and the private sector were all discussed as things upon which the District needs to improve. One participant emphasized the need to continue city partnerships (like the Wilson/McElhaney partnership) to promote safety in schools. The group highlighted the need to continue improving upon special education, especially in regards to race and special education. “As a city- [we’re] doing so poorly, and these issues disproportionately affect students of color.” Asian Pacific Islanders were explicitly named as a group that needed extra attention. The group agreed that the District needed to work on creating trust by being (1) more transparent, especially with spending, (2) following through with their goals and publishing their progress around certain programs/policies/initiatives, (3) increasing communication and engagement with district stakeholders, and (4) rebuilding trust in communities that they have failed.

PEC STAKEHOLDERS FOCUS GROUP

Initial reactions to the policy:

The participants appreciated the essential message of the policy, but expressed that the language was inadequate and that the goals, implementation, and reach of the policy need to be more explicit. The stakeholders felt that the language of the policy was inaccessible and inadequate, and one participant questioned how the policy could move forward without the District’s definition of “equity” being embedded within the policy. “If we don’t define it, it can become whatever it wants once it hits the District.” Two other participants agreed that there were “too many buzzwords,” while a few others offered suggestions that the district make the language more accessible to parents. Additionally, participants criticized the definition of special education as being too specific, noting there are different classifications within special education. A couple of participants expressed that there needed to be defined action, goals, and implementation processes in the policy. “I’d love to see more about what the actions are. It’s light on what the school district is going to do about it.” Another participant stated, “They’re not at the site, and they’re so far removed from the implementation of the process... I need to know what you need me to do.” Participants criticized the policy for a lack of meaningful interventions to implement the policy. A few participants commented that the policy needed to expand its reach to ensure that teacher support is explicitly included in the policy. “It’s great that it’s student centered... We also need to speak to our commitment to teachers as well.”

Defining equity and equitable outcomes:

The group defined equity in terms of “getting what you need” and “leveling the playing field” “with dignity and respect.” One participant emphasized the difficulty in knowing and acquiring exactly what is needed with a special needs child, and the participant expressed that the parents of special needs children often have little social capital, noting that dignity and respect go a long way with these parents. Resource allocation was also used as a marker of equity. To

stakeholders, a marker of equity was when students have the resources that they need in order to succeed. As one participant elaborated, “You need to have highly qualified teachers and academic resources at all schools. We need to acknowledge that some students need more than others, and the District needs to help.”

Staff and teacher support:

The participants expressed a need for adequate staffing and teacher support in order to create equitable learning environments, especially for special needs children. One participant noted the “burnout for special education is as high as 60% in the first three years,” and the problem is not that there are not quality teachers. The issue is that there is such a high turnover because of burnout, that staffing is continuously turning over and affecting the quality of instruction. In order to combat this, the participants thought that there should be professional development for teachers, adequate staffing support and that the policy should be linked to job satisfaction to keep retention rates high. Additionally, participants raised the topic of parent engagement as a critical factor helping to maintain equitable environments; parents have to know their rights to exercise them.

CLASSIFIED STAFF FOCUS GROUP 1

Initial reactions to the policy:

Participants in this group were concerned with the language and the explicitness of the policy. Language accessibility was a concern of to a couple participants in the group, with one noting that “I have to go online to look up the words.” They expressed that the policy language should be accessible to people of different educational and cultural backgrounds, and the language, as it stands now, is alienating. Participants also thought that the policy was not explicit enough and the target audience was vague. They were unsure of whom the policy was meant to cover. One participant thought that it was important to focus on the kids, but the District needs to cover adults as well. The participants agreed that it should be an all-encompassing policy, covering not only students, but support services as well, and it should cover not only race/ethnicity, but also economic equity.

Defining equity and equitable outcomes:

The group framed the discussion of what equity/fairness is around job fairness. A large part of the fairness conversation focused around the compensation that staff in their positions received for the amount of work that they were asked to do. One participant said, “Fairness to me is making the right amount of money,” going on to state that they make the same amount of money as someone in a similar position at McDonalds (minimum wage) but do more work. Another participant stated that they are required to train hires (who are hired by other people) and take on extra work (because of the cutbacks across the district), without extra compensation or raises. “We are way behind in cost of living. It used to be based on that, but not anymore.” There was

a perceived lack of fairness around district hiring processes, including not hiring within and a lack of mobility into higher positions.

Subs also played a large role in the conversation about fairness. The group noted that subs are not given benefits, and they are often kept at that temporary status for years, despite being told that they might be permanent within 3, 6 or 9 months. Through this lens, they juxtaposed the benefits and salaries that District employees receive on Broadway versus the inequitable circumstances, which temporary employees experience.

Workforce attraction and retention:

Emerging from the initial conversation about fairness was the theme of workforce attraction and retention. Without adequate resources, compensation, benefits, and temp to permanent timelines, participants conveyed that the District has failed to attract and retain qualified teachers and staff. One participant also believed that these inadequacies result in a less diverse workforce, within support staff (clerical, nutrition services and custodial services), and another member expressed that these inadequacies result in the decline of teacher quality.

The group stated that there needed to be a concrete plan/structure for temporary to permanent hires, and within that structure, there needed to be a plan for benefits, paid vacation and sick leave. Right now, temporary workers do not know when they will be permanent and getting benefits, and they can be terminated at will, even if they have been there for years. Temporary workers result in a less stable workforce, with many choosing to leave to seek alternative employment. This results in higher turnover rates, the need for more training and less experienced employees.

Need for counseling in schools:

These employees expressed that they have seen firsthand the results of inadequate counseling services on students even though they work in an entirely different capacity. As staff that is on school sites every day, they are able to form bonds with students and see when they are suffering. As such, they have a unique perspective and are able to see when kids truly need help. One participant highlighted the struggle of LGBTQ kids, telling the story of one girl, who transitioned to a boy. “She needed someone to support her. She is going through something. She is not getting it. She is angry. She is having problems.” Another lamented the track that many black kids take to Dewey. “It breaks my heart. . . . They are from a different generation. Something is wrong and maybe it’s the teachers. They need help.”

Broader District concerns:

Throughout the conversation, there were varied concerns that emerged. A couple of participants were concerned about the lack of District engagement with both students and staff, with one participant noting that the District does not engage staff to find out their concerns. Another participant expressed feeling gender bias in her role, stating, “it’s not that easy as a woman. . . . They would respect me more as a man. That I should be doing something else.” Also adequate

staffing was an issue for this group, who felt that the District needed to base the number of staff on the number of students and not the size of the school.

CLASSIFIED STAFF FOCUS GROUP 2

Overall takeaways:

Participants in this focus group said they feel staff are under-paid, under-valued, and treated as lesser than teachers. One participant stated that the way they were treated indicates that the District “would rather teach kids than feed them.”

To promote equitable outcomes, participants recommended improving language inclusion efforts, following up on and implementing information collected through engagement, and establishing an Equity Office to field staff complaints and conduct job audits.

Defining equity and equitable outcomes:

Participants in the focus group spoke about “equity” as where “everyone is treated equally in all instances.”

How the District can promote equity (and what it needs to do better):

Inadequate community engagement emerged as one prevalent topic during the focus group. The focus group participant noted that although the District does seek their opinions and feedback about various topics related to their experience working within the District, OUSD falls short in completing the feedback loop and actually following up on their concerns and suggestions. The focus group reported that the District has requested and recorded their perspectives and asks many times, but this engagement has not resulted in any changes.

The focus group also commented on poor communication within the District. Participants described how existing channels for staff members to air grievances and seek support (e.g. through managers and supervisors, who then are supposed to report to central staff) are ineffective and inadequate. One participant suggested that to mitigate this problem, the District should create an Equity Office that includes an arm dedicated to hearing staff complaints and conducting job audits.

A number of other focus groups and interviews have highlighted the need for better language inclusion for OUSD students and families; the focus group indicated that more English-language support services are necessary for OUSD staff, as well. The dynamics of the focus group itself provided compelling evidence supporting this point. Two non-English speaking focus group participants, when we asked specifically what changes they would most want to see in the District, said more opportunities to learn and practice English. Other English-speaking members

of the group commented further on the matter, and suggested that the District either offer more English courses or provide resources for staff to access learning opportunities on their own.

Inadequate access to resources also emerged as a theme. Participants noted that staff are underpaid and receive too few hours per week. They said that the District relies heavily on subs, which drives down the number of hours available for regular staff. Further, participants said that the District does not provide security staff during lunch time, forcing staff to deal with student fights.

Participants' comments illustrated how inequitable access to and allocation of resources among schools manifests in better working conditions for staff in schools located in the hills (a.k.a. higher-income areas) than in the flats.

What the District is already doing well to promote equity:

Focus group participants did report that the District conducts engagement efforts, often asking for their feedback around various issues related to job satisfaction, but said they have yet to see the District implement any of their feedback.

