

RESOURCE EQUITY GUIDEBOOK

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# EMPOWERING, RIGOROUS CONTENT



ALLIANCE FOR  
RESOURCE  
EQUITY

Uniting advocates and education leaders  
to unlock excellence for every student



## About

This guidebook for district- and school-level action planning leverages Education Resource Strategies' deep expertise supporting districts and schools and iterates from frameworks and tools that we have tested and used with school and district leaders from across the country over the last decade.

It was also informed by strong collaboration with The Education Trust and its expertise working with equity advocates across the country to support state and federal policy development that focuses on eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps for students of color and students from low-income backgrounds.

The Alliance for Resource Equity is a partnership between **Education Resource Strategies (ERS)** and **The Education Trust**.



### WHY AN ALLIANCE?

Across the nation, local decision makers and equity advocates are committed to improving schools—including school board members, state and district leaders, civil rights advocates, families, educators, and even students themselves. However, a lack of coordination can limit the impact of these efforts. The Alliance for Resource Equity works to bring many combinations of stakeholders together around a framework for shared understanding, and a plan for collaborative action.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

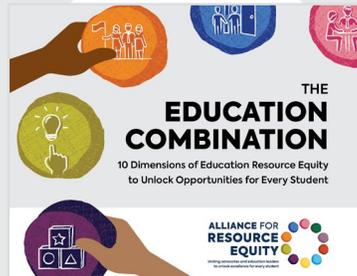
This work is the result of joint efforts among dozens of people, led by Education Resource Strategies, with strong collaboration from The Education Trust, as part of the Alliance for Resource Equity.

First, we owe our deep thanks to the many people in the field who inspire us by engaging in this difficult (yet rewarding) work each day: Thank you to our partners within the schools, systems, and communities that we have worked with throughout the years; to the leaders and researchers from peer education organizations who served as valuable thought partners; and to the many district and nonprofit leaders, advocates, teachers, and families from across the country who contributed with an ongoing willingness to reflect, share their stories, and help others learn.

We would also like to acknowledge the many team members who contributed to this work. At Education Resource Strategies, this includes Hayley Bacon, Nicole Katz, Torrie Mekos, Eddie Branchaud, Tomas Molfino, Betty Chang, Jonathan Travers, and Karen Hawley Miles. At the Education Trust this includes Terra Wallin, Allison Socol, Tanji Reed Marshall, Ary Amerikaner, and Kayla Patrick. Thank you to J Sherman Studio for their design partnership.

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The Alliance for Resource Equity is solely responsible for the ideas presented in this document and for any errors.

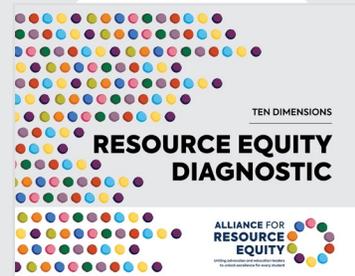


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### THE EDUCATION COMBINATION

## Learn about the 10 dimensions

This paper turns the spotlight on education resource equity by sharing the 10 dimensions that unlock better, more equitable experiences in school for all students.



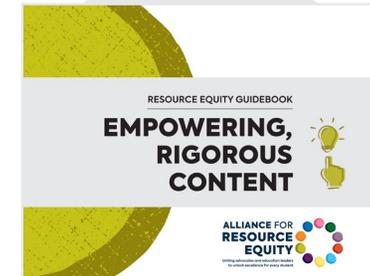
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### THE RESOURCE EQUITY DIAGNOSTIC

## Identify strengths and gaps

This tool helps you better understand the current state of education resource equity and excellence for students in *your* school system across all 10 dimensions.

- **Advocates' Guide:** Tailored guidance for advocates on how to use the diagnostic in partnership with your local school system.
- **Sample Meeting Agenda:** An example of a meeting agenda to help community advocates and district leaders work collaboratively to kick off the process of improving education resource equity.



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### THE RESOURCE EQUITY GUIDEBOOKS

## Explore next steps

This series of guidebooks digs deeper into your diagnostic results by probing underlying causes of challenges in your school system and considering ways to improve students' experiences in school.



Dimension 4: Empowering, Rigorous Content

# ABOUT THIS GUIDEBOOK

Your team of district leaders and community members can use this guidebook about **Empowering, Rigorous Content** to choose promising actions based on your district’s challenges and the distinct needs of your students.

- Determine **root causes** of challenges in your school district
- Explore **potential actions**
- Plan **next steps**

In this guidebook, each key question is a separate “chapter”—and depending on what growth opportunities your team identified in the diagnostic, you can choose to look at any number of these key questions. **For each key question that is relevant to your district, you will investigate the underlying root causes of challenges, explore potential actions, and plan next steps.** Key questions, root causes, and potential actions often connect to each other across chapters.

KEY QUESTION

## 4.1

Does each student have access to high-quality and culturally relevant curriculum and instructional materials?

KEY QUESTION

## 4.2

Is each student enrolled in courses that set them up for success in college and a meaningful career, including equal access to advanced courses?

KEY QUESTION

## 4.3

Does each student have access to arts and enrichment opportunities beyond core content?

Refer to your [Resource Equity Diagnostic \(bit.ly/equitydiagnostic\)](https://bit.ly/equitydiagnostic) as you use this guidebook.



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# WHAT IS EDUCATION RESOURCE EQUITY?

When schools, systems, and communities work together to mobilize the right combination of resources that create high-quality learning experiences for all students, that is what we call **education resource equity**. Yet many schools and systems are set up as if different students all need the same things. Worse yet, students with higher needs and students of color are often *less* likely than their peers to have access to the high-quality learning experiences that research tells us are necessary to prepare them for college and career.

**Education resource equity is what we need to make sure that school unlocks every child’s power to live a life of their choosing—and that race and family income no longer predict a student’s life trajectory.**

To change students’ educational experiences for the better, we need to “do school” differently by making changes at the district and school levels. This means working together to design schools and systems that use the right combination of resources to meet each child’s distinct needs.

## KEY TERMS

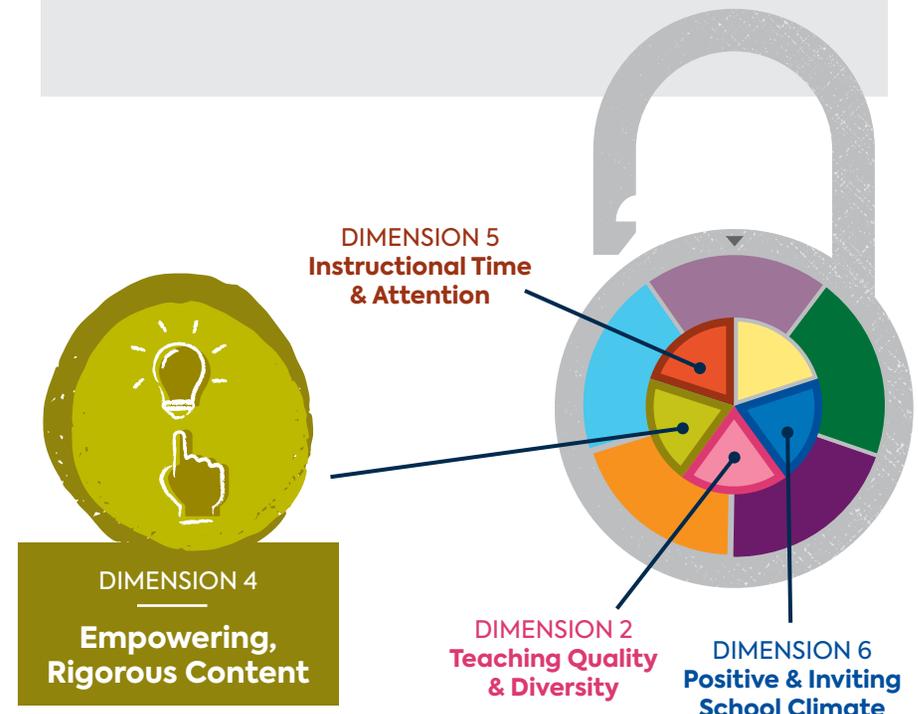
**Students with higher needs** includes students in your district who may face additional barriers to success, such as students from low-income backgrounds; English learners; students with disabilities; and students experiencing foster care, homelessness, or the juvenile justice system.

