WAYS 2 EQUITY PLAYBOOK ENHANCEMENT

EQUITY

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION LEARNERS

Santa Clara County Office of Education

Table of Contents

The electronic version of the *Ways to Equity Playbook* can be found here: **https://www.innovationscollaborative.org/cepip.aspx**.

Introduction

When a child is born, we consider what is required to nurture, provide care, and support their well-being and growth. Parents, caregivers, and teachers play a pivotal role in helping children develop their skills and interests. A high-quality early childhood education allows infants and toddlers to grow in a safe learning environment. Within our educational system, creating equity goals will provide access to learning for all children, beginning with the early stages of life, where exposure to others outside the home and access to activities that promote healthy brain development, shape the trajectory of infants and young children's lives.

To reach this goal, we must strive toward ensuring all children receive what they need to reach their fullest potential. As a diverse, robust group of individuals come together to help teach and support a child—irrespective of race, gender, socioeconomic status, ability, or language, they bring their cultures, beliefs, histories, and expertise to the table. The work entails all who are willing to engage in courageous conversations about community, belonging, and structural inequalities to better operationalize diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts and align with decision-making that leads to positive student outcomes.

It is important to remember that structural changes within a system that may seem laborious to some, can have everlasting positive impacts on students, educators, and communities. Early childhood educators, working towards creating equitable experiences for children, can engage in such practices more successfully when they feel valued within their wider communities, and are supported by the early learning setting for which they work.

In this, "Enhancement to the *Ways 2 Equity Playbook*: Early Childhood Education Learners," you will find information on equity terminology and equity-driven approaches toward implementing new practices and strategies that will allow educators to support the equity needs of young children from infancy to third grade. The purpose of this enhancement is to further readers' attention, and focus, on early childhood education, and highlight evidence-based strategies to address equity challenges in the Santa Clara County school systems and beyond.

This *Playbook* also features a variety of materials to further advance diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in school systems. These include: the process of transforming and adopting curricula that prioritize equity-mindedness and guidance for discussing and becoming aware of bias in teaching. Other resources include policy papers, books, professional articles, presentations, and local and national organizations with missions that emphasize advancing equity within communities and early childhood education.

No matter the task that comes from utilizing the information presented throughout, we are hopeful that it motivates users to persevere and continue striving to challenge systems and ways of being, in order to ensure that our early learners thrive, regardless of their race, disability, or socially economic status.

Before delving specifically into content focusing on younger children, this *Playbook* will present the historical context based on which it was developed. The endeavor for educational systems to develop equity goals in order to achieve positive student outcomes, while transforming educational practices for historically marginalized students, as an urgent and long overdue process, encapsulates the motivation of the *Playbook*.

Page 8/Section 4 will detail how to use the *Ways 2 Equity Playbook*, while also using current activities and tools on this page to drive decision making. That is, how to build upon elements from four sections in the Playbook known as 'On-Ramps: Beginning and Continuing on your Equity Journey,' 'Creating a Culture of Inclusion and Belonging,' 'Culturally Relevant Pedagogy,' and 'Universal Design for Learning.' An example consists of following a facilitation guide and answering a set of questions aimed at critically addressing the equity needs of your educational institution's most vulnerable student groups. Keep in mind, each demographic group has unique cultural backgrounds and skills (e.g., racial-ethnic identity, language, abilities) that should be seen as assets and strengths to create developmentally appropriate interventions.

Reviewing existing content from the *Playbook*, in tandem with this 'Enhancement for Early Childhood Education Learners,' should help users articulate where their educational institution is on the equity journey and what is required to carry out equity work to better reach early childhood learners.

We hope this enhancement contributes to personal and professional growth.

Background

In September 2020, the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) officially launched the *Ways 2 Equity Playbook* at the 7th annual Innovations Collaborative State Conference (ICSC). The *Ways 2 Equity Playbook* is a navigation tool that can be used to identify equity needs throughout organizations with a primary focus on looking at equity through a systems lens to ensure improved student outcomes. To download a free copy, click here.

From November 19, 2020, to May 20, 2021, SCCOE hosted monthly two hour-long informative webinars for educators. A group of 30+ professionals joined to network with peers, shared best practices, and learned about facilitating equity conversations. They participated in thought-provoking activities and take-home tasks to incorporate the *Ways 2 Equity Playbook* elements in their classroom practices. To see previous recordings of the Equity Institutes and Navigating Equity Network series, click here.

The *Playbook* purposefully examines three historically marginalized student groups: African American students, students with disabilities, and English Learners. Additionally it provides targeted universal tools and resources to address the equity efforts of supporting those student groups. The underlying belief is that while we focus our efforts on supporting African American students, students with disabilities, and English Language Learners, these targeted tools and resources will also be a means to addressing the needs of *all* students that we serve.

"We have learned the way to develop the most effective, sustainable model of equity in education begins and continues with a conversation," said Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Mary Ann Dewan. "With the *Ways 2 Equity Playbook*, we have an opportunity to address and respond to inequitable practices in our education system in a meaningful, deliberative way that will facilitate dialogue and improve communication, which is the only way we will continue to learn, understand and eliminate bias."

The *Ways 2 Equity Playbook* is the culminating two-year project of the California Equity Performance and Improvement Program (CEPIP) grant made possible by Assembly Bill 99, authored and promoted by Assemblywoman Dr. Shirley Weber. The grant was designed to create funding to promote equity in California's public schools by supporting and building capacity within County Offices of Education, local educational agencies, and schools. To fulfill this effort, the SCCOE has partnered with several national equity organizations, including the National Equity Project (NEP) and Western Educational Equity Assistance Center (WEEAC), as well as several local school districts. Case studies highlighting the partnering school districts are featured in the *Playbook*.

Educators using the *Ways 2 Equity Playbook* can access additional resources to support classroom implementation as well as examine school wide systems. In keeping with the navigational metaphor, the Playbook features a series of "on-ramps," allowing users to approach the conversation and equity journey where applicable. The first on-ramp stresses the need for an organization to define equity, which will be discussed next.

Defining Equity

To achieve equity, one must define what is meant by equity. In essence, educational equity means that every student can go to school and feel that they belong, are valued, and can succeed. Noguera ([2019](#)) explains that the "true" meaning of equity is "acknowledging students' differences and giving them what they need to be successful. It also means staying focused on outcomes, both academic and developmental". In other words, to achieve equity, educators and administrators must know the students whom they teach, understand which pedagogies and resources each student needs to thrive, and remain attuned to how quantitative and qualitative data reflect this. This requires focused investigation of the systems in place that are producing the current results. This way, new systems can be established that ensure that each child receives what they need to succeed.

The focus on equitable outcomes rather than equality (sameness) of resources is key to defining "equity". Making this point visually, the graphic below demonstrates that different students require different resources and support to achieve desired outcomes. As Kimberlé Crenshaw ([1998](#)) put it, "Treating different things the same can generate as much inequality as treating the same things differently." Therefore, to achieve equity, educators must be willing to learn how to provide differently for different students. This, however, can be challenging to put into action.

The main purpose of the *Ways 2 Equity Playbook* (*W2EPB*) is to assist schools, districts, and county offices of education in taking thoughtful action by helping them to find their unique pathways to equity. Equity that is, by definition, systemic. Because working toward equity requires ongoing action and continuous improvement, the *W2EPB* definition of equity centers "ways", or practices that support its advancement. It is understood that for many, the road taken will quite likely feel like uncharted territory. Afterall, the infrastructure for equity as an overarching objective for public education has yet to be built into the system—but is both possible and necessary.