SEIU

Initial reactions to the policy:

The participants all shared the initial reaction that “addressing inequality is an important starting point.” They thought that it is a good foundation to build upon, but the policy is too broad and the language is too vague. The policy needs more specifics, more detail and more accessible language, with one member citing that it is “using language that has different educational backgrounds.” The members were critical of the source of the policy, stating that it sounded like “Antwan Wilson is presenting this to the Board, when [the Board] should be presenting it to him.” But they agreed that it seemed as though the policy is going in the right direction.

Defining Equity and Equitable Outcomes:

The members' definition of equity focused largely around living conditions and the external factors that create a suitable environment for students and workers to thrive. One member emphasized that equity meant “fairness across the board,” but that fairness is only achieved when “living is equal.” Outside of education, there are factors like violence, financial insecurity and family instability that contribute to students and parents being unable to have an equal start. This start is exacerbated as time goes on and these deficits continue to contribute to increasing financial and emotional instability. To help stabilize the foundations of its stakeholders, the District needs to support its parents and especially its workers. There need to be plans for worker investment and advancement. And in an Oakland that is experiencing increasing gentrification, members stated that the District needs to make intentional choices to keep classified workers local-grown and supported on all levels.

Promoting Equitable Outcomes:

In order to promote equitable outcomes in schools, the members suggested that OUSD introspectively examine their practices and relationships. One member expressed that OUSD needs to create more programs to support families within the District, especially single parent households. The member communicated that the District needs to more fully support their employees, since many of them have children within the District, by giving equity in employment and more advancement opportunities. Along the same lines, they suggested a closer OUSD/union relationship to ensure that this support happens. However, the members expressed a clear distrust of the OUSD and suggested that the District needed to build trust with the unions and their stakeholders, in order for anyone to buy into their blueprint for the equity policy. The members stated that the District needs to be more transparent and accountable, citing their manipulation of language and using it to benefit the wrong causes. They suggested the creation of an entity to follow up on any money coming from grants/going to policies, and they expressed a need for a blueprint of goals and resources, for this policy, in order to get people on board. The members expressed that in order to gain buy-in to the policy and its aims, the District needs to reach out and create trust. The participants communicated that it was incredibly important for the District to create an inclusive and supportive environment for all staff, not just teachers. They asked for the District to recognize and compliment the work that non-teacher staff does, noting that classified support staff often play impactful roles in students' lives, but they are hardly ever commended for their work.

TEACHERS

OEA

By reason of their position within the District, the OEA members' initial reactions to the policy focused around the implications of the policy for teachers and classrooms. Mainly, members stressed that the policy implementation should aim to create fully funded classrooms, support for teachers and an equitable hiring policy for Oakland grown teachers and college students. The group was skeptical about ulterior motives to the policy, including the promotion of private schools, more administration/bureaucracy and lofty definitions that could be leveraged to favor specific groups.

Defining equity and equitable outcomes:

When defining equity and equitable outcomes, the group stressed that equity was about equal access, leveling the playing field and fixing deficits. The members focused on defining equity and equitable outcomes through examining the biggest inequities that they saw system-wide and within the District. Three main areas of concern for the group were poverty, language barriers and the dismantling of special education programs. On a systemic level, poverty was overwhelmingly agreed upon as being the greatest barrier to equity. While institutional and overt racism were seen as important issues, the group acknowledged the need to have something more explicit in the policy regarding poverty and its role in inequity (specifically the achievement gap). On a District-wide level, language barriers and a lack of special education

programs were highlighted as two of the most pressing equity issues. The lack of translation services, the pre-designation of students from ELL to being fluent and the unfulfilled promises of support for newcomer classrooms were some examples of issues that are creating an inequitable learning environment for ELL students and inequitable access for ELL parents. The dismantling of special education programs was seen as an equity issue for both the special education students, who are not getting the attention that they need, as well as the mainstream students, who become affected when special education students become disruptive.

While one member mentioned a “culturally responsive teaching and learning response program” that was regarded as a successful equity promotion program, within the District, there was an overwhelming feeling that the District has not created or promoted equitable opportunities for students and/or teachers. It is agreed that the linked learning academies and the dual enrollment programs that the District has established are programs with good objectives. The group noted, however, that access to and the intended outcomes of the linked learning programs are largely determined by school demographics. For instance, there is a manufacturing academy at McClymonds, but Oakland Tech offers a wide variety of tech programs. Before students have even enrolled in these programs, there is a barrier to access and a separation of learning possibilities. In addition to the programs not targeting students equitably, the programs are not fully integrated and they are not reproduced at the correct scale. The linked learning model is shown to be most successful with small class sizes and small caseloads, but it is being mass-produced with large class sizes, even though students won’t see equitable benefits.

When it comes to the District’s relationship with teachers and administration, there is a decided feeling of inequity. Of great concern is the issue of discrimination, especially around issues of employment and discipline. Teachers over the age of 40 receive and African American teachers bear the burden of the harshest disciplinary measures, and “hiring practices favor the hiring of young Anglo teachers.”

In order to address inequity, the District needs to look at systemic factors, like racism and poverty, and District-wide issues, like language barriers, special education, access to linked learning and dual enrollment, and employee discrimination. Supplemental suggestions for addressing inequity included strong early education programs and adequate classroom resources and support.

ADMINISTRATION/LEADERSHIP

UAO (GROUP A)

Initial reactions to the policy:

The group agreed that if this policy is to be a true equity policy, it needs to be more explicit (“too vague”) and inclusive (“if we are talking about an equity policy, we are talking about everyone”), and it needs to have more administrative regulations tied to it. Members were confused about who the policy was actually trying to address, since it explicitly calls out racial equity, but is titled an “equity policy,” not a racial equity policy. As well, members suggested

providing context to the policy that addressed “why now,” “what support really means” and how this policy can be framed to address “inherent and institutional systems.” The group was greatly concerned about the lack of administrative regulations, with members deeply worried about how the policy would function without them. In addition to administrative regulations, the group wondered what kinds of resources would be allocated to this policy, and some members even questioned from where the resources might come. A member stated, “there is a lot of pushback when you try to divert resources. When you are talking about diverting resources from our kids to other kids, you need to really explain this.” One member brought up the trouble with the District’s current translation policy, which is underfunded and has resulted in a lack of translators and a lack of resource support to fully implement the policy. The members stressed that the policy had to be wide reaching and inclusive, addressing family issues, social-emotional issues, learning differences, behavioral health, and in general the “larger issues.” A few members stressed that bigger solutions needed to be explicitly stated. “Restorative justice circles, it is the in thing. I am a little resentful that it is looked at as the end all be all.” One member suggested data and investigation to inform the policy, stating that as it is, “the root causes are not addressed. This doesn’t get to that.”

Defining of equity and equitable outcomes:

Amongst the members, there were varying definitions of equity. A couple of members defined equity in terms of supporting everyone (in whatever amounts necessary) to have equal outcomes. “Equity may look like providing different forms of access to resources and opportunities, depending on their needs and depending on where they are starting from.” One member added that equity means having a seat at the table, especially in regards to gender and racial equity. “[It is] also about having a voice and being able to speak. My experience, as a woman of color in OUSD is that it has not always been that way.” There were a few that defined equity as having equal access, especially to “support structures for academic, civic community needs, social needs, basic needs and emotional needs.” One member explored the definition of equity, by exposing the inequity of PTA fundraising and how that leads to inequitably resourced school sites.

Current District inequities and problems:

The group was greatly concerned with if and how the District will address their current inequities and problems. For instance, the funding issue was highlighted as a barrier to equity that currently exists within the District. Members expressed dissatisfaction with the LCFF formula and voiced support for the funding to follow the child. Funding was labeled as a huge barrier to equity, especially when intervention services and afterschool programs have to be cut. Members expressed frustration with the current lack of teacher supports, like aids, mental health assessments and counselors, the high rate of teacher turnover, as a result of a lack of District support and the lack of diversity among teachers (“kids need to see themselves reflected in their teachers”). Other issues that members saw in the District were: HR “inequitably placing leadership in situations where it is guaranteed they won’t be successful,” the dilapidated state of some OUSD facilities for students and staff, under-resourced classrooms, the poor quality of some CDCs and a lack of funding for support staff.

Restorative justice program:

Among the group, there was great support for the District's push to support restorative justice practices. Members expressed frustration with the lack of funding that went towards that position, stating that they were unable to find someone to take the position because the pay was so low. Some members communicated having success with RJ only because they already have full-time family coordinators, which takes up a large chunk of their Title 1 funds. The members agreed the kids who benefit from programs like RJ, AAMAI and LMB are from the schools with less funding, so they are struggling to meet the needs of these kids, who need support the most. "There are a lot of programs supporting this [behavioral health] work, but funding them is an issue. When one is clear on what the needs are at each school, then we need to do something about that."

UAO Group B

Initial reactions to the policy:

The members expressed that the policy lacked pieces on implementation, accountability, definitions and its relation to employees. Several members conveyed that implementation and accountability were the only teeth that this policy would have- but noted that they were missing in the current policy. One member said, "It looks great in writing, but in practice? The Superintendent will talk about it, like it's just another document, unless it has a plan." One member communicated that they felt as though the inequalities have to be defined, since there may not be people that know what they are. "You have to define the inequities, in order to address them." Members also voiced that the policy has to explicitly name employees as a beneficiary to actually be considered an equity policy.

