RESOURCE EQUITY GUIDEBOOK

POSITIVE & INVITING SCHOOL CLIMATE

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**.

ERS

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.
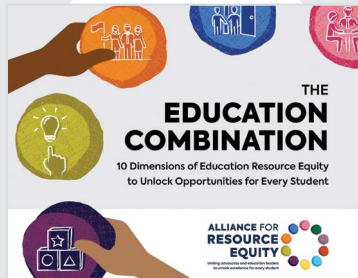
1

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.
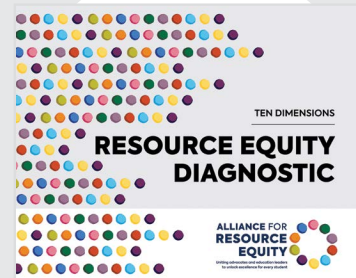
2

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 ten 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.
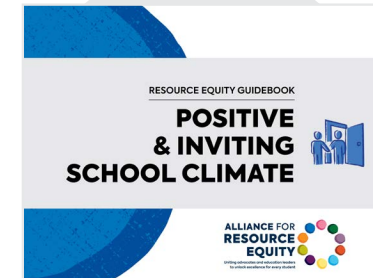
3

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 1

School Funding

DIMENSION 2

Teaching Quality & Diversity

DIMENSION 3

School Leadership Quality & Diversity

DIMENSION 4

Empowering, Rigorous Content

DIMENSION 5

Instructional Time & Attention

DIMENSION 6

Positive & Inviting School Climate

DIMENSION 7

Student Supports & Intervention

DIMENSION 8

High-Quality Early Learning

DIMENSION 9

Learning-Ready Facilities

DIMENSION 10

Diverse Classrooms & Schools

Dimension 6: Positive & Inviting School Climate

ABOUT THIS GUIDEBOOK

Refer to your Resource Equity Diagnostic (bit.ly/equitydiagnostic) as you use this guidebook.

Your team of district leaders and community members can use this guidebook about **Positive & Inviting School Climate** 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.

It is important to note that this guidebook focuses on students' experiences of school climate, even though staff shape and experience school climate too. **A strong adult culture helps facilitate a positive and inviting school climate for students.**

KEY QUESTION

6.1

Does each student experience a safe school with transparent, culturally sensitive, and consistently enforced rules and discipline policies?

KEY QUESTION

6.2

Does each student have positive relationships with staff and other students?

KEY QUESTION

6.3

Does each student have access to effective social-emotional learning opportunities?

KEY QUESTION

6.4

Does each student attend a school that actively and meaningfully engages families?

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.
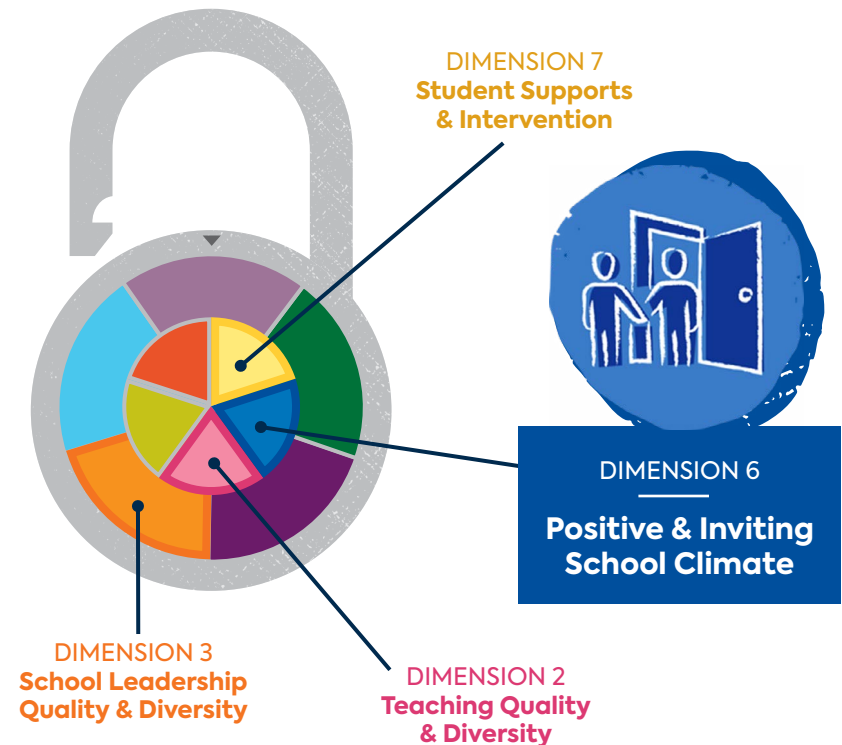
KEY TERMS

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, **Positive & Inviting School Climate** is closely related to other dimensions, such as: **School Leadership Quality & Diversity**, because school leaders set the precedent for school climate and influence staff priorities; **Student Supports & Intervention**, since disciplinary actions and social-emotional learning opportunities can often require targeted interventions; and **Teaching Quality & Diversity**, since a teacher workforce that is culturally and linguistically diverse can help promote a positive and inviting school climate for students. 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.

DIMENSION 7
Student Supports & Intervention

DIMENSION 6
Positive & Inviting School Climate

DIMENSION 3
School Leadership Quality & Diversity

DIMENSION 2
Teaching Quality & Diversity

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, a challenge in Foundations for Excellence may mean that your district does not have a large enough supply of school counselors, psychologists, and social workers overall.

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.

The Resource Equity Diagnostic (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.

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 with higher proportions of English language learners are less likely to have the resources needed to engage families in their home languages.

- Inequities *within* schools—for example, if Black students are disproportionately more likely to be subject to exclusionary disciplinary actions than white students at their school.

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.

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: **PRACTITIONERS**, 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 63 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.

THE IMPACT OF BIAS ON POSITIVE & INVITING SCHOOL CLIMATE

Working on equity—including education resource equity—requires us to identify and erode mindsets and structures that may be rooted in bias, including racism.

Individual and institutional biases, especially those that hold power in our society, can perpetuate harm to specific groups of students. Education resource equity work typically centers the experiences of students of color (including Black, Latino, and Native American students, or other under-served racial/ethnic groups in a particular district) and students with higher needs (including students from low-income backgrounds; English learners; students with disabilities; and students experiencing foster care, homelessness, or the juvenile justice system). *However, bias can negatively impact students with other underserved identities too*—including, but not limited to, gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, or religion. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that every student has multiple, intersecting identities, each of which must be properly affirmed and sustained for their needs to be fully met.

Bias affects all ten dimensions of education resource equity and has particularly profound implications for **Positive & Inviting School Climate.** As your team works to ensure every child receives the right combination of resources to unlock their full potential, understanding the specific ways bias plays out in your unique context will be critical.

Schools both shape and reflect society. Schools and educators can—and do—actively work to combat the biases that exist in society; however, they can sometimes implicitly (or explicitly) create or perpetuate bias in society, too.

Individual Bias is a person's perceptions and assumptions about groups of people. Individual biases can affect our understanding, actions, and decision-making.

- Sometimes individual biases are *explicit*, meaning people are aware of their own biases.

- In other instances, individual biases are *implicit*, meaning people are unaware that they exist. It is important to note that implicit biases don't always match a person's underlying values or beliefs—for example, one could believe in racial equality, but still implicitly treat Black and Latino students with bias.

Because individuals are shaped by their context, including the institutions they interact with (such as school and work), *institutional* biases can inform or perpetuate *individual* biased actions and mindsets.

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Institutional Bias is when rules, policies, practices, and procedures within an institution (such as a district or a school) operate in ways that advantage or disadvantage specific groups of people.

- Sometimes institutional biases are *explicit*, meaning discriminatory rules, policies, and practices purposefully disadvantage certain groups or create inequitable opportunities.

- In other instances, institutional biases are *implicit*, meaning biased rules, policies, practices, and procedures have become ingrained in an institution without acknowledgement of the negative impacts on underserved groups.

Because institutions are governed and sustained by people (such as students, families, and teachers), *individual* biases can cumulate and compound into *institutional* biased policies or practices.