**Students of color**, in this context, includes Black, Latino, and Native American students, or other historically underserved racial/ethnic groups in your district.

The 10 dimensions of education resource equity often interact. For example, **Empowering, Rigorous Content** is closely related to other dimensions, such as: **Teaching Quality & Diversity**, since the impact of high-quality curriculum largely depends on how teachers use that curriculum, which relies on high-quality professional learning; **Instructional Time & Attention**, because this impacts the amount of access that students have to high-quality content and materials, as well as their enrollment in college- and career-aligned courses, arts, and enrichment; **Positive & Inviting School Climate**, since a positive school climate (with strong student and family relationships) is foundational to both teachers’ and students’ ability to engage in empowering content.

No single dimension of education resource equity can unlock every student’s potential—but when dimensions are combined to meet students’ distinct needs, they are a strong foundation for unlocking better, more equitable experiences in school.

Learn more at [educationresourceequity.org/dimensions](https://educationresourceequity.org/dimensions).



# FOUNDATIONS FOR EXCELLENCE & EQUITABLE ACCESS

To make progress toward education resource equity, your team will need to consider:



## FOUNDATIONS FOR EXCELLENCE

Systemwide

Foundations for Excellence gauges whether there is enough of a resource available at the system level and whether foundational structures, practices, and policies are in place to enable equitable access to the resource for all students. For example, challenges in Foundations for Excellence may mean your district does not offer multiple advanced courses across grade levels and subjects.

If your district faces challenges with Foundations for Excellence, then your team will need to consider how the root causes you see in this guidebook play out across the system, for all schools or all students. The actions you choose to address these root causes should be implemented systemwide.



## EQUITABLE ACCESS

In specific schools or classrooms

Equitable Access assesses whether students with higher needs, students of color, and students with lower academic performance have access to the right amount and combinations of resources necessary to meet their needs. Challenges in Equitable Access may mean that in your district there are...

- **Inequities across schools**—for example, if schools that serve higher proportions of students from low-income backgrounds are less likely to offer advanced courses; and/or
- **Inequities within schools**—for example, if students of color are less likely to be enrolled in advanced courses than white students who attend the same school, even after controlling for performance.

If your district faces challenges with Equitable Access, then your team will need to consider how the root causes of those inequities play out at specific schools or for specific groups of students. The actions you choose to address these root causes should be targeted toward specific schools or classrooms.



The [Resource Equity Diagnostic \(bit.ly/equitydiagnostic\)](https://bit.ly/equitydiagnostic) can help your team determine key opportunities and challenges both systemwide (**Foundations for Excellence**) and in specific schools or classrooms (**Equitable Access**). Keep these results in mind as you work through this guidebook to ensure that your team is addressing the specific challenges your district faces.

# HOW DO WE USE THIS GUIDEBOOK?

First, get everyone together at the table.

Every community, district, school, and child is unique. And your system undoubtedly has strengths, challenges, and possible barriers that will surface as you explore this guidebook.

**That's why the first step to ensuring that students have better, more equitable experiences in school is engaging the people who know that unique context best.** To accurately identify and effectively mobilize the right combination of resources for meeting students' needs, many different people need to be part of the process. Their perspectives, expertise, and lived experiences will help to inform a planning process that reflects your system's unique context and has broad community support.

Therefore, you should use this guidebook as part of a facilitated group exercise and a starting point for larger conversations and planning. Include the following groups from the outset: **PRAC-TITIONERS**, including school board members, district leaders, and central office department staff; **EDUCATORS**, including school leaders and teachers; and **ADVOCATES**, including civil rights leaders, business leaders, families, and other community members.

## A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

After you've decided which key question chapter(s) to start with, use the guiding questions to help you narrow down the menu of common root causes and select the one(s) that are most significant, relevant, or true for what is driving your district's challenges. Together, you should use the root cause menu to help your team think, discuss, analyze data, seek out other views, and keep asking "why?" to dig deeper. You may find that this menu doesn't include every root cause that contributes to your district's challenge. You can add your own customized root cause based on your [diagnostic results](#) and insights from the diverse groups of stakeholders at the table.



## B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

Next, use the guiding questions as you explore potential actions and choose the ones that seem most promising given the needs of students in your community. For each action you choose, indicate if you will pursue it **systemwide**, in **specific schools or classrooms**, or both.



## C PLAN NEXT STEPS

Making changes isn't easy. As you gear up for deeper planning and implementation, your team will need to organize your roles and identify both short- and long-term next steps. Use the guidance on "[Plan Next Steps](#)" on page 40 to prioritize which of the actions you selected seem most promising to pursue (and when), to further customize those actions to meet the unique needs of your students, and to check for alignment with other district efforts and priorities.



KEY QUESTION

# 4.1

Does each student have access to high-quality and culturally relevant curriculum and instructional materials?



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**KEY QUESTION 4.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS?**

USE THESE GUIDING QUESTIONS AS YOU **DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES** OF YOUR DISTRICT'S CHALLENGE

In your district, **where** does this challenge occur?



**SYSTEMWIDE** for all schools or all students  
(Foundations for Excellence)



**IN SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS,**  
affecting specific groups of students (Equitable Access)

