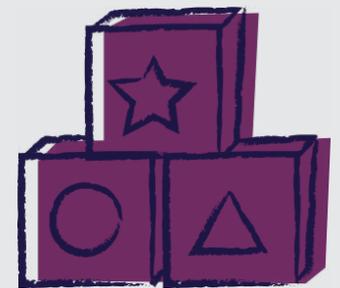


RESOURCE EQUITY GUIDEBOOK

HIGH-QUALITY EARLY LEARNING



**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**.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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

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

We would also like to acknowledge the many team members who contributed to this work. At Education Resource Strategies, this includes Mark Heath, Christopher Cleveland, Betty Chang, Torrie Mekos, and Karen Hawley Miles. And at the Education Trust, this includes Terra Wallin, Carrie Gillispie, and Heather Rieman. Thank you to Danielle Ewan at EducationCounsel for content feedback. Thank you to J Sherman Studio for their design partnership.

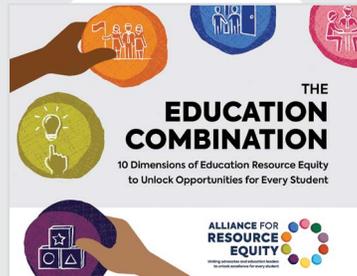
This work was made possible by the support of The Raikes Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and The W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

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



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.

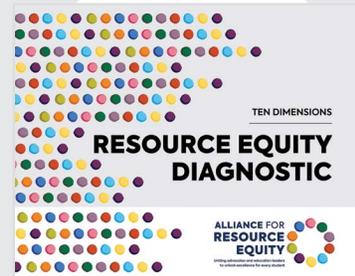


1

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 8: High-Quality Early Learning

ABOUT THIS GUIDEBOOK

Your team of district leaders and community members can use this guidebook about **High-Quality Early Learning** 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**

While the term “early learning” refers to educational experiences from birth through third grade, this guidebook focuses on one specific aspect: preschool. Specifically, this guidebook is intended to support planning for free public preschool and wraparound services (such as transportation and lunch) for all 3- and 4-year-old children via district- and community-provided programming.

KEY QUESTION

8.1

Does each student have access to high-quality preschool programs?

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



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WHAT IS EDUCATION RESOURCE EQUITY?

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

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

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

KEY TERMS

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

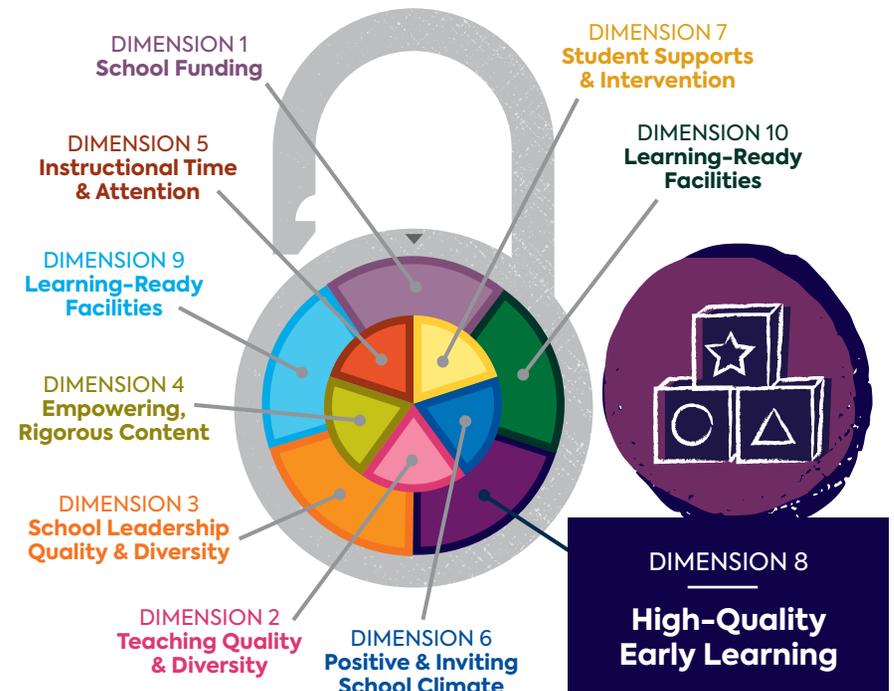
Students of color, in this context, includes Black, Latino, and Native American students, or other historically underserved racial/ethnic groups in your district.