The beginning of each chapter of this guidebook notes some possible manifestations of bias to serve as a reminder to identify and address potential areas of individual and/or institutional bias in your district.

KEY QUESTION

6.1

Does each student experience a safe school with transparent, culturally sensitive, and consistently enforced rules and discipline policies?

RESOURCE EQUITY GUIDEBOOK SERIES
DIMENSION 6: POSITIVE & INVITING SCHOOL CLIMATE

KEY QUESTION 6.1: DOES EACH STUDENT EXPERIENCE A SAFE SCHOOL WITH TRANSPARENT, CULTURALLY SENSITIVE, AND CONSISTENTLY ENFORCED RULES AND DISCIPLINE POLICIES?

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:

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.1: DOES EACH STUDENT EXPERIENCE A SAFE SCHOOL WITH TRANSPARENT, CULTURALLY SENSITIVE, AND CONSISTENTLY ENFORCED RULES AND DISCIPLINE POLICIES?

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

ROOT CAUSES

Institutional Vision PAGE 12

The district lacks clear, collective, and comprehensive visions for student and staff safety, and for student behavior and discipline, and/or does not prioritize students' physical and emotional safety, and/or does not foster an environment that supports staff in adopting culturally sustaining and holistic mindsets toward equitable safety and discipline practices.

Staff Capacity & Expertise PAGE 14

School leaders, teachers, and support staff lack the time, expertise, and/or cultural competence needed

to respond to student behaviors in ways that effectively and consistently promote a safe, supportive, and positive learning environment.

Policy Development & Communication

PAGE 17

Student safety and disciplinary policies vary widely from school to school in terms of how equitable and culturally sustaining expectations, procedures, and consequences are established, including the extent to which they are co-created with staff, students, and families; and/or how effectively and consistently these policies are communicated to staff, students, and families.

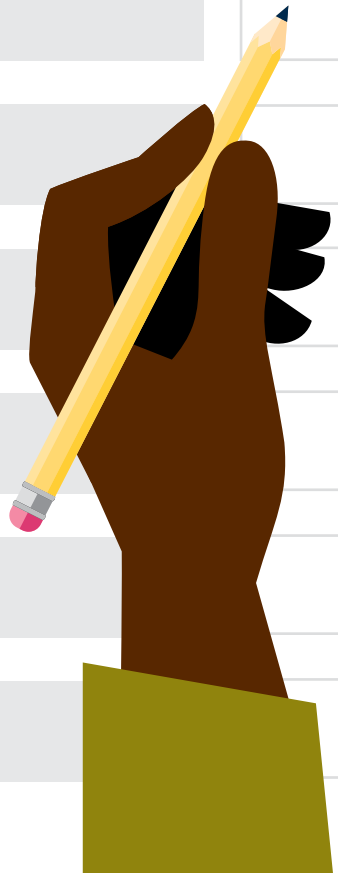### Student Conduct & Discipline Practices PAGE 21

Student conduct and discipline policies are not consistently and equitably enforced across schools, and/or schools do not implement appropriate evidence-based conduct and discipline practices that create trusting, stable learning environments, and that keep students physically and emotionally safe.

Other* PAGE 23

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

The Impact of Bias PAGE 7

In addition to taking on structural root causes (like those listed on this page), districts need to support staff in examining the racial, gender, and ability biases (among others) that may be contributing to students having inequitable experiences in school.

For example, some staff members might hold unconscious biases around their perceptions of Black male students, resulting in them being disproportionately subject to disciplinary action relative to their peers.

A — DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B — EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C — PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.1: **DOES EACH STUDENT EXPERIENCE A SAFE SCHOOL WITH TRANSPARENT, CULTURALLY SENSITIVE, AND CONSISTENTLY ENFORCED RULES AND DISCIPLINE POLICIES?**

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

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

KEY QUESTION 6.1: DOES EACH STUDENT EXPERIENCE A SAFE SCHOOL WITH TRANSPARENT, CULTURALLY SENSITIVE, AND CONSISTENTLY ENFORCED RULES AND DISCIPLINE POLICIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE   SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Institutional Vision

THE VISION

The district has clear, collective, and comprehensive visions for student and staff safety, and for student behavior and discipline; prioritizes students' physical and emotional safety; and fosters an environment that supports staff in adopting culturally sustaining and holistic mindsets toward equitable safety and discipline practices.

Define a **district-level vision and strategy** for school inclusivity, safety, and discipline that is co-developed with the entire community, lifts student and family voices, affirms and sustains diverse cultures and development of identity, and promotes a comprehensive and holistic approach to student safety that includes physical, social, emotional, and psychological wellbeing.

Support school staff in building their understanding about their school's demographics, community, and cultural context, as part of the development of each school's individualized **school-level vision and strategy** for student safety.

Adjust **district organizational structures**, and support schools in adjusting their own organizational structure, to align with the comprehensive vision—including establishing dedicated leadership positions and teams that prioritize and address each aspect of student safety. Facilitate cross-departmental approaches to student safety, so that student supports, social-emotional learning, mental health, school security, and family engagement staff can more easily collaborate in service of the broader vision.

Encourage the creation of **cross-functional leadership roles** and leverage these staff members to support the district's comprehensive and holistic approach to student wellness and safety.

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.1: DOES EACH STUDENT EXPERIENCE A SAFE SCHOOL WITH TRANSPARENT, CULTURALLY SENSITIVE, AND CONSISTENTLY ENFORCED RULES AND DISCIPLINE POLICIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE

SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Institutional Vision *(cont'd)*

THE VISION

The district has clear, collective, and comprehensive visions for student and staff safety, and for student behavior and discipline; prioritizes students' physical and emotional safety; and fosters an environment that supports staff in adopting culturally sustaining and holistic mindsets toward equitable safety and discipline practices.

Train and support staff— through professional learning, exploration, reflection, and discussion—in fostering a strong professional culture based on mutual trust and accountability by building understandings of their own **biases, mindsets, and expectations** for students and how these may influence their perceptions of and reactions to student behavior.

Other potential action(s):

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.1: **DOES EACH STUDENT EXPERIENCE A SAFE SCHOOL WITH TRANSPARENT, CULTURALLY SENSITIVE, AND CONSISTENTLY ENFORCED RULES AND DISCIPLINE POLICIES?**

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE

SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Staff Capacity & Expertise

THE VISION

School leaders, teachers, and support staff have the time, expertise, and cultural competence needed to respond to student behaviors in ways that effectively and consistently promote a safe, supportive, and positive learning environment.

Reconsider the **combination of positions and expertise** needed to realize the district and schools' comprehensive visions—including establishing new roles (such as qualified school climate coordinators) and clarifying the responsibilities of existing roles (such as school security personnel), so that there is sufficient capacity to address the social, emotional, and physical wellbeing of all students.

Incorporate scenario activities and student interviews into the recruitment process to help hire and retain **school leaders, teachers, and student support staff** who have experience and competencies in building a positive and safe school climate for all students and who are adept at implementing evidence-based discipline interventions.

Hire and retain qualified **school-based medical and mental health professionals**—including counselors, social workers, psychologists, and nurses—and integrate them within school communities to better support all students' academic, social, emotional, psychological, and medical needs.

Recognize and share the **expertise of existing staff** who implement effective and equitable safety and discipline practices and who could therefore serve as leaders and models for other staff, while ensuring that educators of color are not disproportionately expected to take on additional roles, especially without compensation.

A — DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B — EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C — PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.1: DOES EACH STUDENT EXPERIENCE A SAFE SCHOOL WITH TRANSPARENT, CULTURALLY SENSITIVE, AND CONSISTENTLY ENFORCED RULES AND DISCIPLINE POLICIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE   SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Staff Capacity & Expertise *(cont'd)*

THE VISION

School leaders, teachers, and support staff have the time, expertise, and cultural competence needed to respond to student behaviors in ways that effectively and consistently promote a safe, supportive, and positive learning environment.

Support **school leaders** in taking an active role in establishing and reinforcing a positive school climate, including quickly and consistently responding to staff needs and supporting staff with implementation of appropriate disciplinary practices.