**Which** of the root causes on the next page drive this challenge in your district?

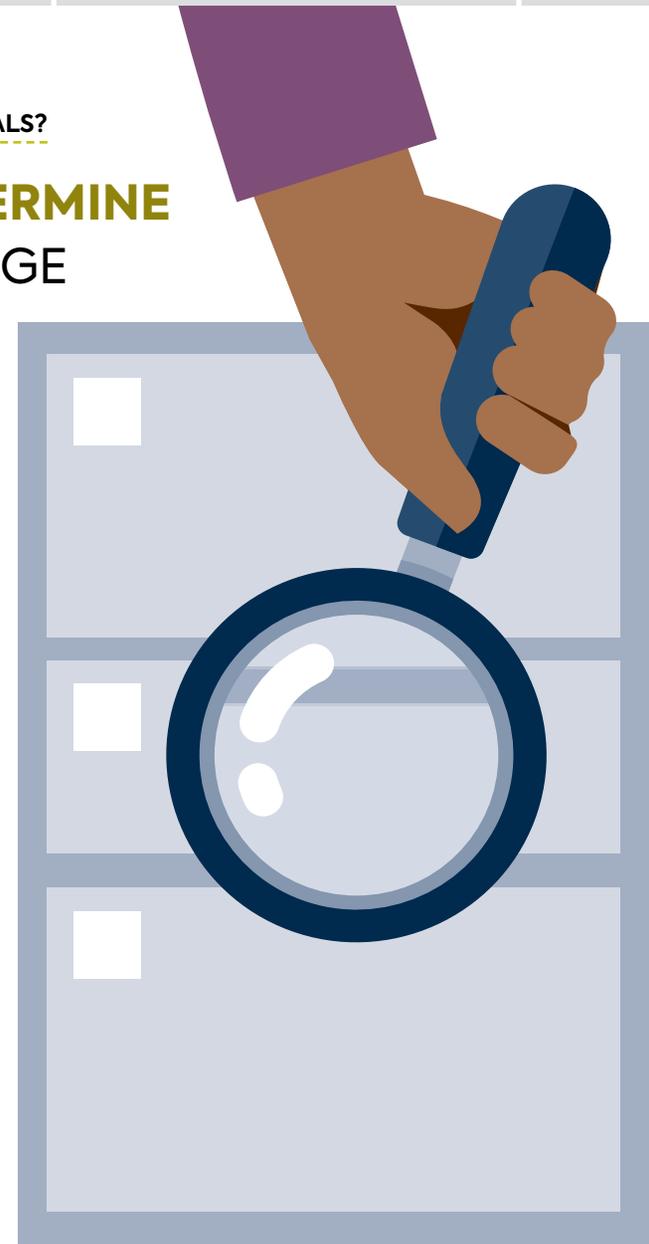
Consider...

- Available district data
- Input from different stakeholder groups, particularly those most directly impacted by existing inequities

**How** do biases play out in your district?

Explicit or implicit biases can underly root causes and/or affect peoples' perceptions of root causes.

Your notes:



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**KEY QUESTION 4.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS?**

WHAT ARE THE **ROOT CAUSES** OF YOUR DISTRICT'S CHALLENGE?

ROOT CAUSES

**Curricula Quality & Availability** PAGE 12

Curricula, materials, and assessments are not high-quality, standards-aligned, unbiased, and culturally relevant i—or are not available for all grade levels and subject areas.

**Staff Capacity & Expertise** PAGE 13

Even if high-quality, culturally relevant curriculum, materials, and assessments are available, teachers do not consistently use them due to a lack of support or expertise around how to apply them to their practice, or due to potential implicit and/or explicit biases.

**Other\*** PAGE 15

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*\*You can add a custom root cause depending on your district's unique context*



**KEY QUESTION 4.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS?**

USE THESE GUIDING QUESTIONS AS YOU **EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS**

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How would the actions shown on the following pages address **your district's specific challenge?**

For each action you choose, mark how you will apply it...

 **SYSTEMWIDE**  
(Foundations for Excellence)

 **IN SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS**  
(Equitable Access)

How might you adapt any actions that seem promising to meet the specific needs of students in your district?

Which actions have **already been tried in your district?**

What lessons can you apply now to address your district's challenge?

What do stakeholders **recommend?**

What recommendations do different stakeholder groups have—particularly those most directly impacted by existing inequities?

What potential **barriers** exist?

What barriers exist that will need to be addressed to implement this action effectively? How will doing so improve students' experiences in school?

Your notes:

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**KEY QUESTION 4.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS?**

**WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS



**Curricula Quality & Availability**

**THE VISION**  
Curricula, materials, and assessments that are high-quality, standards-aligned, unbiased, and culturally relevant are available for all grade levels and subjects.

Create a **team to evaluate, select, and develop new curricula**, ensuring the team represents diverse perspectives from school leaders, teachers, content experts, and families.

Evaluate the **existing curricula** in each grade level and subject area to identify any improvements needed in the availability, depth, rigor, and/or cultural relevance.

Develop a high bar of clear **selection criteria** for adopting new curricula. These criteria should be clearly connected to the instructional vision and ensure racially balanced representations across the curriculum.

Source curricula from a **combination of places and resources**, which may include traditional publishers, state education agencies, publicly available Open Educational Resources (OERs), and/or internally developed materials. Use a qualified third party or subject-specific tool to evaluate curricula based on the quality (including alignment with relevant standards), degree of cultural relevance and racially balanced representations, level of financial and time investment (including both up-front costs and the recurring costs associated with adaptation, technical and content support), and teachers' needs.

Select and develop **comprehensive and detailed curricular resources** across all grade levels and subject areas, including scope and sequence/pacing guidance, detailed units and lessons, aligned assessments, and related supportive materials such as texts and manipulatives. Ensure that additional materials that are used to address unfinished learning (such as menus of ways to support students with prerequisite content knowledge and skills for each standard) integrate well with core curriculum.

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**KEY QUESTION 4.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS?**



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

**WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

**Curricula Quality & Availability**  
*(cont'd)*

**THE VISION**  
Curricula, materials, and assessments that are high-quality, standards-aligned, unbiased, and culturally relevant are available for all grade levels and subjects.

Create **easily accessible systems for teachers** to find the most up-to-date curricula and instructional materials that are digital (such as scope and sequences) and physical (such as books).

Conduct **pilots of new curricula** and collect input from teachers, school leaders, and a diverse set of students and families through surveys, feedback conversations, classroom observations, and/or advisory committees. Carefully plan the timing of these pilots to ensure that it does not impact success on state assessments, and ensure that students are not repeatedly exposed to piloted curriculum.

Develop a **data-driven plan to continuously refine curricula** that involves teacher and student feedback (for example, does the curriculum strengthen students' sense of identity and belonging?), student work, and student assessments to evaluate effectiveness and adjust.

Other potential action(s):



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**KEY QUESTION 4.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS?**

**WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



**Staff Capacity & Expertise**

**THE VISION** Teachers consistently use high-quality, culturally relevant **i** instructional materials in their classrooms.

Set expectations around using vetted curriculum, and communicate a **clear vision for how much flexibility schools and teachers will have to adapt instructional materials**, depending on district and school culture (such as collaboration norms), teacher experience and capacity, students’ needs, and overall change management strategy.

Provide **support and flexibility for teachers** to select instructional materials that incorporate the racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of their students—for example, choosing a high-quality text that features characters of the same cultural background as their students.

Provide **content-specific, ongoing, job-embedded professional learning** to help teachers develop a deep understanding of their content standards and what student success looks like, to unpack the curriculum and understand any instructional shifts required, and to practice scaffolding content and instruction toward these standards in targeted ways.

Create **content-focused teams of teachers**, led by teacher-leaders, instructional coaches, or other experts, including relevant support staff such as interventionists. Ensure that teams have dedicated weekly time to collaborate on using the curriculum to plan lessons, reviewing assignments and tasks to ensure they are aligned with grade-level standards, reviewing and grading students’ work, and determining how to adjust instruction to meet students’ needs.

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**KEY QUESTION 4.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS?**



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

## WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?

### Staff Capacity & Expertise (cont'd)

THE VISION

Teachers consistently use high-quality, culturally relevant **i** instructional materials in their classrooms.

Provide professional learning (including ongoing reflection and support) to help teachers recognize and shift **mindsets that could be rooted in bias** or influence the rigor of the curriculum and instructional materials that they use.

Provide teachers with frequent, growth-oriented **feedback and coaching** about the rigor and cultural relevance of their lessons, assignments, assessments, and grading practices based on classroom observations, reflections, analysis of students' work, and student surveys.