With the public education system a legacy has been inherited. Boldly put: the U.S. education system originated as a tool to further privilege the racially and economically advantaged (see Kliewer & Fitzgerald, [2001](#); Rooks, [2020](#)). To a great extent, mental "fitness" was measured through standardized tests norm-referenced to White, educated men, thus advantaging them and those like them while disadvantaging the "other" (Kendi, [2019](#); see also the National Education Association's "[History of Standardized Testing in the United States](#)"). When we analyze data and take honest stock of the outcomes, we see that this pattern persists within the education system. As is shown through the *W2EPB*, it is undeniable that in comparison to most other student groups, White students continue to receive higher test scores, enroll in and pass more honors and Advanced Placement classes, go to college more, have better teachers, and be suspended less.

There is a hard truth in the data presented throughout this document: For students who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)[1], poor, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, plus other groups (LGBTQIA+)[2], and/or identified as having disabilities, schools are often institutions which systematically reproduce and maintain their oppression. Consequently, the institution of schooling does not value what these students bring to school: their
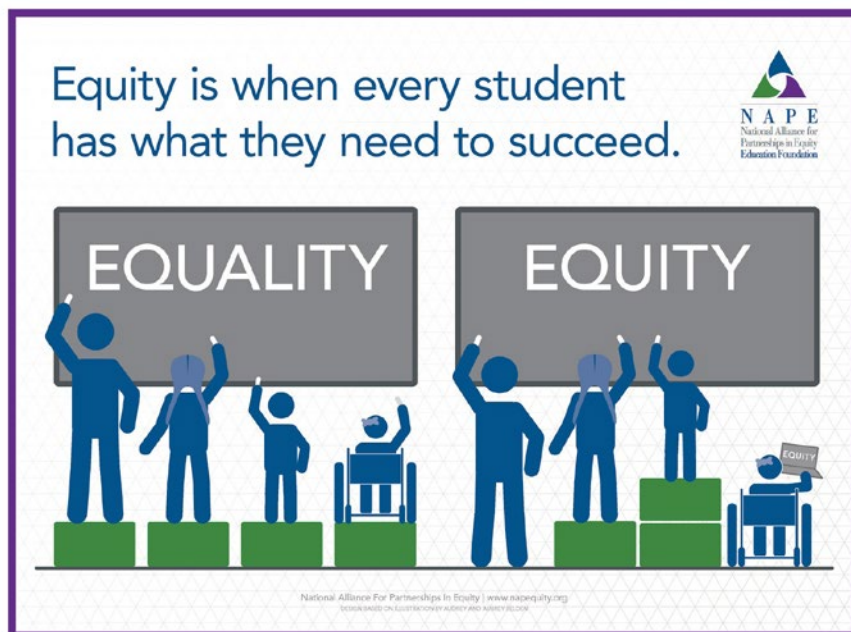
National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity • www.napequity.org • © 2016 NAPEEF

---

[1] BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. This term is used "to highlight the unique relationship to whiteness that Indigenous and Black (African Americans) people have, which shapes the experiences of and relationship to white supremacy for all people of color within a U.S. context" (The BIPOC Project). In effect, the term illuminates the fact that U.S. concepts of race were built on white supremacist notions of blackness and indigeneity.

[2] LGBTQIA+ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, plus other groups marginalized due to gender and sexual identities.

Defining Equity (from National Equity Project)

Each student[3] receives what they need, when they need it, to thrive social-emotionally and academically.

Working toward equity means that we engage in these practices and behaviors:

- Promoting just and fair inclusion, and creating the conditions in which each person participates, prospers, and reaches their full potential.

- Removing the predictability of success and failure that is currently correlated with a student's ethnicity, culture, race, or socio-economic status.

- Interrupting inequitable practices, examining biases, and creating inclusive school environments for each student and their families.

- Paying attention to the social and historic forces which create and maintain systems in which students are treated differently based on who they are.

culture (Valenzuela, 1999; Perry & Steele, 2004), including their languages (Rosa & Flores, 2017), agency (Paris & Alim, 2017), funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992), community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), and their bodies (Hattery & Smith, 2017; Morris, 2016). The core motivation of the *W2EPB* is the strong belief that all students deserve dignity and respect and that they should be valued for their full humanity.

At times a deficit perspective (or mindset) is used to understand BIPOC students, students with disabilities, and students whose first language is not English. A deficit perspective views students through what they *do not* have, or what they lack, as opposed to seeing them for the assets they possess and bring to school every day. To counter the pervasiveness of this deficit perspective, a commitment to transforming the education system must be cultivated. Paris and Alim (2017) write, "We believe that equity and access can best be achieved by centering the dynamic practices and selves of students and communities of color in a critical, additive, and expansive vision of schooling" (p. 3). How do we take action toward equity? The objective of the *Ways 2 Equity Playbook* is to offer a response to this question.

Given the profound and heavy nature of the above, people who serve students and schools must be tenacious and bold. It should be expected that the work ahead will be challenging. And while it may be uncomfortable for some, it will be inspiring and uplifting for many. Working toward equity is the best thing we can do for all students, families, and everyone who makes up the life of schools. Accordingly, it is necessary to cultivate opportunities for what Singleton (2014) calls "courageous conversations", or critical dialogue and reflection. Engagement in such discussions can cultivate essential attitudes of an equity mindset: humility, transparency, courage, and a willingness to learn and change. With emphasis simultaneously placed on work to address implicit biases, great strides can be made to advance equity. From the beginning, the *W2EPB* highlights learning about systemic oppression, activities that address implicit biases, processes which include self-reflection, engagement with equity ideas, and critical dialogue.

Reflection Questions:

1. What is your organization's working definition of equity? Whose voices were included in this definition? Whose voices were not?

2. How has your organization engaged in conversations about the meaning of equity? Who has participated in these conversations? Who has not?

3. What are some reasons educators might be fearful about introducing conversations about racism in their classes? What can school leaders do to alleviate that fear? What can we do as individual educators to alleviate that fear in ourselves?

---

[3] The use of "student" reflects an awareness of the audience for this playbook. It is understood that those using these materials are engaged in the education sphere. However, there are some realms of the education sphere where "student" may not be the most accurate word when referring to those in TK, preschool, early childhood programs, or adult education programs.

Resources

- **To further examine different types of educational inequity, such as societal, socioeconomic, familial, cultural, etc.:** https://www.edglossary.org/equity/
- **Equity Literacy Institute offers a free-low-cost self-paced learning module.** https://equity-literacy.thinkific.com/
- **See Glen Singleton's** *Courageous Conversations about Race: A field guide for achieving equity in schools* **(2005) for a powerful guide for talking about power and privilege related to race so that education systems can then create plans necessary for their transformation.**

Tools

- **CA-1 Course with Micro-Credential Badge: "Vision One"** https://www.learningdesigned.org/node/975/initiative-resources
- **Use the History of Education Timeline Activity to investigate the history of educational inequity.** https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NCN7QxGbLewItm-mMY_68_IeqpsNVlkqgj45CrucNrfU/edit

Select References

- Crenshaw, K. (1991). "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43(6):: 1241–99.