Policy that covers employees, hiring and protects employees from retaliation:

The members wanted to see an equity policy that (1) covers employees, (2) covers hiring and (3) protects employees from retaliation. One member expressed that there is great racial inequity within the central offices. Unspecified racial groups make much more money than other groups, and there is no one that is held accountable for it. Another participant conveyed that some employees do not feel equal and appreciated because no one listens to them, which forces them to leave the District. Members also voiced interest in having hiring as a part of the equity policy. One member expressed that there was great inequity in the hiring process. Many positions go to people that are friends or acquaintances of the person doing the hiring. "They can hire who they want and pay above the scale to these people... There is inequity in the hiring process." Additionally, participants were frustrated at the inequitable opportunities for advancement, as a result of being classified vs. certificated. "The issue for us in the central office is that a lot of the educated people are diminished because of the side we are on... the certificated side and the classified side... 'Oh you are classified? You should not be worrying about those things,' as in opportunities." Also one member mentioned all the huge number of male principals and hinted at having a piece on gender and hiring. A couple of participants expressed interest in having a policy that protects/covers them from employer retaliation. One employee stated that there is "a trust issue" and a "culture of fear." Another said that, "If they go

to their unions and file a grievance, they can easily figure out the department.” They stressed the necessity to be able to file a grievance, all whilst remaining anonymous.

Religious tolerance:

One member communicated great interest in having religious tolerance be part of the equity policy. The employee stated, “Meetings are scheduled on Friday evenings. If you are Muslim or Jewish. There are some activities on Saturday; it’s Shabbat. Some people are afraid to say anything.” They discussed how there was a professional development session, scheduled on Rosh Hashanah, and the member was told that they missed it because they were “doing that Jewish thing.” All inequities should be addressed in the policy, and that includes inequities that arise as a result of religious observances.

Other issues:

Other issues that members brought up, with regards to the equity policy, were having separate equity policies for different departments, equity in special education (especially ensuring that charter schools offer special education), bolstering the equity policy by using past exit data, creating inclusive cultural climates in schools, equalizing PTA funding, and figuring out how to stop people from creating work-arounds for the policy.

Appendix 2: Key Quotes from Focus Groups

While analyzing the written notes and/or transcripts of the focus groups and interviews, we extracted various quotes that highlight some of the reoccurring themes that emerged from these discussions.

STUDENTS	
QUOTE	CONTEXT
I think a lot of people think equality is like okay everybody is the same. But equity also recognizes the fact that certain things need to be done for certain groups because of our past, not having equality. Like certain moves need to be made for that group specifically, so that they can feel as comfortable as another group.	This quote was in response to defining equity.
You can't achieve equality without equity first.	This quote was in response to defining equity.
Understanding everyone's experience and background. And acknowledging that not every child is the same and need different resources.	This quote was in response to defining equity.
Then [I am] looking around the classroom my sophomore year and I was like basically one out of two like black people in the class. And so that hurts me because it makes me feel, one like I am almost a spokesperson for like the one percent-ish people of color. But also it makes me wonder like why other students of color aren't doing [this class] and may have to do with this stigma of like the definition of [this class].	Student was discussing the isolation and marginalization students of color feel in high-performing school/classroom settings that are predominantly white.
So, when I mentioned my culture and identity, me being an African American male, I think about the African American Initiative. And, that's one part that's missing [in classrooms]. 99% direct correlation with problems at home and addressing what is happening at home.	Student was talking about the importance/impact of the AAMAI and how it needs to be expanded to other schools/classrooms/students.
It's too expensive to live here.	The students were positing some explanations for why the administration couldn't retain teachers in their school. They touched on the rising cost of living and gentrification as possible reasons for high teacher turnover or high substitute rates.
White kids and girls that don't do their homework have an A,	Came up when students were

<p>but somehow I have a C, even though I've been doing well on my tests and assignments. I can see the favoritism in class.</p>	<p>discussing if they feel supported in the classroom. This student provided an example of bias that he experienced in class.</p>
<p>I'm concerned, like there should be a sign. If you have the whole class failing, what do you do? Is there no sign to the administration?</p>	<p>Students discussed poor teacher quality as a negative aspect of their schools. One student wondered why a certain teacher was still around, despite the fact that most of the class was failing. The student felt that the low performance class-wide should signal to the administration that there is a problem with the teacher.</p>
<p>We had a whole semester with just a substitute, our teacher quit... we didn't learn anything.</p>	<p>The students were discussing the impact of high teacher turnover on their education, in response to the prompt about how the District was/was not supporting equity.</p>
<p>Sometimes [there are things] that only people from Oakland go through. If you don't understand what some of those students go through, then you're not going to understand how to teach them or make them respect you, or vice-a-versa.</p>	<p>The student suggested that the District hire more community-grown teachers as a way to make the school site more equitable.</p>
<p>But like really teaching the teachers about what makes a safe space, how to create these environments. I feel like if we had something like that on a larger, professional scale, and really get that down, it would be a lot better, like coming to educators and telling them, "This is how you talk to..."</p>	<p>This student suggested that professional development for teachers include training that helped teachers understand how to create safe spaces for students that are at high risk for being marginalized.</p>
<p>I have not had racist teachers yet. Stereotypes [influence] the</p>	<p>The comment was made</p>

<p>teachers, [so] your teachers are not seeing you. Teachers view people different ways.</p>	<p>while students were talking about bias and stereotypes affecting the classroom.</p>
<p>But I noticed a lot of people have said that they don't feel safe voicing their opinions, or when something's wrong say, making it right because everyone else in the classroom is just going to gang up on you and be like, "Well that's not true because A, B, and C", and something that we really need to work on at this school is creating a safe space for people for people to voice their opinions.</p>	<p>During a discussion about representation in the classroom, one student voiced that she did not feel safe expressing her opinions and commented that she understood others to feel similarly.</p>
<p>Yeah, like a rich white kids school that you have that already. If you like, [came from] Park Day or something. They come over here [to the high school] knowing the things that they need to for the engineering test, and so they can get into engineering. There's a whole bunch of people that don't have that offered to them.</p>	<p>One student expressed her frustration with the lack of diversity in the advanced placement classes and program, but she also commented that access to these classes was restricted because of an entrance exam that allowed students with educational advantages to perform better on these tests.</p>
<p>They didn't ask anyone. They just did it. So, now it's like it's so strange. Now, I'm feeling like it's not like I feel like it's a joke or something. And, they're making... cuz it's like I don't even know. Those signs look all sketchy and like not like official and stuff. And, it already feels... Ya, there's a way to do gender neutral bathrooms and create a space, and that was not it.</p>	<p>This comment was made during a conversation about the designation of a boy's restroom to a gender neutral restroom. The student was frustrated with the lack of engagement around the designation of the space, and the lack of engagement made her feel as though the space was not safe, and that the administration missed the opportunity to create real safe spaces in the school and educate her peers.</p>
<p>Because we sit there and have to learn about the white men all day, but I don't get to learn about the queer women or the queer people in general, the black people, or whatever. So, it's like we have to push it on them, we have to make them do it. And, we have to make them feel uncomfortable because otherwise, they're not going to do it. A lot of times, when it comes to teaching about intersectionality, everyone is worried about making other people uncomfortable, trying not to make white people uncomfortable – but they have to feel uncomfortable. If</p>	<p>On the need of accepting that some, particularly white heterosexual male populations, may become uncomfortable with implementing curriculum that details the history of peoples of color, or LGBTQ events/people, and that it is</p>

we are serious about equity, and making us feel safe here, and it is not a joke, then it is critical for them to learn about us too and not just themselves.	important to accept that they will need to be uncomfortable to implement a curriculum that is truly inclusive.
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PARENTS

QUOTE	CONTEXT
Equity is trying to shift where the attention is, so that kids who are dealing with inequity, they get the most energy put towards them.	This was a response to defining equity and equitable outcomes.
I agree with the goals wholeheartedly. I'm totally onboard. But, also, because it's so broad, I'm not sure what to do with this. It feels like an unfunded mandate... I understand the spirit, but I can't understand what this looks like on the ground.	The parents liked the intent of the policy, but they were concerned because it lacked in so many areas (especially implementation and identifying resources).
They were able to raise 200k-300k in fundraising events for their school. It blows my mind that this is a thing. Everyone benefits when everyone does better.	One parent explicitly called out site of inequity was in PTA fundraising. Parents wondered how this type of fundraising was allowed, when it clearly creates inequitable school sites.
The shopping experience is an example of how inequity is going to be perpetuated. It's heartbreaking. Not everyone has the time.	The shopping experience was brought up as a source of inequity because in order to look at schools, parents have to be well resourced. And these parents, although well resourced, recognized that not all parents were able to utilize the options process to the fullest- which helped to cater to an inequitable District.
This is really important. I think there's incredible racial disparity, and I'm glad we're spelling this out.	This was an initial reaction to the parent's first reading of the equity policy.
How do we talk to parents? Folks that work 9-5?	The group was discussing barriers to parent engagement, and work schedules as well as language barriers were raised as two

	factors that limited parent engagement.
They should come and talk to us. They make top down decisions without our consent. They need to facilitate participation in two languages.	These parents explicitly singled out District engagement with parents, as a priority outcome for the policy. They stressed that the District needs to make more effort to include all parents.
In the school we come from, there is no culture to follow. Academically we are doing great, but there is not a cultural connection. A lot of work needs to be done.	These ELL parents emphasized the need for cultural exposure and education for everyone in school. They felt as though teachers were not culturally responsive and students were not aware of other cultures and traditions.
One of the things is looking at parents in general, working parents. They need to figure out new and innovative ways to get to parents.	These parents expressed their dissatisfaction with District leadership and the course, in which they are taking the schools. Therefore, they thought it was important for parents to be engaged and helping to mold the District's agenda. However, they noted that it was difficult to engage parents, and they thought that should be a priority.
So if we see our children aren't doing well, then we talk to the teachers. The teachers care at this school.	These ELL parents thought that the teachers at their children's schools were a great resource. Though they recognized that not all teachers were good, they emphasized the impact that good teachers have on students.
Be more in communication with families	Parents felt that the policy could help foster a better relationship between the District and families.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