Provide all staff with **ongoing, job-embedded professional learning** to:

- Implement **discipline practices that are culturally sustaining and age-appropriate**, including work on mindsets that may be rooted in bias and therefore affect interactions with students and perceptions of their behavior.

- Develop equitable, evidence-based **classroom and behavior management techniques** (such as positive behavior reinforcement and restorative practices) that build relationships and support students' social and emotional development when conflict occurs.

- Understand **possible root causes of student behavior**, by drawing upon trauma-informed pedagogies and other strategies for recognizing how different students may express their needs.

- Build knowledge and comfort around **crisis response and de-escalation strategies**, with an emphasis on appropriate and equitable implementation.

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.1: DOES EACH STUDENT EXPERIENCE A SAFE SCHOOL WITH TRANSPARENT, CULTURALLY SENSITIVE, AND CONSISTENTLY ENFORCED RULES AND DISCIPLINE POLICIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE

SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Staff Capacity & Expertise *(cont'd)*

THE VISION

School leaders, teachers, and support staff have the time, expertise, and cultural competence needed to respond to student behaviors in ways that effectively and consistently promote a safe, supportive, and positive learning environment.

Provide staff with the enabling **school and classroom conditions** conducive to creating trusting, inclusive, and safe learning environments—including physical spaces that minimize conflict, sufficient time to address issues as they arise, and smaller class sizes that meet the needs of students.

Provide regular **collaborative planning time** for teachers to share best practices, brainstorm approaches, and monitor their progress in equitably implementing discipline and safety policies, including time for coaching by experienced and effective mentor teachers.

Other potential action(s):

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.1: DOES EACH STUDENT EXPERIENCE A SAFE SCHOOL WITH TRANSPARENT, CULTURALLY SENSITIVE, AND CONSISTENTLY ENFORCED RULES AND DISCIPLINE POLICIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE

SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Policy Development & Communication

THE VISION

Student safety and disciplinary policies are consistently equitable and culturally sustaining in their expectations, procedures, and consequences, including the extent to which they are co-created with staff, students, and families; and how effectively and consistently these policies are communicated to staff, students, and families.

Partner with staff, students, and families (for example, through student-led, restorative disciplinary proceedings) to determine consistent schoolwide ==norms, routines, and strategies== for creating a safe and trusting environment and positive strategies for responding to student missteps.

Co-create an ==unbiased, evidence-based code of conduct== with staff, students, and families that clearly outlines behavioral expectations and consequences for not meeting those expectations.

Ensure a ==culturally sustaining approach to school policies== by meaningfully involving students and families throughout the process of creating and regularly revisiting policies, including those related to self-expression, such as hair, grooming, and dress codes.

Examine the reasons behind why students may struggle to meet school rules and policies, and either adjust the policies to better accommodate their needs, or provide students with the ==necessary resources or supports== to fully participate and engage with the school community.

A — DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B — EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C — PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.1: DOES EACH STUDENT EXPERIENCE A SAFE SCHOOL WITH TRANSPARENT, CULTURALLY SENSITIVE, AND CONSISTENTLY ENFORCED RULES AND DISCIPLINE POLICIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE   SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Policy Development & Communication *(cont'd)*

THE VISION

Student safety and disciplinary policies are consistently equitable and culturally sustaining in their expectations, procedures, and consequences, including the extent to which they are co-created with staff, students, and families; and how effectively and consistently these policies are communicated to staff, students, and families.

Determine the **times and spaces** within which school policies apply, such as before and after school hours, outside school buildings, on school grounds, during transportation to and from school, or in virtual settings and on social media—and clearly communicate these policies to students and families.

Eliminate **excessively punitive discipline policies**, such as: suspensions for minor offenses like willful defiance, policies that suspend or expel students in early grades, and the use of school police to enforce school policies and address non-criminal behavior.

Eliminate **exclusionary discipline policies** to the fullest extent possible; enact policies that minimize disruptions to the student's learning and the learning of others, if removal from the classroom through suspension, expulsion, or other disciplinary actions becomes necessary.

Ensure rules and policies are **transparent to students and families** by sharing documents outlining policies with students and families at least annually, in their home languages and using multiple communication methods, such as handouts, emails, or in-person meetings.

A   DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B   EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C   PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.1: DOES EACH STUDENT EXPERIENCE A SAFE SCHOOL WITH TRANSPARENT, CULTURALLY SENSITIVE, AND CONSISTENTLY ENFORCED RULES AND DISCIPLINE POLICIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE　　**SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS**

Policy Development & Communication *(cont'd)*

THE VISION

Student safety and disciplinary policies are consistently equitable and culturally sustaining in their expectations, procedures, and consequences, including the extent to which they are co-created with staff, students, and families; and how effectively and consistently these policies are communicated to staff, students, and families.

Ensure all staff have clear **procedures and norms** (including clarity on their respective roles and responsibilities) for communicating with families about student behaviors in a timely manner, so that consistent messages about behaviors and associated disciplinary consequences are regularly conveyed via phone calls, report cards, home visits, and other methods of communication.

Create a districtwide and school-level **committee or task force** to lead initiatives that aim to address biased rules and discipline policies—composed of a variety of stakeholders, including teachers and counselors, families, and students, and that reflect the diversity of the student population.

Encourage teachers to co-create classroom rules with students and to frequently and consistently reinforce and **communicate rules and discipline policies** to students in the specific context in which they are learning.

A　DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B　EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C　PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.1: DOES EACH STUDENT EXPERIENCE A SAFE SCHOOL WITH TRANSPARENT, CULTURALLY SENSITIVE, AND CONSISTENTLY ENFORCED RULES AND DISCIPLINE POLICIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE **SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS**

Policy Development & Communication *(cont'd)*

Create **technology and cybersecurity policies** that encourage responsible technology use and protect students against online threats while in school and at home.

Other potential action(s):

THE VISION

Student safety and disciplinary policies are consistently equitable and culturally sustaining in their expectations, procedures, and consequences, including the extent to which they are co-created with staff, students, and families; and how effectively and consistently these policies are communicated to staff, students, and families.

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.1: DOES EACH STUDENT EXPERIENCE A SAFE SCHOOL WITH TRANSPARENT, CULTURALLY SENSITIVE, AND CONSISTENTLY ENFORCED RULES AND DISCIPLINE POLICIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE

SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Student Conduct & Discipline Practices

THE VISION

Student conduct and discipline policies are consistently and equitably enforced across schools, and schools implement appropriate evidence-based conduct and discipline practices that create trusting, stable learning environments, and that keep students physically and emotionally safe.

Ensure staff members use the **types of practices**—including positive behavior reinforcement, logical consequences, restorative justice, trauma-informed approaches, and culturally sustaining pedagogies—that grow students' social-emotional skills in a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment and that help students develop skills in the early grades to positively develop both identity and independence.

Provide clear guidance and targeted support to staff around implementing **discipline practices that minimize lost learning time** for all students (such as restorative justice, peer mediation, or other evidence-based practices) to avoid temporarily or permanently removing students from their classroom or school.

Require teachers to integrate **technology** into their classrooms, and support teachers in acknowledging the importance of technology to twenty-first century learners—for example, by welcoming the use of calculator phone apps during class time and the use of headphones during independent study time.

Partner with staff, students, and families to dedicate **time for building relationships in the school community and addressing culture and climate concerns**, such as during morning meetings, assemblies, class time, and family–teacher phone calls or conferences.

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.1: DOES EACH STUDENT EXPERIENCE A SAFE SCHOOL WITH TRANSPARENT, CULTURALLY SENSITIVE, AND CONSISTENTLY ENFORCED RULES AND DISCIPLINE POLICIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE   SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Student Conduct & Discipline Practices *(cont'd)*

THE VISION

Student conduct and discipline policies are consistently and equitably enforced across schools, and schools implement appropriate evidence-based conduct and discipline practices that create trusting, stable learning environments, and that keep students physically and emotionally safe.

Communicate with students and families regularly to recognize and reward **positive behaviors**, so that contact with families is not dominated by negative reports about students; support families with building upon school norms by discussing helpful practices for supporting students at home.

Conduct **surveys and focus groups** with students, families, and staff to identify and prioritize initiatives that aim to address inequities (such as high suspension rates for particular groups of students) or other specific district and school challenges they experience; communicate the survey and focus group results and related school or district responses to promote accountability and build trust with students and families.