Other potential action(s):

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

PLAN NEXT STEPS

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**KEY QUESTION 4.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS?**

**WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



**Other Root Cause**

You can add a custom root cause depending on your district's unique context.

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**KEY QUESTION 4.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS?**

For prompts to help your team think about next steps, go to page 40.

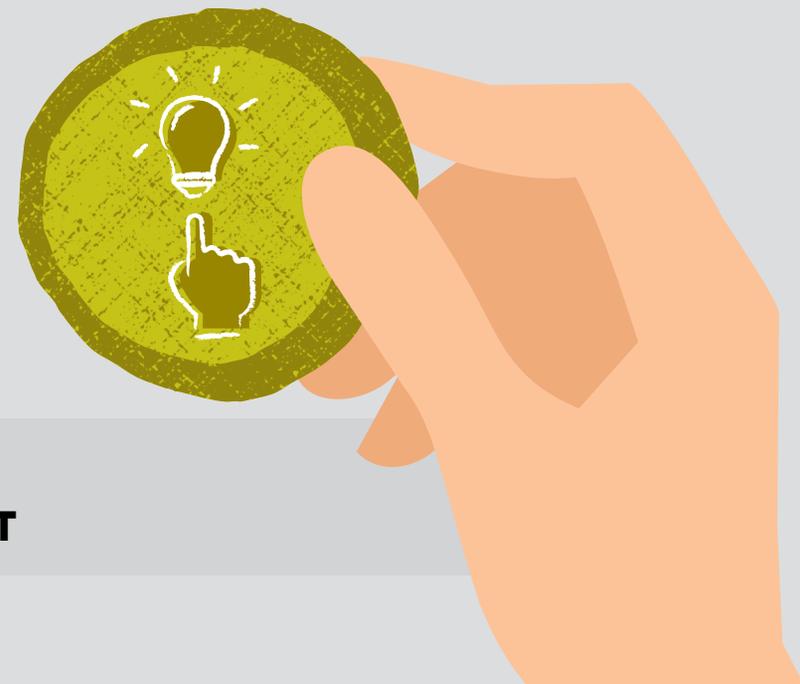
**NOTES**



KEY QUESTION

# 4.2

Is each student enrolled in courses that set them up for success in college and a meaningful career, including equal access to advanced courses?



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**KEY QUESTION 4.2: IS EACH STUDENT ENROLLED IN COURSES THAT SET THEM UP FOR SUCCESS  
IN COLLEGE AND A MEANINGFUL CAREER?**

USE THESE GUIDING QUESTIONS AS YOU **DETERMINE  
ROOT CAUSES** OF YOUR DISTRICT'S CHALLENGE

In your district, **where** does this challenge occur?



**SYSTEMWIDE** for all schools or all students  
(Foundations for Excellence)



**IN SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS,**  
affecting some groups of students (Equitable Access)

**Which** of the root causes on the next page drive this challenge in your district?

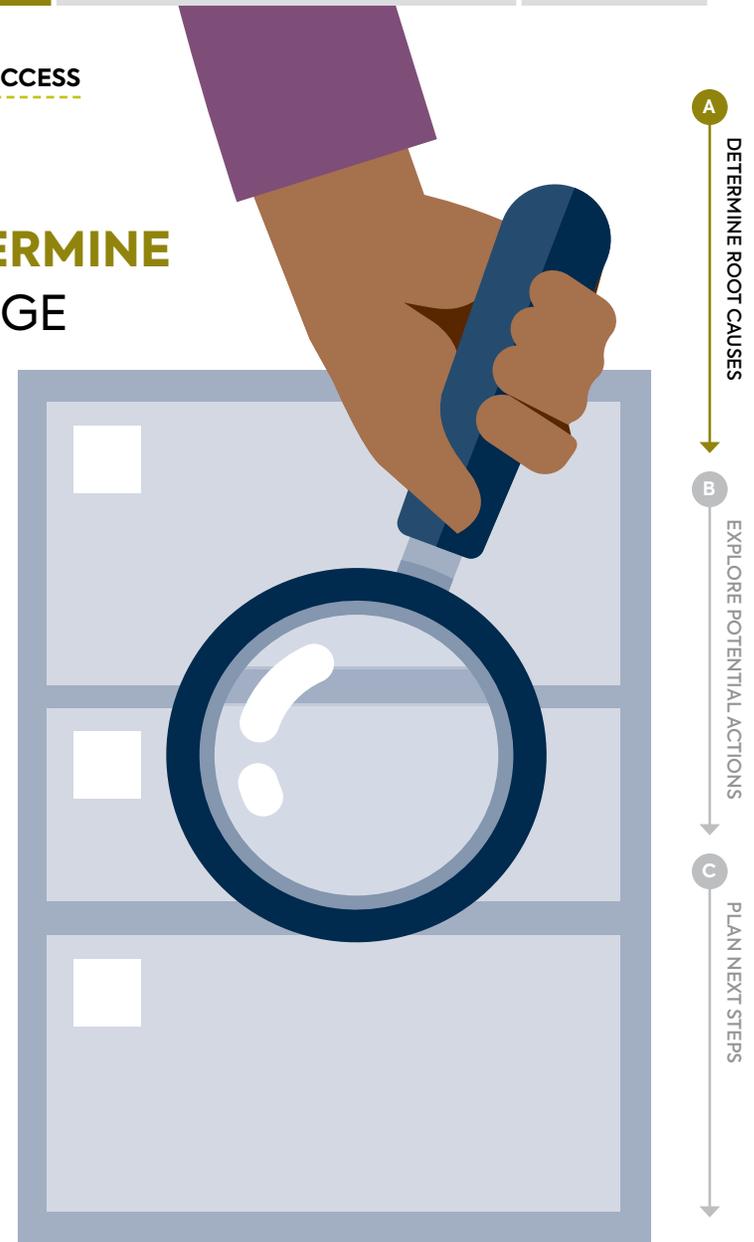
Consider...

- Available district data
- Input from different stakeholder groups, particularly those most directly impacted by existing inequities

**How** do biases play out in your district?

Explicit or implicit biases can underly root causes and/or affect peoples' perceptions of root causes.

Your notes:



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**KEY QUESTION 4.2: IS EACH STUDENT ENROLLED IN COURSES THAT SET THEM UP FOR SUCCESS IN COLLEGE AND A MEANINGFUL CAREER?**

WHAT ARE THE **ROOT CAUSES** OF YOUR DISTRICT'S CHALLENGE?

ROOT CAUSES

**Course Offerings & Availability** PAGE 21

Schools do not consistently offer a sufficient variety of college-and-career-aligned courses, including advanced courses and their prerequisites, or there are not enough seats in these courses to meet student demand.

**Course Pathways & Schedules** PAGE 23

Course pathways and school schedules, starting in early grades, are developed in a way that makes it difficult for students to take and succeed in all of the courses they need, when they need them (including advanced courses and their prerequisites).

**Course Enrollment Practices** PAGE 25

Students are not enrolled in the right set of coursework at the right time due to policy barriers, complicated processes, and/or a lack of clearly communicated information and guidance.

**Other\*** PAGE 27

*\*You can add a custom root cause depending on your district's unique context*

**KEY QUESTION 4.2: IS EACH STUDENT ENROLLED IN COURSES THAT SET THEM UP FOR SUCCESS IN COLLEGE AND A MEANINGFUL CAREER?**

USE THESE GUIDING QUESTIONS AS YOU **EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS**

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How would the actions shown on the following pages address **your district's specific challenge?**

For each action you choose, mark how you will apply it...