QUOTE	CONTEXT
Staff and teacher support is a major problem in the system. Therefore, we need to be focusing on the adults doing the work, rather than just kids that are failing.	When discussing what is not working within the District, staff and teacher support was brought up as a site for improvement. A lack of critical resources for these supports and limited community support were discussed as limitations on improvement.
What’s working well with AAMAI? And how do we expand it? What best practices can we use? Let’s not reinvent the wheel.	During discussion about priority outcomes for the policy, members discussed the successful work with AAMAI and wondered how to expand the model.
Communication, in terms of external communication needs to be way improved. Because I think a lot of this OUSD has. Is it being given to community partners in a digestible format?	This quote was in response to the solicitation of suggestions for priority outcomes for the policy. The group prioritized improving District communication and dissemination of information.
There needs to be a very clear definition of what equity means within the parameters of what the District can do- not what it cannot do.	While discussing the first impressions of the policy, this member thought that there needed to be explicitness about the limitations of the District’s reach to combat inequity.
As a city, [we are] doing so poorly [with special education], and these issues disproportionately affect students of color.	This came up when discussing what the District could do better. There was discussion around improving the special education program, since that disproportionately affects students of color.
Targeted resources for targeted communities	In response to creating equity and equitable outcomes within the District.
Seeing yourself reflected in staff and leadership	The partners discussed the importance of seeing

	leadership that reflected students because it would create a safe space for students to discuss what's going on in their lives and relating to leadership can offer a support system for them.
Hiring staff that comes from the communities which they are serving. Need a pipeline from TK to do this. From our District, it's making commitment and establishing partnerships.	During the discussion about creating equitable outcomes, members raised the idea of hiring teachers from the community that understand specific issues that students face and can offer substantive support.
Say we all want students to succeed, but it's an interesting concept to think about how things play out in OUSD. Who is getting resources to support who? Who is designing resources?	When discussing the definition of equity and equitable outcomes, the partners focused on resource allocation as both a barrier and a pathway to equity (ELL, foster youth, and newcomers were explicitly mentioned). This quote reflects that part of the conversation.
You need to have highly qualified teachers and academic resources at all schools. We need to acknowledge that some students need more than others, and the District needs to help.	This comment was in response to creating equitable outcomes for students- specifically in regards to special education students.
Meet people where they are	Response to defining equity

STAFF

QUOTE	CONTEXT
They can pay me a lot less than them because of benefits. They'd rather keep me as a temp and let them go.	Staff providing the example of hiring temps and subs as a major example of inequity for staff. The participant proffered that the District hires temps and subs to keep staff wages low, but it

	perpetuates a great inequity between staff and administration, and it is generally an unfair practice.
That should be a policy when you start. You have probation. Then benefits kick in, not 100%, but something. They may be there four years and no benefits and no job security.	This quote was in response to the discussion around hiring temps and subs.
I think that the Superintendent and his staff, they need to come out to see the schools that are not achieving and say what are they doing and ask to be of help. They should get to know the staff members and people in schools.	These staff thought that the District needed to improve their engagement with staff and site visits were suggested as a possible option for engagement.
I like the language workshop that the District has offered for new hires at the job fairs- like the one at Hoover.	One issue of inequity experienced is the inequity around ELL staff. Staff explained that many subs and temps are ELL, but the District does not give enough support to them or their coworkers. Staff explained that this creates a chaotic environment, where no one is able to produce their best work. Language workshops and classes were raised as a possible option for helping with this issue.
If I've invested 10 years in a position and you want to eliminate it, how do I tell my son?	When discussing how the District could promote equitable outcomes, these members raised the issue of OUSD really supporting their staff members- especially those that have sacrificed so many years in low-wage positions to provide for their families.
Does the District hear the workers?	During the conversation, the members questioned if the District really heard or took into account staff voices in decisions. They said they needed to fix this issue to make it work.

TEACHERS

QUOTE	CONTEXT
Thinking it's kind of contradictory to talk about equity on a leadership level and talking about dismantling the special education program so that those kids won't be getting the services that they should be getting.	This was an initial reaction to what the teachers thought the District was not doing to promote equity.
Major re-designation of kids from ELL to fluent. All these re-designated kids are not competent. They are struggling in their classes.	The teachers emphasized ELL and special education as two areas where there was a lot of inequity. Teachers thought that students were being designated as fluent too early, and they and their families were not being given adequate language resources.
We are not getting the support we need to make this happen.	Teachers expressed feeling overwhelmed by the amount they are being asked to deal with. They stressed the need for more teacher supports and for more resources, in order to create classrooms with equitable outcomes.
One of the things that comes to mind when talking about the achievement gap. I would like to see something more explicit about the effect of poverty on children.	The teachers wanted something in the equity policy explicitly calling out and addressing poverty as a factor that affects children and the achievement gap.
I want to raise the issue of employment discrimination and equity... Hiring practices favor the hiring of young, Anglo teachers.	Teachers identified other areas of inequity as discrimination in the workplace and biased hiring procedures. The teachers cited harsher punishments for older teacher and/or teachers of color and preferable hiring practices for young, Anglo whites as examples of these inequities.
The area of institutional bias is in administration.	This comment reflects the attitudes about discriminatory

	practices in the administrative ranks of the District. The comment followed the conversation about bias and discrimination of teachers (as referenced above).
Putting the manufacturing academy at McClymonds. Already separates college there. I wouldn't call those programs equitable.	The teachers challenged the idea of an equitable District when they brought up Oakland Tech and the tech money that flows through it. They cited that while Oakland Tech has a tech academy, McClymonds has a manufacturing academy. They expressed that there was a clear gap in future opportunities from each of these programs, and concluded that although both schools have academies, the programs were not equitable.

ADMINISTRATION/LEADERSHIP

QUOTE	CONTEXT
When we talk about equity policies, they are not talking about employees. One of the big policies that is not implemented every day is how we treat out people, the ones who come to work everyday.	During the initial reactions, administrators raised concerns that the policy was not inclusive enough- and that it needed to explicitly name employees as a group that is intended to be included in the policy.
They can hire who they want and pay above the pay scale to these people... There's inherent inequity in the hiring process.	When talking about equity in the District, administrators saw a hiring bias towards acquaintances and friends of higher administrators. They felt that there is inequity in how people are hired/apply for jobs.
There are some very well resourced schools, due to PTAs, and there are some that are not as well-resourced because the	Administrators discussed the issue of PTA fundraising

<p>parents' base is not as affluent.</p>	<p>affecting the equity within schools. This concern made the administrators question how there can be equitable schools when this issue is so prevalent.</p>
<p>There are a lot of programs supporting this [behavioral health work], but funding them is an issue.</p>	<p>During a discussion about what the District is doing right, restorative justice came up as an area where the District was doing well. But, some administrators cited that there was often a lack of funding for these programs, which limited access and effectiveness.</p>
<p>It's also about having a voice and being able to speak. My experience, as woman of color in OUSD, is that it has not always been that way.</p>	<p>During initial reactions, administrators brought up the gender inequality within the workplace. The administrators stressed the importance of everyone having a seat at the table.</p>
<p>Equity may look like providing different forms of access to resources and opportunities, depending on their needs and depending on where they are starting from.</p>	<p>This was a response to defining equity.</p>
<p>It's also the four other staff people that are being hired in their five hundred-thousand-dollar budget.</p>	<p>Discussing what the District needs to improve, this participant explicitly called out the extra staffing that school could raise because of fundraising efforts.</p>
<p>Quality schools development in partnership with communities. That means making those schools that aren't good right now- they're in some challenging neighborhoods- and opportunity is, as I see it, forcing that neighborhood to have the conversation about what they want their schools to look like.</p>	<p>Participant discussing opportunities for the District and highlighting quality schools, in development with the community as real sites to make equitable change- from enrollment to curriculum- "school site development all-in-one"</p>
<p>With great privilege comes great responsibility.</p>	<p>To make the District more equitable one interviewee proposed educating well-resourced children on</p>

	inequity and how they are responsible to have some role in promoting equity.
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Appendix 3: *From The Desk Survey Responses—* Additional Detail

Additional Answer Analysis

Key words that emerged from the survey responses

“*Resources*” appeared in 47 responses provided by 31 discrete respondents.