Collect and regularly review district- and school-level **data on discipline and school climate** to identify any disproportionalities in disciplinary actions; set clear goals and benchmarks to close gaps, to ensure existing systems work effectively and equitably for all students, and to support targeted and continuous improvements.

Other potential action(s):

A — DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B — EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C — PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.1: DOES EACH STUDENT EXPERIENCE A SAFE SCHOOL WITH TRANSPARENT, CULTURALLY SENSITIVE, AND CONSISTENTLY ENFORCED RULES AND DISCIPLINE POLICIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE

SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Other Root Cause

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

A — DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B — EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C — PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.1: DOES EACH STUDENT EXPERIENCE A SAFE SCHOOL WITH TRANSPARENT, CULTURALLY SENSITIVE, AND CONSISTENTLY ENFORCED RULES AND DISCIPLINE POLICIES?

For prompts to help your team think about next steps, go to page 63.

NOTES

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION

6.2

Does each student have positive relationships with staff and other students?

RESOURCE EQUITY GUIDEBOOK SERIES
DIMENSION 6: POSITIVE & INVITING SCHOOL CLIMATE

Intro	Key Question 6.1	Key Question 6.2	Key Question 6.3	Key Question 6.4	Next Steps
PAGE 3	PAGE 8	PAGE 25	PAGE 37	PAGE 49	PAGE 63

KEY QUESTION 6.2: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF AND OTHER STUDENTS?

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)**

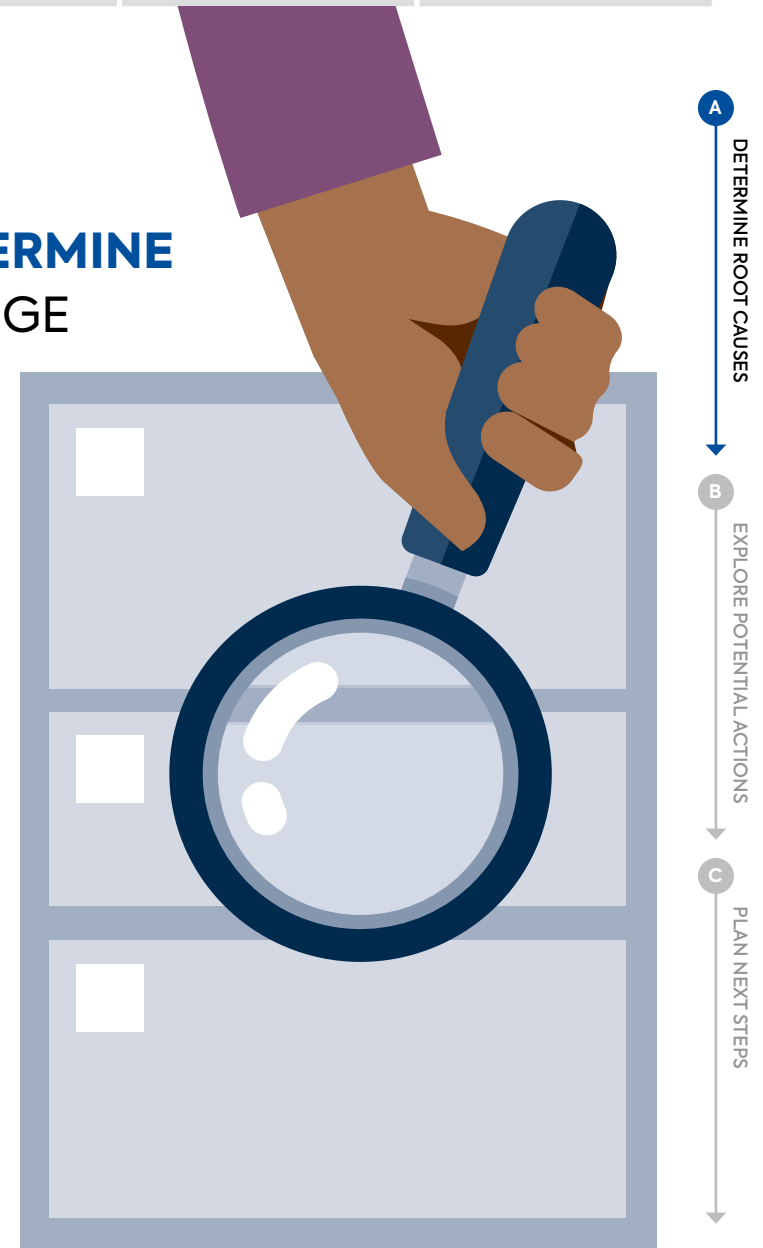**Which** of the root causes on the next page drive this challenge in your district?

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

KEY QUESTION 6.2: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF AND OTHER STUDENTS?

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

ROOT CAUSES

Institutional Vision PAGE 29

The district lacks a clear, collective, and comprehensive vision for positive and inviting school climates because meaningful student relationships with staff and peers are not prioritized, and/or the district does not foster an environment that supports staff in adopting culturally sustaining and holistic mindsets toward establishing and facilitating relationships with students.

Staff Capacity & Expertise PAGE 31

School leaders, teachers, and support staff lack the time, expertise, and/or cultural competence needed to effectively develop positive relationships with students and to support the development of strong relationships between students.

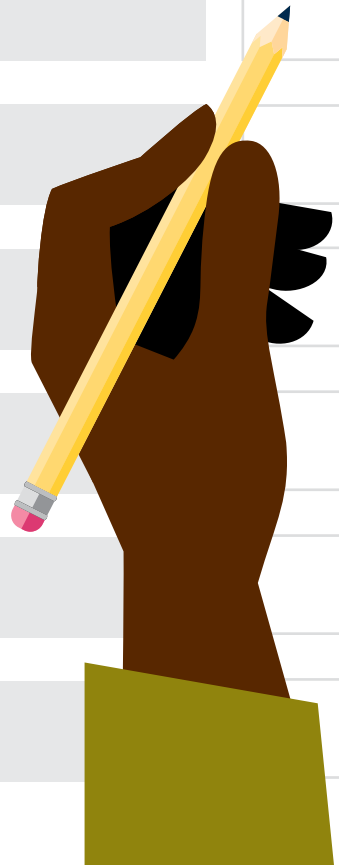## Relationship-Building Practices PAGE 33

Systems and routines that support effective relationship-building are not consistently prioritized, practiced, and/or differentiated across schools to meet students' needs, and/or schools do not have the necessary time or structures set up within the school day for practices to successfully foster meaningful, positive student relationships with staff and peers.

Other* PAGE 35

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

The Impact of Bias PAGE 7

In addition to taking on structural root causes (like those listed on this page), districts need to support staff in examining the racial, gender, and ability biases (among others) that may be contributing to students having inequitable experiences in school.

For example, some staff members may hold unconscious biases around the home lives or family relationships of students from low-income backgrounds, or staff members may not recognize the need for mixed-gender sports teams or identity-based affinity groups, making it difficult for LGBTQ+ students to find a sense of community.

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.2: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF AND OTHER STUDENTS?

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

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 do stakeholders **recommend**?	What potential **barriers** exist?
What lessons can you apply now to address your district's challenge?	What recommendations do different stakeholder groups have—particularly those most directly impacted by existing inequities?	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

KEY QUESTION 6.2: **DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF AND OTHER STUDENTS?**

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE

SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Institutional Vision

THE VISION

The district has a clear, collective, and comprehensive vision for positive and inviting school climates, that prioritizes meaningful student relationships with staff and peers as a key component, and the district fosters an environment that supports staff in adopting culturally sustaining and holistic mindsets toward establishing and facilitating relationships with students.

Elevate student relationships with staff and peers as a priority in the ==district-level vision and strategy== for fostering positive and inviting school climates, ensuring that the vision is co-developed with the community and supports student wellbeing.

Support school staff in building their understanding about their school's demographics, community, and cultural context, as part of the development of each school's individualized ==school-level vision and strategy== for building students' relationships with staff and peers.

