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Ideas from Experts on How Districts Can Create the Conditions for Sustainable Change

Educational Equity Through Social and Emotional Well-Being

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This practitioner brief is one in a series highlighting concrete ways that education leaders can increase educational equity by building supportive learning environments that meet all students' social and emotional needs. The introductory brief to this series suggests that changes at three levels of the education system are needed to promote students' social and emotional well-being: (1) the structural and policy level; (2) the level of educators' well-being and capabilities; and (3) the level of the specific social and emotional support programs available to students. This brief focuses on the first level: how districts can create the conditions necessary to begin addressing inequities in the U.S. education system by focusing on structural and policy change. It shares the experiences and recommendations of school district leaders, as well as those of one coauthor of this brief, who as a practitioner worked closely with several districts including the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS).

Introduction

The U.S. education system finds itself at a moment in history when district leaders are expected to address questions of student and educator well-being as they never have before, weighing decisions related to how to provide in-person instruction safely, how to support students' and educators' social and emotional well-being in the context of stress and adversity experienced outside of school, and how to keep students psychologically and emotionally safe at school and defended from discrimination from adults and their peers.¹ The disparate effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on students of color and low-income households,² alongside a national mobilization for social justice in 2020, have heightened public awareness of inequitable structures and policies in the U.S. education system and beyond. And they have brought new attention to research showing that these systemic inequities have negative effects on many students' physical, social, and emotional well-being; their cognitive development; and ultimately their ability to engage fully in academic content.³

All children are born able to prosper and learn, ready to develop to their full potential when presented with supportive learning conditions. Education researchers and neuroscientists have found that students can flourish and engage in school when their learning environments provide the following conditions: (1) a way to meet their basic physical needs; (2) physical and psychological safety, as well as an environment of social and cultural respect; (3) supportive relationships with their teachers and other adults in the school that promote learning and healthy child development; and (4) opportunities to have their voices heard to make a difference and shape their school environment.⁴ Such conditions foster a sense of belonging and being valued that unlocks students' ability to engage in school and take academic risks to learn new concepts and content.⁵

As discussed in the first brief in this series, inequities in society in general and in the education system in particular prevent many students from experiencing these conditions.⁶ When students are exposed to chronically stressful or adverse conditions, they may experience a toxic stress response in their bodies and brains that diminishes their concentration, their memory, and their ability to regulate their thoughts, emotions, and behavior.⁷ When presented with the resulting challenging student behavior and disengagement, adults' existing biases and beliefs about how students learn and behave can affect whether school practices and policies are carried out in ways that support these students.⁸ Yet research and practice have demonstrated that when schools provide the conditions that afford physical and psychological safety, support, and opportunities for growth for every student, children from all backgrounds can learn and flourish.⁹

This brief discusses concrete, system-wide actions that some districts are taking to reorient their structures and policies in an attempt to address these inequities and provide all students with supportive learning environments. These actions aim to address the inequities of the past, confront the current adversity the pandemic created for all, and build a more resilient system to face future and unknown challenges. Box 1 provides more information on the district leaders consulted for this brief.

BOX 1 District Leaders Consulted for This Brief

The lessons presented in this brief reflect the experiences of the authors with direct practice supporting school systems, district leaders, and educators, and conversations with district leaders who offered their insights about the challenges and opportunities facing school districts aiming to create equitable learning environments for all students. The following district leaders contributed to this brief:

- **DR. MELISSA KIM**, Deputy Chancellor, District of Columbia Public Schools
- **DR. ANGELA CHAPMAN**, Chief of Transformation and Leadership, Columbus City Schools (*Formerly Chief of Elementary Schools, District of Columbia Public Schools*)
- **DR. KYLA JOHNSON-TRAMMELL**, Superintendent, Oakland Unified School District
- **DR. MARY SIEU**, Superintendent, ABC Unified School District

The leaders interviewed for this brief want to ensure that the positive school environments some educators cultivate are not diminished by larger systems that lack their vision.