“*Results*” / “*outcomes*” appeared in 30 responses provided by 20 discrete respondents.

“*Access*” appeared in 29 responses provided by 20 discrete respondents.

“*Equal*” appeared in 29 responses provided by 20 discrete respondents.

“*Opportunity*” appeared in 26 responses provided by 17 discrete respondents.

Leading responses

Question: How can your school site and/or the school district create a more equitable environment for students, families, and staff?

1. Increase staff-to-student ratios, particularly by decreasing class size (9 respondents)
2. More counseling services (particularly around health and nutrition) (7 respondents)
3. Attracting and retaining high-quality teachers by increasing salaries and offering expanded professional development opportunities (7 respondents)
4. Mitigate inequitable access to outside resources (e.g. private fundraising) between schools in hills and flats (6 respondents)
5. Improve District-family communication (5 respondents)
6. Increase family engagement (5 respondents)
7. Establish libraries with professional librarians at every school site (4 respondents)

Question: Given your interaction with your local school site and/or the school district, what seems to work for you to help you feel that your local school site and/or the school district is addressing issues of equity?

(Note: Most respondents answered this question by offering suggestions for what the District could do better, do more of, or being doing in addition to commenting on what the District is already doing well to address equity issues.)

1. Family engagement (respondents specifically involvement in PTAs and LCAP meetings as examples of effective family engagement) (7 respondents)
2. Transparency and good District-family communication (most responses related to this theme are requests to improve communication) (6 respondents)
3. Restorative justice programs (4 respondents)

4. Public access to data (2 respondents)

Question: Given that the District is developing an equity policy, in your opinion, what should the outcome(s) of this policy be?

1. Reduce disparities in access to outside resources (e.g. private fundraising) between schools in the hills and the flats (6 respondents)
2. Increased and more meaningful family engagement (6 respondents)
3. Libraries with professional librarians at every school site (5 respondents)
4. All students graduate college- and/or career-ready (4 respondents)

Selected Responses/Key Quotes

This information is organized by topic and then response.

Transparency / District-family communication / Language inclusion / restorative justice: “Greater transparency, for a start. The superintendent should regularly hold open houses where people can talk to him and share their concerns and issues. Schools that require more resources to address students with higher needs – whether that be from living in traumatic situations or due to learning differences – should receive those resources. Also, restorative justice should be fully implemented and the school district should not have disparities in expulsion and other disciplinary measures between ethnic groups. Lastly, all meetings should be fully translated so that all parents can fully and completely participate, and parents should be empowered to speak up for their rights and their children.”

District-family communication / family engagement: “You need administrators that are 100% committed to finding ways to regularly meet with and hear from all parents, not just the ones who feel comfortable coming to PTA meetings are walking into the office. They need to utilize translation, coffee hours, whatever is necessary to make this happen.”

Family engagement / data: “The LCAP meetings and being on my School Site Council at my kids school really help me learn more about the work being done around our students. I especially like the use of the data being more easier to read and can give you an idea how our students performing. The School Site Council is an important piece in our schools because it provides a place for parents to have a voice and address issues around school equity, resources and funding.”

Family engagement: “It's important for us to understand the data as families so we can know where the challenges are and can get involved in helping to create solutions. The District outcome of this policy should consist of parent and student involvement.”

Family engagement: “There should be groups of stake holders that are chosen depending on if they belong to the group that is underserved. How are the parents of English Learners being surveyed? Are they on committees? How is the DELAC being included as a prominent voice in what happens in the district?”

Language inclusion: “More bilingual people are being hired to deal with direct services so that families feel welcome and heard.”

Staff diversity / Language inclusion: “More teachers and support staff who “look and talk like Oakland.””

Staff diversity: “Diversity among staff and administration is an important place where I can see equity at work and I think the district is doing a good job with this. Gender equity could us some more work. At the highest levels of administration throughout the district, I get the impression that the employees are mostly men. So once again, we have the same, tired pattern where men are in positions of power and influence making the big salaries and women are in the predominately lower positions making significantly less.”

Equity training: “...there needs to be explicit training of teachers, especially new teachers who don't necessarily reflect the cultural backgrounds of the students, around issues of race, class, gender, etc., and how to embody those learnings in the classroom.”

Counseling services: “Offering a broad range of counseling and guidance for families, particularly on health, nutrition and parenting needs, will assist students, families and staff.”

Equity training / role of PTAs: “I would love to see diversity training made available (or links to resources) for OUSD parents. Also, it should be a mandatory yearly training for PTA boards (for schools that have them), teachers, principals and an assembly for kids. I am on the PTA at a hills school. I am struggling to help my PTA start thinking about equity. I feel like I need diversity training/equity training, as does my PTA board. We are fighting some of the country's most difficult social issues and have little support/information/training to help us.”

Project-based/hands-on learning: “...while I only really know how this has worked for my own kid, it seems like a project-based curriculum has worked well to keep my [privileged] child engaged in learning while allowing the teacher to focus on kids who need to spend extra time on the basics. I have appreciated that our teachers make an extra effort to lift up as role models parents and guardians who are not part of dominant/White mainstream society (e.g., recent immigrants), and who explicitly incorporate social justice approach in their teaching.”

High-quality teachers / teacher retention / libraries: “OUSD can provide a more equitable environment for students, family and staff by raising teacher salaries significantly to be competitive with other Bay Area school districts, assigning only experienced highly qualified teachers to schools with the neediest populations (not using Teacher Corps personnel, substitutes, or interns), providing fully staffed school libraries with up-to-date technology and collections, and truly supporting classroom teachers instead of nonprofit organizations. Invest in infrastructure not band-aids.”

Appendix V: Email Submissions

The Alliance for Girls, Inc. submitted a proposed Equity Policy revision by email in February 2016. OUSD’s legal department took these suggested revisions into consideration when reviewing and revising the Equity Policy. The proposed revisions from Alliance for Girls (drafted by counsel at Equal Rights Advocates) are provided in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Alliance for Girls' Proposed Revisions to Equity Policy

Oakland Unified School District (the "District") students are at the heart of the District's equity policy. It is the policy of the District to seek to eradicate bias, whether conscious or unconscious, at all levels of the organization (centrally and in school sites). The District will seek to eliminate institutional bias that results in lower academic achievement for students, and in particular for students of color. Through eliminating institutional bias, the District will increase academic achievement and graduation rates for *all* students, while narrowing the academic and opportunity gaps between the highest and lowest performing students.

The District acknowledges that complex societal and historical factors contribute to inequity within our district. Students deserve to be educated in environments that respect them as individuals, and value rather than marginalize their diverse identities. The District is committed to culturally responsive pedagogy that addresses and overcomes inequities and challenges negative stereotypes, thereby providing all students the opportunity to graduate and be college, career, and community ready.

The District recognizes that a racial achievement gap exists and is committed to narrowing and ultimately eliminating racial disparities in educational outcomes. The District recognizes that in addition to racial bias, other forms of bias also affect the educational experiences of students and their academic outcomes, including but not limited to bias based on sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, disability, socioeconomic status, and involvement with the dependency or juvenile justice systems. The District is committed to explicitly identifying and addressing all disparities in educational outcomes for the purpose of targeting areas for action, intervention and investment.

A parent participant in an East Oakland Parents focus group provided the following feedback contained in Table 8 by email in February 2016.

Table 8: Email from East Oakland Parent Participant With Additional Feedback About Proposed Equity Policy

My apologies for just now sending you this email. I attend the African American parent focus group that was held at CUES.

My feedback on the proposal are as follows:

1. The description of who the equity policy covers is broad and the paragraph on page 2 should be placed on

the front page as the second paragraph followed by the background. Its seems as if it is an after thought.

2. There needs to be a Equity Policy Action Plan that includes clear strategies, measurements, assessments, and timeline. The strategies need to be wrapped around the following groups so that all stakeholders are held accountable for the expected outcomes:

Administration

Faculty: recruitment, retention, training

Staff: recruitment, retention, training

Parents

Students: recruitment, retention, training

Facilities: access, habitability, size/space, etc.

Curriculum

Policies: what policies are inequitable to various student populations (union contracts, cell phone usage on campus, etc).

Community: what role does the community play in a functional and thriving academic environment?

It should read similar to collegiate Diversity Action Plans such as the one that follows: http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/about/vision/center-for-diversity-inclusion/about/upload/OHSU_Diversity_Action_Plan_2013.pdf

3. The plan should be transparent and have an office that facilitates the work. Like a Chief Diversity Officer and a team to implement the strategies, tracking, measure ability, assessments, and setting timelines.

4. Demonstrate what school districts have implemented an Equity Policy and the outcomes thus far.

Some of the terminology I used in my commentary were:

Addressing systematic white mediocracy in the teaching staff.

School is glorified daycare not designed for parent engagement: schedule, events, etc.

Structurally white teachers systematically have low expectations for students of color.