- Hattery, A. J., & Smith, E. (2017). *Policing Black Bodies: How Black Lives Are Surveilled and How to Work for Change.* Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Kendi, I. X. (2019). *How to be an antiracist*. One World.
- Kliewer, C. & Fitzgerald, L. M. (2001).. "Disability, Schooling, and the Artifacts of Colonialism." *Teachers College Record 103*(3): 450–70.
- Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & González, N. (2005). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. In *Funds of Knowledge: Theorizing Practices in Households, Communities, and Classrooms* (pp. 71-88).
- Morris, M. W. (2016). *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools*. The New Press.
- Paris, D. & Alim, S. H. (2017). *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World*. Teachers College Press.
- Perry, T. & Steele, C. (2004). *Young, Gifted, and Black: Promoting High Achievement among African-American Students*. Edited by Asa Hilliard III. Beacon Press.
- Rooks, N. (2020). *Cutting School: The Segrenomics of American Education*. The New Press.
- Rosa, J. & Flores, N. (2017). "Unsettling Race and Language: Toward a Raciolinguistic Perspective." *Language in Society 46*(5) 621–47.
- Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive Schooling: U.S.-Mexican Youth and the Politics of Caring.* State University of New York Press.
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). "Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth." *Race, Ethnicity and Education 8*(1): 69–91.

How to Use the *Ways 2 Equity Playbook*

As a product of the California Statewide System of Support, the *Ways 2 Equity Playbook (W2EPB)* draws on methods of continuous improvement in its approach to systems-based equity work. This section provides guidance on how to use the *W2EPB*. Please note that you will find a list of recommended equity audits and assessment resources, but the *W2EPB* is not in itself an equity audit. In addition, the *W2EPB* was designed as a resource to be used electronically, offering digital-only sections and links to online resources and tools throughout. Please check the electronic version for updates, as we understand the *Playbook* as a "prototype" upon which we will continue to iterate with input and new developments in the field. Please see https://www.innovationscollaborative.org/cepip.aspx for the electronic document that includes additional sections: district case studies and a list of equity assessments and audits.

Organization of the Ways 2 Equity Playbook

The *W2EPB* is organized to guide schools, district, and county offices through their equity work. It has been assembled so that the sections of the *Playbook* move the reader from the more conceptual and theoretical to the more practical. However, just as equity work requires simultaneous engagement with theory and practice, the *Playbook* sections strive to address both layers of equity work at the same time. The education system cannot advance equity without seeing these as two parts of an integrated whole.

Preparing for Equity Work

1. In the original *Playbook*, thoroughly read the sections in Part I: Ramping Up. (These pages will orient the reader to the thinking behind the *W2EPB* and its approach to the process.)
2. Assess where to *start* by using the "On-ramps to Equity".
3. Establish your core equity team that is representative of the school community. (Through the process, there will be a need to develop smaller teams to guide specific aspects of the work.)
4. Choose and use assessment/audit tools to take the equity temperature of your site.
5. Using a planning tool, begin designing your site's ways to equity. (E.g. Sampson's "Digging for Equity".)

Engaging the Equity Work

Use the "On-ramps to Equity" to begin the process. As has been stated, undertaking equity work is not a one-size-fits-all process; intentionality and planning are key to achieving successful outcomes. In addition, it is imperative to simultaneously and continuously explore the comingling of implicit bias and systemic oppression in personal reflection and within your educational contexts. Note: The Innovations Collaborative of the Santa Clara County Office of Education has created an online micro-credential module for teachers to support implementation of the *W2EPB* in the classroom: Utilizing the Ways 2 Equity Playbook.

Using Protocols to Guide your Equity Work

Throughout the *W2EPB*, tools, resources, and support are offered in the journey toward equity. Many of these tools come in the form of "protocols". A protocol is a structured process or set of guidelines that promote meaningful, efficient, and equitable inquiry and communication. Using protocols can help ensure that work is collaborative, equitable, and focused. (Links to protocols are provided throughout the *W2EPB*. They can be accessed through the electronic version of the *Playbook* at http://www.innovationscollaborative.org/cepip.aspx)

On-Ramps: Beginning and Continuing on your Equity Journey

These "on-ramps" should be used to help the user identify where they are in their journey, their objectives, and how to proceed. This tool can be used as a self-assessment and inventory of actions, with each component essential to designing and carrying forth equity work. For example, beginning in column #2, everything listed in column #1 is still a necessary component to be addressed and should be as fully engaged as possible. This is intentional. While equity is an urgent need, to truly see changes in any system, the work must be deliberate, purposeful, collaborative, and deep. Use these on-ramps to gauge where you are. From there, engage in continuous improvement cycles. Finally, remember this: Working toward equity is complex, so not everything here happens in every place and at every time. To that end, the following is offered as a set of processes to help your system delve into the work.

"PRE" WORK:

- Beginning this journey means preparing your system to engage in work that is sometimes messy, often emotional, and challenges our most basic assumptions.
- Leadership must communicate the importance, excitement, and challenge of this work toward equity to staff: personal work and institutional work.
- Gather and explore relevant data, both public and internal; especially investigating disproportionality through an intersectional data analysis of the focal student groups: African American students, students with disabilities, and English learners.
- Read through the *Ways 2 Equity Playbook*, highlighting areas of focus.

On-Ramps: Beginning and Continuing on your Equity Journey

	1. **Starting your Engine:** Learn about Equity in your System	2. **Picking up Speed:** Dive into Planning for Equity	3. **Merging onto the Highway:** Share Plans and Begin your Equity Cycles	Relevant *W2EPB* Sections: Access to find information and tools
Leadership Development	☐ Establish a core leadership team that will identify and develop a broader equity leadership team ☐ Identify trainings/education for leadership team on systemic racism & implicit bias ☐ Take implicit bias assessment ☐ Explore equity literature for future book circles (see resources) ☐ Establish community agreements/norms	☐ Establish a broader, representative equity leadership team across stakeholder groups ☐ Leadership team engage in an equity assessment ☐ Develop smaller leadership teams for specific areas of work (ongoing) ☐ Identify an equity team facilitator who is available, consistent, and experienced ☐ Initiate equity literature book circles/equity discussions with all staff	☐ Ensure that representative stakeholders are participants at all levels of process ☐ Continue equity literature book circles/equity discussions with all staff	Team Development & Facilitation Implicit Bias & Cultivating Equity Mindshifts Equity Literature
Teacher/Staff Development	☐ Take implicit bias assessment ☐ Participate in trainings/education on systemic racism & implicit bias ☐ Explore equity literature for future book circles (see resources)	☐ Reflect on results of implicit bias assessment; consider next steps for individuals and collective action based on results ☐ Further focus trainings/education for teachers on systemic racism & implicit bias ☐ Initiate equity literature book circles/equity discussions with all staff	☐ Continued, focused trainings/education for teachers on addressing systemic racism & implicit bias through effective pedagogy ☐ Continue equity literature book circles/equity discussions with all staff	Team Development & Facilitation Implicit Bias & Cultivating Equity Mindshifts Equity Literature
Data & Research	☐ Needs assessment: Investigate Dashboard data of districts/schools using data exploration protocol ☐ Identify focal student groups ☐ Needs assessment: Survey teachers, staff, parents, students, and other stakeholders ☐ Explore equity audits/assessments to use in your context	☐ Continue to collect relevant quantitative and qualitative data at the local and state levels ☐ Conduct intersectional data analysis for disproportionality ☐ Conduct root cause analysis	☐ Continue to collect and share relevant quantitative and qualitative data ☐ Continue to conduct intersectional data analysis for disproportionality, with attention to African American students, SWD, and ELs ☐ Plan cycles of research and measurement for improvement	Using Data to Inform Equity List of Equity Audits & Assessments African American Students Students with Disabilities English Learners