Build ==district- and school-level organizational structures== that facilitate meaningful student relationships with staff and peers, such as time dedicated to relationship- and community-building, or small homeroom classes or advisory groups that ensure each student has regular contact with a staff member and group of peers.

Recruit, hire, and retain ==candidates and staff that reflect students' backgrounds and identities==, by ensuring they experience competitive compensation, opportunities for development, manageable workloads, and a positive school climate.

A — DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B — EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C — PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.2: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF AND OTHER STUDENTS?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE   SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Institutional Vision *(Cont'd)*

Train and support staff—through professional learning, exploration, reflection, and discussion—in understanding their own ==biases, mindsets, and expectations== for students and how these may influence their relationships.

Other potential action(s):

THE VISION

The district has a clear, collective, and comprehensive vision for positive and inviting school climates, that prioritizes meaningful student relationships with staff and peers as a key component, and the district fosters an environment that supports staff in adopting culturally sustaining and holistic mindsets toward establishing and facilitating relationships with students.

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.2: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF AND OTHER STUDENTS?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE　　**SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS**

Staff Capacity & Expertise

THE VISION

School leaders, teachers, and support staff have the time, expertise, and cultural competence needed to effectively develop positive relationships with students and to support the development of strong relationships between students.

Hire and retain **school leaders, teachers, and student support staff** with cultural competency and who have experience fostering belonging and building positive relationships, particularly with students from underserved backgrounds.

Recognize and share the **expertise of existing staff** who demonstrate effective and equitable relationship-building practices and who could therefore serve as leaders and models for other staff, while ensuring that educators of color are not disproportionately expected to take on additional roles, especially without compensation.

Provide all staff with **ongoing, job-embedded professional learning** to:

- Understand **mindsets that may be rooted in bias** and therefore affect their interactions with students or ability to develop strong relationships.

- Understand **students' lived experiences**, such as by conducting empathy interviews, home visits, or shadowing students' days.

- Share **evidence-based practices** for building positive relationships with and between students, and create an idea bank of effective strategies.

A　DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B　EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C　PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.2: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF AND OTHER STUDENTS?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE   SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Staff Capacity & Expertise
(Cont'd)

THE VISION

School leaders, teachers, and support staff have the time, expertise, and cultural competence needed to effectively develop positive relationships with students and to support the development of strong relationships between students.

Adjust staff assignments and schedules in ways that reduce ==teachers' loads== so that students have regular contact with at least one designated adult and staff can cultivate deeper relationships with students, prioritizing students with higher needs and students in transitional grade levels, such as sixth- and ninth-grade.

Provide regular ==collaborative planning time== (including time for coaching by experienced and effective mentor teachers) for teachers to share best practices for building strong relationships with students and for managing their own emotional wellbeing.

Ensure ==sufficient formal time== is built into school and class schedules for staff to develop meaningful relationships with students and for students to build meaningful relationships with one another, such as during homeroom, one-to-one conferences, or extracurricular blocks.

Other potential action(s):

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.2: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF AND OTHER STUDENTS?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE

SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Relationship-Building Practices

THE VISION

Effective relationship-building is consistently prioritized, practiced, and differentiated across schools to meet students' needs, and schools have the necessary time and structures set up within the school day for such practices to successfully foster meaningful, positive student relationships with staff and peers.

Integrate **norms, practices, and events** that recognize and validate students' diverse identities, perspectives, and experiences—for example, celebrating students' cultural heritage and sharing gender pronouns, so all students feel comfortable and safe expressing their authentic selves among others.

Support staff in implementing **pedagogical strategies** that build relationships with and among students—such as developing student-teacher advisory groups, assigning study groups, incorporating collaborative work time, and designing learning activities that create leadership opportunities and elevate students' voices.

Embed opportunities to get to know students, and for students to get to know one another—for example, through **content-focused activities and unstructured social time**, including self-directed and outdoor play for young students.

Encourage staff, in collaboration with community-based organizations, to lead **extracurricular clubs, sports teams, and affinity groups** that build relationships with and among students outside of a traditional classroom context, while simultaneously supporting students' extracurricular interests, cultural awareness, and expression.

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.2: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF AND OTHER STUDENTS?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE **SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS**

Relationship-Building Practices *(Cont'd)*

THE VISION

Effective relationship-building is consistently prioritized, practiced, and differentiated across schools to meet students' needs, and schools have the necessary time and structures set up within the school day for such practices to successfully foster meaningful, positive student relationships with staff and peers.

Identify ways to foster ==continuity and stability== for students—such as reducing teacher turnover through strong career pathways and compensation, implementing schedules and staffing assignments that keep students and teachers together for multiple years, or widening support networks to include relationships with librarians, counselors, and other permanent staff.

Foster a ==strong adult culture that sets a precedent of positive and supportive relationships== and models relationship-building skills and competencies for students, such as effective and respectful communication, collaboration, and support.

Collect and regularly review ==data on student relationships== and sense of belonging, to determine whether students of all backgrounds feel adequately connected to staff and their peers, and to assess which relationship-building practices are most effective to inform targeted and continuous improvements.

Other potential action(s):

A — DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B — EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C — PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.2: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF AND OTHER STUDENTS?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE

SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Other Root Cause

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

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.2: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF AND OTHER STUDENTS?

For prompts to help your team think about next steps, go to page 63.

NOTES

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION

6.3

Does each student have access to effective social-emotional learning opportunities?

RESOURCE EQUITY GUIDEBOOK SERIES
DIMENSION 6: POSITIVE & INVITING SCHOOL CLIMATE

KEY QUESTION 6.3: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE SOCIAL–EMOTIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES?

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:

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.3: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES?

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

ROOT CAUSES

Institutional Vision PAGE 41

The district lacks a clear, collective, and comprehensive vision for positive and inviting school climates because the role of integrated social-emotional learning is not prioritized, and/or the district does not foster an environment that supports staff in adopting culturally sustaining and holistic mindsets toward students' interpersonal growth and development.

Staff Capacity & Expertise PAGE 43

School leaders, teachers, and support staff lack the time, expertise, cultural competence, and/or a deep enough understanding of students' needs to effectively create learning environments that foster social-emotional growth and deliver social-emotional learning opportunities for all students.

Programs & Integrated Practices PAGE 45

Integrated practices and supplementary programs for social-emotional learning and development are not consistently and equitably implemented across schools, and/or schools lack the resources to provide opportunities that support all students' interpersonal growth and development.

Other* PAGE 47

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

The Impact of Bias PAGE 7

In addition to taking on structural root causes (like those listed on this page), districts need to support staff in examining the racial, gender, and ability biases (among others) that may be contributing to students have inequitable experiences in school.

For example, some staff members may hold unconscious biases around the social-emotional competencies of students with disabilities.

A
DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B
EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C
PLAN NEXT STEPS

RESOURCE EQUITY GUIDEBOOK SERIES

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Intro	Key Question 6.1	Key Question 6.2	Key Question 6.3	Key Question 6.4	Next Steps
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KEY QUESTION 6.3: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES?

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

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

KEY QUESTION 6.3: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE

SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Institutional Vision

THE VISION

The district has a clear, collective, and comprehensive vision for positive and inviting school climates that prioritizes the role of integrated social-emotional learning, and the district fosters an environment that supports staff in adopting culturally sustaining and holistic mindsets toward students' interpersonal growth and development.

Elevate integrated social-emotional learning as a priority in the ==district-level vision and strategy== for fostering positive and inviting school climates, ensuring the vision is co-developed with the community and responds to students' needs and strengths related to social, interpersonal, emotional, and cognitive skills (such as resolving conflicts, expressing thoughts, and setting goals).

Support school staff in building their understanding about their school's demographics, community, and cultural context, as part of the development of each school's individualized ==school-level vision and strategy== for supporting students' social-emotional learning throughout the school day.

Build ==district- and school-level organizational structures== that facilitate collaboration and cross-departmental approaches to social-emotional learning—for example, establishing dedicated leadership positions for social-emotional learning, and establishing supplementary programs, targeted interventions, and integrated universal practices.

A — DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B — EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C — PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.3: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE   SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Institutional Vision
(Cont'd)

THE VISION

The district has a clear, collective, and comprehensive vision for positive and inviting school climates that prioritizes the role of integrated social-emotional learning, and the district fosters an environment that supports staff in adopting culturally sustaining and holistic mindsets toward students' interpersonal growth and development.

Consider **cross-functional roles**—for example distributing social-emotional learning responsibilities to staff beyond traditional counseling departments; and consider **cross-functional hires**—for example hiring school support staff from broader applicant pools than just those with academic mentoring backgrounds, to better foster a collaborative approach to implementing the district's vision.

Train and support staff—through professional learning, exploration, reflection, and discussion—in understanding their own **biases, mindsets, and expectations** for students and how these may influence their perceptions of students' social-emotional competencies and growth.

Other potential action(s):

A — DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B — EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C — PLAN NEXT STEPS

Intro	Key Question 6.1	Key Question 6.2	Key Question 6.3	Key Question 6.4	Next Steps
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KEY QUESTION 6.3: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE

SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Staff Capacity & Expertise

THE VISION

School leaders, teachers, and support staff have the time, expertise, cultural competence, and deep understanding of students' needs to effectively create learning environments that foster social-emotional growth and deliver social-emotional learning opportunities for all students.

Hire and retain ==student support staff==—such as counselors, social workers, and behavioral specialists—to work directly with students and provide ongoing training to teachers and other school staff on integrating evidence-based social-emotional learning practices into classes and curricula.

Recognize and share the ==expertise of existing staff== who implement effective and equitable social-emotional learning practices and who could therefore serve as leaders and models for other staff, while ensuring that educators of color are not disproportionately expected to take on additional roles, especially without compensation.

Provide all staff with ==ongoing, job-embedded professional learning== to:

- Implement ==practices that are culturally sustaining and age-appropriate==, including work on mindsets that may be rooted in bias and therefore impact supporting students' social-emotional growth and development.

- Develop ==integrated social-emotional learning practices==, including building teachers' capacity by providing social-emotional resources and lesson plan ideas for each grade level.

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.3: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE

SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Staff Capacity & Expertise *(Cont'd)*

THE VISION

School leaders, teachers, and support staff have the time, expertise, cultural competence, and deep understanding of students' needs to effectively create learning environments that foster social-emotional growth and deliver social-emotional learning opportunities for all students.

Provide regular **collaborative planning time** for staff to identify daily opportunities for developing social-emotional learning skills and to plan instruction that is responsive to the needs of students, including time for coaching by experienced and effective mentor teachers.

Ensure **sufficient formal and informal time** is built into school and class schedules for staff to offer supplementary and integrated social-emotional learning opportunities—for example, during homeroom, one-to-one or small group conferences, or during after-school programs.

Other potential action(s):

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.3: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE

SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Programs & Integrated Practices

THE VISION

Integrated practices and supplementary programs for social-emotional learning are consistently and equitably implemented across schools, and schools have the resources to provide opportunities that support all students' interpersonal growth and development.

Introduce students to social-emotional learning in early grades, create or adopt a **curriculum throughout the preK-12 system** that integrates explicit teaching of social-emotional skills throughout the school day, and identify common concepts and language to be used consistently when communicating about goals with students.

Identify universal strategies for helping students develop **social-emotional competencies** (such as labeling, expressing, and regulating) that are culturally sustaining and that meet students' developmental needs; implement individualized strategies though equitable screening and identification processes for students who may require more targeted social-emotional supports.

Give students **opportunities to practice social-emotional learning skills** during instruction across content areas; ensure students have regular time to practice social-emotional learning skills via opportunities to collaborate, advocate, resolve conflicts, debate multiple perspectives, and solve grade-level problems with peers.

Establish **supplementary programs and support groups** for students who may need additional social-emotional learning support, such as students with disabilities and students experiencing trauma.

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.3: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE

SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Programs & Integrated Practices
(Cont'd)

THE VISION

Integrated practices and supplementary programs for social-emotional learning are consistently and equitably implemented across schools, and schools have the resources to provide opportunities that support all students' interpersonal growth and development.

Consider, and when necessary improve, the ==contextual environment== in which students are learning, and ensure social-emotional learning priorities are not rooted in the expectation that students demonstrate self-regulation when their foundational environment is not conducive to feeling safe, supported, and included.

Conduct ==surveys and focus groups== with students, families, and teachers to identify and prioritize initiatives that address students' social-emotional needs; articulate the school or district responses to these surveys and focus groups to promote accountability and build trust with students and families.

Collect, review, and respond to ==information on students' social-emotional competencies== to determine which social-emotional practices are most effective in supporting all students' interpersonal development, thereby aiding targeted and continuous improvements.

Other potential action(s):

A
DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B
EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C
PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.3: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE

SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Other Root Cause

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

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.3: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES?

For prompts to help your team think about next steps, go to page 63.

NOTES

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

PLAN NEXT STEPS

DIMENSION 6: POSITIVE & INVITING SCHOOL CLIMATE

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KEY QUESTION

6.4

Does each student attend a school that actively and meaningfully engages families?

RESOURCE EQUITY GUIDEBOOK SERIES
DIMENSION 6: POSITIVE & INVITING SCHOOL CLIMATE

KEY QUESTION 6.4: DOES EACH STUDENT ATTEND A SCHOOL THAT ACTIVELY AND MEANINGFULLY ENGAGES FAMILIES?

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

KEY QUESTION 6.4: DOES EACH STUDENT ATTEND A SCHOOL THAT ACTIVELY AND MEANINGFULLY ENGAGES FAMILIES?

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

ROOT CAUSES

Institutional Vision PAGE 53

The district lacks a clear, collective, and comprehensive vision for actively and meaningfully engaging families, caretakers, and guardians, and/or does not foster an environment that supports staff in adopting culturally sustaining and holistic mindsets toward partnering with families in students' learning.

Family Engagement Practices PAGE 58

Practices for meaningfully engaging families in the school community in a variety of ways that support students' learning are not implemented consistently, effectively, or equitably across schools, and/or schools lack the resources to adequately address communication or logistical barriers.

The Impact of Bias PAGE 7

In addition to taking on structural root causes (like those listed on this page), districts need to support staff in examining the racial, gender, and ability biases (among others) that may be contributing to students have inequitable experiences in school.
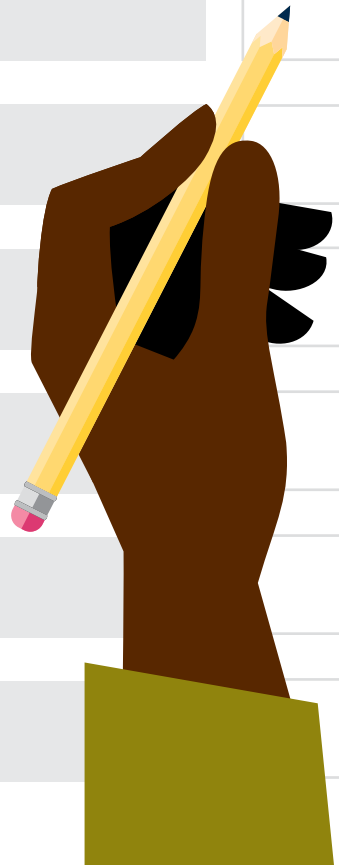
For example, some staff members may hold unconscious biases around the ability of families from low-income backgrounds to engage in their children's learning.

Staff Capacity & Expertise PAGE 55

School leaders, teachers, and support staff lack the time, expertise, and/or cultural competence needed to effectively engage families in students' learning and the wider school community.

Other* PAGE 61

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

A **DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES**

B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.4: DOES EACH STUDENT ATTEND A SCHOOL THAT ACTIVELY AND MEANINGFULLY ENGAGES FAMILIES?

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

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 do stakeholders **recommend**?	What potential **barriers** exist?
What lessons can you apply now to address your district's challenge?	What recommendations do different stakeholder groups have—particularly those most directly impacted by existing inequities?	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

KEY QUESTION 6.4: DOES EACH STUDENT ATTEND A SCHOOL THAT ACTIVELY AND MEANINGFULLY ENGAGES FAMILIES?