Engaged faculty have no power

Principals have mid-management positions with no authoritative power. They can only influence changes.

Why do white students' concerns circumvent any issues students of color are facing?

Superintendent should be fearless and enforce radical change. With enough parents on his side, he can be fearless and impactful.

I hope you find my comments useful. Feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Table 9: Email from Parent Interested in Providing Feedback

1. How do you identify yourself and your culture? I try to be a well-rounded person, with a sense of awareness and knowledge of what's going on around me in my community and the world. For example, I try to learn about OUSD policies and attend my daughters schools SSC meetings.

2. Do you feel like your student's school experience has embraced and supported your student, and your community's identity and culture? Early on, no. But now because I advocate for my 13 yr. old daughter, I'm getting some help that I---we need.

a. Please provide examples of how you feel your student is supported and included. SST meetings at my request, homework help afterschool, and a "point person" (usually any staff, who my daughter feels comfortable with) for my daughter to check in with when she's having a hard day.

b. Please provide examples of you may have felt your student has been unsupported, or

excluded in any way.

The number one thing is when my daughter is on the verge of getting a F grade, the teacher does not communicate on a "solution".

3. How do you define the word fair?

Living/acting accordance with the rules, yet using your ability to understand the feelings of another.

What are the things you think that your student's school, teachers, or staff at school, have done that are good at treating you fairly?

At my 7 yr. old school, they stay in constant communication, and greet and respect me.

b. What are the ways that you think your school environment could be more fair? Or more accepting?

When teachers have a genuine hope for their students---they don't necessarily have to have the same background.

Table 10: Email from Parent Interested in Providing Feedback

Answers to: OUDS Equity Focus Groups Questions

1) I am an African American woman.

2) No.

a. I feel my children have great teachers that do the best they can with what little their school offers as far as academics.

b. My children's school does not offer much tutoring or parent support. My children's school also spends too much time disciplining for behavior problems which leaves little time to give instructions for lessons to the children who do not have behavior issues.

3) I define fair as well deserved treatment biased on one's ability, work and or environment.

a) The communication is good. My concerns are always addressed in a timely matter.

b) Unfair treatment comes in to play when it comes to time spent disciplining a group of children when only one or two has been misbehaving and the lack of resources for the children struggling to keep up with the common core standard that continues to rise every school year.

Appendix VI: List of Contacts for Future Engagement Around Implementation

Many of the adult participants in these focus groups stated that they would be willing to participate in future engagement efforts around implementation. We list the contact information for these participants below. All individuals whose contact information is highlighted are also key contacts for gathering additional contacts, including important student contacts.

Table 11: List of Participants Willing to Participate in Future Engagement Efforts.

CONTACT NAME	AFFILIATION	RELATIONSHIP TO PROCESS	EMAIL	TELEPHONE
Raquel Jimenez	OUSD		raquel.jimenez@ousd.org	510-273-1563
Katie Nunez-Adler	OCO	CBO Leader	katy@oaklandcommunity.org	510-967-5137
Paul Flores	The Unity Council	CBO Leader	pflores@unitycouncil.org	510-535-1371
Gianna Tran	EBAYC	CBO Leader	gianna@ebayc.org	
Rhummanee Hang	Banteay Srei	Focus Group Supervisor- API Young Women	rhang@banteaysrei.org	
Nkaju Lab	Banteay Srei	CBO Leader	nyang@banteaysrei.org	
Mike Tran	The Spot	CBO Leader	michael@thespotoakland.org	
David Kakishiba	EBAYC	CBO Leader	junji@ebayc.org	
Sophia Wu	EBAYC	Focus Group Supervisor- Vietnamese Families	sophia@ebayc.org	
Joshua Fisher Lee	AYPAL	CBO Leader	joshua@aypal.org	
Lily Chuong	EBAYC	Community Partner	lily@ebayc.org	
Kenny Porter	Greater New Beginnings	Focus Group Supervisor- Foster Youth	kgnb1234@aol.com	510-663-9090
Larry Hickman	Quest for Success Youth Foundation	Focus Group Supervisor- Foster Youth	lpacificquest@aol.com	510-467-4250
Donneva Reid	OUSD Facilities and Planning Management	Staff/SEIU Member	donneva.reid@ousd.org	
Bettie Reed	SEIU	Staff/SEIU Leader	bettie.reed@ousd.org	
Perry Bellam Handleman	OEA Member	Teacher	perrybh@gmail.com	917-881-5994
Steve Miyamoto	OEA Member	Teacher	stevenmiy@gmail.com	510-912-3921
Dreq Coppel*	OEA Member	Teacher	dcoppel@cta.org*	510-536-5850
Chaz Garcia	OEA Member	Teacher	chastity.garcia@ousd.org	510-414-3593
Fusi Gurl*	OEA Member	Teacher	oaklandeapresident@yahoo.com	510-763-4020
Janeen Apaydin	OEA Member	Teacher	janan.apaydin@ousd.org	510-336-9677
Natalia Cooper	OEA Member	Teacher	natalia.cooper@ousd.org	510-290-6263
Mary Hill	OEA Member	Teacher	hillmarye@msn.com	510-749-0998
Dierdre Snyder	OEA Member	Teacher	deirdre.snyder@ousd.org	510-594-7649
Rodney Brown	OEA Member	Teacher	rodney.brown@ousd.org	510-910-4194
Madeleine Smith	OEA Member	Teacher	madeline.naomi.smith@gmail.com	916-247-8499
Andy Young	OEA Member	Teacher	ayoung0452@sbcglobal.net	510-390-4715

Kei Swensen	OEA Member	Teacher	keiswensen@gmail.com	510-703-5126
Relena Ellis	OEA Member	Teacher	relenaellis@sbcglobal.net	415-269-5256
Jessica Gipson	OUSD- Nutrition Services	Staff		510-485-2419
Lan Soi Vuong	OUSD- Nutrition Services	Staff	lansvuong@yahoo.com	510-325-8681
Sharelettee Rodgers	OUSD- Nutrition Services	Staff	sharelettee.rodgers@ousd.org	510-517-7978
Robert Law	OUSD- Nutrition Services	Staff	robert.law@ousd.org	510-434-2253
Jennifer LeBarre	OUSD- Nutrition Services			
Joyce Peters	OUSD- Nutrition Services			
Trish Gorham	UAO	UAO President/Administrator	oaklandeapresident@yahoo.com	
Jennifer Karsseboom Davis		Parent	jenn.dk@gmail.com	510-978-0533
Sara Richard		Parent	sarakahn44@yahoo.com	510-332-0667
Elizabeth Gessel		Parent	gesselelizbeth@gmail.com	510-301-4565
Elizabeth Ching		Parent	bching@igc.org	510-655-7407
Shona Armstrong		Parent	shona_armstrong@hotmail.com	510-654-7740
Carol Haberberger		Parent	c-c-c@pacbell.net	510-763-2035
Leonora Willis		Parent	leonarawillis@gmail.com	323-253-3277
Joel Kelleher		Parent	joci.kelleher@gmail.com	510-393-6190
Meena Palaniappan		Parent	meenajpalaniappan@gmail.com	510-417-5998
Odessa Matsubara		Parent	kmmatsubara@gmail.com	646-302-5360
Nilofer Ahsan		Parent	nilofera33@gmail.com	312-493-3278
Eldridge Persons		Parent		510-499-5108
Lawanda Marnero		Parent	marnero.lawanda@gmail.com	510-593-5367
Che Abram		Parent	happyche@gmail.com	510-861-0290
Rachel Harralson		Parent	r.a.harralson@gmail.com	510-858-8767
Nicole Wiggins		Parent	nicolewiggins@rocketmail.com	510-395-5906
Dion L Parker		Parent	dionparker1974@gmail.com	510-472-2462
Maria L. Cabrera		Parent		510-827-7819
Luz Alcaraz		Parent	mar25luz@hotmail.com	510-712-1305
Mario Zamudio		Parent		510-927-5074
Rosario L. Pena		Parent		510-206-2392
Yessenia Copado		Parent		510-590-6027
Sara Lucas		Parent	saralu0982@gmail.com	510-502-1033
Carmen Lopez		Parent	camaju03@gmail.com	510-213-9442
Whitney Morris	Girls Inc. of Alameda County	Community Partner	wmorris@girlsinc-alameda.org	510-357-5515 x241
Kelli Finley	One Circle Foundation	Community Partner	kelli@onecirclefoundation.org	415-726-1844
Kathleen Thurmond	Alliance for Girls	Community Partner	kathleen.thurmond@gmail.com	562-879-1602
Benita Hopkins	Love Never Fails	Community Partner	benita@loveneverfailsus.com	510-776-3290
Cheryl Chambers	Love Never Fails	Community Partner	jobs@loveneverfailsus.com	510-289-3911
Latanya D. Tigner	Dimensions Dance Theater	Community Partner	dimensionsdance@prodigy.net	510-465-3363
Corrina Gould	American Indian Child Resource Center	Community Partner	corrina@aicrc.org	510-208-1870 x319
Emma Mayerson	Alliance for Girls	CBO Leader	emma@alliance4girls.org	510-207-4542
Lailin Chou	Alliance for Girls	Community Partner	kailin@alliance4girls.org	510-629-9464
Nicole Godreau	Girls Inc. of Alameda County	Community Partner	ngodreau@girlsinc-alameda.org	

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Appendix VII: Overview of Equity Policies in Selected School Districts Nationwide

The following information provides an overview of some of the key components of Equity Policies in place in other school districts nationwide. We reviewed this information when preparing our initial focus group questions and before bringing those questions to the first working group session with community partners and OUSD personnel in November 2015.