On-Ramps: Beginning and Continuing on your Equity Journey

	1. **Starting your Engine:** Learn about Equity in your System	2. **Picking up Speed:** Dive into Planning for Equity	3. **Merging onto the Highway:** Share Plans and Begin your Equity Cycles	Relevant *W2EPB* **Sections: Access to find information and tools**
Planning	☐ Identify and broadly define equity challenges ☐ Begin to draft equity goals that explicitly address inequities found in needs assessment ☐ Develop a timeline starting with these on-ramps and cycles of continuous improvement	☐ Develop shared definition of equity ☐ Define and prioritize your equity goals ☐ Choose set of tools to address the challenge based on defined equity goals ☐ Begin drafting an equity plan (made up of report of findings, tools, strategies, communication plan, plan to monitor progress)	☐ Narrow focus to one equity challenge, drawing on stakeholder input ☐ Finalize equity plan ☐ Initiate and continue use of equity tools and strategies ☐ Check for integrity of the equity plan	Defining Equity Using Data to Inform Equity
Communication	☐ Identify stakeholders ☐ Begin development of communication plan	☐ Continue to develop communication plan ☐ Share equity data with community of stakeholders	☐ Finalize communication plan ☐ Communicate the equity plan to stakeholders ☐ Continue to share data findings and open up conversations with stakeholders	Developing an Equity Communication Plan
Culture & Climate	☐ Calibrate potential equity goals to mission and vision ☐ Begin process of ongoing personal reflection	☐ Align equity objectives to mission and vision ☐ Continue ongoing personal reflection ☐ Include students and community representation in decision-making and work	☐ Check for and build student and community representation in decision-making and work	Creating a Culture of Inclusion & Belonging Implicit Bias & Cultivating Equity Mindshifts Student Engagement Family Engagement
Progress Monitoring	☐ Check-in with teachers and staff about their response to the equity focus	☐ Continue monitoring equity and representativeness of leadership team	☐ Monitor progress: Schedule regular meetings (every 2-4 weeks) ☐ Monitor leadership capacity-building	Team Development & Facilitation Using Data to Inform Equity

These on-ramps were developed at the Santa Clara County Office of Education from a combination of vetted sources: *The Equity Framework*, (Linton, 2011); *Self-Assessment of MTSS Implementation (SAM)*, (Stockslager, K., et. al., 2016), *Culturally Responsive Organizational Series*, Sampson, 2019, and the SCCOE *W2EPB* Team.

Supporting Early Learning Students

This section underscores early childhood education history in the U.S. It explores the various early learning and care programs available to families and the distinct characteristics and services provided. We acknowledge that families seek high-quality childcare for their children; thus, we offer questions to help you reflect on your school's goals for early learners and strategic plans to develop culturally relevant pedagogy in preschool programs. Additionally, this section highlights the current state of early learning in California, including publicly funded programs and prospects for future initiatives, such as Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK), as well as equity issues impacting early learners.

Background and History of Early Learning

Early Childhood Education (ECE) and school readiness provide children with the skills and preparation to blossom as human beings and thrive in the workforce and global economy. In particular, high quality early care and education programs are the most effective investment to close the opportunity and achievement gaps, and offer the highest return on public investment. In the U.S., Early Childhood Education (or pre-primary) refers to various programs (e.g., educational, social welfare) within the public and private sectors such as preschools, family child care, and kindergarten that offer services to children ages 0-5. These different auspices comprise many part-day and full-school-day programs. This raises a question, *What are the most prevalent forms of early childhood care and education environments for children?* Below are the characteristics and benefits of three distinct early childhood programs to help develop an understanding of program benefits which support the learning and care of the nation's children.

Preschool programs (or nursery school programs) are groups or classes organized to provide organizational experiences for children during the year or years preceding kindergarten. These include programs available through public and private entities or compensatory education ("comp ed") under special legislation. These programs are primarily half day or full day (usually 9:00-

3:00 pm). Head Start and the Early Head Start Program are two federally-funded programs that promote school readiness for children living in poverty. Early Head Start focuses on pregnant women and children, birth to three years of age, whereas Head Start focuses on preschool-aged children between 3-4 years old (ECLKC, 2019)

The Head Start Program is a compensatory preschool program that began in 1965 to provide children with comprehensive education, health, nutrition, social, and other services. The Head Start Program was formerly a part of the Office of Economic Opportunity wherein funds were allocated to states, but later appropriated to the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Child Development, beginning in 1972. A report states, "Since its inception Head Start has served more than 37 million children, birth to age 5, and their families. In 2019, Head Start was funded to serve nearly 1 million children and pregnant women in centers, family homes, and child care homes in urban, suburban, and rural communities throughout the nation" (ECLKC, 2019).

Family child care centers (or nonparental care arrangement) are state-regulated homes through licensing and registration that provide care for several children (other than the provider's home) in the caregiver's own home (OECD., 2003). These homes can take between 12 to 14 children and may operate during standard hours or irregular hours such as nights or weekends. About 20% of children under the age of five were cared for in this arrangement in 2019 (NCES, 2021). Typically, parents look for several factors when choosing their child's arrangement. Findings from the Early Childhood Program Participation: 2019 survey reveal among children age five and under who were not yet in kindergarten and were in at least one weekly care arrangement, the factors that were very important to parents in selecting care arrangement included reliability, available time of care, qualifications of staff, learning activities, location, etc. (Cui and Natzke, 2021).

Kindergarten is a preschool program designed to meet the needs of mainly five-year-olds the year before primary school entry. They are sometimes half-day or full-day programs with a wide range of instructional approaches and strategies in the classrooms, such as the amount of attention given to specific activities and skills, which all impact the quality of learning for children.

According to a study, "In 1965, only eighteen states in the U.S. funded public kindergarten; by 1970, eighty percent of five-year-olds attended public kindergarten and, in 2000, all states funded some sort of kindergarten, most universal" (Kamerman and Gatenio-Gabel, 2007).

Kindergarten is a near-universal experience for American children, with about 86 percent attending kindergarten before first grade for at least a half day in 2017 (COE, 2019). Whether children attend kindergarten for half or full days varies according to where they live, their race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and their parents' educational level. From 2000 to 2017, the percentage of kindergarten students enrolled in full-day programs was higher than that of preschool students enrolled in full-day programs (COE, 2019). In the full-day program, instruction focuses on reading, mathematics, social studies, and science. Data shows that "Sixty-eight percent of full-day classes spent more than an hour per day on reading instruction compared to 37 percent of half-day classes" (Denton, West and Walston, 2003). What's striking to note is that until recently, national data on young children's reading skills has been minimal but has implications for kindergarten enrollment for full-day programs that expand the learning time.

In terms of attendance, in 2016, a higher percentage of children of two or more races (34 percent) and Black children (32 percent) kindergarten children attended kindergarten; this is a higher rate than was found for White (31 percent), Hispanic (23 percent) or Asian (31 percent) kindergartners (NCES, 2019). Kindergartners whose family income was less than $50,000 attended public, full-day programs at a higher rate than those from more affluent families (NCES, The Condition of Education, 2022). Overall, the national findings support research on full-day kindergarten and its positive association with learning during the kindergarten year.

The Current State of Early Learning Education in California

In California, plans for child care and development services are based on the needs of families in the local community. California has three publicly funded preschool programs that serve families of various socioeconomic backgrounds—the California State

Preschool Program (CSPP) (low-income families), Head Start (families with incomes under the federal poverty line), and Transitional Kindergarten (has no income requirements but enrolls only a limited age group). California's Head Start program is the largest in the nation, and approximately 122,000 children were served by Head Start in the fiscal year 2019 (CA Department of Education, 2022). According to the Public Policy Institute of California, "For FY 2019, the state budgeted $2.2 billion for CSPP and Transitional Kindergarten; the federal government provided $1.1 billion for Head Start for children ages 0-5. Spending on these three programs covers over half of California's public expenditures on child care and development" (Danielson and Thorman, 2019). Other publicly funded programs serve a broader age range, typically ages 0-12, and there's a new one underway to promote learning for four-year-olds.

