

Aligning Denver Public Schools' Equity Efforts

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Overview:

The equity commitment of Denver Public Schools (DPS) has been codified in the district's strategic plan, the Denver Plan 2020, and since then has been developed further through community-based committees and task forces, as well as through Board of Education commitments and resolutions. In an effort to support the district's goal of developing a Unified Equity Plan, several key documents were reviewed, synthesized and analyzed to identify themes and commonalities, unique aspects of each effort, and gaps between district equity efforts.

This report has been informed by several key district documents:

- Becoming a Trauma-informed District Resolution
- Black Excellence Resolution
- Denver Plan 2020 - Close the Opportunity Gap
- Recommendations of the African-American Equity Task Force
- Recommendations of the Strengthening Neighborhoods Initiative
- Safe & Welcoming Resolution
- The SPED Taskforce - Resolution; Recommendations
- The Modified Consent Decree
- The Resolution toward ending suspensions and expulsions of young learners
- SuperSearch Report input
- Bond Oversight Committee input
- The Won't be Erased Resolution
- Feedback to the Superintendent Entry Plan

Key Phases

This document reflects the first phase of a more robust process for transforming Denver Public Schools into an *equity public school district* (in which equity is the identity of the public school district, rather than a commitment of the district). Specifically, this document represents Phase 1, which is informed by assessment of current district efforts. The purpose of Phase 1 is to assess the potential for transforming Denver Public Schools into an *equity public school district* based upon current efforts. Directions for a second phase, which the components indicated below, will support collaborative development with various members of the Denver Public Schools community.

Phase 1: Current Building Blocks

- Co-construct a shared definition
- Frame Equity using Shared Core Values
- Identify equity levers

Phase 2: Unified Equity Plan Development

- Identify data; analyze disaggregated data
- Engage folks (Affected Groups; Stakeholders)
- Conduct systems analysis of root causes
- Strategy development

PHASE 1: Current Building Blocks

Denver Public Schools has invested a significant amount of time and effort to create an organizational culture that focuses upon doing what is best for students. These efforts are not fully aligned, based upon assessment of source documents; thus, the full potential of DPS to become an equity district is not fully realized in the District's current state. There also is, to be sure, significant potential to build upon the District's equity efforts to develop a comprehensive and unified strategy for educational equity throughout the district, benefiting every student, and involving every employee.

Through qualitative document analysis, several themes and patterns emerged across source documents, indicating that there is coherence between several district efforts, though there also are gaps and possibly opportunities. Primary observations, developed below in greater detail, include:

- Equity language is largely strengths-based.
- Vague and inconsistent equity language.
- Absence of a clear, logical model for board resolution development.
- Inconsistent policy-principle-practice alignment.
- Multiple emphases, occasionally not aligned.
- Equity efforts embedded in a single department.
- Community engagement is often focused upon a single equity topic.
- Lack of available information about the status of various efforts.
- Multiple, disparate areas of focus.

Below are three key recommendations to build upon the District's equity efforts by aligning, ending, and constructing practices that are informed by a clear vision for equity that unifies efforts and the District.

Recommendation: Co-construct a shared definition

Various terms and phrases have been used throughout the source documents to describe equity within Denver Public Schools. There was not sufficient evidence of a clear definition of equity guiding and informing the various equity efforts reflected in the source documents (see Table 1). Beginning with determining equity priority areas, Denver Public Schools may benefit from engaging the difficult process of revisiting its equity language, focused upon a co-constructed and shared definition of equity.

Equity Priorities

Developing a coherent and unifying equity framework should be informed by key priority areas, in order to focus and align efforts. One of the difficult challenges of developing a district-wide Unified Equity Plan is to establish priorities for the district's efforts that do not minimize other equity efforts. For Denver Public Schools, the four areas to benchmark its equity efforts are: language, race, ability, and income. The priorities of language, race, and ability are reflected in source documents such as the Modified Consent Decree, African American Equity Task Force recommendations, Black Excellence Resolution, Special Education Task Force recommendations, and related Board of Education resolutions. These emphases, in addition to economic diversity, are consistent with national equity efforts, and provide a strong starting point for Denver Public Schools to enhance its equity efforts through a Unified Equity Plan. While DPS district data indicate that these are priority areas, national social and educational data also indicate that these are priority areas for educational equity.

Also, an important point of clarification about the work of establishing guiding priorities for the District's equity work is that these four emphases do not replace or minimize other important priority areas, such as for students who are undocumented, students who are LGBTQIA+, gifted and talented students, students from different faith backgrounds, and other areas of inequity for students and educators. To be sure, these also are important equity areas. Beginning with four will support the District's development of a Unified Plan in a

manageable and sustainable way, engaging its commitment with consistency over time. Additionally, by focusing upon four areas towards which resources, resolutions, and community input have been directed will support the district to make measurable and scalable progress. Centering the District's efforts in these areas can help to cohere a Unified Equity Plan that drives District change to benefit all students.

Lastly, as argued by Danielle Gonzales¹, Linda Darling-Hammond², Alfredo Artiles³, and other leading educational equity scholars, focusing upon educational equity in the areas of language, race, ability and income reflects a core understanding of educational inequities—as rooted in the differential treatment and experiences of children who are diverse from a dominant societal norm. For Denver Public Schools, all aspects of student diversity matter, and our efforts to achieve educational equity are intended to bring about positive change for all students. Additionally, focusing upon these priority areas will lead to improved educational outcomes for all students within the District—we are deciding to lead with the areas of inequity with the deepest roots and broadest consequences. Thus, it is important to note here that focusing upon language, race, ability and income will not prohibit the District's from pursuing its focus on educational equity for all students, including those who with diverse gender identities, faith perspectives, family structures, documented status, and other important areas of difference. By rooting our educational equity efforts in the four priority areas we have the chance to embed educational equity throughout the district, and for all of our students and employees.

Brief descriptions of these priority four areas, connected to current DPS equity efforts, follow.

Language – as required by the Consent Decree (2012) of the U.S. District Court, Denver Public Schools has been charged to continue to “ensure that all English Language Learners in the Program, like all District students, at each school, in each educational program, and at each grade-level and ELP level, receive grade-appropriate content instruction that is designed to enable them to perform at grade level, reach their full potential, and be on track to graduate from high school prepared for success in life, work, civic responsibility, and higher education” (p.6). An important aspect of educational equity focused upon language is that all students are learning English, whether they speak a different home language, practice African American Vernacular English, or are developing an academic repertoire of language. Language intersects with race, culture, national status, geography, and other important features of our students' lives and identities. It is important for us to continue to look within and across this priority area, keeping in mind its relationship to other priority areas.

Race – as required by the Recommendations of the African American Equity Task Force and the Resolution on the Excellence of our Black and African-American Students, Denver Public Schools has been charged to systematically identify and eliminate district barriers to the success of Black students and educators, as well as for all educators and students of color in the District.

Ability – as required by the Board of Education Resolution to reorganize the Student Equity and Opportunity team in order to improve outcomes for students in special education, and the Task Force Recommendations of the Department of Special Education, the District has been charged to ensure that all students are educated in the least restrictive environment, and that disparities are eradicated through inclusive practices.

¹ <https://educationpost.org/why-weve-got-to-talk-about-race-if-we-want-to-achieve-education-equity/>

² <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/unequal-opportunity-race-and-education/>

³ Artiles, A. J. (2011). Toward an interdisciplinary understanding of educational equity and difference: The case of the racialization of ability. *Educational Researcher*, 40(9), 431-445.

Income – as required by Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESEA/ESSA) which is the largest federal aid program for public schools, Denver Public Schools has been required to continue to pursue and appropriately manage federal and state funds intended to provide additional educational support for children from limited-income households.

These four priority areas are accompanied by additional priority areas also reflected in Board of Education resolutions and recommendations of stakeholders. Family and community members have expressed concern about district inequities facing students, educators, and students’ families; there are persistent and negative effects to the lives of non-native English-speaking students, Black students and teachers, Latinx students, immigrant students, students with limited abilities, and LGBTQ+ students and educators. With the well-being of the entire DPS community as the central concern, a Unified Equity Framework should prioritize these foci accordingly, working to develop them further in order to achieve and sustain equity throughout the district.