The 10 dimensions of education resource equity often interact. For example, **High-Quality Early Learning** is closely related to nearly **all other dimensions**. Nearly all other dimensions of education resource equity—from Teaching Quality & Diversity, to Instructional Time & Attention, to Empowering, Rigorous Content—are required for high-quality early learning to take place.

In this guidebook, we explore these connections in more depth and then highlight possible action steps for early learning. Additional information and suggested action steps can also be found in the [guidebooks for each of the other dimensions](#) of education resource equity.

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.



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 provide enough seats in high-quality, full-day preschool programs to support all eligible 3- and 4-year-old learners.

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.

Note: District-provided preschools are one venue within a broader landscape of providers to serve 3- and 4-year-olds. While districts should assume responsibility for assessing and addressing community needs, they should also strive toward building foundations for excellence by partnering with other community preschool providers to ensure all students have access to a high-quality preschool program.



EQUITABLE ACCESS In specific schools or classrooms

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

- **Inequities across schools**— for example, if schools that serve higher proportions of preschool students from low-income backgrounds are less likely to be staffed with strong teachers who have the tools they need to implement a high-quality, standards-aligned curriculum.
- **Inequities within schools**—for example, if students with higher needs are less likely to have access to a high-quality preschool program than other students in different classrooms within the same preschool because of varying early learning funding streams and funding sources within the same 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.



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

HOW DO WE USE THIS GUIDEBOOK?

First, get everyone together at the table.

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

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

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

A DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

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 [page 29](#) to prioritize which of the actions you selected seem most promising to pursue (and when), to further customize those actions to meet the unique needs of your students, and to check for alignment with other district efforts and priorities.



KEY QUESTION

8.1

Does each student have access to high-quality preschool programs?



KEY QUESTION 8.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS?

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

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KEY QUESTION 8.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS?

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

ROOT CAUSES

Funding PAGE 12

Funding for preschool programs is insufficient, too inflexible, and/or too unclear to meet student and family needs through a district and/or community-provided preschool.

Preschool Teaching & Leadership Quality & Diversity PAGE 16

Preschool programs lack a sufficient amount of high-quality and diverse educators.

Instructional Time & Attention PAGE 20

Preschool programs do not provide targeted instructional time and attention to students who need it most.

Program Availability & Accessibility PAGE 14

Quality district- and/or community-provided preschool options are not available to all families of 3- and 4-year-olds via a clear and inclusive application process, and/or the timing and location of registration opportunities and preschool offerings are inconvenient or inaccessible.

Empowering, Rigorous Content PAGE 18

The content covered in preschool programs doesn't meet standards for being high-quality, culturally/linguistically competent, and/or developmentally appropriate; and/or this content is not intentionally or effectively coordinated with elementary schools, with other community preschool providers, or with input from families and educators.

Positive & Inviting School Climate PAGE 22

Preschools do not consistently use equitable and culturally sustaining student safety and disciplinary practices, and/or educators do not facilitate consistent, authentic, and transparent engagement with families.

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

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KEY QUESTION 8.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS?

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

ROOT CAUSES (CONT'D)

Student Supports & Intervention PAGE 24

Preschools lack programs and practices to identify and connect students with individualized supports; these practices and supports are not effective or culturally sustaining; and/or supports are not integrated into the day-to-day functioning of the school.

Other* PAGE 27

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

Diverse Classrooms & Schools PAGE 26

Preschool assignment, zoning, choice, or transportation policies reinforce segregation such that each preschool does not reflect the district's overall diversity limiting the likelihood students go to school with children from a mix of racial/ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

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

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KEY QUESTION 8.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS?

USE THESE GUIDING QUESTIONS AS YOU EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

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

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



SYSTEMWIDE (Foundations for Excellence)



IN SPECIFIC SCHOOLS (Equitable Access)

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

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

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

What do stakeholders **recommend**?

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

What potential **barriers** exist?

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

Your notes:

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

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KEY QUESTION 8.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS?

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS

Funding

THE VISION

Districts and community-providers have sufficient and flexible funding, that is not capped by enrollment numbers or deadlines.

Create a coalition with families, community leaders, and leaders in other districts to advocate for **effective policies and increased funding** at the local, state, and federal levels to support high-quality early childhood education for children ages zero to five. This may include:

- Campaigning for **revised funding formulas and grant allocations** to increase funds to district and community-provided preschool programs.
- Developing **innovative partnerships with community organizations** to share resources in service of providing district-aligned, high-quality preschool.