Equity-Focused Structural and Policy Change

Across our education system, there are many practices that school leaders and educators use to create supportive and buffering learning environments, guided by a belief that children are inherently good and capable and that the role of the adults in the education system is to nurture students, help them develop strong identities, and unlock their potential for growth and learning. The challenge, according to the district leaders consulted for this brief, is that these practices used by individual schools or educators require them and their students to beat the odds. If the district leaders reduced the barriers to these practices at the district level, the approaches implemented by talented educators could be expanded to a larger scale and sustained even if those educators were promoted or left for other opportunities. The respondents (the leaders interviewed for this brief) also want to ensure that the positive school environments such educators cultivate are not diminished by larger systems that lack that same vision.

The leaders emphasized that to create equitable and supportive school systems, they had to set the tone from the top and send the message that equitable conditions had to occur at every level. And doing so meant first honestly exploring and accounting for the ways school systems make it harder for some students to succeed and may create disproportionate outcomes among students of different races and classes.¹⁰ Such reflective work and interrogation is consistent with generally accepted guidelines for implementing evidence-based practices.¹¹ Implementing a program or practice for the sake of compliance with a district policy is different from the practice existing within a system that is striving to create equitable conditions for all students. Instead, the approach requires leaders and educators in multiple settings in a district, from the board of education and district superintendent to principals and teachers to support staff members, to (1) come to firmly believe that all students have the potential to learn and thrive and (2) commit to grounding all decisions in that belief.¹²

The district leaders knew that they would not dismantle structural inequities quickly, over one or two school years. Instead, they anticipated ongoing processes in which their districts would continually examine their progress toward equity, especially as new challenges emerged. Journeys like theirs will look different for various districts—some educators may already be actively interrogating their systems, while others will be just beginning the process—so this brief is not intended to be prescriptive. Instead, it presents observations from the authors' direct practice and conversations with district leaders about their experiences. Their insights fall into three main categories: First, they emphasized the importance of developing a new vision for a district. Second, they shared how to support adults in shifting their mindsets about students. Finally, they discussed aligning district structures and policies with the new vision.

Developing a New District Vision

Reevaluating the District's Vision for Schooling

A critical first phase of some district leaders' efforts was to lay out a new vision for education that provides equitable conditions for all students. They began by questioning their own beliefs and assumptions about students and how they learn, and examining how these beliefs aligned with or contradicted the way their districts were actually operating. Education researchers Frattura and Capper have argued that in fact, passionate and committed leaders often run districts whose practices do not reflect a responsibility to ensure all students learn and develop.¹³ The respondents felt that when district leaders and staff members do come to believe that they are responsible for creating the necessary conditions for learning and opportunity for all students, they can then begin to implement practices to promote equity not just in one school, but across the system.

To begin these conversations, district leaders explained that they can create opportunities for open dialogue that is respectful, nonjudgmental, trusting, and consensual, where district and school leaders can come to an agreement on a new vision, tackling questions such as:

- What do you believe is the purpose of public education?
- What is the mission of your school system?
- How do you define equity?
- What responsibility do you accept to ensure that all students in your school system learn?
- What are your assumptions about how learning happens best?
- To what extent does your school system provide that context for all students?
- Whom does the system currently work for? Whom does it leave behind?

Leaders from DCPS noted that it was useful to partner with an outside organization to facilitate this work, as it can be challenging for district leaders and staff members to assess their own needs and create their own equity-focused framework, given their competing demands. In addition to collaborating with other partners, DCPS worked closely with Turnaround for Children, an organization that translates the science of learning and human development into tools, strategies, and services for educators so they can help more students reach their full potential as learners.¹⁴ DCPS applied Turnaround for Children's framework and tools for engaging district staff and building educators' own ability to interrogate the ways the system is or is not benefiting all students. By grounding the discussions in the science of learning and human development as they approached questions like the ones above, district leaders created a common set of beliefs, grounded in research evidence, that allowed them to identify policies and practices that were aligned with the research versus those that

contradicted it. While these insights sometimes matched what some educators had been saying for years, the change was that district leaders took on the responsibility to begin to change the district conditions, rather than relying on individual teachers or principals to create supportive environments for students.