Expanding and (re)defining equity

To be sure, equity is a term that has achieved significant traction in education communities throughout the US in recent years. This has been positive, overall, in drawing attention to the significantly different academic and developmental outcomes experienced by children enrolled in schools and educational programs throughout the U.S. This is made all the more challenging by a wide range of definitions of equity as well as a range of synonyms utilized by educational organizations around the U.S.

As reflected in the Appendix B, no single and cohering definition of equity is used consistently across the collection of equity documents reviewed for this report and Unified Equity Plan Framework. Throughout are statements reflecting that equity is valued, there are multiple equity beliefs, and there also are several commitments to equity in DPS. Towards developing a representative and robust definition of equity, unique to Denver Public Schools and informed by both scholarship and practice, a starting point may be the following equity statements:

Table 1. Variations of equity language in source documents	
Source Document	Equity Statement
Equity in DPS 1 pager	Diversity is a community treasure and equity is at the core of our mission. DPS will always welcome, support and protect our diverse student body.
Resolution on the Excellence of our Black and African-American Students (Black Excellence Resolution--February, 2019	We celebrate our diversity and will provide the necessary resources and supports to eliminate barriers to success and foster a more equitable future for <i>all</i> of our students.
The Resolution for Strengthening Neighborhoods (SNI Resolution) March 2017	High-quality socio-economically integrated schools.
Won't-Be-Erased Resolution November 2018	Committed to providing safe and welcoming spaces. (Resolution Objecting to Any Limitation on the Rights of our LGBTQ+ Students, Employees and Community Members.
Safe and Welcoming School District Resolution	Committed to providing safe and welcoming environments.
Denver Public Schools as a Trauma-Informed School District	3 Commitments: <i>Committed</i> to our mission to provide all students the opportunity to achieve the knowledge and skills necessary to become contributing citizens; <i>Committed</i> to removing barriers that impact student growth and achievement;

	<i>Committed</i> to providing prevention and intervention health initiatives within the Whole Child framework; <i>Committed</i> to ensuring mental health supports for students.
The Resolution Towards Ending Suspensions and Expulsions of Young Learners	3 Values: <i>Value</i> discipline reform efforts focusing on the elimination of racial disparities in discipline. <i>Value</i> elimination of school-to-prison pipeline. <i>Value</i> use of restorative practices and other positive alternatives to suspension and expulsion. 2 Beliefs: Belief in importance of restoring relationships. Belief in participation of families, teachers, leaders and support staff in development of behavior plans.
African-American Equity Task Force Guidelines and Recommendations	4 Characteristics <i>Establishing</i> deep, authentic and trusting relationships. <i>Equitable</i> partnerships with African American Students, Families and Educators. <i>Partnerships</i> of inclusion, voice and shared ownership in the design, implementation and oversight of all related efforts and initiatives. <i>Continuous improvement</i> to monitor progress and responsive adapting of efforts to meet changing needs.
DPS Plan 2020: Every Child Succeeds, 2010	We celebrate our diversity and will provide the necessary resources and supports to eliminate barriers to success and foster a more equitable future for all our kids. Our diversity is a community treasure and equity is the core of our mission. We commit to building a culture that embraces the unique identity and potential of every child.

The use of equity language also is reflected in the statements of diversity, and common across these documents is the use of strengths-based and positive language. In order to bring more alignment to the District's equity efforts, and in order to inform increased coherence of identifying inequities and determining strategies to solve various, complex, and shifting forms of inequity, DPS may work collaboratively to redefine equity. At present, equity is defined by Denver Public Schools as: *We celebrate our diversity and will provide the necessary resources and supports to eliminate barriers to success and foster a more equitable future for all our kids.*

While the phrasing used to define equity demonstrates that Denver Public Schools is committed to pursuing equitable outcomes for all students, it does not provide a clear or definitive, formal statement of the meaning of equity. There are risks in vaguely defining terms, including public discomfort/resistance and in resulting vague strategies; these risks should be addressed thoughtfully and directly.

What is possible with a more formal statement of the meaning of equity is ensuring the District's shared understanding that is it important to name inequities, identify their causes, acknowledge the roles of individuals and systems in creating and solving inequities, and prioritize key priority areas of language, race, ability, and income. A step towards a formal statement of the meaning of equity, redefined for Denver Public Schools is:

The system of acknowledging and dismantling the various forms of racism against marginalized groups enacted in schools and throughout the district, in order to ensure that all students, educators, families and communities have the resources, supports, opportunities, and environments necessary for children to learn and develop in school.

Sustaining focus upon the four priority areas specified above honors the current equity emphases of the district as indicated above, aligns well to a growing body of academic research, and is consistent with the emphases of other school districts.

Important to the work of developing a coherent, robust, and representative definition of equity, it may be valuable to sustain focus upon the four priority areas of language, race, ability, and income, while also considering redefining equity for the district. By more specifically name the root(s) of inequity toward redefining equity for DPS, a starting point for a shared, co-constructed definition of equity is attainable.

Focus: Co-constructing and adopting a shared definition of equity for DPS

Among the most important and first steps in achieving the difficult, demanding and important work of educational equity, is the development of a definition of educational equity. The effort to develop a shared definition will be beneficial if co-constructed with internal and external members of the District's community and team, including representative members of the staff at various levels of experience and professional roles and members of the civic and at-large community. The perspectives of community members will be a resource to the collaborative effort. Additionally, it will be particularly important to engage with marginalized voices and perspectives as thought leaders in the co-construction process, recognizing that the purpose of co-constructing a shared definition is in response to the experiences of children, educators, and others who experience marginalization through their experiences in the District. Intentional and thoughtful attention to a collaborative process requires articulation of a clear end to be achieved, along with clear commitment to the value of the process of co-construction as an important feature of generating buy-in and critical external perspectives.

Likely Tensions:

- Competing interests of individuals, groups, District
- Absence of important voices and experiences
- Determining who's necessary, while honoring those who are present
- Negotiating dynamics of group imbalance (e.g., over-representation of group involvement)
- Maintaining priority of (traditionally/historically) marginalized voices
- Pursuing and ensuring representation of diverse experiences
- District and professional versus community and lived expertise
- Sustained, concurrent attention to multiple areas of inequity
- Balancing organizational decision-making against diverse decision-making processes
- Distinguishing between a sense of urgency and the need for a strong process
- Maintaining commitment to transparency and accountability
- Ensuring multi-generational group makeup (including youth and aging populations)
- Dealing with difficulty, discomfort, and ambiguity
- Framing core issues versus listing individual issues
- Supporting the process versus driving the process

Questions to Consider:

- What does the definition of equity need to emphasize?
- Has the current language of equity been effective? Why (not)?
- Why do we need a shared definition of equity?
- What are the power dynamics to be navigated through the process of co-constructing a shared definition of equity?

- Through what agreements can individuals who occupy different roles or have different social capital engage in this process as peers?
- Are there non-negotiables to consider (e.g., intersectional thinking)?
- Through what processes will tensions be navigated, such as those resulting from competing interests?
- What decision-making practices or protocols can be enacted?
- What are the terms that require clarification and distinction (e.g., culture, race, discrimination, equality, diversity)?

Recommendation: Frame Equity using Shared Core Values

In addition to working towards a shared definition of equity, another important aspect of developing a Unified Equity Plan is identifying existing District structures that can provide a reliable frame for integrating educational equity throughout the District. It would be neither wise nor effective to begin any equity work from zero in a District such as Denver Public Schools, which already has a fair amount of educational equity efforts underway. Instead, building upon existing equity structures, once assessed for alignment to the shared definition of equity and the District's equity goals, is strongly recommended. Throughout Denver Public Schools, there already is a robust and reliable framework into which a coherent and integrated plan for equity can be woven. The District's Shared Core Values should be considered the appropriate framework for the Unified Equity Plan, as it provides an opportunity to align the District's Unified Equity Plan to the District's Strategic Plan.