 **SYSTEMWIDE**  
(Foundations for Excellence)

 **IN SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS**  
(Equitable Access)

How might you adapt any actions that seem promising to meet the specific needs of students in your district?

Which actions have **already been tried in your district?**

What lessons can you apply now to address your district's challenge?

What do stakeholders **recommend?**

What recommendations do different stakeholder groups have — particularly those most directly impacted by existing inequities?

What potential **barriers** exist?

What barriers exist that will need to be addressed to implement this action effectively? How will doing so improve students' experiences in school?

Your notes:

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES  
B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS  
C PLAN NEXT STEPS

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**KEY QUESTION 4.2: IS EACH STUDENT ENROLLED IN COURSES THAT SET THEM UP FOR SUCCESS IN COLLEGE AND A MEANINGFUL CAREER?**

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



**Course Offerings & Availability**

THE VISION

Schools consistently offer a sufficient variety of college-and-career-aligned courses, including advanced courses and their prerequisites, and there are enough seats in these courses to meet student demand.

Review requirements for entry to public colleges and universities (such as foreign language requirements) and revise **graduation requirements** as needed to increase alignment.

Conduct an **audit of courses** to identify gaps in the types of course offerings that would be needed to set students up for success in college and career, such as offering Algebra I in 8th grade.

Shift **incentives** to encourage schools to increase access to advanced courses—for example, if school evaluations are currently based on AP scores, instead shift this to measure AP enrollment or growth in AP scores.

Establish **partnerships** to expand the set of courses available to students, including intra-district courses among schools, dual enrollment programs with local colleges and universities that enable students to earn college credit, and industry partnerships for career and technical education (CTE) apprenticeships and internships.

Set clear expectations around **course sequencing pathways** that work backwards from graduation requirements, including potentially a default rigorous college- and career- prep course sequence.

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## KEY QUESTION 4.2: IS EACH STUDENT ENROLLED IN COURSES THAT SET THEM UP FOR SUCCESS IN COLLEGE AND A MEANINGFUL CAREER?

### WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?

SYSTEM-  
WIDESPECIFIC  
SCHOOLS OR  
CLASSROOMS

#### Course Offerings & Availability (cont'd)

Schools consistently offer a sufficient variety of college-and-career-aligned courses, including advanced courses and their prerequisites, and there are enough seats in these courses to meet student demand.

THE VISION

Provide **ongoing, job-embedded professional learning** for district and school leaders to recognize and shift mindsets that may be rooted in bias or influence the courses they offer, such as perceptions that students of color would not be interested in advanced courses or are not qualified.

Provide **financial incentives**—such as base salary increases, stipends, and / or benefits such as tuition reimbursements—for teachers in high-need subject areas to help attract qualified teachers and to encourage teachers to seek needed credentials for specific courses.

Other potential action(s):

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

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**KEY QUESTION 4.2: IS EACH STUDENT ENROLLED IN COURSES THAT SET THEM UP FOR SUCCESS IN COLLEGE AND A MEANINGFUL CAREER?**

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



**Course Pathways and Scheduling**

**THE VISION** Course pathways and school schedules, starting in early grades, are developed in a way that enables students to take and succeed in all of the courses they need, when they need them (including advanced courses and their prerequisites).

Create **early warning systems** to identify whether students are meeting readiness goals at each grade level by regularly examining academic and non-academic data, including grades, attendance, and disciplinary data.

Conduct **transcript audits**—identifying failed courses or unnecessary repeated courses—to determine where students begin to get off track and align with requirements for college and career; make adjustments to both individual students’ schedules and overall course-taking sequences based on trends across students and grades levels.

Analyze **schedules and policies** for course enrollment (such as tracking) and school enrollment (such as magnet schools), as well as the relationship to student outcomes. Identify barriers that prevent students from taking certain courses (such as offering advanced STEM courses at the same time as English as a Second Language courses), that reduce connections with high-performing peers (such as arranging schedules so that students in the honors section of one course all end up scheduled together in other courses), or that close students out of important options very early on (such as tracking in early elementary school).

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## KEY QUESTION 4.2: IS EACH STUDENT ENROLLED IN COURSES THAT SET THEM UP FOR SUCCESS IN COLLEGE AND A MEANINGFUL CAREER?

SYSTEM-  
WIDESPECIFIC  
SCHOOLS OR  
CLASSROOMS

## WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?

### Course Pathways and Scheduling (cont'd)

Course pathways and school schedules, starting in early grades, are developed in a way that enables students to take and succeed in all of the courses they need, when they need them (including advanced courses and their prerequisites).

THE VISION

Provide school leaders with **scheduling tools** (such as models, prototypes, and software) to help them design flexible, comprehensive schedules that keep students on track to meet readiness goals at each grade level and meet their students' distinct needs.

Use **strategic scheduling practices** to provide additional time, support, and course access for students with lower incoming proficiency, or those who have failed or missed credits for required courses. This may involve intervention blocks, concurrent courses (such as taking Algebra and Geometry during the same semester), or integrated courses (curricula that covers two courses in a single period).

Other potential action(s):

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

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**KEY QUESTION 4.2: IS EACH STUDENT ENROLLED IN COURSES THAT SET THEM UP FOR SUCCESS IN COLLEGE AND A MEANINGFUL CAREER?**

**WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



**Course Enrollment Practices**

THE VISION  
Students are enrolled in the right set of course-work at the right time.

Monitor **data on rates of participation** in different courses, particularly in lower-level courses and advanced courses, to examine if there are disproportionate enrollment patterns for different groups of students.

Establish a **default rigorous college- and career- prep course sequence** for all middle and high school students that families would need to opt out of rather than opt into, such as enrolling 8th-graders in Algebra I.

Change **enrollment requirements** for advanced courses to eliminate criteria that put the onus on students to sign up or that could be influenced by bias—instead use a combination of measures, including teacher and counselor recommendations, course exam scores, and grades in relevant subject areas. Consider providing access or automatic enrollment for students above a standardized performance threshold, or open access for all students.

Create more **capacity to provide guidance** to students by hiring for additional guidance-related positions or restructuring the roles of other school staff (such as assistant principals) to spend time helping students with course planning and postsecondary planning.

Provide **ongoing, job-embedded professional learning** for:

- Guidance counselors and other advisors to understand the entry requirements for a diverse set of postsecondary pathways.
- All school staff (including school leaders, teachers, and counselors) to recognize and shift mindsets that may be rooted in bias, influence course assignment, or affect how they engage students and families in course planning and enrollment.

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## KEY QUESTION 4.2: IS EACH STUDENT ENROLLED IN COURSES THAT SET THEM UP FOR SUCCESS IN COLLEGE AND A MEANINGFUL CAREER?

### WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?

#### Course Enrollment Practices (cont'd)

THE VISION

Students are enrolled in the right set of coursework at the right time.

Provide **postsecondary planning**—starting before high school—to help students fully explore the full range of their college and career options, and to help them understand the prerequisite requirements for different options (courses, grades, experiences), set goals, and plan coursework that aligns with their future goals.

Provide **easy-to-understand information for families**—in their home languages and using multiple communication methods—about the courses their child should be taking to prepare for college and different career options, including the requirements, benefits, and tradeoffs associated with different courses and course pathways—for example, explaining AP/IB programs and how to enroll (including waived fees).