Engaging Caregivers, Families, and Communities

The respondents believed that as they developed these new district visions, it was important for them to incorporate the perspectives of caregivers, families, and the community, particularly perspectives from groups who may not have been heard in the past or who might distrust the system, both of which can be the result of school staff members' implicit and explicit biases.¹⁵ Regardless of families' commitment to their students' learning, some face barriers to engaging with schools due to conflicting work schedules, limited family resources, not speaking English, or lack of comfort.¹⁶ Respondents said these families could be an untapped resource in understanding students' strengths, needs, and challenges. By attempting to empower these families—even if not all engaged and reciprocated—the district leaders sought to gain insights as to whether existing structures and policies aligned or contrasted with their revised vision for the district.¹⁷ Involving the community can also serve to build trust and keep districts accountable for creating equitable conditions, they said. Some district leaders recommended publicly sharing progress using the district's metrics with the community while acknowledging areas that still need work. They hoped that being transparent with the community as their districts adjusted structures and policies would make the community more likely to trust and support them when tough decisions ultimately needed to be made.

Best practices put forth by the National Parent Teacher Association recommend disseminating critical information to the community using multiple methods: texting, email, robocalls, and virtual meetings in the languages spoken by families in the school district. They also suggest soliciting families' perspectives through surveys, canvassing, relationship-building home visits, and parent workshops.¹⁸ For example, DCPS' Communications and Engagement Office holds a series of Parent University workshops designed to give families more techniques to support their children's learning and to advocate on their behalf. At the same time, those workshops are meant to build trust between families and DCPS, give parents more information on which to base their decisions, and make the DCPS central office more transparent to the community.¹⁹ DCPS also has a family engagement partnership with the Flamboyan Foundation that emphasizes home visits, which has resulted in improved student attendance and grade-level reading proficiency.²⁰ Respondents said that by conducting continual outreach to caregivers and communities, they could get closer to equitable systems that supported the needs of all students, not only those whose families already had the resources and understanding to advocate for them in the current systems.

Incorporating Students' Perspectives into the New District Vision

When students are given opportunities to help shape their school environment (for example, by contributing to decisions regarding classroom procedures and the topics they learn), they may feel more empowered, emotionally invested, and connected to the topics explored in the classroom, and more likely to feel accountable to the procedures and systems they have helped create.²¹ Methods

of engaging students can include hosting student discussions, involving students in decisions, and conducting student surveys. Any of these methods can be tailored to ensure that students from all backgrounds are represented. The ABC Unified School District in Southern California holds an annual Youth Leadership Summit at a university where 20 students from each middle and high school in the district convene to create an action plan of improvements they want their schools to implement. This work is supported by the superintendent and the faculty, who assist students with implementation. Respondents said that engaging students to inform the new district vision in these ways could both generate ideas from the end user's perspective and help define equity goals in a way that resonated with those directly affected.

Giving Supportive and Equitable Conditions the Same Priority as Academic Standards, Curriculum, and Instruction

Schools' climates and cultures have been found to mirror the priorities on which they are measured, evaluated, trained, and supported.²² Some respondents said that a heavy emphasis on academic standards, curriculum, and instruction—rather than an integrated approach that incorporated students' social, emotional, and academic development—could create climates in which students were asked to ignore the realities of their homes and communities and only present their academic selves. Yet as the first brief in this series argues, research shows that if districts emphasize creating supportive and equitable environments, they may be able to buffer outside sources of stress and create engagement and learning opportunities for all students.²³ Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), districts have the opportunity to embrace a whole-child approach to school improvement by holding themselves accountable for metrics of school quality and nonacademic success.²⁴ The respondents believe that school climate measures should be included in the accountability metrics by which schools are evaluated, so that school climate is not an afterthought.

Some respondents spoke of a need to incorporate comprehensive criteria for what “success” for students and schools looks like, such as metrics that incorporate students' perceptions of school climate and culture.²⁵ For example, students at DCPS rate their perceptions of feeling loved, challenged, and prepared at school. District leaders at DCPS are trying to ensure that greater numbers of students—especially those belonging to historically underserved groups—score high on all three indicators, because this metric will signal whether students are actually experiencing equitable and supportive conditions at school (with the idea that these conditions will lead to improved learning outcomes). During a recent school-improvement and community-engagement process, the schools that scored low on these metrics received a much deeper needs assessment using Turnaround for Children's Schoolwide Environmental Assessment Tool; the district office also conducted empathy interviews with teachers and students to inform improvement plans for those schools.