Core Commitments

The Denver Public Schools Strategic Plan (Denver Plan 2020) contains the District's Shared Core Values and core beliefs. These foundational commitments provide a starting point towards developing a more coherent plan for the District's equity work. These foundational commitments are used throughout this section to provide a structure to the Unified Equity framework. Possibilities for expanding the Shared Core Values also are indicated.

DPS Shared Core Values

- **Students First:** We put our kids' needs at the forefront of everything we do.
- **Integrity:** We tell the truth, and we keep our promises.
- **Equity:** We celebrate our diversity and will provide the necessary resources and supports to eliminate barriers to success and foster a more equitable future for all our kids.
- **Collaboration:** Together as a team, we think, we work and we create in order to reach our goals.
- **Accountability:** We take responsibility for our individual and collective commitments, we grow from success, and we learn from failure.
- **Fun:** We celebrate the joy in our work and foster in our students a joy and passion for learning to last their whole lives.

Equity Goals

Broadly, DPS has a reliable foundation for becoming an equity district. When viewed alongside Board of Education resolutions, the Modified Consent Decree, and stakeholder recommendations, the District's Shared Core Values offer a structure upon which a Unified Equity Plan can be developed and maintained.

Students First: The Students First Shared Core Value states that "We put our kids' needs at the forefront of everything we do." The intent of this Shared Core Value may serve well the Unified Equity Plan, possibly focused upon three key areas of students' needs and District efforts to meet those needs: Whole Child

Development, Academic Achievement, and cultivating student agency. On every indicator related to these areas, there should be benchmarks determined in order to measure progress in achieving equity throughout the district, including in providing access, allocating resources, and identifying and removing obstacles to educational equity for all children throughout the District. As reflected in the District’s demographic data, a driving focus of a Unified Equity Plan, and all related district equity efforts, can be upon the learning and development of Students identified as ELLs (English Language Learners), Students of Color (including Black, Latinx/Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Native American, Multiracial, Bi-racial), Students from limited-resource households, and Students with limited abilities.

Towards this end, the District can ensure that all students, in each school, receive grade-appropriate instruction in academic content that will support their grade-level learning, making adequate progress towards on-time graduation from high school, and having developed the skills needed for “life, work, civic responsibility, and higher education⁴.”

Educator Focus: While not listed as a Shared Core Value, a focus upon the District’s team of educators is key to an Equity Plan. As evidenced by the Black Excellence Resolution, Modified Consent Decree, and the Special Education Task Force recommendations, as well as other documents, educator professional growth and development are priority areas for DPS. Through the use of multiple and diverse opportunities for DPS educators to improve their practice, there can be measurable and effective progress to achieve educational equity in every classroom and at every school by focusing upon equity for educators. Achieving this can be achieved by leveraging current efforts to ensure that all DPS teachers are ELA trained, consistent with the requirements of the modified Consent Decree; however, expanding this to a more broad training program may include ensuring that all DPS teachers are trained in pedagogies of anti-racism, full inclusion, culturally-sustaining practice, and inclusive excellence. Developing skills in such pedagogies also may be supported through ongoing mentorship through professional development opportunities.

In order to ensure that all students throughout DPS have every opportunity to learn and develop in a supportive and appropriate learning environment, a coherent mechanism for training all educators (including Board members, Senior Leadership Team members, mental health professionals, administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, support personnel) may be most effective. An example of such a coherent model for professional learning and educational equity for educators is described below.

Equity Pedagogy Model
Focus 1: Professional Identity Supporting practicing educators of different years of experience, and with a wide-array of responsibilities can be complex. An important and unifying first step can include a focus upon the unique and important identities of each educator. With a focus upon professional identity, DPS educators may be trained in key areas in order to further their understanding of the ways in which their identities support or obstruct their educational equity practice. Possible areas for this focus may include: ● Implicit Bias ● Funds of Knowledge⁵ ● Local Community Assets and Resources ● Anti-racism ● Social Justice ● Diversity and Inclusion

⁴ P.6 – Modified Consent Decree 2012.

⁵ González, N., Moll, L. C., & Amanti, C. (Eds.). (2006). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. Routledge.

Focus 2: Professional Practice

In addition to supporting educators in the development of their professional identities, achieving educational equity may be achieved through a focus upon the various ways in which they practice their professions as educators in an equity district such as Denver Public Schools. Through a focus upon professional practice, a common and shared language may be established that recognizes the District's commitment to equity and encourages all educators throughout the District to continuously integrate an equity focus in their practice. Emphases for this focus may begin with existing District commitments such as:

- Culturally-responsive education/Culturally-sustaining practices
- Student identity, voice, and leadership
 - LGBTQIA+ development and needs
 - Anti-discrimination
 - Student access to resources
- Whole Child Development
- Use of Bilingual (TNLI) program implementation, sheltering instructional practices and daily English Language Development to support language acquisition
- Inclusive practices; classroom inclusion
- Social and emotional development

Additional emphases may include:

- Practices for engaging with the families and communities of students
- Learning theory (particularly socio-cultural and humanism theories of learning)
- Neuroscience
- Methods for organizing instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners
- Culturally-sustaining pedagogies
- Formative and summative assessment; forms and uses of data
- Culturally-sustaining and Restorative approaches to school and classroom culture

Focus 3: Means of Delivering Professional Learning

Diverse and differentiated means for supporting educators in their professional learning may be a resource for encouraging and increasing buy-in, while maintaining high and consistent expectations for equity throughout the District. Recognizing that different educators have unique and complex backgrounds, interests, experiences, and commitments to equity, it can be valuable to offer opportunities and methods to support professional learning. Methods to maintain and additional methods to consider may include:

- A Summer Academy for new teachers
- Differentiation and scaffolding based upon targeted data points; experience; observation, evaluation, and coaching data; community, family, and student input
- Co-developing mechanisms for coaching, feedback, and evaluation that highlight the importance of planning for instruction
- School year Professional Learning
- School year site-based mentorship
- Online and in-person Professional Learning opportunities

Questions to Consider:

- If there is a district commitment to becoming an equity district, what professional skills should be prioritized? Which, if any, are non-negotiable?
- How can multiple areas of equity be considered simultaneously through professional learning?
- Through what practices can siloed thinking and issue-emphasis be reduced?
- What sorts of experiences can supplement content in professional learning?

- How can professional learning occur that is opening to persons from different backgrounds, experiences, belief-systems, etc.?
- Can all adults learn new habits of practice?
 - If so, how does this inform professional learning opportunities?
 - When learning is not achieved, evident through improved practice, what are the appropriate responses?
- What are the proper data inputs? Timelines?
- What are the most effective, fair, and students first-oriented practices to manage requirement/accountability and an appropriate amount of professional flexibility?
- How does a commitment to transparency and accountability inform professional learning?
- What are the roles for community members to partner with the district to support and inform professional learning?
- Should professional learning about equity be required of all educators throughout the District?
- What are the risks of optional, or self-selected professional learning?
 - How can these risks be mitigated, in order to ensure educational equity for students and others?
- How can equity priorities be balanced through professional learning?

Collaboration: The Collaboration Shared Core Value states that “Together as a team, we think, we work and we create in order to reach our goals.” The intent of this Shared Core Value is helpful to inform the District’s Unified Equity Plan, and may be even more helpful when joined with the Core Belief that “Our kids need all of us—educators, families, community partners and staff—and together, we are Team DPS.” Evidenced by the multiple documents demonstrating the District’s equity emphasis, there is a high amount of diverse community interest in the District’s efforts to improve the academic, behavioral, and social outcomes for every DPS student. It is clear that Denver Public Schools has invited the close work of an engaged community of interested persons, and the engagement of members of the local and civic community is a tremendous resource for the district. This is particularly apparent in the following equity efforts:

- African American Equity Task Force (AAETF)
- Special Education Task Force (SETF)
- Strengthening Neighborhoods Committee (SNC)
- District Advisory Committee (DAC) and DAC Board
- Bond Oversight Committee (BOC)
- Superintendent Entry Plan Feedback (SEPF)

There is strong alignment between the district’s expressed commitments to equity and the interests of community members involved in task forces, committees, and other groups to inform the district’s practices to achieve equity. This alignment indicates that the District will benefit from ongoing partnership with family and community members to maintain their thoughtful and supportive involvement in the District’s equity efforts. Throughout the recommendations of the four task forces and committees, in addition to the elicited feedback to Superintendent Cordova’s Entry Plan, there are clearly high expectations for student success. Thus, emphasizing and enacting the Shared Core Value of Collaboration will involve close and sustained engagement with members of the community, both those in formal (e.g., publicly-elected) and informal roles (e.g., residents).