Implementation & Monitoring Across Select School Districts

Most of the school districts that have passed equity policies that we discuss below have also created task forces or internal departments responsible for ensuring the integration of equity into policies and programming. In Seattle, for instance, the District created the Department of Equity and Race Relations to “develop and support a research based model for the Seattle School District which will institutionalize educational and racial equity for every student, in every school, every day.”¹

Almost all of the school district equity policies that we review below call for the Superintendent to create an action plan around the goals laid out in the equity policy, and to track and regularly report progress toward these goals. For example:

- Saint Paul Public Schools Equity Policy: “The Board directs the Superintendent to develop and implement a system-wide racial equity plan with clear accountability and metrics, which will result in measureable academic improvements for SPPS students. The Superintendent shall regularly report progress on the plan and outcomes.”²
- Portland Public Schools Racial Educational Equity Policy: “...the Board directs the Superintendent to develop action plans with clear accountability and metrics, and including prioritizing staffing and budget allocations, which will result in measurable results on a yearly basis towards achieving the above goals. Such action plans shall identify specific staff leads on all key work, and include clear procedures for district schools and staff. The Superintendent will present the Board with a plan to implement goals A through F within three months of adoption of this policy. Thereafter, the Superintendent will report on progress towards these goals at least twice a year, and will provide the Board with updated action plans each year.”³

¹ Equity and Race Relations Department, Seattle Public School District.
<http://www.seattleschools.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=627&pageId=1680960>

² Saint Paul Public Schools Equity Policy. Website of St. Paul Public Schools. July 16, 2013. <http://equity.spps.org/>

³ Portland Public Schools Racial Educational Equity Policy. Website of Portland Public Schools. June 13, 2011.
<http://www.pps.k12.or.us/equity-initiative/8128.htm>

Although many school districts that have passed equity policies have also created and published action plans, fewer have released progress reports. Fewer yet have published data-driven progress reports that quantitatively track trends and results.⁴

Those school districts that have released reports that describe progress made toward the goals outlined in the equity policy include Reynolds School District (Oregon); Palm Beach County School District (Florida); Fairfield School District (Ohio); Castro Valley School District (California); and Ithaca City School District (New York). The quality, consistency, and level of quantitative data reporting varies significantly between these school districts. Fairfield School District, for example, publishes an annual progress report that describes programs and actions taken that advance the District’s stated equity goals, but includes little quantitative data about trends and progress (with the exception of the number of minority teachers employed and student demographic information). Castro Valley School District has completed at least one report that leans heavily toward reporting quantitative data, but it is not clear that the District has compared that data with quantitative information from subsequent years.

The Ithaca City School District has created far and away the most comprehensive, data-driven progress reports. It publishes an annual “Equity Report Card” that describes its Equity Strategic Plan performance targets, and includes data around “Equity Performance Key Indicators” as well as academic performance, attendance, suspension, and student participation data, all broken down by student race/ethnicity.

Specific Examples of School District Equity Policies in Place

Portland Public Schools

The Portland Public Schools (PPS) district has passed several Board Policies to support its Equity Initiative. The “Racial Educational Equity Policy” outlines critical goals that promote racial equity for PPS students. The “Equity in Public Purchasing and Contracting” Board Policy models equity in District business practices to “further enhance achievement of goals established in its Racial Educational Equity Policy.”⁵

To operationalize the Racial Educational Equity policy, PPS created a set of 18 goals across four focus areas (Teaching & Learning; Workforce Development; Family & Community Engagement; Cultural & Organizational Transformation) that address change across the organization and work plans for reaching those goals. The Racial Equity Plan outlines specific actions for each of these 18 goals. For each action, the Plan names a point person; establishes a baseline metric; establishes two progress indicators, spaced 8 months apart; and establishes a year-end intended outcome.

⁴ Note: it is possible that these reports do exist but are unpublished, or are buried in board of education meeting minutes and materials.

⁵ <http://www.pps.k12.or.us/equity-initiative/8129.htm>

For example:

- Action (2012-2013): Review with counselors racialized enrollment data in college credit bearing courses by high school.
- Lead: Tammy Jackson
- Sept. 2012 baseline metric: 2011-2012 college credit bearing course enrollment data (racially disaggregated)
- Jan. 2013 progress indicator: High school counselors have reviewed enrollment data, analyzed process for forecasting, and figured out how it might be adapted to racially represent students of color.
- Sept. 2013 progress indicator: Forecasting data indicates 1:1 relative rate of enrollment of students of color to white students in college credit bearing courses.
- Year-end intended outcome: Fall 2013 course enrollment reflects 1:1 relative rate of enrollment. First progress grades of 2013-2014 show 1:1 relative rate of passing college credit bearing courses.

To oversee implementation of the District's Racial Educational Equity Policy and Racial Equity Plan, PPS created the Equity & Inclusion Council (EIC).

- The EIC serves as the advisory council to the Superintendent and Chief Equity Officer (CEO) which helps lead the dynamic process of systemic equity transformational change. The council is comprised of both (a) individuals who have sufficient leadership influence and authority in their area of the organization to assemble the resources and support needed to make the change effort succeed and (b) managers who can provide assistance in the design and deployment of the Racial Equity Plan and ensure that tasks are completed as directed.⁶

Since 2006, the Portland Public Schools district has also invested in training with Pacific Educational Group based on the Courageous Conversation About Race curriculum. Training components include the following:

- Beyond Diversity is the foundational two-day seminar designed to help teachers, students, parents, and administrators understand the impact of race on student learning and investigate the role that racism plays in institutionalized academic achievement disparities.
- With the support of PPS staff, all schools have formed CARE teams - Collaborative Action Research for Equity - which are teacher-led teams that work to develop and share culturally relevant teaching practices in the school. Parents and students have also formed groups to deepen their cross-racial skills and understanding.

Equity Initiative

"Portland Public Schools is committed to academic excellence and personal success for all students. Central to this commitment is educational equity. We are committed to providing instruction with the rigor, cultural relevance, and relationships that ignite the potential of each and every student. In order to do so, we must shift our practices to see students as

⁶ <http://www.pps.k12.or.us/equity-initiative/8130.htm>

individuals—including their race, their language, their gender, their sexual orientation, and their various abilities.

This work is necessary to serve a diverse student body well and prepare every student to navigate and compete in a culturally rich society and global economy, now and into the future.”

- Chief Equity Officer, Lorenzo Poe. “The PPS Equity Initiative”. Website of Portland Public Schools. Retrieved Oct. 29, 2015. <http://www.pps.k12.or.us/equity-initiative/>

Racial Educational Equity Policy

Policy Highlights:

In order to achieve racial equity for our students, the Board establishes the following goals:

A. The District shall provide every student with equitable access to high quality and culturally relevant instruction, curriculum, support, facilities and other educational resources, even when this means differentiating resources to accomplish this goal.

B. The District shall create multiple pathways to success in order to meet the needs of our diverse students, and shall actively encourage, support and expect high academic achievement for students from all racial groups.

C. The District shall recruit, employ, support and retain racially and linguistically diverse and culturally competent administrative, instructional and support personnel, and shall provide professional development to strengthen employees’ knowledge and skills for eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in achievement. Additionally, in alignment with the Oregon Minority Teacher Act, the District shall actively strive to have our teacher and administrator workforce reflect the diversity of our student body.

D. The District shall remedy the practices, including assessment, that lead to the over-representation of students of color in areas such as special education and discipline, and the under-representation in programs such as talented and gifted and Advanced Placement.

E. All staff and students shall be given the opportunity to understand racial identity, and the impact of their own racial identity on themselves and others.

F. The District shall welcome and empower students and families, including underrepresented families of color (including those whose first language may not be English) as essential partners in their student’s education, school planning and District decision-making. The District shall create welcoming environments that reflect and support the racial and ethnic diversity of the student population and community. In addition, the District will include other partners who have demonstrated culturally-specific expertise -- including government agencies, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and the community in general -- in meeting our educational outcomes.

- Source: Portland Public Schools Racial Educational Equity Policy, Adopted by Resolution No. 4459, 6-13-11.
http://www.pps.k12.or.us/files/equity/PPS_Equity_Policy.pdf. 2-3.

Implementation:

“...the Board directs the Superintendent to develop action plans with clear accountability and metrics, and including prioritizing staffing and budget allocations, which will result in measurable results on a yearly basis towards achieving the above goals. Such action plans shall identify specific staff leads on all key work, and include clear procedures for district schools and staff. The Superintendent will present the Board with a plan to implement goals A through F within three months of adoption of this policy. Thereafter, the Superintendent will report on progress towards these goals at least twice a year, and will provide the Board with updated action plans each year.”

