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Now What?

Confronting Uncomfortable Truths About Inequity in Schools

A Leadership Rubric for Action

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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from Now What? Confronting Uncomfortable Truths About Inequity in Schools.

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YOUR NEXT STEPS: ANALYZE FOR EQUITY

Remember that Cultural Proficiency is not merely a new set of tasks, nor is it a new program to implement. Rather, it is a lens through which we see our work anew and a lens through which we can view the work that is still ahead of us. To support readers in taking the recommended actions, we have outlined eight interrelated steps. They include some traditional data points and also new data points that will instill a deeper understanding of where your organization is positioned before you move forward. It is important to determine the sequence of these steps as you prepare to develop the plan. The recommended steps are listed below and described in greater detail when addressed individually. Remember that the steps are not sequential, and it is up to you to identify what needs to be addressed first, second, and so on.

- Step one: Select data from a variety of sources.

- Step two: Disaggregate the data by significant demographic groups in your school, district, and community.

- Step three: Study longitudinal data over at least a five-year period.

- Step four: Cross-tabulate the data for demographic groups by socioeconomic status, ethnic groups, and language fluency.

- Step five: Arrange the data so they are easily read and understood by stakeholders.

- Step six: Invite stakeholders to examine the data.

- Step seven: Use data and information that stakeholders collected to explore contributing factors or hypotheses.

- Step eight: Use stakeholder input to develop an equity plan to guide your journey forward.

Each of the eight steps is explained below, with guidance for implementation. As a reminder, your organization has a unique context that will determine the order of the steps to follow and ensure that each step is considered in your plan.

STEP ONE: SELECT DATA FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES

Data may be confusing and misleading if not looked at comprehensively. We list individual data points to assist you in beginning this crucial analysis of your organization.

First, we need to identify specific areas of information about student progress, such as those listed below. The data points listed are quantitative and will provide specific information for analysis. You may have other data points that are relevant to your school or district. Select several areas, including race, ethnicity, gender, and gender identity as components of your analysis. To go deeper, it is important to examine intersectional data points between areas. For example, in examining dropout rates, it is important to determine who is included in your dropout numbers. Are students of color dropping out? Is it students who are living in poverty or impacted by homelessness or foster care? When do you see evidence of the trend toward dropping out? It is too late to identify a student in the final years of schooling, when intervention is more difficult. Look back at reading and attendance patterns in your early grades. Research clearly identifies third grade as a benchmark. As you read the statements below, consider intersectionality of race, ethnicity, and gender under each data point.

- Achievement on standardized tests

- Dropout rates

- Earning sufficient credits to graduate on time

- Enrollment in AP or other high-status courses

- Enrollment in college-approved courses

- Enrollment in special education classes

- Enrollment trends overall

- Grade distribution

- Matriculation/graduation rates

- Parent attendance at school events

- Reclassification rates for English learners

- Suspension and expulsion data

In addition to the quantitative data you may regularly collect in your school/ district, consider collecting qualitative data. Below are examples of additional qualitative data points you may collect:

- Throughout their daily schedule, shadow a high school student who is designated as an English learner or special-needs student.

- Conduct focus groups with students who are not on track to graduate, and listen to their voices.

- Meet with school counselors to learn about the concerns expressed by the students, without student identifiers.

- Observe outdoor play areas at the elementary level to see who is alone and not engaged with their peers, and keep a log of observations to see trends over time.

- At the high school level, observe the extracurricular clubs and notice which students are engaged and which students are excluded.

- When observing classrooms, note whether the environment is reflective of the student demographics.

- Collect student artifacts that illustrate student interests.

- Facilitate home visits by teachers and support personnel.

- Conduct focus groups with parents who usually do not attend school functions.

What do you know about the experience of your dropouts, including attendance, social-emotional issues, and discipline patterns? Visit your kindergarten classes on the first day of school and see if there are dramatic differences between the experiences of students as they are introduced to the start of their K–12 education. Are social-emotional supports in place across classrooms in this pivotal first learning experience?

The authors encourage you to be as comprehensive as possible. First list all the potential data sources, and next prioritize the data as you consider your short- and long-term change strategy. Paying attention to both quantitative and qualitative data will provide you with a more holistic view of the current academic and school climate of your school system to determine the next steps in creating equity goals.