Additionally, recognizing that educators cannot and should not operate in isolation, the district has demonstrated a commitment to ongoing communication and collaboration with stakeholders throughout the community to achieve educational equity. The creation of an Equity Division that brings together teams who have been supporting district and school culture, targeted supports for students and family and community

engagement, reflects the District’s commitment to achieving and sustaining educational equity through close partnership with the families of each student as well as members of the local and civic community.

To deepen and sustain this focus, while honoring the various interests and commitments of DPS’ broad and diverse community, the District may take advantage of its opportunities to examine the tensions of family and community engagement. These tensions include:

- Establishing a balance that supports enacting practices of collaboration that are both internal (between departments, for example) and external
- Determining how to build nested structures that support collaboration within the district, reducing unnecessary hierarchical structures and processes
- Honoring specific equity interests while maintaining a broad focus on equity that does not disrupt other equity emphases
- Enabling access for family and community members, considering meeting locations, times, dates in ways that reflect their multiple and competing interests
- Balancing specificity of scope with broader, related emphases
- Interaction with co-occurring community groups
- Roles of DPS staff in work with community groups
- Forms and sources of compensation that honor time and effort of community and family members
- Use of incentives to encourage sustained engagement

Utilizing the District’s existing relationships with community members as a starting point, an example of embedding a district-wide equity-focused community group is an Equity Community Advisory Committee, based upon the work of the Ithaca (NY) School District.

Focus: Equity Community Advisory Committee
Through a standing committee, DPS may have an opportunity to achieve steady community involvement and input into the district’s efforts to fulfill its vision of educational equity, transparency, and accountability. Working alongside the Board of Education and the Office of Family and Community Engagement, a group such as an Equity Community Advisory Committee may be able to review and inform the progress and outcomes of the District’s educational equity goals while also providing information to the community. Additionally, such a Committee can support the district in maintaining its focus upon all areas of diverse student needs.
Questions to Consider: ● What are the most appropriate ways to ensure broad and diverse community representation? ● Through what mechanisms can membership reflect (proportionately) the racial/linguistic demographic profile of District student body? ● What are the most fair and equitable ways to encourage membership, extending to new members of the community? To family members who have not before been involved? To encourage participation of those who typically are overlooked? ● How can regional representation work alongside representation of diverse group members? ● How can civic and at-large community involvement be balanced? What are the roles and opportunities for youth involvement? ● What are the most appropriate ways to determine a meeting schedule and rhythm that is co-developed? ● What are the tensions presented by decisions about location and time? Who may be left out? ● Through what processes can the District reduce the likelihood of redundancy of focus or work efforts?

- What are the appropriate roles for Senior Leadership Team members? The Office of Culture and Equity?
- Is there a role for regular, public-facing updates on the work of this group? Through what media?

Integrity and Accountability: Among the most important Shared Core Values of Denver Public Schools are its commitments to integrity and accountability. **Integrity**, defined in the Denver Plan 2020 as “We tell the truth, and we keep our promises,” serves to signal to all members of the Denver Public Schools community—including students and their families, educators, and local and civic community members—that DPS will practice information transparency, enabling the broader DPS community to know the “truth” of the district. This practice of transparency also supports the District’s commitment to **Accountability**, defined as, “We take responsibility for our individual and collective commitments, we grow from success, and we learn from failure.” There are several reasonable and effective strategies that will support the District in sharing the truth about data, challenges, and efforts, honoring the collective commitment to Integrity and Accountability reflected in the Denver Plan 2020.

With a focus upon the school-based experiences of children enrolled in schools throughout the district, the District has an opportunity to develop further its practices of Accountability and Integrity through increasing the breadth and scope of accessible information shared publicly. There are recommendations and/or requests for increased public sharing of information made by the Special Education Task Force (e.g., benefits of full inclusion), Strengthening Neighborhoods Committee (e.g., Whole Child Data), African American Equity Task Force (e.g., school and department Equity Plans), and Modified Consent Decree (e.g., Parent Advisory Committee). Though the specifics of these requests for information sharing differ in detail, there are key opportunities that these requests have in common.

Additionally, Board of Education guidance indicates that transparency and information sharing are important practices of the District’s efforts to achieve equity. These include family, educator and community voice to provide feedback on board policy amendments (Resolution: Suspension and Expulsion), posting a Board Resolution at each school site (Resolution: Safe & Welcoming), publicizing milestones throughout development of Student Equity and Opportunity redevelopment (Resolution: SPED Task Force), transparent allocation of funds (Resolution: SPED Task Force), and including families and external community members in holding the district accountable (Resolution: Black Excellence). The intent of such resolutions appear to indicate a broad commitment to appropriate and intentional information that is based in, and in support of, establishing and maintaining trust, accountability, and collaboration between DPS and the civic and local community.

Taken together, there is broad interest in public information sharing as a mechanism for District-community cooperation to determine, support, maintain and assess the District’s equity efforts. It is unclear whether any particular strategy will be most effective to accomplish this, though it may be a key area of emphasis.

In maintaining a focus upon the four key priority areas of language, race, ability, and income, public information sharing may be a successful strategy to also address other, related equity-oriented topics, including school funding, instructional program, student experience, family experience, and staffing.

Focus: Public Data Sharing

Data Points

As the District identifies equity priority areas, determining what are the appropriate data to inform priority areas is an important process. And, there are lots of possible emphases, including: language, race, ability, and income, public information sharing may be a successful strategy to also address other, related equity-oriented topics, including school funding, instructional program, student experience, family experience, staffing.

It is important to align selected data to equity goals. Determining the appropriate data points should balance what are required data as well as those data that, while not required, reflect inequities occurring throughout the District.

Likely Tensions:

- Balancing legal requirements against public interests
- Balancing collaborative versus directive information
- Acknowledging school-based budgeting and district oversight
- Determining nature fairness and appropriateness of content shared
- Maintaining educator professional support in context of public interests
- Offering a valuable depth of information while presenting it in accessible formats
- Readily providing information in accessible ways and in multiple languages
- Balancing text-based information presentation with visual formats
- Balancing representative data (aggregate) versus disaggregated data

Questions to Consider:

- What are the reasons for sharing information publicly? For not sharing information publicly?
- What sorts of information do families and community members want access to?
 - How do we know? What do we not know? How can we come to know this?
 - Through what processes can we determine what information to share publicly?
- Are there procedures in place to determine what information can(not) be shared publicly?
- What equity goals of the District can be achieved through publicly-available District data?
- What are the various processes available to make information easily accessible to the public? What are the language and technological considerations of sharing District data publicly?
- What are the necessary security protocols to be established and maintained?

Fun: The final Shared Core Value of Denver Public Schools is Fun, defined as: “We celebrate the joy in our work and foster in our students a joy and passion for learning to last their whole lives.”

This Shared Core Value offers an important opportunity to integrate equity throughout the entire District, as it reflects the importance of all members of the DPS community experiencing personal and professional fulfillment throughout all aspects of their work. This includes students, educators, and community members, all invited to engage authentically.

In the process of developing a Unified Equity Plan, this Shared Core Value can be a true resource at this first phase of the work. It is as important that the difficult work of achieving educational equity is fulfilling to all participants as it is that each student experiences belonging in the classroom and throughout their school experiences. Thus, it is important that Fun serves as a compass throughout the development and enactment of the Unified Equity Plan, providing opportunities for individuals and groups to consider their interests and passions, even in the face of disagreement.