Utilize **state-provided planning resources**—such as models of budgets and sample Memorandums of Agreement, as well as state-provided technical assistance—to increase access to high-quality preschool within the district.

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

PLAN NEXT STEPS

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KEY QUESTION 8.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



Funding (Cont'd)

THE VISION

Districts and community-providers have sufficient and flexible funding, that is not capped by enrollment numbers or deadlines.

Review the Alliance for Resource Equity’s [School Funding Guidebook](#) to explore **additional root causes and potential action steps**. Some potential action steps from this guidebook that may be particularly relevant for high-quality early learning are:

- Identify **new potential revenue sources**, such as grant funding or Medicaid payment for school-based health services.
- Investigate and consider shifting away from **sources of significant inefficient spending** to free up funds for schools and students. This can include revisiting central office overhead costs, rethinking transportation policies to meet current standards, and reviewing pension and benefit structures to make sure they are aligned with local benchmarks.

Other potential action(s):

KEY QUESTION 8.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS?



SYSTEM-
WIDE



SPECIFIC
SCHOOLS

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?

Program Availability & Accessibility

THE VISION

Though a centralized, clear, and transparent application process, all students are able to attend a nearby high-quality, full-day preschool program that has sufficient wrap-around services.

Provide **easy, quick, and accessible application processes** through multiple modes (for example, online & smartphone adaptive/responsive, in-person, via phone call) in languages most prevalent in the community. Enrollees should not be required to provide information about the citizenship or immigration status of a child or family members.

Seek continued **input from families** to ensure application and logistical processes are accessible and meeting student and family needs.

Increase the accessibility of preschool programs by offering **full-day hours**.

Analyze **geographic need for high-quality preschools** and implement programs in these neighborhoods, ensuring locations are geographically varied across the district, so that all families have a nearby location. Invest in accessible transportation to and from preschool sites and create processes for families to ensure siblings are in the same preschool.

Establish **partnerships with local child care providers** to implement high-quality preschool at a larger scale.

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

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KEY QUESTION 8.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS?

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS



Program Availability & Accessibility (Cont'd)

Conduct culturally and linguistically competent **family engagement programs** for families with infants and toddlers, preschool-age children, and early elementary school children, with a focus on engaging families before they enter preschool and throughout their children's early childhood education.

Other potential action(s):

THE VISION

Though a centralized, clear, and transparent application process, all students are able to attend a nearby high-quality, full-day preschool program that has sufficient wrap-around services.

KEY QUESTION 8.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS**?



SYSTEM-
WIDE



SPECIFIC
SCHOOLS

Preschool Teaching & Leadership Quality & Diversity

All students have access to high-quality, diverse teachers and school leaders, who implement practices that are research-backed, culturally relevant, and differentiated to meet students' distinct needs.

THE VISION

Gather **data and perspectives** from current preschool educators to understand more about the types of root causes that negatively impact teaching and leadership quality and diversity in preschools.

Review the Alliance for Resource Equity's [Teaching Quality & Diversity Guidebook](#) and [School Leadership Quality & Diversity Guidebook](#) to explore **additional root causes and potential action steps**. Some potential action steps from these guidebooks that may be particularly relevant for high-quality early learning include:

- Increase compensation (**salaries, benefits, stipends**) to make it competitive with neighboring districts and jobs in other sectors that require similar levels of education; focus in either all preschools or preschools located in areas with higher needs to incentivize strong teachers and leaders to work where they are needed most.
- Create district-specific pipelines to develop a **portfolio of pathways** into teaching and preschool leadership—including alternative teacher certification and degree programs and “grow your own” programs, such as paraprofessional-to-teacher models.

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

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KEY QUESTION 8.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



Preschool Teaching & Leadership Quality & Diversity
(Cont'd)

- Improve **application and screening processes** to gain a better sense of teaching and preschool leadership effectiveness (for example, by including a demo lesson portion). Ensure candidates have early childhood training and credentials.
- Tailor **on-going, job-embedded professional learning** sessions and coaching to support the specific needs of individual teachers and early learners at district and community-provided preschools. Some priorities for professional learning may include relationship-building, supporting students' well-being, increased content expertise, culturally relevant pedagogies, healing-centered engagement, and positive behavior support, prevention, and intervention practices.

Other potential action(s):

THE VISION

All students have access to high-quality, diverse teachers and school leaders, who implement practices that are research-backed, culturally relevant, and differentiated to meet students' distinct needs.