STEP TWO: DISAGGREGATE THE DATA BY SIGNIFICANT DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS IN YOUR SCHOOL, DISTRICT, AND COMMUNITY

Setting the context for examining data is a crucial part of the change process. Data are most relevant when meaningful to the stakeholders who are using the information to improve outcomes for students.

Changing mindsets around issues involving Cultural Proficiency begins at the local level. Data help confront the truth and lead to action. For example, Figure 5.1 comes from the report *Harming Our Common Future: America's Segregated Schools 65 Years After* Brown (Frankenberg et al., 2019).

FIGURE 5.1 PERCENTAGE OF INTENSELY SEGREGATED SCHOOLS, 1988–2016
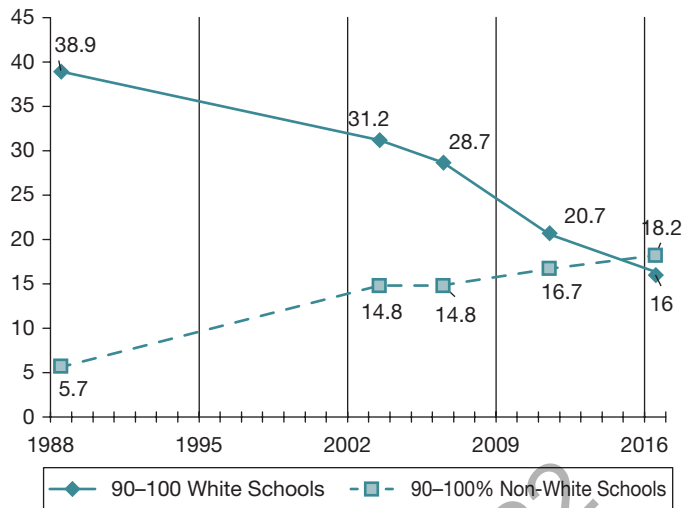
SOURCE: NCES CCD, Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey Data. From The Civil Rights Project at UCLA and Center for Education and Civil Rights, *Harming Our Common Future: America's Segregated Schools 65 Years After Brown* (May 10, 2019).

As you examine Figure 5.1, what questions surface for you?

Are you experiencing increased changes in demographic patterns in your schools?

What do you know about your community?

Are you seeing any of the following patterns?

- Gentrification of communities
- Affordability of housing that is impacting where different groups live
- Homelessness of student populations
- Economic changes due to employment trends in the community
- Students new to the country due to refugee status
- Other factors

Review the listed examples in step one to make sure your examination of data is as complete as possible so it will serve to support the building of your equity plan, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

An example includes unanticipated insights from examining dropout rates. Consider data that on the surface indicate that Latinx students are under-performing in grades four through six and that the trend continues through

middle and high school. When examining the data, you notice that some Latinx students are outperforming other groups. What is contributing to the success of these students? As you delve deeper into the data, you notice that students at schools that have teachers who speak Spanish are progressing consistently with a positive trajectory. You decide to examine professional development. You discuss the data with the principals of the schools and inquire if there are reasons. Principals indicate that teachers received training on scaffolding concepts for non-native speakers of English. You examine further and find that certain teachers appear to be having greater success. What is distinguishing these teachers' classrooms from those of their colleagues?

During a site visit with your district's instructional lead, you both note the similarity of practices in classrooms with teachers identified as producing greater student success. Why? The principal indicates that some of the teachers worked to implement the training and formed a community of practice. Are the teachers in the community of practice doing something different that is showing up in student outcomes?

In this example, you begin to look deeper and find important information:

- Did teachers attend training, and are there variations in implementation?

- Are teachers working together in communities of practice, and are they able to gain needed support to change their practice?

- Does classroom practice impact learning outcomes for students? Are there well-designed, research-based practices implemented with fidelity and supported by peer collaboration?

This example reinforces the importance of reflecting on local data trends and examining possible causes to help leaders establish clarity. With clarity, one begins to shape the pathway forward. The work described in this book is the "Now what?" for culturally proficient leaders. Cultural Proficiency is foundational to the plan that you will create in step eight below.

Now that you have considered the data available to you, let us move to the next step on your path to creating your equity plan and consider the importance of longitudinal data.