The California Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) initiative entails the following:

1. Create or expand California State Preschool Programs (CSPP) or TK programs;
2. Establish or strengthen partnerships with other providers of prekindergarten education within the local educational agency (LEA), including Head Start programs;
3. Ensure that high-quality prekindergarten options are available for four-year-old children (CA Department of Education, 2022).

Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) brings together programs across early learning and K-12, leveraging multiple educational environments to ensure every four-year-old in the country has access to a high-quality learning experience before entering kindergarten. Regardless of a child's background, race, zip code, immigration status, or income level, programs such as Universal Transitional Kindergarten (UTK) and California State Preschool Program (CSPP), as well as Head Start, community-based organizations (CBOs), and private preschool will serve children and families. As one might ponder, "How will Transitional Kindergarten (TK), UPK, and P-3 (Preschool through grade 3) align? "

In the California Department of Education's '1/13/2022 UPK Planning Template Webinar' presentation, they highlight the information that has been provided below (CDE, 2022; p. 6).

Figure 1. UPK Planning Template

P-3	Connects UPK with Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade.	Align developmentally informed best practices, UPK– 3rd grade.
UPK	A mixed-delivery system of UTK, CSPP, Head Start, private providers, and more.	Provide every four-year-old access to high-quality learning the year before kindergarten.
TK	An integral program in the mixed delivery system for achieving UPK.	Serve any four-year old that wants to enroll by 2025-26 (only program that is required).

Supporting Early Learning Students

By 2025-2026, all Local Education Agencies (LEA) must make TK available to all children who will have their fourth birthday by September 1 of the school year. LEAs will need to develop a strategic plan to share with the governing board at a public meeting on or before June 30, 2022. In the plan, they must address how all children within the local educational agency will have access to full-day learning programs the year before kindergarten. The California Department of Education proposes they partner with agencies such as Head Start Programs, community-based early learning and care programs, and the California state preschool program to meet the needs of students and parents. The CDE has allocated $176 million in grants to LEAs with kindergarten enrollment in specific years to plan for UPK and offers planning questions to support the development of comprehensive plans for UPK. For more information, we recommend you view the Universal PreKindergarten (UPK) Planning and Implementation resources from the CDE, here.

Recruitment and retention of high-quality staff is often challenging for early learning and care programs. To this end, strategies to support diverse and effective prospective TK and CSPP teachers are vital. CDE offers *rate reform* for the California State Preschool Program (CSPP) to provide higher reimbursement rates. It may allow some contractors to raise salaries and recruit and retain more qualified staff. For resources regarding rate reform effective January 1, 2022, look here.

Early Learning Education and Equity

Evidence shows that students may reach their fullest potential through access to high-quality early learning programs from preschool to kindergarten and by becoming academically proficient on third-grade achievement measures. California determines a student's academic achievement and outcomes primarily by their third-grade reading proficiency level. Though robust early learning starts in a high-quality childhood education setting and provides children with proficiency in reading, children of low socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to start school behind and may never catch up. A 2009 RAND study found that only 40 percent of eligible three and four-year-olds were enrolled in state-subsidized early childhood education programs. Today, far too few low-income children are enrolled in high-quality early childhood education programs that promote school readiness which impacts the ability to read at grade level in California (CA Department of Education, 2011).

Through early childhood education programs and early learning, caregivers and providers may have opportunities to more readily identify the needs of children earlier in life through fostering a connection to the families. Increasing access to services for all children is a policy imperative and equity goal that demands attention. For example, capturing successful approaches to helping children with disabilities and connecting families to essential health and social services that support the whole child have long-term effects. Though progress has been made to provide services to students with disabilities, more is needed to address their specific needs (Rhim, Sutter and Cambell, 2017; Duncan and Posny, 2010). Moreover, programs and services that address the needs of emerging English learners (children from families whose dominant language is not English) also need more attention in the future. These are just several examples of equity concerns in early childhood education that impact children in the early stages of development and life. The following section further explores the unmet needs of learners with a wide range of ethnicities, abilities, languages, and socioeconomic and geographical backgrounds.

Equity Issues Impacting Early Learners

High-quality preschool programs benefit children in many ways. Research shows that children have better health, social-emotional, and cognitive outcomes, especially children from low-income families at risk of starting kindergarten behind and failing academically. Studies also reveal that the early years are critical in children's learning and development, providing the necessary pre-literacy and language foundation for more advanced skills (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Children who attend

Note: Preschool enrollment includes children enrolled in in-person, virtual, and hybrid learning).

a high-quality, full-day early learning program are 40% more likely to read at grade level. Yet, there is a strong need to ensure that early childhood education for all children ages 0-5 is met for all parents, irrespective of socioeconomic status, and offers effective learning and care for low-income children—an equity challenge we must not overlook.

Additional *equity issues* impacting early learners include:
- Across the nation, 45 percent of 3 to 4-year-olds are not enrolled in publicly funded preschool programs (NCES, 'Enrollment Rates of Young Children', 2022).
- Public preschool programs lack the capacity to serve all children (Danielson and Thorman, 2019)
- Preschool enrollment reflects social and economic disparities (Danielson and Thorman, 2019; NCES, 'Enrollment Rates of Young Children', 2022)
- Preschool enrollment declined in nearly every state between 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 (Friedman-Krauss, et al., 2022, pp. 5-6; McElrath, 2021)
- The COVID-19 pandemic disproportionality affected preschool enrollment for low-income children (Office of Civil Rights, 2021).

Families want high-quality childcare. Yet, the supply of quality care available to low-income families who wish their young children to receive quality care is an equity challenge. As working-class families face high childcare costs and work to make ends meet, increasing access to affordable childcare helps working parent(s) maintain work, especially women. Moreover, a safe, nurturing environment promotes children's development, which is critical to working families, yielding benefits for many decades. We recognize that states and the federal government

are investing in initiatives to expand access, such as preschool development grants. The SCCOE also shares a common interest in the growth and development of children and offer education programs such as preschool services to eligible families of children with all learning needs. Learn more, here.

Reflection Questions

1. In your experience, what do families look for when choosing early childhood education and care programs? List examples.
2. How are the learning programs offered in your city, county, or state meeting the needs of families? What data can be used to analyze the outcomes in meeting families' needs?
3. What constitutes high-quality care and robust educational learning for children in your region? What factors (e.g., equity issues) persist that impede the learning environment's ability to serve low-income families? Or families with children who have disabilities?
4. What steps can you take to develop culturally appropriate/responsive preschool programs beyond the curriculum? For example, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) in family and community connections, language differences, and staff professional development in preschool programs?