Just as belonging and rigor are not mutually exclusive characteristics of an equitable learning environment, personal growth and fulfillment are not mutually exclusive to the difficult work of educational equity. By retaining focus upon a commitment to Fun—which includes rigor, authenticity, joy, fulfillment, and satisfaction—opportunities can be made available and sustained for students, educators, families and community members to retain their sense of dignity, self-worth and inherent value throughout the process. With such a focus upon the Shared Core Value of Fun, every person involved is invited to arrive and depart fully intact (emotionally, psychologically, etc.) despite the emerging difficulties of working towards educational equity. Enacting this Shared Core Value, with such considerations in mind, can mean that educational equity informs how people interact throughout the District, across the lines of age, roles, experiences, locations, and interests.

Focus: Using Strategic Plan as the framework of the Unified Equity Plan

Questions to Consider:

- Whom, and what purposes is each Shared Core Value intended to serve?
- Are the District's Shared Core Values reflective of the strategic direction of DPS?
- Should equity be a separate Shared Core Value, or should be integrated into each of the Shared Core Values?
 - What may be lost by integrating equity into the Shared Core Values? By leaving it separate?
- Do the Shared Core Values align to the co-constructed and shared definition of equity?
- What are the practical implications of realigning Shared Core Values to equity?
 - Will alignment lead to unintended consequences to students, departments, community, etc.?

Recommendation: Identify Existing Equity Levers

Upon review of key district documents, there are three key levers to support Denver Public Schools in becoming an equity district. In the context of this Framework, “lever” refers to a current effort that can be focused upon in order to produce outcomes when appropriate emphasis (e.g., financial resources, human resources, etc.) is directed towards it. These levers are: a) the involvement of local community members and civic leaders, b) Board of Education equity commitment and leadership, and c) District regional reorganization. Each of these key levers is identified and discussed below.

Equity Lever 1: Local Engagement

Evidenced by the multiple documents reviewed for this Plan, there is a high amount of diverse community interest in the District's efforts to improve the academic, behavioral, and social outcomes for the students of Denver Public Schools. It is clear that Denver Public Schools has invited the close work of an engaged community of interested persons, and the engagement of members of the local and civic community is a tremendous resource for the district. This is particularly apparent in the following documents:

- African American Equity Task Force (AAETF)
- Special Education Task Force (SETF)
- Strengthening Neighborhoods Committee (SNC)
- Bond Oversight Committee (BOC)
- Superintendent Entry Plan Feedback (SEPF)

Throughout the recommendations of the four task forces and committees, in addition to the elicited feedback to Superintendent Cordova's Entry Plan, there are clearly high expectations for student success that are achieved through *a) modifications to school staff b) modifications to district staff c) district structures to*

embed equity d) school structures to embed equity e) equity-informed instruction and instructional materials f) ongoing community participation in the district and g) additional financial and information resources for family and community members.

As reflected in the table below, focus areas of local community input have commonalities indicating that members of the local community see equity as achievable through structural changes. Thoughtful consideration of these recommendations for structural changes and engaging in appropriate efforts to enact them are likely to result in increased community engagement with the District's equity efforts while also achieving the District goal of eliminate barriers to success.

Equity Recommendation	Document Section (see above for code indicators)
Additional financial and information resources for family and community members	AAETF 4.1, 4.3, SNI O.D, SNI A.C, SNI E.B, SNI E.C, SNI DS.A, SETF R1.1, SETF R1.A, SETF R1.B, SETF R2.A, SETF R3.A, SETF R3.B, SETF R4, SETF R5
District Structures to Embed Equity	AAETF 1.1, AAETF 1.2, AAETF 2.1, AAETF 3.1, AAETF 5.2, SNI O.A, SNI O.B, SNI A.A, SNI A.B, SNI A.D, SNI DS.B, SETF IP.A, SETF R1.B, SETF R2
School Structures to Embed Equity	AAETF 1.1, AAETF 1.2, SETF R3
Equity-informed instruction and instructional materials	AAETF 2.1, AAETF 2.2, SETF R1.2, SETF R2, SETF R2.B, SETF R3
Ongoing community participation in the district	AAETF 4.1, AAETF 4.2, AAETF 4.3, SNI O.C, SNI O.D, SNI E.C
Modifications to School Staff	AAETF 1.1, SETF R1.A, SETF R3.B
Modifications to District Staff	AAETF O.1, AAETF 5.1, SETF R1.A, SETF R5

Equity Lever 2: A Committed and Interested Board

It is clear that the Board of Education has communicated a commitment to equity, appropriate to its role as the District's publicly-elected governing body. This is a significant asset to Denver Public Schools' work to become an equity district, as there already is groundwork laid to evaluate and revise policies in order to bring additional coherence to the District's capacity to address inequities as an institutional practice. Examples of the Board of Education's commitment to equity can be found in recent Board of Education resolutions, including:

- SPED Task Force Resolution
- Resolution on the Excellence of our Black and African-American Students
- Resolution Objecting to Any Limitation on the Rights of our LGBTQ+ Students, Employees and Community Members
- Denver Public Schools as a Trauma-Informed District
- The Safe and Welcoming School District Resolution
- The Resolution for Strengthening Neighborhoods
- The Resolution Towards Ending Suspensions and Expulsions of Young Learners

Building upon the Board of Education’s commitment to district equity, potential additional or modified resolutions of the Board include:

Resolution Focus	Considerations
Equity	-Adoption of district-wide definition of equity -Articulation of commitment to equity goals for each district department (resolution co-constructed with departments and Culture & Equity office lead) -Role of professional learning -Articulated relationship of data-measurement-outcomes-accountability
Language	-Commitment of human and financial resources -Maintenance of Modified Consent Decree requirements -Hegemony -Native language instruction in TNLI schools -Involvement of Community -Accountability at individual and institutional levels -Intersection with Race, Ability, Income
Race	-Balance of racial groups -Involvement of Community -Student and educator emphasis -Personal, professional, and institutional emphases -Intersection with Language, Ability, Income
Ability	-Roles of structures -Proportionality and Disparities -Involvement of Community -Intersection with Language, Race, Income
Income	-Scope of District’s leverage, capacity -Non-profit, City and State partnership opportunities -Strengths-based versus deficit-based orientation -Intersection with Language, Race, Ability

An important aspect of building upon the commitment and interest of the Board of Education to achieve and sustain educational equity is refining the data-to-policy approach enacted by Board members. While resolutions are an important tool at the Board’s disposal, they may serve more symbolic purposes than substantive purposes without revisiting the purpose and process of utilizing Board of Education resolutions to achieve educational equity throughout the District. Apparent throughout the Board of Education Resolutions included in the source documents is the lack of a clear and consistent model of establishing resolutions. In several cases, as reflected in the Appendix B, the relationship of the issue informing the resolution to the solutions is not quite clear. Thus, the effectiveness of Board of Education resolutions to guide solving inequities throughout the District is unclear. Additionally, and whenever possible, it may be beneficial to the District for the Board to reorient its efforts to guide educational equity through policy by developing resolutions focused upon the District’s desired equitable state, rather than in response to emerging issues. While there certainly will be presenting, unanticipated challenges facing the District and requiring Board of Education intervention through Resolution, a focus upon the desired state of educational equity to guide resolutions may be a worthwhile goal.

Likely Tensions:

- Equity focus: Maintaining attention to the District's equity focus throughout each resolution, and stating the connection of the resolution to equity for students, educators, community members, etc.
- Integrated issue analysis: When appropriate and relevant, ensure that attention is given to multiple social identity characteristics or areas of inequity.
- Connection to data: Identifying the relevant data, selectively, that establishes the phenomenon requiring Board resolution.
- Correlation: To the extent possible, a similar-scale correlation of issue and solution should be articulated in the resolution. Where the issue resides should inform where the solution exists to resolve the issue.