Other potential action(s):



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

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**KEY QUESTION 4.2: IS EACH STUDENT ENROLLED IN COURSES THAT SET THEM UP FOR SUCCESS IN COLLEGE AND A MEANINGFUL CAREER?**

**WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



**Other Root Cause**

You can add a custom root cause depending on your district's unique context.

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**KEY QUESTION 4.2: IS EACH STUDENT ENROLLED IN COURSES THAT SET THEM UP FOR SUCCESS IN COLLEGE AND A MEANINGFUL CAREER?**

For prompts to help your team think about next steps, go to page 40.

# NOTES



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KEY QUESTION

# 4.3

Does each student have access to arts and enrichment opportunities beyond core content?



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**KEY QUESTION 4.3: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO ARTS AND ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND CORE CONTENT?**

USE THESE GUIDING QUESTIONS AS YOU **DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES** OF YOUR DISTRICT'S CHALLENGE

In your district, **where** does this challenge occur?



**SYSTEMWIDE** for all schools or all students  
(Foundations for Excellence)



**IN SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS,**  
affecting some groups of students (Equitable Access)

**Which** of the root causes on the next page drive this challenge in your district?

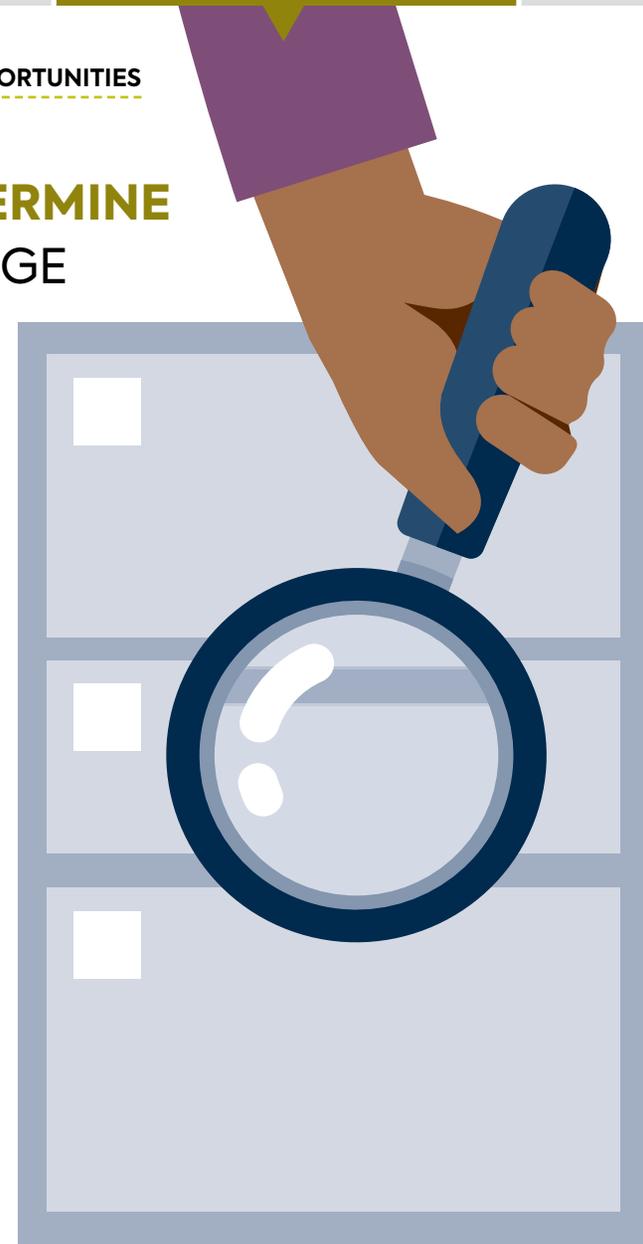
Consider...

- Available district data
- Input from different stakeholder groups, particularly those most directly impacted by existing inequities

**How** do biases play out in your district?

Explicit or implicit biases can underly root causes and/or affect peoples' perceptions of root causes.

Your notes:



A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

PLAN NEXT STEPS

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**KEY QUESTION 4.3: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO ARTS AND ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND CORE CONTENT?**

WHAT ARE THE **ROOT CAUSES** OF YOUR DISTRICT’S CHALLENGE?

ROOT CAUSES

**Course Offerings & Availability** PAGE 33

Schools do not consistently offer high-quality arts and enrichment courses, extracurricular programs, and other opportunities.

**School Scheduling Practices** PAGE 35

School schedules are developed in ways that make it difficult for students to have sufficient time to engage in arts and enrichment courses.

**Participation Supports** PAGE 36

Some students or groups of students do not participate in arts and enrichment courses, extracurricular programs, or other opportunities due to financial, logistical, informational, or other policy-related barriers.

**Other\*** PAGE 38

\*You can add a custom root cause depending on your district’s unique context



**KEY QUESTION 4.3: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO ARTS AND ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND CORE CONTENT?**

USE THESE GUIDING QUESTIONS AS YOU **EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS**

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How would the actions shown on the following pages address **your district's specific challenge?**

For each action you choose, mark how you will apply it...



**SYSTEMWIDE**  
(Foundations for Excellence)



**IN SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS**  
(Equitable Access)

How might you adapt any actions that seem promising to meet the specific needs of students in your district?

Which actions have **already been tried** in your district?

What lessons can you apply now to address your district's challenge?

What do stakeholders **recommend?**

What recommendations do different stakeholder groups have—particularly those most directly impacted by existing inequities?

What potential **barriers** exist?

What barriers exist that will need to be addressed to implement this action effectively? How will doing so improve students' experiences in school?

Your notes:

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES  
B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS  
C PLAN NEXT STEPS

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**KEY QUESTION 4.3: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO ARTS AND ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND CORE CONTENT?**

## WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



### Course Offerings & Availability

**THE VISION**  
Schools consistently offer high-quality arts and enrichment courses, extracurricular programs, and other opportunities.

Establish a **clear vision** about the ways in which arts and enrichment are a valued and integrated part of the comprehensive educational program and overall district strategy, rather than as “extras.” Work to build school cultures with balanced instructional priorities that provide students with a well-rounded set of coursework.

Provide professional learning (including ongoing reflection and support) to help district leaders, school leaders, and teachers recognize and shift **mindsets that may rooted in bias**, that may influence the arts and enrichment opportunities they offer (such as perceptions that students wouldn’t be interested or that arts and enrichment are of low importance), or that may affect policies related to which students get to participate in these opportunities (such as preventing access if students have poor academic performance or engagement in other courses).

Conduct an **audit of courses** to identify gaps in arts and enrichment course offerings.

Establish **community partnerships** with diverse local cultural institutions, businesses, and other organizations and individual teaching artists to provide expertise, personnel, funding, equipment, and/or facilities for arts and enrichment programs; ensure that external arts educators are held to the same high standards for instruction as school staff are.

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### KEY QUESTION 4.3: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO ARTS AND ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND CORE CONTENT?

SYSTEM-  
WIDESPECIFIC  
SCHOOLS OR  
CLASSROOMS

## WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?

### Course Offerings & Availability (cont'd)

THE VISION

Schools consistently offer high-quality arts and enrichment courses, extracurricular programs, and other opportunities.