Resources

Read articles and books on successful strategies for reaching Early Learners:
- Diversity and Inclusion in Early Childhood: An Introduction (Available on Amazon) (Devarakonda, 2014)
- Each and Every Child: Teaching Preschool with an Equity Lens (naeyc.org) (Friedman and Mwenelupembe, 2020)
- K–2 Assessment Systems Enable Early Intervention to Foster Student Success (wested.org) (Jensen et al., 2021)
- Kindergarten Readiness Assessments Help Identify Skill Gaps (wested.org) (Jensen et al., 2021)
- Supporting Early Learning in America (newamerica.org) (Bornfreund et al., 2020)

Learn positions and approaches to advance equity for early learners:
- Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education Position Statement (naeyc.org) (NAEYC National Governing Board, 2019)
- Advancing Equity and Embracing Diversity in Early Childhood Education: Elevating Voices and Actions (naeyc.org) (Alanís and Iruka, 2021)
- CA Department of Education's 'Early Learning and Care Resources'
- Diversity starts in schools – children need to see a wider range of careers (theguardian.com) (Donald, 2018)

- [Viewpoint. Creating Anti-Racist Early Childhood Spaces](#) (naeyc.org) (Allen et al., 2021)
- [Equity Starts Early](#) (ccsso.org) (Stark, 2016)
- [Our Youngest Learners: Increasing Equity in Early Intervention](#) (The Education Trust, National Center for Learning Disabilities, and Zero to Three, 2021)
- [Pre-K Teachers and Bachelor's Degrees: Envisioning Equitable Access to High-Quality Preparation Programs](#) (newamerica.org) (Workman, Guernsey, and Mead, 2018
- [The Program for Infant/Toddler Care Expands Reach and Inclusiveness Through Digital Format](#) (wested.org) (Crocker, 2021)
- [Viewpoint. Creating Anti-Racist Early Childhood Spaces](#) (naeyc.org) (Allen et al., 2021)

Selected References

- *A Matter of Equity: Preschool in America*. U.S. Department of Education. (2015, April). Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/documents/early-learning/matter-equity-preschool-america.pdf
- *California Head Start State Collaboration Office*. California Head Start State Collaboration Office - Child Development (CA Dept of Education). (2022). Retrieved from https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/chssco.asp
- Cui, J., and Natzke, L. (2021). *Early Childhood Program Participation: 2019* (NCES 2020-075REV), National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2020075REV
- Danielson, C., & Thorman, T. (2019, May). *Public Preschools in California*. Public Policy Institute of California. Retrieved from https://www.ppic.org/publication/public-preschools-in-california/
- Duncan, A., & Posny, A. (2010, November). *Thirty-five Years of Progress in Educating Children With Disabilities Through IDEA*. Eric. Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED515893.pdf
- *Early Childhood Education. Early Childhood Education - A Blueprint For Great Schools* (CA Dept of Education). (2011). Retrieved from https://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/bp/bpstrategy5.asp
- *Fast Facts: Childcare*. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a part of the U.S. Department of Education. (2021). Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=4
- Friendman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett , W. S., Garver , K. A., Hodges , K. S., Weisenfield, G. G., Gardiner, B. A., & Merriman, T. (2022). *State Preschool Yearbook - National Institute for Early Education Research*. The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER). Retrieved from https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/YB2021_Executive_Summary.pdf
- *Head Start Program Facts: Fiscal Year 2019*. ECLKC. (2019). Retrieved from https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/
- Kamerman, S.B., Gatenio-Gabel, S. *Early Childhood Education and Care in the United States: An Overview of the Current Policy Picture*. ICEP 1, 23–34 (2007). https://doi.org/10.1007/2288-6729-1-1-23
- McElrath, K. (2021, November). *Heightened Focus on Early Childhood Education Programs as Preschool Enrollment Increased Before COVID-19*. Census.gov. Retrieved from https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/11/pre-pandemic-early-childhood-enrollment-expanded-as-more-enrolled-public-preschool.html
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). Enrollment Rates of Young Children. *Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cfa.
- Nation Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). (2019). *Indicator 5: Early Childcare and Education Arrangements*. Indicator 5: Early childcare and education arrangements. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/raceindicators/indicator_RBA.asp
- (NCES 2022-144) U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION. (2022, May). *Report on the Condition of Education 2022*. Institute of Education Sciences . Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2022/2022144.pdf
- Office of Civil Rights (OCR). (2021, June). *Education in a Pandemic: The Disparate Impacts of COVID-19 on America's Students*. U.S. Department of Education . Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/20210608-impacts-of-covid19.pdf?tpcc=nlcapsule
- *OECD THEMATIC REVIEW OF EDUCATION AND CARE POLICY*. OECD. (2003). Retrieved from https://www.oecd.org/unitedstates/27856788.pdf
- Rhim, L. M. R., Sutter , J., & Campbell, N. (2016, January). *Improving Outcomes for Students with Disabilities: Negotiating Common Ground for District and Charter School Collaboration*. Center for American Progress. Retrieved from https://americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/CharterSpecialEdCollab-report.pdf
- *Universal Prekindergarten FAQs.* Universal Prekindergarten FAQs - Elementary (CA Dept of Education). (2022). Retrieved from https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/em/kinderfaq.asp
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Reading—Young Children's Achievement and Classroom Experiences*, NCES 2003–070, by Kristin Denton, Jerry West, and Jill Walston. Washington, DC: 2003.

Creating a Culture of Inclusion & Belonging

Fostering a culture of inclusion is important for developing a sense of belonging and welcoming for all of our students. In addition to defining inclusion, this section addresses the essential role of inclusive practices to create a sense of belonging when working toward equity. It offers tools and resources to break down barriers to inclusion with early learners.

What is Inclusion?

The fundamental reason inclusion must be considered in education is because exclusion is a structurally entrenched problem. While a difficult notion, it is important to remember that the U.S. public school system originated in exclusionary practices (see sections "Defining Equity" and "African American Students", also Timeline of Education activity). The male children of the educated White elite were the first to benefit from this system that was built uniquely for them. Since the beginning, the U.S. education system has been a site of intense debate over who can, should, and will be included in the group that benefits from this public good, one that brings with it the promise of the nation's principles of democracy and equality. Who is included and who is not? Who belongs and who does not? How is this made known? What are the practices put into place that lead to inclusion, to exclusion? How is belonging felt/not felt in practice? These are the questions to guide efforts to create a culture of inclusion and belonging.

According to the Innovations Collaborative at the Santa Clara County Office of Education, inclusion is when children of *all* abilities participate in a learning environment *together*. They emphasize that *all* students can benefit from inclusive routines and activities and that inclusion teaches *all* students about respecting differences and diversity in a learning community.

The concept of "inclusive classrooms" emerged from the disabilities rights movement, and in education it is commonly understood as pertaining to students with disabilities (SWD). Inclusion is when students with disabilities and their supports are included in the general education classroom. It is important that educators continue to build on this model of inclusion by expanding its meaning to all students. This means that educators will need to take action to ensure that their inclusive practices result in their students feeling a sense of belonging.

While the concept of inclusion must maintain students with disabilities as the ones who were intended to benefit from these practices, the idea is not *only* for students with disabilities, as it impacts all students. (How ironic would it be if we only intended to practice inclusion to serve one group of students?). Everyone in the classroom benefits from every person being included, accepted, and feeling that they belong. This is the essence of an inclusive school culture: each student has a role and feels their purpose for being there. Inclusive education removes barriers to learning through intentional practices to include all students, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized (Ahmad, 2012). Without inclusive practices, students may have more difficulty integrating into their classrooms, an important social environment (Kavkler, Babuder, & Magajna, 2015).

Inclusion and Belonging in Early Childhood Education

Embracing inclusion and creating a sense of belonging is crucial in all settings and it should start as soon as children enter early learning spaces. Oftentimes schools, childcare facilities, and family child care homes, become the first environments a child experiences outside of their own community and family. In order to create opportunities for early learners to feel safe and thrive, children in such settings must develop a strong sense of belonging, and a sense of being valued, as they learn key skills. As young children develop the ability to understand concepts of fairness, respect and embracing differences, their sense of inclusion, safety and belonging must be developed and nurtured. As such, early childhood educators have a responsibility to intentionally work on eradicating structural challenges that replicate inequalities by creating early childhood learning opportunities in which all students feel like they belong and are included (NAEYC, 2019).