Further, though many districts have bought into the importance of supplementing academic content with programs that teach social and emotional skills, these programs generally have modest effects in promoting social and emotional well-being or academic learning; it is likely that they have modest effects because they are implemented as stand-alone activities rather than being integrated throughout the day.²⁶ Teachers may also see stand-alone social and emotional learning programs as taking time away from instruction when they already have many curricular demands.²⁷ Respond-

ents did not want school leaders and staff members to view multiple components of success or well-being as competing district priorities, but to see efforts to create supportive and equitable conditions for all students as complementary, comprehensive, and necessary approaches to engaging students in school and academic learning.

Reflecting the New Vision in Budgets, Metrics, and Accountability Structures

Some respondents said it was important to ensure there was no distinction between the aspirational vision they articulated to the community and the way schools measured success. If a school was doing extremely well on academics but not on its supportive conditions, they did not want to hold it up as an example of success. Similarly, if a school had a strong culture but its students were not excelling academically, it would not reflect the district's vision for success either. Likewise, respondents said they wanted their accountability and incentive systems for leaders and teachers to reflect their districts' new visions. They hoped that having transparent accountability metrics would permit the community to follow, comment on, and come to trust in the process of creating a more equitable school district.

Helping Adults Shift Their Mindsets About Students

Ensuring All District Leaders, School Leaders, and Staff Members Understand the Science of Learning and Human Development

District leaders from DCPS recommended that staff members at all levels of the district receive professional development in the science of learning and human development. They said it was not enough for staff members to recognize the importance of a social and emotional learning curriculum in a school; teachers, principals, and district leaders needed training to understand the mechanisms by which social and emotional well-being is inextricably linked with learning and cognitive growth in the classroom.²⁸ Since relationships, practices, and interactions within classrooms are paramount for students' social and emotional well-being,²⁹ school leaders and staff members had to recognize their large role in creating the physically and psychologically safe conditions students need to engage in learning. In the case of DCPS, according to district leaders, it turned out that staff members said this additional training filled a void in their professional development, that they were craving additional ways to meet their students' diverse needs and engage them in learning. Previously, the district had made a priority of using its professional development resources to teach the academic curriculum, which left educators without techniques for engaging students in the content.

Creating Opportunities to Discuss How Systemic Bias Plays Out in Schools

To further deepen their understanding of the contexts that might influence how social and emotional well-being is linked to learning and cognitive growth in the classroom, district leaders stressed that

before they could interrogate their current policies, structures, and practices, they had to have direct conversations about how systemic bias and disproportionality based on student characteristics (race, language, gender, and so forth) occurred in their schools. Before they tried to shift the mindsets of their staff members, the district leaders said they led by example by being willing to (1) have uncomfortable conversations that required self-reflection, (2) question their current and past policies, and (3) change the status quo if it became apparent that those policies disproportionately harmed some groups of students. For those who wish to take up equity in their districts, district leaders from DCPS recommended identifying equity champions to cultivate trusting relationships and create opportunities to have these important, albeit uncomfortable, conversations.³⁰ Respondents believed that when district leaders engaged in difficult conversations about biases and how to change inequitable practices, school leaders and staff members felt empowered also to have these difficult conversations in their schools. More explicitly, they highlighted that school leaders and staff members need district-supported resources and dedicated time to engage in these conversations.

Some respondents said that if staff members who work directly with students do not reflect on how they may be perpetuating biases, the district will have a much harder time constructing a more equitable system. To that end, Oakland Unified School District holds an annual Racial Justice, Equity, and Healing Summit. Past workshops have included topics on how racism and bias show up in schools, effective culturally responsive practices,³¹ restorative justice that emphasizes healing,³² and equity in family engagement. As another example, an organization that works with districts on shifting people's mindsets, Diversity Talks, offers professional development on this topic that is led by trained young people, so educators can understand the perspectives of students more directly.³³ These examples of professional development are intended to raise the cultural awareness and empathy of teachers, which may strengthen their relationships with students and create more psychologically safe environments for learning.³⁴

Aligning Existing Structures and Policies with the New Vision

Using Data to Determine Whether Policies and Practices Are Equitable

The respondents highlighted the need to examine data continually to see whether policies and practices reflect the new vision and are leading to equitable outcomes. In particular, they suggested using data to answer questions such as, "Who is succeeding in or benefiting from the current system? How does this policy affect students of color or those from households with low incomes? Does it improve conditions for students of color or those from households with low incomes?" These recommendations echo those made by Paul Gorski in an article on avoiding racial equity detours in schools.³⁵ DCPS, in particular, created a district policy that requires written and verbal answers to such questions before any other new policy is approved. Many dimensions of schooling may benefit from this interrogation, with the following areas being particularly ripe for reexamina-

tion because they consistently show disproportionate outcomes for certain groups of students, such as those of color or those from households with low incomes:³⁶