Questions to Consider:

- What does the definition of equity need to emphasize?
- Has the current language of equity been effective? Why (not)?
- Why do we need a shared definition of equity?
- What are the power dynamics to be navigated through the process of co-constructing a shared definition of equity?
- Through what agreements can individuals who occupy different roles or have different social capital engage in this process as peers?
- Are there non-negotiables to consider (e.g., intersectional thinking,
- Through what processes will tensions be navigated, such as those resulting from competing interests?
- What decision-making practices or protocols can be enacted?
- What are the terms that require clarification and distinction (e.g., culture, race, discrimination, equality, diversity)?

Equity Lever 3: Leveraging the Current District Reorganization

In order for Denver Public Schools to become an equity district, consideration should be directed towards the role of the Senior Leadership Team as it relates to operationalizing the District's equity mission across all multiple departments. To be sure, no single recommendation, request, or resolution identifies this important decision-making body. However, operationalizing the intent of a Unified Equity Plan is unlikely without the involvement of this group of leaders. Prioritizing the District's equity focus during the recent and underway reorganization of the District may be a key step towards developing and sustaining the necessary practices to systematize equity. Additionally, the regional network structure may avail itself to integrating equity into each region and school, particularly through the Regional Specialist, CRE (culturally-responsive education).

Expanding District Capacity

It is unlikely that becoming an equity district can be the responsibility of any single office or department, or the responsibility of a segment of the District's offices or departments. Clearly defined, equity can be used to filter and inform the District's activities, use of financial resources, practices of human resources, professional learning, policy making, whole child efforts, engagement with family and community members, school and classroom practices, and assessment and evaluation. To this end, extending the district's equity efforts may be reasonably informed through examining and expanding its capacity for change and pursuing structural adjustments, with a focus upon assessing the extent to which equity can be deeply embedded into each aspect of the District's work. The District's capacity to achieve educational equity may be evident through its efforts to organize:

- Systemic transformation
- Measuring and strengthening the capacity of school and district leaders

- Mechanisms for resource allocation
- Development and expansion of systems to ensure accountability
- Integrating robust assessments of student learning and development

Additionally, through an assessment of the District's capacity to integrate equity throughout each aspect of the District's work, structural adjustments may be possible, including:

- A decentralized equity structure
- Documenting and publicly sharing stories of educational equity
- Developing leadership for educational equity
- Prioritizing educator equity
- Cultivating a statewide Teacher Preparation Network

Unified Equity Plan Development – Towards a Second Phase

As discussed above, this report presents the outcomes of an analysis of several Denver Public Schools equity efforts in order to determine whether there is coherence between multiple, ongoing efforts, and whether there are gaps between multiple, ongoing efforts.

This report was informed by the following key district documents:

- Becoming a Trauma-Informed District Resolution
- Black Excellence Resolution
- Denver Plan 2020 - Close the Opportunity Gap
- Recommendations of the African-American Equity Task Force
- Recommendations of the Strengthening Neighborhoods Initiative
- Safe & Welcoming Resolution
- The SPED Taskforce - Resolution; Recommendations
- The Modified Consent Decree
- The Resolution toward ending suspensions and expulsions of young learners
- SuperSearch Report input
- Bond Oversight Committee input
- The Won't be Erased Resolution
- Feedback to the Superintendent Entry Plan

Through qualitative document analysis, several themes and patterns emerged across these key documents, indicating that there is coherence between several district efforts, though there also are gaps and possibly opportunities for deepening and expanding existing efforts of Denver Public Schools to achieve educational equity for all students and educators.

Following the analysis of current equity efforts, the lingering question about determining next steps should be informed by the work required to enact a Unified Equity Plan. Key components of this phase of the work are described below, though their presentation here is decontextualized. Some of the work required must occur in order, while other components will need to occur simultaneously. Ultimately, the process for developing a Unified Equity Plan must be determined by Denver Public Schools, in collaboration with community and civic members, students, families, employees, Board members, and other key stakeholders internal and external to the District.

Identify data; analyze disaggregated data

In order for Denver Public Schools to achieve its goal of becoming an equity district, its data culture also must be equity-oriented. As it relates to data, developing the equity orientation of DPS should be informed by the relationship of internal to external uses of data; such focus can help support ways to determine how to share the most appropriate data, which can be useful to sustain the *public* nature of a public school district, while upholding limitations on uses of data prompted by legislative changes. To this end, the district can benefit from openly and courageously acknowledging and addressing the implications of the results of its efforts to achieve equity. An equity-oriented data culture allows the District to utilize data to identify inequities, track progress, interrogate district-based root causes of inequities, better understand barriers to equity, and to inform strategies.

Engage people (Affected Groups; Stakeholders)

Civic and community engagement is an important and valuable resource for DPS to broaden and strengthen its equity efforts. Through a systematized process of working alongside a broad array of community members—including persons in formal (e.g., professional or elected) and informal roles; persons from various racial, linguistic, income and ability backgrounds; persons representing a broad array of ages, abilities, genders, and faiths—DPS can enact its commitment to accountability while working to achieve its equity goals. By maintaining emphasis on a shared definition of equity that provides a clear or definitive, formal statement of its meaning, DPS can continue to integrate stakeholder focus on student and educator needs reflecting emphases on race, language, ability, income, gender expression, national status, etc. so as to maintain appropriate focus on particular categories through which inequities may be provoked alongside furthering a shared and sustained commitment to equity.

Conduct systems analysis of root causes

In order to support achieving the goals of a Unified Equity Plan, the District will have to prioritize analysis of the root causes of inequity at levels of interpersonal relationships, classroom practice, school programming, school community, and district policy. Each of these areas of focus should be contained to the District context, with attention to the District's scope of control and responsibility as the primary concern. In some cases, and at some stage of the District's effort to champion educational equity in the broader social context, a wider-reaching and more comprehensive root cause analysis that depends upon external organizations may be necessary. However, this is not a recommended starting point, as the effort required to include external organizations will require additional time and resources, and it will likely de-prioritize what DPS can initiate through a context-specific process of analyzing root causes.

The importance of analyzing the causes of inequity cannot be overstated, and it is a major step that can require a significant amount of time and effort. Root cause analysis throughout the District should rely upon relevant research literature and a reliable framework. Also, by directing focus towards language, race, ability and income, root cause analysis will inform weaknesses and opportunities of current strategies and practices, and identify and highlight strategies and practices that achieve equity for all students, educators, and members of the DPS community. The types of emphases that root cause analysis may lead to, include:

- Board policies and governance
- District general organizational structure
- District regional organizational structure
- Senior Leadership Team scope of responsibilities
- Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary academic programming
- Portfolio management policies, structures, organization, resources
- School choice policies, structures, organization, resources
- Human Resources policies, structures, organization, resources
 - Grievance procedures

- Educator protection from retaliation
- Financial practices, transparency, policies, structures, organization
- Social-emotional learning policies, structures, organization, resources
- Student discipline policies, structures, organization, resources
- Whole Child practices, policies, structures, organization, resources
- Educator recruitment and retention policies, structures, organization, resources
- Special Education designation policies, structures, organization, resources
- Post-secondary readiness practices, policies, structures, organization, resources

Examples of issues that may be served through root cause analysis leading to real and measurable educational equity throughout DPS includes a) recruitment and retention of culturally, linguistically, racially diverse educators; b) establishing and maintaining broader and more representative family and community engagement; c) early literacy development; d) disciplinary outcomes; e) school choice access and use; and f) academic and vernacular language development, among others.