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KEY QUESTION 8.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS?

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS

Empowering, Rigorous Content

Preschool programs are aligned to developmentally appropriate standards (such as those from the National Association for the Education of Young Children or the National Institute for Early Education Research), leverage input from families and educators, and are coordinated with elementary schools and other community preschool providers.

THE VISION

Align and coordinate district- and community-provided preschool and early elementary school **curricula, standards, and programs** in a developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically competent way.

Regularly connect community-based early childhood and social service organizations with early elementary school leaders to strengthen **transition planning and service coordination**.

Host **summer learning programs** for children attending community-based preschools who are transitioning to kindergarten.

Gather **data and perspectives** from current preschool leaders, educators, families, and content experts to learn more about the types of root causes that negatively impact curricula quality and availability.

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 8.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS**?



**Empowering,
Rigorous
Content**
(Cont'd)

THE VISION

Preschool programs are aligned to developmentally appropriate standards (such as those from the National Association for the Education of Young Children or the National Institute for Early Education Research), leverage input from families and educators, and are coordinated with elementary schools and other community preschool providers.

Review the Alliance for Resource Equity’s [Empowering, Rigorous Content Guidebook](#) to explore **additional root causes and potential action steps**. Some potential action steps from this guidebook that may be particularly relevant for high-quality early learning include:

- Create a **team to evaluate, select, and develop new curricula** that represents diverse perspectives from school leaders, teachers, families, and especially early learning content experts.
- Select and develop **comprehensive, highly detailed curricula** that include scope and sequence/pacing guidance, detailed units and lessons, related materials such as texts, and fully aligned assessments. Ensure that additional materials that are used to address unfinished learning—such as menus of ways to support students with prerequisite content knowledge and skills for each standard—integrate well with core curriculum.
- Create or adopt a **culturally competent curriculum that integrates social and emotional development into academic learning.** ⓘ

Other potential action(s):

KEY QUESTION 8.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS?

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS

Instructional Time & Attention

THE VISION

Preschool programs and curricula are differentiated to provide students with appropriate individualized supports.

Provide **inclusion-based preschool settings** with enough seats and staffing for children with and without developmental delays and disabilities to learn together.

Gather **data and perspectives** from current preschool leaders, educators, families, and content experts to learn more about the types of root causes that negatively impact instructional time and attention.

Review the Alliance for Resource Equity's [Instructional Time & Attention Guidebook](#) to explore **additional root causes and potential action steps**. Some potential action steps from this guidebook that may be particularly relevant for high-quality early learning include:

- Maintain a comprehensive, integrated **data system** for identifying and monitoring each student's academic and non-academic needs (such as assessment scores; grades; IEP/504 information; individualized family service plans; ELL information; social-emotional data; and information about physical/mental health or family needs), as well as supports they receive and outcomes over time. This system should be clear, accurate, and easily-accessible to help promote high standards for documentation across schools and support student transitions between schools.

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

PLAN NEXT STEPS

KEY QUESTION 8.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



Instructional Time & Attention
(Cont'd)

THE VISION
Preschool programs and curricula are differentiated to provide students with appropriate individualized supports.

- Establish a clear process for staff to meaningfully engage **families and students** in discussions about progress and in decision-making about their academic support plans (for example, changes to student schedules).
- Increase the **amount of teaching staff** to ensure class and group sizes are small enough for teachers to provide individualized attention to all students. This could be accomplished by:
 - Increasing the amount of staff (or funding) allocated to schools; this may require seeking additional funding or trading off investments in other areas.
 - Leveraging existing resources—for example, by strategically assigning resident teachers or by redefining existing roles.

Other potential action(s):

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KEY QUESTION 8.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS?

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS

Positive & Inviting School Climate

Preschool programs and policies are consistently equitable and culturally sustaining in their expectations, consequences, and procedures, including the extent to which they are co-created with and communicated to staff, students, and families.

THE VISION

Offer stipends and create schedules to allow early learning educators to have **frequent conversations with families**, including virtual options and home visits.

Define a **district-level vision and strategy** for school inclusivity, safety, and developmentally-appropriate approaches to 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. Ensure preschool rules and policies prohibit the use of corporal punishment, seclusion, suspension, or expulsion.

Gather **data and perspectives** from current preschool leaders, educators, families, and content experts to learn more about the types of root causes that negatively impact school climate.