- Disciplinary referrals and resulting disciplinary actions
- Special education classification
- Gifted and Talented classification
- Access to Advanced Placement courses

Most districts have student information systems with a wealth of data available, ranging from test scores to ratings of students' well-being. To identify patterns, some respondents said their districts have disaggregated data for student subgroups defined by race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, and English language learner status, among other characteristics. Some data systems also allow users to analyze the intersection of student subgroups. For example, Oakland Unified School District's publicly available data dashboards permit an examination of suspension rates of different racial/ethnic groups by gender.³⁷ To interpret the data with an emphasis on equity and to take note of a range of perspectives, a district can use a structured protocol like the one developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL).³⁸ Combining a strong data system with frequent analysis and discussion may help the district determine whether its student outcomes are aligning with its new vision.

DCPS recently launched a dashboard that integrates existing data—such as social, emotional, and academic assessments of students; metrics of school climate and culture; and attendance, discipline, and suspension data—into one system. The idea is that having all these data in one place will make it possible to diagnose patterns and determine whether the system is serving all students equitably, in supportive ways, across a number of domains. However, districts do not have to build strong data systems on their own. They can partner with outside organizations that provide data dashboards, surveys, and strategies to identify certain students or groups of students who need extra support for their social and emotional well-being.³⁹ Other districts choose to partner with universities and colleges. Harvard University's Strategic Data Project, for example, supports districts interested in using data to improve and sustain positive student outcomes.⁴⁰

Creating Institutions to Support Equity

Oakland Unified School District's leaders said that one way to advance the district's equity goals was to create a dedicated Office of Equity. The Office of Equity establishes guidance and technical assistance across different district-level departments and schools, spreading and coordinating equity-based approaches and practices that improve the social and emotional outcomes of all students. The office's staff can implement, spread, and sustain targeted, coordinated equity initiatives and programs for African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Latino/a, and LGBTQ+ students.⁴¹ Respondents noted that a dedicated, district-level office helps keep district initiatives coordinated, which gives them a greater chance of having the intended effect on thinking and practices.

The respondents noted it was important for students from all backgrounds to see balanced, nonstereotypical representations of themselves and other groups in the materials they are taught.

Reevaluating Curricula

The respondents noted it was important for students from all backgrounds to see balanced, non-stereotypical representations of themselves and other groups in the materials they are taught. Such materials will seem more relevant to students, they said, and build their self-identity and self-worth, which can in turn promote their sense of belonging and social and emotional well-being.⁴² Researchers and educators recognize that students from White or privileged backgrounds, or with straight or cisgender identities, also benefit from reading stories and hearing voices from other perspectives; such materials help them to learn about cultures and identities different from their own and develop empathy for peers of all backgrounds, even if those peers are not enrolled in their current schools.⁴³ Similarly, by using inclusive curricula that counter bias and racism, teachers can gain a more nuanced understanding of history and can connect with and provide supportive relationships to students from all backgrounds.⁴⁴

Some of the respondents said their districts have therefore attempted to conduct thorough reviews of their curricula. To illustrate, during its annual summer review of their curriculum, DCPS now has a subset of educators audit not just whether a curriculum is diverse, but whether it actively combats bias and racism.

Providing More Resources to School Leaders and Teachers in Schools That Need More Support

Some respondents discussed the importance of distributing resources equitably across schools based on need. An equal distribution of resources across a district can leave adults working in schools that need more support poorly equipped to navigate the challenges presented in those environments, while adults in schools with fewer challenges have the same or even more resources. Instead, respondents hoped that if districts emphasized providing more training, mentorship, and pay to school leaders and staff members working in schools that need more support, they might be better able to recruit and retain people who want to work in those schools. Respondents noted that many of those teachers and principals are often themselves people of color. If they could retain more of these educators, the staff at these schools might better reflect the student populations. Research shows that students in these schools can benefit academically from teachers and other school staff members who share their backgrounds.⁴⁵

Conclusion

This brief presents recommendations from several districts that have been working to make their educational systems more equitable, focusing specifically on lessons related to structural and policy change. The leaders and practitioners who contributed to this brief all pointed to the importance of creating a new vision for their school districts to become equitable systems that provide supportive and nurturing learning conditions for all students. They noted that education systems sometimes put on paper philosophies or sets of priorities that were not implemented in schools or that focused on incomplete approaches to student success. In those cases, they cautioned, the communities served by those districts expected results that ultimately did not materialize for their children. As highlighted in the introductory brief in this series, focusing heavily on programs for students without building the capabilities of staff members or interrogating a system's policies and structures can inadvertently perpetuate inequitable learning environments.