Identify **grant funding** for arts and enrichment opportunities to enable schools to hire additional staff or form partnerships, provide stipends for teachers (for example, to run after-school clubs), and establish programs (for example, arts and enrichment equipment/materials, field trips).

Award **partial full-time equivalent (FTE) allocations** for teachers of electives courses without full teaching loads, so that they can be shared across schools within the district (whether in-person or virtually)—which will help provide access for smaller schools and extend the breadth of opportunities offered in a cost-effective manner.

Create **mixed roles** in which core content teachers or administrative staff spend a portion of their time teaching enrichment courses (such as drama or digital arts), or in which electives staff spend a portion of their time pushing in to support core classes.

Other potential action(s):

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

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**KEY QUESTION 4.3: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO ARTS AND ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND CORE CONTENT?**

## WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS**?



### School Scheduling Practices

**THE VISION**  
School schedules are developed in ways that enable students to have sufficient time to engage in arts and enrichment courses.

Analyze schedules to **identify and address barriers** to ensure that necessary academic courses and supports (such as tutoring) don't occur at the same time as/prevent access to arts and enrichment courses.

Support school leaders with school scheduling that enables opportunities for arts and enrichment classes by providing **examples and tools**, such as sample schedule and staffing models to address specific needs and school contexts.

Enable students to take both arts/enrichment courses and core courses during the current school day by increasing the **number of periods** in the day or using **block scheduling**.

Implement an **expanded school day or year** to enable students to access arts and enrichment classes while maintaining the same level of core content instruction.

Strategically **integrate arts methods** into core academic classes (for example, observational drawing in science class or acting out scenes from a novel in ELA)—and vice versa (for example, understanding sound waves in music class or critical reading in drama class); modify curriculum and provide professional learning opportunities for core content teachers and arts/enrichment teachers to learn new skills and collaborate with each other.

Establish **after-school, intersession, or summer enrichment programs**, and ensure equal access for all students by considering factors such as fees and transportation.

Other potential action(s):

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### KEY QUESTION 4.3: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO ARTS AND ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND CORE CONTENT?



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

## WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?

### Participation Supports

There are no barriers that prevent students from participating in arts and enrichment courses, extracurricular programs, or other opportunities, and information is accessible for families and students.

THE VISION

Conduct **student and family surveys**—in their home languages and using multiple modalities (for example, web-based surveys and phone-based surveys)—to understand which barriers (including financial, logistical, or information barriers) prevent them from being able to access arts and enrichment courses, extracurricular programs, and other opportunities.

Provide a clear and simple process for students and families to obtain **financial assistance** for arts and enrichment opportunities, such as funding supplies/equipment for an arts club or waiving field trip fees.

Create **systems that address logistical barriers to engagement** in extracurricular arts and enrichment, such as providing transportation from after-school activities or offering extracurricular activities at rotating times.

Increase students' access to arts and enrichment opportunities by changing **policies** that prevent students from participating based on factors such as poor academic performance.

Other potential action(s):

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

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**KEY QUESTION 4.3: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO ARTS AND ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND CORE CONTENT?**

## WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



### Participation Supports (cont'd)

**THE VISION**

There are no barriers that prevent students from participating in arts and enrichment courses, extracurricular programs, or other opportunities, and information is accessible for families and students.

Plan concrete ways to regularly engage students and families about arts and enrichment opportunities—including providing **exposure** to different types of opportunities and their benefits (for example, showcase events), and by providing easy-to-understand **information** (in their home languages and using multiple communications methods) about how students and families can get involved.

Provide professional learning (including ongoing reflection and support) to help all school staff (including school leaders, teachers, and counselors) recognize and shift **mindsets that may be rooted in bias** or influence how they engage students and families in arts and enrichment opportunities.

Other potential action(s):

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**KEY QUESTION 4.3: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO ARTS AND ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND CORE CONTENT?**



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

# WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

## Other Root Cause

You can add a custom root cause depending on your district's unique context.

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**KEY QUESTION 4.3: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO ARTS AND ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND CORE CONTENT?**

For prompts to help your team think about next steps, go to page 40.

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# Plan Next Steps



1. PRIORITIZE



2. CUSTOMIZE

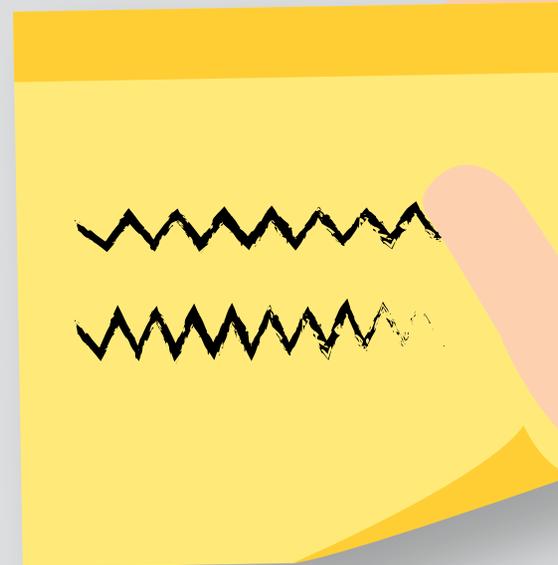


3. ALIGN



4. PLAN

Now that your team has begun to uncover the root causes of your school system's challenges and explored possible actions to improve **Empowering, Rigorous Content**, it's time to plan next steps. You can continue to build on the momentum your team has built so far by beginning to outline what you will do next and who will help to move this work forward.

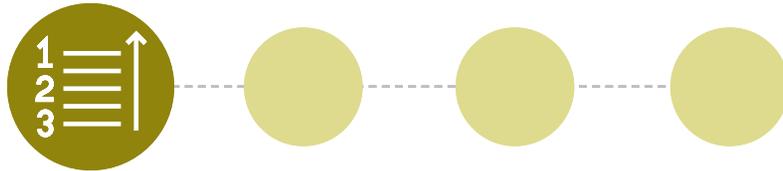


The Alliance for Resource Equity partners directly with state and local systems and communities to support education resource equity. Reach out to bring our team to you for workshops, in-depth engagements, or other support as you analyze resources, design strategies, and gear up for implementation.

[educationresourceequity.org](https://educationresourceequity.org)

RESOURCE EQUITY GUIDEBOOK SERIES  
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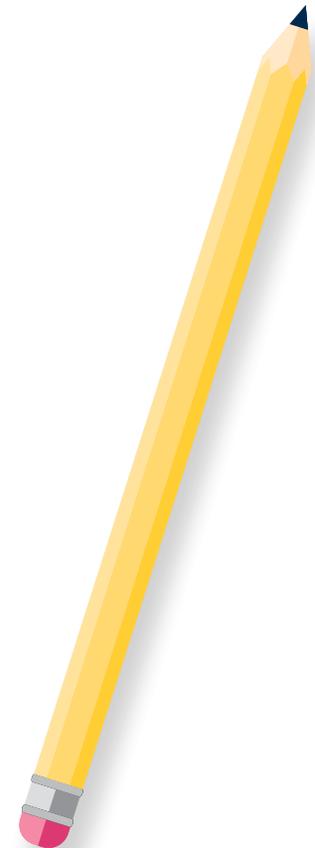
## 1. PRIORITIZE

How will we choose which promising actions to pursue—and when?