- Source: Portland Public Schools Racial Educational Equity Policy, Adopted by Resolution No. 4459, 6-13-11.
http://www.pps.k12.or.us/files/equity/PPS_Equity_Policy.pdf. 3.

Supporting Board Policy: Equity in Public Purchasing and Contracting

Policy Overview:

The District will significantly change its practices in order to achieve and maintain equity in its purchasing and contracting activities, to achieve and maintain an equitable and diverse contractor workforce and to leverage its contracts to further enhance career learning opportunities for students.

Therefore, the Board establishes the District’s Equity in Public Purchasing and Contracting Policy with the following goals:

- The District will provide professional, supplier, construction and personal service purchasing and contracting opportunities to small businesses that have been historically under-utilized, including businesses owned by people of color and women.
- The District will ensure apprenticeship opportunities in the construction trades and will promote construction employment opportunities for people of color and women.
- The District will continue to provide career learning opportunities for students, providing them exposure to various potential career paths, including, but not limited to, architecture, engineering and related services, legal and accounting services, as well as building trades and construction work.

Oregon Leadership Network

More than 20 school districts in Oregon are implementing or have made strides toward implementing equity policies:

“The Oregon Leadership Network (OLN) is the only statewide educational leadership network in the nation with equity at its core. Its vision is that every Oregon school, district, and organizational leader demonstrates the highest level of culturally responsive leadership anchored in Oregon’s research-based leadership standards.”

“Today, the OLN includes more than 20 school districts that educate over 40 percent of Oregon’s student population. These districts are joined by ESDs, our three statewide education agencies, professional organizations, and higher education institutions in developing educational leadership for equity.”⁷

Minneapolis Public Schools

Policy Overview:

“The purpose of this policy is to establish a framework for the elimination of bias, particularly racism and cultural bias, as factors affecting student achievement and learning experiences, and to promote learning and work environments that welcome, respect and value diversity. Further the purpose is to establish particular actions that the District shall take to address disparities in educational opportunity and achievement.”

- Source: “Equity and Diversity”, Minneapolis Public Schools Policy 1304.
http://policy.mpls.k12.mn.us/uploads/policy_1304.pdf

“The policy is the culmination of a nearly year-long process that included input from a variety of stakeholders including the Board Equity and Achievement Committee and the Education Equity Organizing Collaborative, which is comprised of a group of multiracial, multicultural organization partners working to further educational equity. Part of the process included developing an Equity and Diversity Impact Assessment that provides information on how some MPS students and communities are disproportionately affected by bias in policies, procedures and protocols.”

- Source: Press Release, October 9, 2013.
http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/october_9.html.

Implementation Overview:

Equity & Diversity Impact Assessment:

The Minneapolis Public School (MPS) district has created an Equity & Diversity Impact Assessment tool to evaluate how policies and programming impact diversity and equity. “...MPS leaders are required to apply the Equity & Diversity Impact Assessment to all future policies, practices, programs and procedures that have a significant impact on student learning and resource allocation. The impact assessment provides decision makers guidance on how various MPS communities are impacted by the policy, practice, program or procedure and offer alternative solutions so that no community is disproportionately impacted.”

⁷ <http://educationnorthwest.org/oln/about>

- Source: Minneapolis Public Schools Equity & Diversity Impact Assessment, 2013-2014. <https://v3.boardbook.org/Public/PublicItemDownload.aspx?ik=34322315>

Black Male Achievement Office:

“We have established the Office of Black Male Student Achievement, a new department dedicated to accelerating academic strategies and narrowing the achievement gap. The new office will lead our efforts to:

tackle issues and barriers that contribute to the achievement gap;
create opportunities for culturally responsive practices;
deploy gap-closing strategies.”

- Source: “Office of Black Male Achievement”, Website of Minneapolis Public Schools. Accessed Oct. 29, 2015. <http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us/obmsa.html>

Budget:

“Minneapolis Public Schools officials are switching to a new way of budgeting to ensure that the most education money follows students with the greatest need.

The new funding model will assign dollar amounts for various student needs, such as special education or English language instruction. Schools with the largest concentrations of students with those needs are likely to receive bigger budgets than schools with fewer students in need of special resources.

Minneapolis is the first in the state to shift to this model and will join about 15 large, urban districts that retooled their budgeting in similar ways.”

- Source: Alejandra Matos, “Minneapolis Schools Rethinking Budget Around Equity”, Star Tribune. May 16, 2015. <http://www.startribune.com/minneapolis-schools-rethinking-budget-around-equity/304010151/>

St. Paul Public Schools

Policy Overview:

“This policy confronts the institutional racism that results in predictably lower academic achievement for students of color than for their white peers. Eliminating our district’s institutional racism will increase achievement, including on-time graduation, for all students, while narrowing the gaps between the highest- and lowest-performing students.”

- Source: “Racial Equity”, St. Paul Public Schools Policy 101, <http://equity.spps.org/>

Implementation:

To implement its equity objectives, the St. Paul Public Schools has established a 5-year plan that outlines measurable goals and timelines for achieving them.⁸ The district has also created a phased plan for training and leadership development, and for creating equity-promoting partnerships:

- [Phase 1: District-wide Equity Leadership Development \(DELT\)](#)

⁸ http://equity.spps.org/uploads/5_year_plan.pdf

- [Phase 2: School and Site Equity Leadership Development \(E-Teams\)](#)
- [Phase 3: Collaborative Action Research for Equity \(CARE\) Team Development](#)
- Phase 4: Partnerships for Academically Successful Students (PASS) Team Development
- [Phase 5: Student Leadership Development SOAR \(Students Organized Against Racism\)](#)

The St. Paul Public Schools system has partnered with the following organizations:

[Pacific Educational Group](#) began partnering with SPPS in 2011 to launch our equity work based on the book "Courageous Conversations About Race" (Singleton & Linton, 2006). The group facilitates professional development and provides strategic planning for SPPS staff district-wide.

[The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems](#) supports state and local school systems to assure a quality, culturally responsive education for all students.

[Edutopia](#) is dedicated to improving the K-12 learning process by documenting, disseminating, and advocating innovative, replicable, and evidence-based strategies that prepare students to thrive in their future education, careers, and adult lives.

[National Association for Multicultural Education](#) advances and advocates for equity and social justice through multicultural education.

[Facing Race](#) is a multi-year campaign focused on Minnesota that aims to positively change the nature of personal, organizational and institutional relationships.

[Teaching Tolerance](#) is a place for educators to find thought-provoking news, conversation and support for those who care about diversity, equal opportunity and respect for differences in schools.

[Great Lakes Equity Center](#) is one of ten regional Equity Assistance Centers (EACs) funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Educators can find resources and professional learning related to equity, civil rights and systemic school reform.

- Source: http://equity.spps.org/equity_partners

Hmong Youth Leadership Summit 2015

"The SPPS Hmong Youth Leadership Summit brought together secondary students across St. Paul to interrupt systems that perpetuate inequities by strengthening cultural values and leadership capacity. The focus of the summit will be fostering experiences in schools that empower students, promote skills that contribute to higher achievement, and reinforce the importance of preserving language, heritage and history."

- Source: <http://equity.spps.org/>

[NAAPID: Feb. 9, 2015](#)

National African American Parent Involvement Day (NAAPID) is a day for parents to come to their child's school, see what their day is like and to support their child's educational future.

- Source: <http://equity.spps.org/>

Seattle Public Schools

Policy Overview:

“The Seattle Public Schools (SPS) Department of Equity and Race Relations (DERR), in partnership with the City of Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) and the Racial Disproportionality in Discipline Committee, Phase I is part of a five-year comprehensive and coherent plan to institutionalize educational and racial equity in our schools as mandated by SPS Ensuring Educational and Racial Equity Policy No. 0030.”

- Source:

<http://www.seattleschools.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=627&pageId=1681020>

Implementation:

Race Equity Teams:

The goal of the implementation of Racial Equity Teams is to support a school-led effort to create a strong, sustainable and effective Racial Equity Team to advance racial equity by:

- 1) Aligning with District-wide efforts to implement the “Ensuring Educational and Racial Equity” Policy to eliminate racial disproportionality in graduation and discipline rates,
- 2) Building capacity among principal, teachers, staff, and students in transforming school policies and practices,
- 3) Strengthening the voices and participation of students, families and community to inform school policies, practices and procedures.

- Source:

<http://www.seattleschools.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=627&pageId=1681020>

San Jose Unified School District

Policy Overview:

“The Governing Board values the contributions made by all members of our diverse community of students, staff, parents, and community groups to our mission and goals. We believe that equity of opportunity, and equity of access to programs, services, and resources are critical to closing the achievement gap between our identified student groups; Hispanic, English Learners, African American, Caucasian, Asian, low socioeconomic status, and students with disabilities. In May of 2010, the SJUSD Board of Education adopted Board Policy 0210 to ensure that the principles of equity and inclusion would be integrated into all of our policies, programs and practices.”

- Source: <http://www.sjUSD.org/opportunity21/equity-policy/>