It is important to note that this effort to transform district policies and structures so that they promote educational equity is not a one-time endeavor. District leaders recognized it is a continual process informed by the new visions they developed, where they expect to return again and again to reexamine how to align structures, policies, and practices with those new visions; solicit community and student involvement; build trust; work to shift adult mindsets and school cultures; and put in place accountability structures and metrics to monitor their districts' progress. They have made a commitment to disrupt the status quo, and expect to have to stick with these efforts for a long time in order to truly change their systems and make them more equitable for all students.

SELECTED RESOURCES

Engaging caregivers, families, and communities

- The Center for Family Engagement, National PTA. 2020. *PTAs Leading the Way in Transformative Family Engagement*. This report outlines best practices for a parent-teacher association to engage families.

www.pta.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/cfe-4-i's-publication.pdf

Creating safe spaces to discuss systemic bias in education

- *Courageous Conversation*. From the organization's website:

Founded by Glenn E. Singleton in 1992, Pacific Educational Group (PEG) is committed to achieving racial equity in education. We engage in sustained partnerships with educational organizations to transform beliefs, behaviors, and results so people of all races can achieve at their highest levels and live their most empowered and powerful lives. Courageous Conversation™ is our award-winning protocol for effectively engaging, sustaining and deepening

ing interracial dialogue. Through our Framework for Systemic Racial Equity Transformation, PEG is dedicated to helping educators address persistent racial disparities intentionally, explicitly, and comprehensively.

<https://courageousconversation.com>

- *The National SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity) Project.* From the organization's website:

The National SEED ProjectSM partners with schools, organizations, and communities to develop leaders who guide their peers in conversational communities to drive personal, organizational, and societal change toward social justice. SEED leaders design their seminars with the flexibility to adapt them to their own local needs. They include personal reflection and testimony, listening to others' voices, and learning experientially and collectively, in the context of each participant's intersecting identities. Through this methodology, SEED equips participants to connect our lives to one another and to society at large by acknowledging systems of power, oppression, and privilege.

www.nationalseedproject.org

- *The Racial Empowerment Collaborative (REC) at The Pennsylvania State Graduate School of Education.* From the organization's website:

The Racial Empowerment Collective (REC) is a research, program development, and training center that brings together community leaders, researchers, authority figures, families, and youth to study and promote racial literacy and health in schools and neighborhoods.... The Teacher Professional Development program by the REC seeks to increase racial literacy—the ability to read, recast, and resolve racially stressful social interactions—of teachers and school leaders.

www.recastingrace.com

Elevating students' voices

- *Diversity Talks.* From the organization's website:

Diversity Talks partners with organizations to create unique learning environments where the most marginalized voices are at the forefront.... Our virtual youth-led professional development workshops provide an experiential learning opportunity for adults to reflect internally, identify and confront racism, acknowledge power and privilege, and build authentic relationships with youth.

www.diversitytalkspd.com

- Center for American Progress (2019). *Elevating Student Voice in Education.* This report outlines practices to amplify authentic student voices in education at the school, district, and state levels.

www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2019/08/14/473197/elevating-student-voice-education

Teaching culturally responsive curricula that combat bias

- *Learning for Justice* (formerly *Teaching Tolerance*). From the organization's website:

We provide free resources for educators—teachers, administrators, counselors, and other practitioners—who work with children from kindergarten through high school. Educators can use materials to supplement the curriculum, inform practice, and create inclusive school communities where children and youth are respected, valued, and welcomed participants.

www.learningforjustice.org

Using data to identify patterns

- Harvard Education Redesign Lab (2020). *Choosing a Data Platform for Individualized Success Planning: A Guide for School and Community Leaders*. As summarized on the website:

In this guide, we focus on the role of data platforms in supporting success planning, identifying key considerations for choosing a platform and showcasing examples.... Finally, we share features of popular data platforms used by school districts to capture comprehensive student data.