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

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KEY QUESTION 8.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



Positive & Inviting School Climate
(Cont'd)

THE VISION
Preschool programs and policies are consistently equitable and culturally sustaining in their expectations, consequences, and procedures, including the extent to which they are co-created with and communicated to staff, students, and families.

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.

Review the Alliance for Resource Equity’s [Positive & Inviting School Climate Guidebook](#) to explore **additional root causes and potential action steps**.

Other potential action(s):

KEY QUESTION 8.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS?

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS

Student Supports & Intervention

Preschools have effective, culturally sustaining programs and transparent and unbiased practices for identifying and providing individualized supports that meet students' academic and non-academic needs—and supports are integrated into the day-to-day functioning of the school.

THE VISION

Gather **data and perspectives** from current preschool leaders, educators, families, and content experts to learn more about the types of root causes that negatively impact individualized supports and interventions for early learners.

Review the Alliance for Resource Equity's [Student Supports & Intervention Guidebook](#) to explore **additional root causes and potential action steps**. Some potential action steps from this guidebook that may be particularly relevant for high-quality early learning include:

- Maintain a comprehensive, integrated **data system** that provides easily accessible, clear, and accurate data for each student's academic needs (including IEP/504 information and individualized family service plans), and non-academic needs (including social-emotional needs, physical and mental health needs, and family needs). Ensure this data system can be used to document supports and outcomes over time and to promote high standards in documentation across the district, especially when students transition between schools.
- Implement **multi-tiered systems of supports** to address individual student needs, including universal supports that all students receive, targeted supports that some students receive, and intensive supports that a few students receive; vary strategies according to students' needs.

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

PLAN NEXT STEPS

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KEY QUESTION 8.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS?

WHAT ARE THE **POTENTIAL ACTIONS?**



Student Supports & Intervention
(Cont'd)

Preschools have effective, culturally sustaining programs and transparent and unbiased practices for identifying and providing individualized supports that meet students' academic and non-academic needs—and supports are integrated into the day-to-day functioning of the school.

- Establish **partnerships with community organizations and external professionals** to leverage their expertise and fill any existing gaps in the student supports offered by schools—such as by developing joint programs, establishing service coordination positions, and implementing cohesive models for delivering supports.
- Develop a clear and up-to-date **inventory of pre-approved resources** offered by local agencies, universities, businesses, and other community organizations—and make it easily accessible for school staff and families to use.

Other potential action(s):

THE VISION

KEY QUESTION 8.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS?



SYSTEM-
WIDE



SPECIFIC
SCHOOLS

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?

Diverse Classrooms & Schools

Preschool assignment, zoning, choice, and transportation policies break down patterns of segregation, such that each preschool reflects the district's overall diversity and increases the likelihood students go to school with children from a mix of racial/ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Gather **data and perspectives** from current preschool leaders, educators, families, and content experts to learn more about the types of root causes that negatively impact classroom and school diversity.

Review the Alliance for Resource Equity's [Diverse Classrooms & Schools Guidebook](#) to explore **additional root causes and potential action steps**. Some potential action steps from this guidebook that may be particularly relevant for high-quality early learning include:

- Analyze **current racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic segregation** in the district. Use findings to revise assignment and zoning boundaries to promote more integrated preschools.
- Create programs within preschools—such as dual language and arts programs—that attract racially, ethnically, culturally, and socioeconomically diverse families and reserve **seats for students with the highest needs**. Seek input from families and community members to ensure these programs are relevant and accessible to underserved students.
- Analyze **transportation needs and opportunities** to ensure all students can take advantage of preschool programs free of cost.

Other potential action(s):

A

DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES

B

EXPLORE POTENTIAL ACTIONS

C

PLAN NEXT STEPS

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KEY QUESTION 8.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS?

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ACTIONS?



SYSTEM-WIDE



SPECIFIC SCHOOLS



Other Root Cause

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

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KEY QUESTION 8.1: DOES EACH STUDENT HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS?

For prompts to help your team think about next steps, go to page 29.