Creating a Culture of Inclusion and Belonging

Fostering a community of belonging in early childhood settings through culturally responsive and inclusive practices, can greatly impact the educational trajectory for students. Research has shown that both neurodiverse and neurotypical children benefit from inclusive practices. An inclusive environment encourages acceptance, empathy and compassion in young learners who are exposed to peers with varying abilities, while also promoting leadership skills, autonomy, perspective taking and increased self esteem (Farrell, 2000; Fuchs et al., 2000). While inclusive environments promote language development for all learners, neurodiverse students have been found to make significant gains in their language skills due to the modeling of peer language, novelty of the environment, and encouragement from their peers (Rafferty et al., 2003).

Over decades people have written about and discussed the myriad ways in which African American students experience exclusion in schools. The W2EPB is but one of multiple efforts to transform an education system so that the practices of school reflect a fundamental belief system of inclusion that leads to all students feeling that they belong, are valued, and respected. As discussed in previous sections, African American students are more likely to experience exclusionary discipline practices like out of school suspensions. These exclusionary practices not only negatively affect student engagement in the school and classroom environments, but they also increase their likelihood of being pushed out of school before they graduate (see sections "Suspension Rates and School Discipline" and "African American Students"). Suspension leads not only to lost instructional time, but these exclusionary practices convey the message that they are not welcome, or that they do not belong.

Breaking Down Barriers to Inclusion

Barriers that inhibit students from achieving a sense of belonging in the general education classroom continue to exist. Placing a student in the general education classroom also does not guarantee that they are receiving the support needed for an equitable education. Considering what the "least restrictive learning environment" means for the student, it is more than just deciding between the special and general education classrooms, for an environment is so much more than a location. An environment includes *everything*; it is the teacher, the peers, aids, and other members of a student's support team. The environment is the learning material, the physical accessibility of a room, and every element that can add to or detract from a student's learning. It is the educator's responsibility to understand that these elements add to students' learning experiences.

In early childhood classrooms, barriers to inclusion also exist. Mindsets and beliefs around the achievability of inclusion, lack of knowledge on inclusive practices, coupled with ongoing biases toward children with disabilities, pose barriers for inclusion in early childhood settings. Additionally, there is a lack of understanding about the impact inclusionary practices can have on young learn-

ers, as well as a lack of training and competencies, "[i]n child development, early childhood pedagogy, and individualizing instruction. This affects all children and presents a challenge to high-quality inclusive early learning" (Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children With Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs, 2015).

Educators should practice placing themselves in the position of each student before them. Consider asking: *Are there any barriers preventing all students from accessing this lesson? How can these barriers be overcome? In what new learnings, professional development, or training can I participate to challenge my mindset towards more welcoming and inclusive practices?*

Through this exercise, educators can consider what language, learning tools, and perspectives are being used and if these are fully accessible to all students. Creating an accessible classroom may take some creativity. This is why teachers must know and build relationships with their students and families in the practice of facilitating an inclusive environment. Additionally, students must also have the opportunity to learn about one another. Knowing one another as people, and not through labels, is what helps break down barriers to inclusion and belonging.

Using Rituals and Traditions

To promote a sense of belonging and inclusiveness in a preschool environment, schools may want to weave in rituals and traditions into the classroom. Specific to preschool classrooms, rituals can assist students in stressful times, foster connectivity amongst peers and adults, create memories, and further strengthen bonds of school and community (Howell & Reinhard, 2015). The impact of rituals and traditions is long lasting. Through connections and acceptance, an environment of safety, warmth, and security is developed to best support the learning and growth of our youngest students.

What are rituals, routines and traditions?

According to Gillespie and Peterson (2012, p. 77), rituals are "intentional ways of approaching a routine with careful consideration for the individual within the routine." Specific for early childhood educators, rituals foster deeper connection between school and community, especially between families and their own children. When used, rituals are able to create secure environments and nurturing environments (Gillespie & Peterson, 2012). Routines are repeated events that occur in a certain order. They create predictability and lay the foundations for daily tasks in an early learner's life (Gillespie& Peterson, 2012; Howell & Reinhard, 2015). Traditions are meaningful events or experiences that a classroom community or program have created that occur with some regularity. Oftentimes, traditions are linked to a past history or practice that occurs at a specific time(s) of year (Deal & Peterson, 1999). When these three practices are combined, a climate of inclusivity and acceptance is created in the classroom environment.

Common routines that are present in early childhood settings include transitions to and from school, clean up time, bathroom time, meal time, and morning circle time. Some examples of traditions for these routines may include having a caregiver sing a special song with their child during the transition to school, incorporating music and song to signal clean up or the close of the day, and having a morning ritual that includes communicating and sharing about one another. All of these rituals can be adapted to the needs of the various learners in the classroom. Finally, traditions can include a yearly celebration around a specific holiday, specific celebratory traditions for when a student has a birthday, quarterly transitions to indicate the changes of the seasons, or any other traditions that can be embedded in the classroom during specific times of year to bring all of the learners together to share in a collective experience.

Routines, rituals, and traditions are critical in the social-emotional well-being of our youngest learners. By creating predictable environments woven with compassion, celebration, and safety, students come into contact with safe environments that are not only welcoming but increase their sense of trust and belonging (Karlsudd, 2021). Together, early educators can make a significant impact on the lives of our youngest learners and provide them with critical life-long skills while also making their first educational experiences positive.

Promising Practices

Greetings at the Door

Inclusion can begin as soon as students enter their learning environment, with something as simple as intently greeting students at the door (Cook, C. et. al., 2018). This video provides an example of how teachers can welcome students right at the classroom door with a personalized handshake for each student. This is just one way for teachers to convey to students that they are seen and cared for in the classroom. The importance of this greeting is to build relationships and communicate a message of inclusion and belonging to students. What does your school do to ensure that each student who walks into their classroom feels welcome?

My Name My Identity Initiative

The My Name, My Identity initiative, launched in 2016 through the Santa Clara County Office of Education, is intended to bring awareness to the importance of respecting one's name and identities in school communities. The second objective is to create a culture of respect and inclusiveness in school communities across the nation by asking educators, parents, community members, and students to take the pledge to pronounce student names correctly and to honor their identities.

Welcoming and Partnering With Families to Create Inclusive Classrooms

Inviting families to share about their culture and their language in the classroom is a great way to also help nurture inclusive classroom practices and create a stronger sense of belonging for children. Seeing their family members come to their class to teach others about their customs and cultures will allow students to feel validated and valued. Such experiences would also allow children to experience other cultures and languages, different from their own, while developing a larger world view of inclusion and connectedness. Additionally, parents need to partner with educators in understanding the research and benefits of inclusion and become active participants in decision making, policies, and advocacy of inclusionary practices in education.

Reflection Questions:

1. What practices do you engage to develop a sense of inclusion and belonging for your school's families? When families enter your community, where during the onboarding process are there opportunities to begin to develop a sense of inclusion and belonging?
2. What routines and rituals can you create daily/weekly for your own classroom?
3. How can you adapt routines and rituals to meet the needs of all your early learners?
4. How can you bring traditions into your classroom? Can you think of ways to make these traditions inclusive and culturally responsive?
5. What rituals and traditions do you remember from your own childhood?