<https://edredesign.org/links/choosing-data-platform-individualized-success-planning-guide-school-and-community>

- *Illinois State Board of Education, 5Essentials System*. As described on the website:

The 5Essentials is a research-based school improvement system that defines, measures, and utilizes the most important organizational conditions, including aspects of a school's culture and climate, to improve student outcomes.

Specifically, the 5Essentials is an improvement framework and diagnostic survey with research-tested scoring and interactive reporting that provides insights into schools' organizational strengths and areas of opportunity across the five essential factors for school improvement: Effective Leaders, Collaborative Teachers, Involved Families, Supportive Environment, and Ambitious Instruction. The system also includes professional learning designed to help educators leverage 5Essentials data to inform improvement planning and drive improved school and student outcomes.

www.isbe.net/Pages/5Essentials-Survey.aspx

<https://uchicagoimpact.org/our-offerings/5essentials>

- *Chicago Public Schools Data Dashboard*. An example of a large public school district's data dashboard that integrates information on performance (at grade level or below), student academic growth, school culture and climate (using 5Essentials System data), attendance, graduation, and preparation for post-graduation success.

www.cps.edu/schools/find-a-school

- *Harvard Data Wise Project*. From the project's website:

The Data Wise Project supports educators in using collaborative data inquiry to drive continuous improvement of teaching and learning for all students.

Based at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and in partnership with educators around the world, we offer a suite of on-campus and online courses that teach a step-by-step process and habits of mind for using a wide range of data sources to improve instruction.

<https://datawise.gse.harvard.edu/about>

- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. *Structured Data Reflection Protocol*. From the organization's website:

This tool presents a structured reflection process for SEL teams and other school stakeholders to observe trends and discuss ideas for continuous improvement of SEL implementation. It emphasizes the importance of examining data with an equity lens and elevating a range of perspectives when interpreting data.

<https://schoolguide.casel.org/resource/sel-data-reflection-protocol>

NOTES

- 1 The Aspen Institute's National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, *From a Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope: Recommendations from the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development* (Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute, 2019).
- 2 Aubrey Edwards-Luce, Averi Pakulis, Cara Baldari, Carrie Fitzgerald, Christopher Towner, Conor Sasner, Kathy Sacco, Michelle Dallafior, Miriam Abaya, and Olivia Gomez, "Key Stats on the Effect of COVID-19 on Kids," First Focus on Children (website: <https://firstfocus.org/resources/key-stats-on-the-effect-of-covid-19-on-kids>, 2020).
- 3 Robert J. Jagers, Deborah Rivas-Drake, and Teresa Borowski, "Equity & Social and Emotional Learning: A Cultural Analysis" (Chicago: CASEL, 2018).
- 4 Jacquelynne Eccles and Jennifer A. Gootman, *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*, National Academy Press (Washington, DC: National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002); Jennifer A. Fredricks, Phyllis C. Blumenfeld, and Alison H. Paris, "School Engagement: Potential of the Concept, State of the Evidence," *Review of Educational Research* 74, 1 (2004): 59–109.
- 5 Sira Park, Susan D. Holloway, Amanda Arendtsz, Janine Bempechat, and Jin Li, "What Makes Students Engaged in Learning? A Time-Use Study of Within- and Between-Individual Predictors of Emotional Engagement in Low-Performing High Schools," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 41, 3 (2012): 390–401.
- 6 Jean Baldwin Grossman, Susan Sepanik, Ximena A. Portilla, and Kevin Thaddeus Brown, Jr., "Educational Equity: Solutions Through Social and Emotional Well-Being" (New York: MDRC, 2021).
- 7 Pamela Cantor, David Osher, Juliette Berg, Lily Steyer, and Todd Rose, "Malleability, Plasticity, and Individuality: How Children Learn and Develop in Context," *Applied Developmental Science* 23, 4 (2019): 307–337.

- 8 Anne Gregory and Gabrielle Roberts, “Teacher Beliefs and the Overrepresentation of Black Students in Classroom Discipline,” *Theory into Practice* 56, 3 (2017): 187–194.
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