NOTES



Plan Next Steps



1. PRIORITIZE



2. CUSTOMIZE

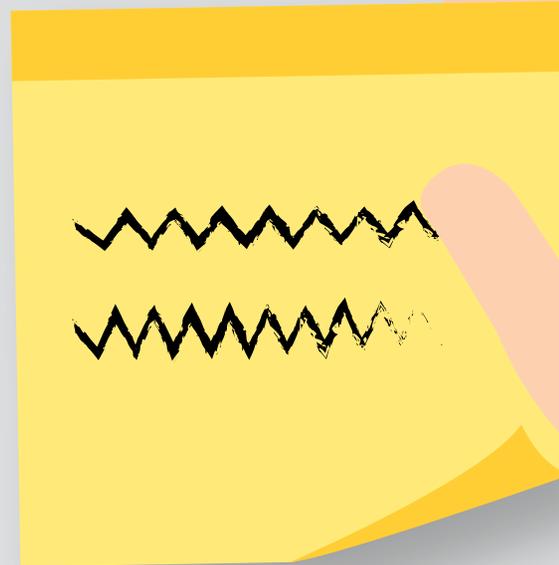


3. ALIGN



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 **High-Quality Early Learning**, 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

Intro

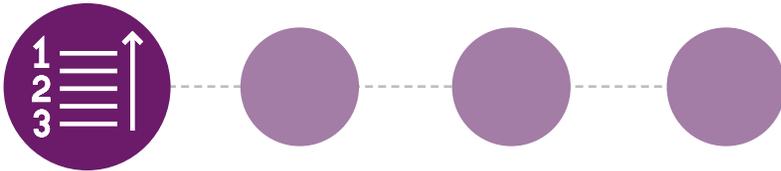
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1. PRIORITIZE

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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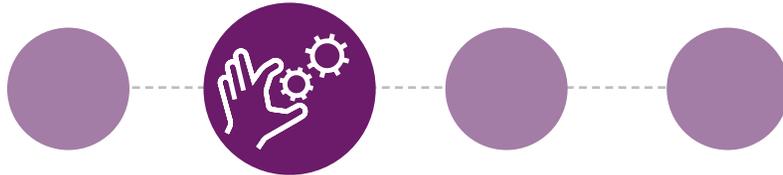
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2. CUSTOMIZE

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

Important considerations:

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

NOTES



Intro

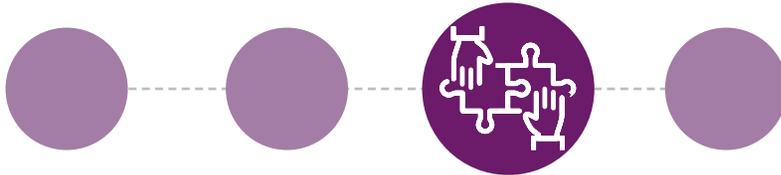
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3. ALIGN

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

Important considerations:

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

NOTES



Intro

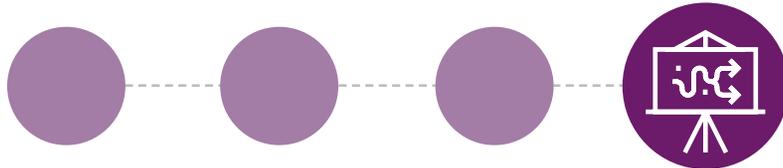
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4. PLAN

What is needed to successfully implement the most promising actions?

Important considerations:

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

NOTES



APPENDIX



ADDITIONAL NOTES

i CULTURALLY RELEVANT

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

For educators, this work entails building cultural competencies (understanding culture and its role in education), adopting asset-based mindsets with continual efforts to reduce bias, and knowing individual students well enough to craft experiences that use familiar frames of reference and make learning contextual, activate students' prior knowledge and experiences, encourage them to leverage their cultural capital, and consider their learning styles to make instruction more relevant and effective.

- Examples of **culturally relevant teaching** include practices such as incorporating students' interests in the scenarios used in math problems, incorporating media that positively depicts diverse cultures, providing students with options to self-select how to demonstrate their learning, using reciprocal teaching and cooperative learning methods, gamifying lessons, and using familiar songs to help make new concepts “sticky.”
- Examples of **culturally relevant materials** include literature that features different types of families, characters who look like students or face relatable challenges (without resorting to stereotypes), and assessments that avoid assumptions about students' points of reference without including necessary context, such as past SAT analogy questions that referenced yachts, regattas, and debutante balls.

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7. Laura Bellows, Daphna Bassok, and Anna J. Markowitz. *Teacher Turnover in Early Childhood Education: Longitudinal Evidence from the University of Publicly-Funded Programs in Louisiana*. Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, 2021. <https://www.edworkingpapers.com/index.php/ai21-453>
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10. National Association for the Education of Young Children. *Increasing Qualifications, Centering Equity: Experiences and Advice from Early Childhood Educators of Color*. 2019. <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/blog/increasing-qualifications-centering-equity>

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