Important considerations:

- How do we believe this action could address our current challenges?
- How does the ease of implementing this action compare with the degree of impact it will have?
- What do we believe are the likely outcomes of implementing this action? For which students? Over what timeframe(s)?
- What is the opportunity cost of *not* moving forward with this action?
- To what extent is there energy and momentum in our community around moving forward with this action?

## NOTES



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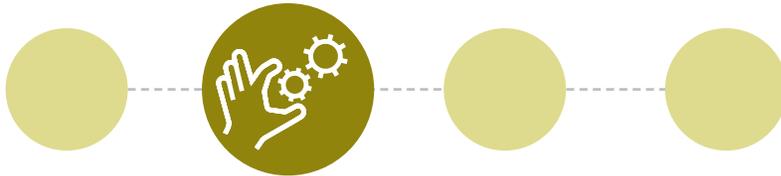
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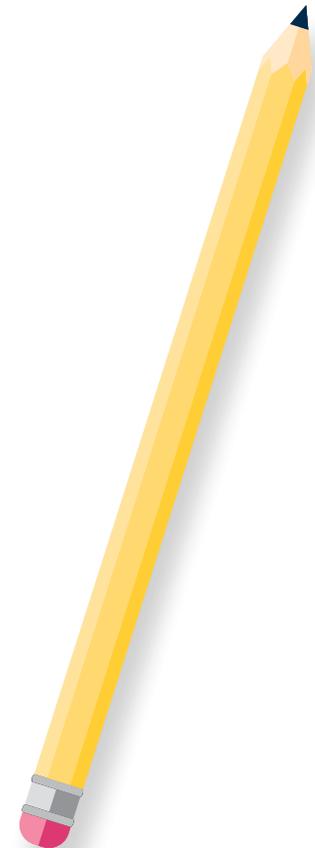
## 2. CUSTOMIZE

How will we adapt the most promising potential actions to fit our community's unique context?

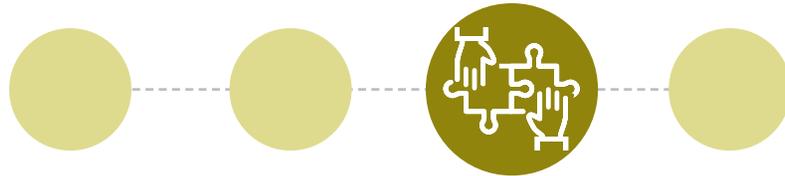
Important considerations:

- Are there past or current efforts that have been successful that we can adapt or build off of?
- What unique risks or barriers might threaten success?
- How will we get our community involved in making progress on this action?
- What prerequisite steps might be needed before we move forward?  
(For example, learning more through focus groups or community sessions, partnering with local advocacy groups, or changing existing policies or timelines)

## NOTES



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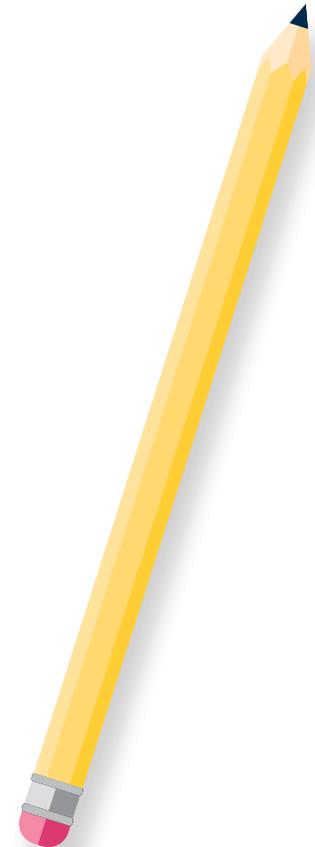
### 3. ALIGN

How do the most promising potential actions align with other strategic priorities in our district?

Important considerations:

- What is our big-picture theory of action? How does it tie any new actions that we choose to pursue to our district- or school-level priorities?
- How can we make sure that our strategic plan accurately reflects our equity goals?
- How might our efforts in this action area connect to [other dimensions](#) of education resource equity?
- What related efforts or investments does this work rely on? What else do we need to start, stop, or continue doing for implementing this action to be effective?
- How does this action align with the goals and priorities of different groups of people, including families, educators, and students?

### NOTES



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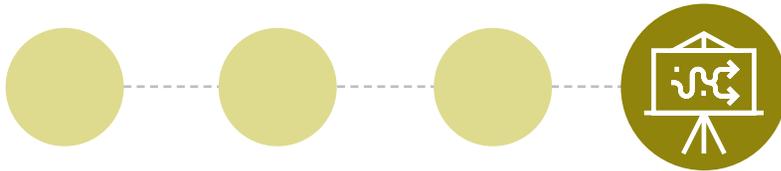
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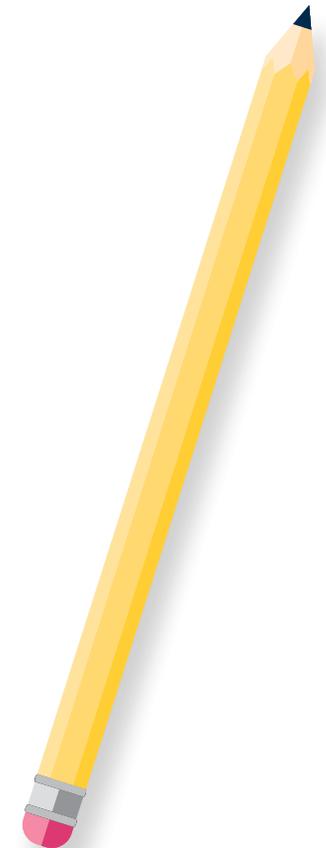
## 4. PLAN

What is needed to successfully implement the most promising actions?

Important considerations:

- What resources, processes, and mindsets will this work require? What shifts might we need to make? Will these shifts impact other district or school priorities?
- What can we do to proactively mitigate potential risks and barriers to success?
- What are our short-, medium-, and long-term timelines for planning and implementing this action?
- How might we build buy-in around this action?
- How will we measure impact? How will we know we are on track?

## NOTES





# APPENDIX



# ADDITIONAL NOTES

## **i** CULTURALLY RELEVANT

In teaching and learning, **culturally relevant** teaching means infusing students' cultural backgrounds (including racial and ethnic identity, gender, socioeconomic class, disability, and language), interests, and lived experiences into their educational environments to engage and empower students—especially those whose experiences and cultures typically get excluded. Culturally relevant teaching can help students better understand the content they are learning and can support students' ability to recognize, understand, and critique social inequalities. It helps all students develop the knowledge and skills they need to critically and meaningfully engage the world and others. Culturally relevant teaching also seeks to sustain students' cultures and validate pluralism as part of the democratic process of schooling—that is why it is sometimes also referred to as **culturally sustaining** pedagogy.

Examples of **culturally relevant materials** include literature that features different types of families, characters who look like students or face relatable challenges (without resorting to stereotypes), and assessments that avoid assumptions about students' points of reference without including necessary context, such as past SAT analogy questions that referenced yachts, regattas, and debutante balls.

### **When using this work, please cite as:**

Alliance for Resource Equity. *Resource Equity Guidebook: Empowering, Rigorous Content*. Education Resource Strategies and The Education Trust, 2021. [educationresourceequity.org/toolkit/guidebooks](https://educationresourceequity.org/toolkit/guidebooks)

# SOURCES

This guidebook includes best practice research from the following publications:

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