SYSTEM-WIDE   SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

A — DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B — EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C — PLAN NEXT STEPS

Insitutional Vision

THE VISION

The district has a clear, collective, and comprehensive vision for actively and meaningfully engaging families, caretakers, and guardians, and fosters an environment that supports staff in adopting culturally sustaining and holistic mindsets toward partnering with families in students' learning.

Elevate family engagement as a priority in the **district-level vision and strategy** for positive and inviting school climates, ensuring that the vision is co-developed with teachers and school communities, lifts student and family voices, and supports students' learning and identity development.

Support school staff in building their understanding about their school's demographics, community, and cultural context, as part of the development of each school's individualized **school-level vision and strategy** for family engagement.

Build **district- and school-level organizational structures** that facilitate meaningful family engagement, such as establishing dedicated leadership positions for family engagement, forming family-teacher associations, and creating family representative positions on school governance committees.

Recruit, hire, and retain **candidates and staff that reflect students' and families' backgrounds** and linguistic diversity by ensuring they experience competitive compensation, opportunities for development and leadership, manageable workloads, and a positive school climate.

Recognize the importance of engaging with families via **multiple forms of communication**, in their home languages, and at different times of day in response to varying work schedules; **invest in the systems, technologies, and personnel** needed to achieve these various forms of communication.

KEY QUESTION 6.4: DOES EACH STUDENT ATTEND A SCHOOL THAT ACTIVELY AND MEANINGFULLY ENGAGES FAMILIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE   SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

A — DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B — EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C — PLAN NEXT STEPS

Institutional Vision *(Cont'd)*

THE VISION

The district has a clear, collective, and comprehensive vision for actively and meaningfully engaging families, caretakers, and guardians, and fosters an environment that supports staff in adopting culturally sustaining and holistic mindsets toward partnering with families in students' learning.

Partner with outside organizations to establish ==family and community engagement programs that build on family interests, needs, and strengths==, such as adult education programming, and opportunities for building English language proficiency, taking citizenship exams, developing computer literacy skills, or participating in wellness or art classes.

Train and support staff—through professional learning, exploration, reflection, and discussion—in understanding their own ==biases, mindsets, and expectations== for families and how these may influence their perceptions of and interactions with families.

Other potential action(s):

KEY QUESTION 6.4: DOES EACH STUDENT ATTEND A SCHOOL THAT ACTIVELY AND MEANINGFULLY ENGAGES FAMILIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE

SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Staff Capacity & Expertise

THE VISION

School leaders, teachers, and support staff have the time, expertise, and cultural competence needed to effectively engage families in students' learning and the wider school community.

Hire and retain ==school leaders, teachers, and student support staff== with cultural competency, a growth mindset, and who have experience engaging families in their students' learning and growth, particularly with families from underserved backgrounds.

Ensure communication with families is offered in ==multiple languages==, including by hiring staff, outsourcing, leveraging external partnerships, or providing stipends for existing staff to provide translation services.

Recognize and share the ==expertise of existing staff== who implement effective and equitable family engagement practices and who could therefore serve as leaders and models for other staff, while ensuring that educators of color are not disproportionately expected to take on additional roles, especially without compensation.

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.4: DOES EACH STUDENT ATTEND A SCHOOL THAT ACTIVELY AND MEANINGFULLY ENGAGES FAMILIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE   SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Staff Capacity & Expertise *(Cont'd)*

THE VISION

School leaders, teachers, and support staff have the time, expertise, and cultural competence needed to effectively engage families in students' learning and the wider school community.

Provide all staff with **ongoing, job-embedded professional learning** to:

- Implement culturally sustaining practices, including using **culturally relevant curricula**, to effectively incorporate and examine issues of injustice, and address mindsets that may be rooted in bias and therefore affect expectations and interactions with families.

- Build awareness about specific ways families' own prior experiences with schools might make them feel unwelcome, uncomfortable, or underrepresented, and how **implicit power dynamics** may discourage families (especially those from underserved backgrounds) from seeking to engage with the school community.

- Develop **evidence-based practices for family engagement** (including a focus on families from underserved backgrounds who are more likely to be overlooked) and supporting students' learning and wellbeing, including soliciting and responding to family concerns and informing families about students' academic and personal growth.

- Provide and refine guidance for effective practices that correspond to **family engagement milestones throughout the school year**, such as leading family-teacher conferences, writing report cards, participating in home visits, and hosting open houses.

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

KEY QUESTION 6.4: DOES EACH STUDENT ATTEND A SCHOOL THAT ACTIVELY AND MEANINGFULLY ENGAGES FAMILIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE

SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Staff Capacity & Expertise
(Cont'd)

THE VISION

School leaders, teachers, and support staff have the time, expertise, and cultural competence needed to effectively engage families in students' learning and the wider school community.

Create ==collaborative planning time== for teachers and other school staff to share best practices for family engagement, including time for coaching by experienced and effective mentor teachers and safe spaces for teachers to discuss, question, and unpack their own biases.

Provide ==dedicated time for family engagement as part of both staff schedules and school calendars==, such as family outreach periods, home visits, traditional family-teacher conferences, or forming family-teacher academic teams to foster collaboration on curriculum and instruction.

Other potential action(s):

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.4: DOES EACH STUDENT ATTEND A SCHOOL THAT ACTIVELY AND MEANINGFULLY ENGAGES FAMILIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE

SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Family Engagement Practices

THE VISION

Practices for meaningfully engaging families in the school community in a variety of ways that support students' learning are implemented consistently, effectively, and equitably across schools, and schools have the resources to adequately address communication or logistical barriers.

Proactively seek **input from families**, with a deliberate effort to include families of color and families from other underserved backgrounds, about the types of communication and engagement strategies they find most helpful; provide clear guidance to families about when, why, and how they can contact their students' school leaders, teachers, and staff.

Mitigate **logistical barriers** so that families can more easily attend in-person engagements—for example, providing transportation and childcare, holding events at community centers, and scheduling events on evenings and weekends.

Engage families via **multiple forms of communication** online, on paper, and in person, and use data management systems that allow family contact information and preferences to be easily and frequently updated, to ensure convenient and accessible communication with families remains constant through changing circumstances.

Communicate with families in their **home languages** to the fullest extent possible, and proactively offer informational materials in the languages most prevalent in the community.

Extend **positive communications** to families about their students' academic and personal growth, including regular updates about their achievements, successes, and goals, to develop trust and a healthy rapport between staff and families.

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.4: DOES EACH STUDENT ATTEND A SCHOOL THAT ACTIVELY AND MEANINGFULLY ENGAGES FAMILIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE   SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Family Engagement Practices
(Cont'd)

THE VISION

Practices for meaningfully engaging families in the school community in a variety of ways that support students' learning are implemented consistently, effectively, and equitably across schools, and schools have the resources to adequately address communication or logistical barriers.

Empower families by encouraging **involvement in their students' education**—for example, providing concrete guidance, support, and ideas around how they can help their students develop good work habits (while also taking care not to expect families to supplement instruction of academic content).

Provide formal and informal opportunities for students and families to be meaningfully and proactively included in decision-making, such as through **representation on schools' governing bodies.**

Partner with **community organizations, leaders, and advocates** to collaboratively support students outside of school hours and to bridge the potential gap between families and schools, especially for families whose prior experiences make them feel unwelcome, unsupported, or underrepresented in education spaces where implicit power dynamics may exist.

Conduct **surveys and focus groups** with students and families to understand their experiences, ideas, questions, and concerns; articulate the school or district responses to these surveys and focus groups to promote accountability and build trust with students and families.

A — DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B — EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C — PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.4: DOES EACH STUDENT ATTEND A SCHOOL THAT ACTIVELY AND MEANINGFULLY ENGAGES FAMILIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE **SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS**

A — DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

Family Engagement Practices *(Cont'd)*

Collect and regularly review **data on family engagement** to determine whether families of all backgrounds are actively and meaningfully engaged in school programs, partnerships, and decisions, to keep track of which families are not being reached, and to assess which family engagement practices are most effective to inform targeted and continuous improvements.

Other potential action(s):

B — EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

THE VISION

Practices for meaningfully engaging families in the school community in a variety of ways that support students' learning are implemented consistently, effectively, and equitably across schools, and schools have the resources to adequately address communication or logistical barriers.

C — PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.4: DOES EACH STUDENT ATTEND A SCHOOL THAT ACTIVELY AND MEANINGFULLY ENGAGES FAMILIES?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**

SYSTEM-WIDE

SPECIFIC SCHOOLS OR CLASSROOMS

Other Root Cause

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

A — DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B — EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C — PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 6.4: DOES EACH STUDENT ATTEND A SCHOOL THAT ACTIVELY AND MEANINGFULLY ENGAGES FAMILIES?

For prompts to help your team think about next steps, go to page 63.

NOTES

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

PLAN NEXT STEPS

Plan Next Steps

1. PRIORITIZE   **2. CUSTOMIZE**   **3. ALIGN**   **4. PLAN**
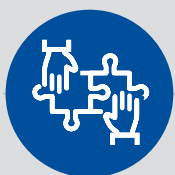
Now that your team has begun to uncover the root causes of your school system's challenges and explored possible actions to improve **Positive & Inviting School Climate**, it's time to plan next steps. You can continue to build on the momentum your team has built so far by beginning to outline what you 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

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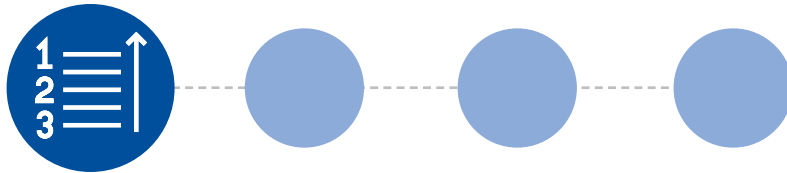
1. PRIORITIZE

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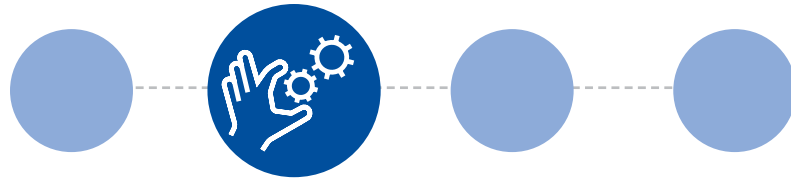
Important considerations:

- 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?

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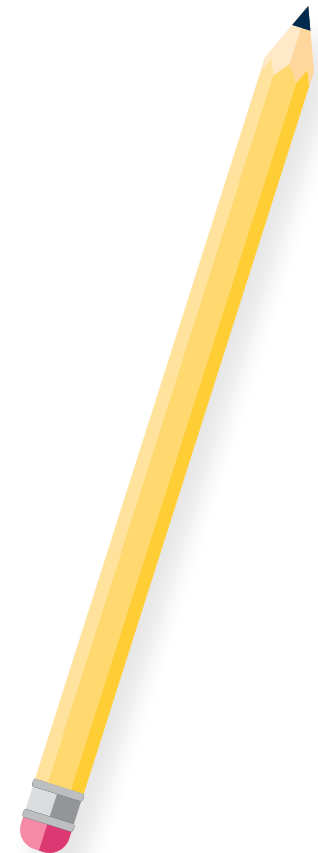
2. CUSTOMIZE

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)
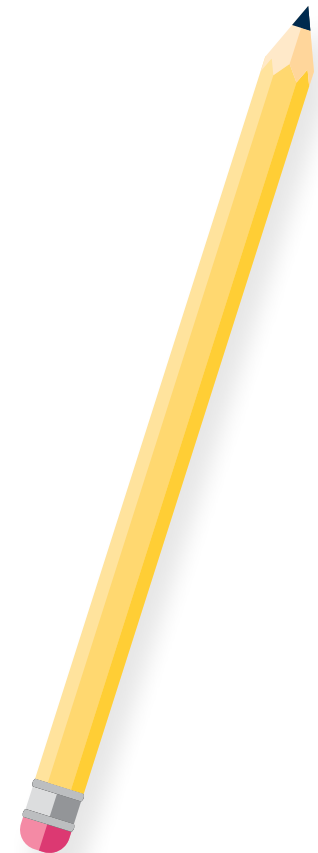
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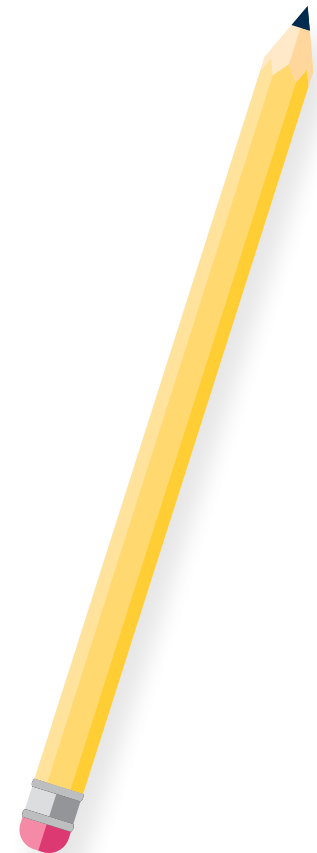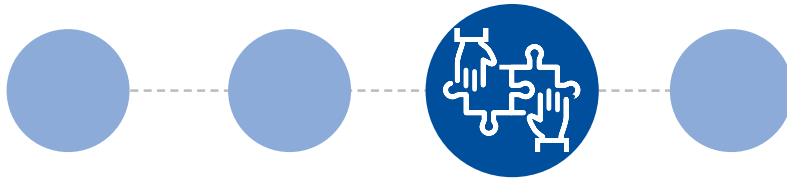
3. ALIGN

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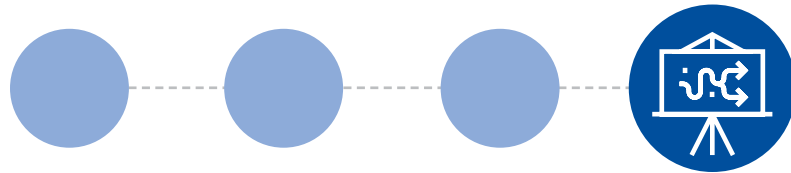
Important considerations:

- 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?
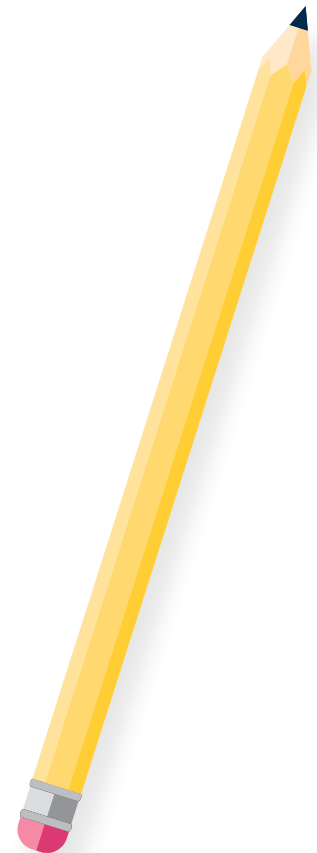
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4. PLAN

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?

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APPENDIX

ADDITIONAL NOTES

ⓘ CULTURALLY SUSTAINING

In teaching and learning, *culturally sustaining practices* support and encourage students to express, preserve, and perpetuate their cultural identities (including race and ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, and language), home practices, and lived experiences in their educational environments—especially those whose cultures typically get eroded or erased. Culturally sustaining practices seek to sustain — rather than just represent—students' cultures and identities.

In districts, schools, and classrooms, this work entails crafting policies and learning experiences that are grounded in students' real-life contexts, while validating and leveraging their cultural capital. For educators, it means building cultural competencies (understanding culture and its role in education), adopting asset-based mindsets with continual efforts to reduce bias, and forming strong relationships with individual students. Infusing students' identities and experiences into the curricula and content itself is foundational to engaging and empowering students — therefore, *culturally relevant materials* (such as literature that features different types of families and characters who look like students or who face relatable challenges, without resorting to stereotypes) are a key component of culturally sustaining teaching and learning.

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ALLIANCE FOR
RESOURCE
EQUITY

Uniting advocates and education leaders
to unlock excellence for every student