Strategy development

Given the breadth of effort required to achieve the above components of developing a Unified Equity Plan, the development of a robust and effective plan to enact strategies and direct needed resources to accomplish the District's equity mission is critical. By emphasizing the four priority areas in strategy development, the District can make concrete and measurable progress in eliminating disparities and increasing opportunities while accomplishing systems change. Strategies should be specific, co-constructed (educators, students, families, community), measurable, appropriately flexible, relevant, and time-bound. Potential key focus areas include:

- Equity Impact Assessment – capacity to assess the likelihood of success or impact of a given strategy
- Strategic Planning – the design and development
- Onboarding – development and implementation of integrated processes for training all new educators to understand, adopt, and accomplish educational equity
- District-wide events – use of programs and events to increase interest, commitment and access support to achieve educational equity through individual practice and through collective effort
- Senior Leadership Team capacity – clear and co-constructed integration of equity into the scope of responsibilities of SLT members
- Establishing a timeline
- Regional Instructional Superintendents capacity - clear and co-constructed integration of equity into the scope of responsibilities of RIS members
- Equity Office distribution of responsibility
- Continuous evaluation and improvement – goals set for equity outcomes targeted by the District should be accompanied by a well-designed process for tracking results, measuring progress, and making necessary adjustments

Supplemental Content Appendix

A: Rationale for Definition of Equity

To be sure, equity is a term that has achieved significant traction in education communities throughout the US in recent years. This has been positive, overall, in drawing attention to the significantly different academic and developmental outcomes experienced by children enrolled in schools and educational programs throughout the U.S. This is made all the more challenging by a wide range of definitions of equity as well as a range of synonyms utilized by educational organizations around the U.S. Associate Dean for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at University of California, Los Angeles, defines *equity* as “a real committed set of ideals and principles that are really focused on trying to serve the most needy students.”⁶ Representing 57 school districts across the state of Minnesota, Schools for Educational Equity considers equity the “access to a high quality education regardless of where they live in Minnesota.”⁷ Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) defines equity as “improving systemic culture, conditions, and competencies across the district in order to better serve children and families situated furthest from opportunity.” OUSD goes on to define equity as “providing each student with the academic, social and emotional supports they need to prepare for college, career, and community success in the future.” Estela Mara Bensimon Professor in Educational Equity and the Founder and Director of the Center for Urban Education at University of Southern California’s Rossier Graduate School of Education defines equity this way: “equity has a very distinct meaning, rooted in achieving racial proportionality in all educational outcomes. At its core, it is about acknowledging and addressing racism in our educational systems.”⁸ Despite the likely-perceived social and political inconvenience of such a definition, its root focus upon racism in education, rather than focusing upon outcomes achieved by children in schools and classrooms, offers a starting point engaging in equity efforts across a school district like Denver Public Schools.

The racism of which Dr. Bensimon writes takes on many forms and is enacted in many actions acceptable in public education, including under-service to diverse language speakers and learners, students with varying levels of physical and mental abilities, and from different racial/cultural/ethnic backgrounds. In sum, the lack of a clear and guiding definition of equity in Denver Public Schools may contribute to persistent inequities and sustained practices that persist throughout the experiences of students, educators and policymakers, as well as those of family and community members.

As reflected in Appendix B, no single, cohering definition of equity was provided in any of the equity documents reviewed for this report and Unified Equity Plan. Throughout, there were statements of value, belief, and commitment. The lack of a definition of equity is of significant concern, and lowers the possibility of pursuing equity, knowing its characteristics, and assessing its achievement. The working definition of equity that we offer to Denver Public Schools, in an effort to frame the Plan for Equity is:

The system of acknowledging and dismantling the various forms of racism enacted in schools and throughout the district, in order to ensure that all students, educators, families and communities have the resources, supports, opportunities, and environments necessary for children to learn and develop in school.

⁶ <https://www.hmhco.com/blog/defining-equity-in-your-school-district>

⁷ <http://www.schoolsforequity.org/>

⁸ <https://rossier.usc.edu/magazine/fall-winter-2018/reclaiming-equity-in-word-and-deed/>

Appendix B:

Document	Authors	Equity Discussed As	Population/Subjects	Issues/Problems	Solution/Actions	Status
Equity in DPS (equity 1-pgr)	CELT	A Value: Diversity is a community treasure and equity is at the core of our mission. DPS will always welcome, support and protect our diverse student body.	Students Students of Color	Student Achievement: Students of Color (vs. white Ss)	Funding a. Student-based budgeting	
			Students English Language Learners	Student Achievement: English Language Learners (vs. native English-speaking Ss)	Teachers a. Employee Resource Groups b. ToC Recruitment c. Teacher Mentorship d. CRE Training e. ELA Training	
				Student Achievement: Students with Disabilities (vs. those w/o recognized disabilities)		
				Family/Comm Needs/Inadequacies: Life Skills Economic Self-sufficiency Family Poverty	Family Engagement a. PTHomeVisitProg b. Center for Family Opportunity	
				Socioeconomic Segregation:	Community a. SNI	
			???	School Tiered Support System		
Document	Authors	Equity Discussed As	Population/Subjects	Issues/Problems	Solution/Actions	Status
Resolution on the Excellence of our Black and African-American Students (Black Excellence Resolution) (February, 2019)	Board of Education	A Value: We celebrate our diversity and will provide the necessary resources and supports to eliminate barriers to success and foster a more equitable future for <i>all</i> of our students.	Students Black or African American Students	School: ---	School a. Review student performance data b. Review student discipline data c. Review student special education-placement data	
				Student Experience: disproportionate suspensions (28%; 2017-18)		
				Student Experience: disproportionate disability designation (16.5%; 2017-18)		

				Student Experience: disproportionate course enrollment (10%; 2017-18)		
				Student Achievement: Black/AA graduation rates (67%; 2017-18)		
				Student Experience: Report feeling supported (77%)		
				Student Experience: Report feeling safe (58%)		
			Students Black or African American Students	Student Achievement: On-time graduation of students with disabilities (2%; 2017-18)		
				District ---	District a. Implicit bias training for all district employees b. Culturally Responsive Education training for all district employees	
				Central Office ---	Central Office a. Define results (adult/student/system levels) b. Develop common language c. Equity audit d. Establish school-specific targets e. Align targets with instructional priorities f. Implement progress monitoring	
Document	Authors	Equity Discussed As	Population/Subjects	Issues/Problems	Solution/Actions	Status
The Resolution for Strengthening Neighborhoods (SNI Resolution) (March 2017)	Board of Ed	A characteristic: High-quality socio-economically integrated schools	Schools	City/County of Denver: Changing demographics and housing patterns affecting enrollment	District <i>Resolution</i> to form a citywide committee to make recommendations to district	

Document	Authors	Equity Discussed As	Population/Subjects	Issues/Problems	Solution/Actions	Status
Resolution Objecting to Any Limitation on the Rights of our LGBTQ+ Students, Employees and Community Members (Wont-Be-Erased Resolution) (November 2018)	Board of Ed	A Commitment: Committed to providing safe and welcoming spaces	Students Employees Family/Community Members	Student Experience: Federal government policy change regarding gender identity of students	District <i>Resolution</i> to expand GSAs and other supports	
Document	Authors	Equity Discussed As	Population/Subjects	Issues/Problems	Solution/Actions	Status
Safe and Welcoming School District Resolution (no date)	Board of Ed	A Commitment: Committed to providing safe and welcoming environments	Students	Student Experience: Federal policy change may result in immigration enforcement actions	District Resolution a. Student Information Protect students' confidential information b. Student Experience Ensure that learning environments are not disrupted by immigration enforcement actions c. Emergency Response Teams Training to help ensure student safety	
Document	Authors	Equity Discussed As	Population/Subjects	Issues/Problems	Solution/Actions	Status
Denver Public Schools as a Trauma-Informed School District (no date)	Board of Education	4 Commitments: <i>Committed</i> to our mission to provide all students the opportunity to achieve the knowledge and skills necessary to become contributing citizens <i>Committed</i> to removing barriers that impact student	Students Families of Students Educators	Student Experience: a. Suspension and Expulsion b. Suicide and Threat Response	Student Experiences a. Provision of Restorative Practices b. Provision of Social Emotional Learning c. Provision of skill building opportunities d. Continued support to ensure that students feel supported/engaged/safe/healthy/challenged/socially intelligent/emotionally intelligent	

		growth and achievement <i>Committed</i> to providing prevention and intervention health initiatives within the Whole Child framework <i>Committed</i> to ensuring mental health supports for students		Families Circumstance: Intergenerational Poverty	Families ---	
				--	District <i>Resolution</i> to a. become a trauma-informed district to best meet the needs of diverse students, families, educators b. To inform supports for all students in all grade levels who need stronger supports: i. Use information from Healthy Kids CO Survey ii. Use information from Whole Child Student Perception Survey c. Offer district-wide training, coaching and support in trauma-informed approaches	
Document	Authors	Equity Discussed As	Population/Subjects	Issues/Problems	Solution/Actions	Status
The Resolution Towards Ending Suspensions and Expulsions of Young Learners (no date)	Board of Education	3 Values: <i>Value</i> discipline reform efforts focusing on the elimination of racial disparities in discipline <i>Value</i> elimination of school-to-prison pipeline <i>Value</i> use of restorative practices and other positive alternatives to suspension and expulsion 2 Beliefs:	Students	Student Experiences Suspension and Expulsion a. Racial disparities b. Youngest learner suspension and expulsion	District <i>Resolution</i> to amend Board policy <i>Resolution</i> to ensure that family, educator, and community voices are included in feedback to policy amendment	

		Belief in importance of restoring relationships Belief in participation of families, teachers, leaders and support staff in development of behavior plans				
Document	Authors	Equity Discussed As	Population/Subjects	Issues/Problems	Solution/Actions	Status
Resolution (SPED Task Force) May 2018	Board of Education		Students Students with identified disabilities African American Students Latinx Students	Student Experiences a. Overrepresentation of students with disabilities in “opportunity quartile of lowest achievement” b. Disproportionate representation of AA/L students in lowest levels of academic achievement c. Disproportionate representation of AA/L students in Affective Needs programming	District Resolution to staff to create a process to build out Student Equity and Opportunity reorganization plan that will: a. Eliminate disproportionate outcomes for students with disabilities b. Be designed in collaboration with CELT c. Ensure students are served in Least Restrictive Environment d. Ensure transparent allocation of funds to serve students with disabilities e. Develop school-level expertise through PD f. Provide public milestones and deliverables with communication progress	
Document	Authors	Equity Discussed As	Population/Subjects	Issues/Problems	Solution/Actions	Status
African-American Equity Task For Guidelines and Recommendations	Not listed (DPS staff and community member participants)	4 Characteristics <i>Establishing</i> deep, authentic and trusting relationships <i>Equitable</i> partnerships with African American Students, Families and Educators <i>Partnerships</i> of inclusion, voice and	Students African American Students Educators African American Educators	Opportunity and Achievement gaps for African-American students and educators	District a. Funding for creating of an African-American Equity Team b. Adapt and Expand SPF Equity indicator c. Develop and Implement Systems to support ongoing PD focused on instruction, engagement, communication with African-American	

		shared ownership in the design, implementation and oversight of all related efforts and initiatives <i>Continuous improvement</i> to monitor progress Responsive adapting of efforts to meet changing needs			students, families and community members d. Create a shared definition of Culturally Responsive Instruction and Education e. Ensure that curricular materials are responsive to African American students f. Develop and implement an African-American Equitable Access Plan to increase access to AP/GT/Concurrent-enrollment/STEM/STEAM/CareerConnect/IB/MYP/student leadership/magnet programs g. Evaluate current state of program offerings by school h. Conduct a stakeholder survey to understand specific needs of African-American males i. Provide teachers with additional support to accelerate learning of low-performing students j. Provide additional push-in support, where needed k. Establish Community and Family Opportunity Centers l. Create school-level and district-level Black Family Advisory Councils m. Design and implement a supportive assessment and planning tool that assists African-American students and families to navigate the school process (k-12) n. Create a district-led HR task force to provide development, implementation, and oversight of equitable recruitment,	
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					hiring, promotion, renewal and compensation i. HRTF ensure that School leader candidates demonstrate cultural competence. ii. HRTF investigates and remedy disparities in pay structures considering race, ethnicity, gender iii. HRTF oversee development of internal pipeline of African-American educators and educational leaders o. Develop systems and structures to attract African-American educators i. Establish employee resource groups for members of isolated groups ii. Partner with city to create support groups for African-American employees School a. Create and publicly disseminate Equity Plan i. PTVHP ii. Ongoing assessment of Home Visits iii. Develop personalized learning plans for each African American student iv. Focus on wrap-around supports v. Address disproportionate discipline practices vi. Culturally Responsive Curriculum vii. Identify opportunities for Central Office support departments to be actively engaged in schools	
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Document	Authors	Equity Discussed As	Population/Subjects	Issues/Problems	Solution/Actions	Status
DPS Plan 2020: Every Child Succeeds (2010)	Board of Education (Haynes, Jimenez, Johnson, O'Brien, Rodriguez, Rowe, Taylor) Senior Leadership Team (Boasberg, Colon, Cordova, Duran, Figoli, Hearty, Lee-Ashley, A. Martinez, G. Martinez, Spalten, Suppes, Vaughn, Whitehead-Bust) Advisory Committee Ronda Belen, Brandon Blew, Katrina Mann Boykin, Frank, Coyne, Nickolas Dawkins, Karen Fox Elwell, Chris Gibbons, Jozette Martinez Griffin, Brooke Johnson-Brown, Kim Knous-Dolan, Jennifer Morrison, Lindsay Neil, Ivonne Porras, Nita Reske, Zach Rowe, Juanita Stevenson, Ada Volek, Chuck Ward Staff Nikole Burns, Casey, Dustin Kress, Jennifer Stern	We celebrate our diversity and will provide the necessary resources and supports to eliminate barriers to success and foster a more equitable future for all our kids. Our diversity is a community treasure and equity is the core of our mission. We commit to building a culture that embraces the unique identity and potential of every child.	Students Schools	Student Experience 61% of students attend a High Performing School	Student Experience: Priority Areas a. Partner with community organizations to expand high-quality supports and services for families with young children to build the foundation for academic success b. Expand high-quality school choices in all communities through differentiated supports for existing schools, new school strategies, turnaround efforts and strong accountability systems c. Implement intentional strategies to focus on culturally responsive education in every classroom	
				Student Experience 1100 students graduate college and career ready	Student Experience: -----	
				Student Achievement 60% of 3 rd grade students are proficient at reading and writing (50% for African American and Latino(x) students)	Student Achievement: Priority Areas a. Invest Early (prioritize resources in early grades (preschool-3 rd grade) to set up our youngest students for later success. b.	
				Student Achievement Graduation Rate is at 68% (African American and Latino(x) graduation rate is 64%)	Student Achievement:	

Appendix C: Demographic Profile of Denver Public Schools

Links to demographic data can be found at: <https://financialservices.dpsk12.org/student-submissions/>
Detailed demographic reports are from this site are linked below.

Number of Schools: 223

2018-19 Student Population Data

- [Student membership](#): 93,356
- [English Language Learners](#)
- [Ethnicity and Gender Data](#)
- Free/Reduced Lunch: 64.5%
- [Students with Disabilities Data](#)

Students with Disabilities by Race/Ethnicity as of Dec. 1, 2018		
Demographic	Subgroup	Rate
Race/Ethnicity	Asian	2%
	Black	16%
	Hispanic	59%
	Nat. American	1%
	Pac. Islander	0%
	Two or more	4%
	White	19%

2018 Achievement Snapshot

	Academic Achievement		4-year on-time graduation rate for 2018
	Proficient or advanced in Literacy (2018 CMAS data)	Proficient or advanced in Math (2018 CMAS data)	
White Students	72.4%	64.5%	78%
African-American / Black	28.4%	17.4%	67%
Hispanic / Latinx	28.9%	19.8%	68%

2018-19 Teacher Population

	All DPS Staff	Teachers	Teacher Leaders	School Leaders	Para-professionals	Specialized Service Providers
White	54%	72%	76%	61%	34%	79%
Hispanic / Latinx	30%	19%	16%	21%	45%	10%
Black	10%	4%	4%	12%	14%	5%
Asian	2%	1%	1%	-	2%	2%
Multi Race	3%	3%	3%	4%	3%	3%

*Data not shown for groups of an n-size less than 5

**Teacher Leaders = Senior/Team Leads + (Regional) Team Specialists + New Teacher Ambassadors

***School Leaders = Principals + APs + Leaders of Others