Tools

- **Think Inclusive: 5 Strategies for Structuring and Inclusive Classroom Environment**
  https://www.thinkinclusive.us/5-strategies-for-structuring-an-inclusive-classroom-environment/

Creating a Culture of Inclusion and Belonging

- Teaching Tolerance: Learning Plans for Diversity
  https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/learning-plans?keyword=&field_social_justice_domain%5B40%5D=40
- Scholastic: Lesson Plans on Multiculturalism & Diversity
  https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plans/teaching-content/multiculturalism-and-diversity/

Resources

- Te Kete Ipurangi: Inclusive Education guide to developing an inclusive classroom culture
  https://www.inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/developing-an-inclusive-classroom-culture/
- Think Inclusive: What does inclusion look like?
  https://www.thinkinclusive.us/inclusion-is-belonging/
- Othering & Belonging Institute: Blueprint for Belonging
  https://belonging.berkeley.edu/b4b

Select References

- Boroson, B. (2017). *Inclusive Education: Lessons From History—Educational Leadership*. 74(7), 18–23.
- Dover, A. G., & Rodriguez-Valls, F. (2018). Learning to "brave up": Collaboration, agency, and authority in multicultural, multilingual, and radically inclusive classrooms. *International Journal of Multicultural Education, 20*(3), 59.
- Dukes, C., & Berlingo, L. (2020). Fissuring Barriers to Inclusive Education for Students with Severe Disabilities. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 45*(1), 14–17.
- Farrell, M. (2000). Educational inclusion and raising standards. *British journal of special education, 27*(1), 35-38.
- Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L. S., & Burish, P. (2000). Peer-assisted learning strategies: An evidence-based practice to promote reading achievement. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 15*(2), 85-91.
- Gillespie, L., & Petersen, S. (2012). Rituals and routines: Supporting infants and toddlers and their families. *YC Young Children, 67*(4), 76.
- Good, M.E., Maseqicz, S., Vogel, L. (2010). Latino English language learners: Bridging achievement and cultural gaps between schools and families. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 9*(4), 321-339.
- Howell, J., & Reinhard., K. (2012). *Rituals and traditions: Fostering a sense of community in preschool.* National Association for the Education of Young People
- Karlsudd, P. (2021). Promoting diversity and belonging: Preschool staff's perspective on inclusive factors in the Swedish preschool. *Education sciences, 11*(3), 104.
- Kavkler, M., Babuder, M. K., & Magajna, L. (2015). Inclusive Education for Children with Specific Learning Difficulties: Analysis of Opportunities and Barriers in Inclusive Education in Slovenia. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal, 5*(1), 31–52.
- NAEYC Position Statement (2019). Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education. Retrieved from https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/advancingequitypositionstatement.pdf
- Rafferty, Y., Piscitelli, V., & Boettcher, C. (2003). The impact of inclusion on language development and social competence among preschoolers with disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 69*(4), 467-479.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Education (2015). Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Education. Retrieved from https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/joint-statement-executive-summary.pdf

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

This section highlights culturally relevant pedagogy (and the related instructional practices of culturally responsive teaching and culturally sustaining pedagogy) as a practice of equity. Culturally relevant pedagogy is explained, barriers to its implementation are underlined, and promising practices are presented.

What is Culturally Relevant Pedagogy?

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) acknowledges and utilizes the cultural and historical backgrounds, knowledge, and experiences of students to inform the teachers' classroom and methodology from infancy and beyond. Culturally relevant pedagogy helps teachers create a bridge between the identities and communities to which students belong while simultaneously meeting learning objectives and expectations in the classroom. CRP was coined by Gloria Ladson-Billings in a 1995 article. In her proceeding 1997 book, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*, she writes that culturally relevant pedagogy "empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural references to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 17). These classroom settings have the power to improve the lives of Black/African American students and the outcomes of all children. This approach has proven effective in all teacher education programs, including early teacher preparation programs, that should prepare teachers to successfully teach African Americans and all students of color. In another book, Ladson-Billings (2001) emphasizes that students must "experience academic success; develop and/or maintain cultural competence, and develop a critical consciousness in which they challenge the status quo of the current social order" (p. 143). In all classroom settings, especially in those critical early life experiences of a child's life, educators must start by knowing who their students and families are, and using that knowledge of student culture, language, and abilities as foundational classroom practice. Effective training is required for new teachers to realize these goals and to ensure that they are developmentally appropriate and just for the students that they serve.

Teachers must develop relationships with students that allow all students to be their authentic selves and feel a sense of belonging. A human-care approach to teaching that is culturally relevant also allows teachers to see students' identities and the cultural, historical, and familial backgrounds as assets as opposed to detriments to learning. Therefore, the onus is on teachers to work toward a common goal and understanding of how to leverage students' experiences to help create an inclusive classroom and curricula that reaches and empowers all learners.

Researchers emphasize that culturally relevant education is an inclusive framework used to describe teachers' attempts to effectively teach diverse students and to integrate multicultural content and socio-political consciousness in learning environments (Dover, 2013). For instance, teachers who employ culturally relevant pedagogy embody certain characteristics. For teachers to effectively teach diverse students, an "inside-out" or "windows and mirrors'' approach to leading is required. They must be conscious of their positionality. In other words, they must be aware of their identities and the unintentional biases they hold regarding race, gender, and socioeconomic status, and they must recognize how these factors show up in the classroom (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017).

Culturally relevant pedagogy is important for early learners because it can lay the foundation for their future academic success and social-emotional development. It supports language development because students who are exposed to culturally relevant pedagogy are more likely to have positive experiences with language and communication. This, in turn, can lead to better language development and acquisition, which is critical for success in school and later in life.

Culturally relevant pedagogy promotes positive self-concept. Early learners who see their own culture reflected in the classroom are more likely to develop a positive self-concept. When learners feel that their culture is valued and respected, they are more likely to feel a sense of belonging and connection to their classmates and teachers. This can support their

social-emotional development and help them develop positive relationships with others. Culturally relevant pedagogy encourages curiosity and engagement. Students are more likely to be interested in what they are learning and to actively participate in classroom activities when they see cultural reflections in the classroom.

Barriers to Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Challenges arise in districts' and teachers' interpretation, implementation, and evaluation of culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching practices, which poses barriers to successfully reaching students of color and producing positive outcomes. These can include:

- Teachers and support staff are not always aware of the subconscious beliefs that persist within them and all of us, commonly referred to as implicit bias.
- CRP is not to be mistaken for implementing superficial classroom practices without spending time cultivating relationships and making spaces where students can express their full humanity.
- Assumptions that CRP is not intended for young learners and that young learners do not have the capacity to challenge notions of racism, xenophobia, homophobia, and ableism.

Promising Practices in Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

1. Engage families and communities to establish habits and expectations

The body of research centered on culturally relevant pedagogy tends to highlight examples of effective practices to reach students along the lines of race and ethnicity; however, a majority of the best approaches often cited reflect what's occurring in K-12 schools and classrooms. In our efforts to meet the equity needs of *all* students, investigating where CRP shows up in early childhood education is equally significant. At this stage of development, there is information to draw from on the relationship between educators and families.

Fostering healthy relationships with children's parents and caregivers is an approach early childhood educators often employ, which helps them learn about their students' backgrounds and develop purposeful activities that reflect the myriad identities of diverse learners. The more knowledgeable teachers become about the cultures and customs of their students and families, the greater confidence they have to leverage the diversity within their classrooms and create developmentally appropriate activities.

In the article, "Equity Starts Early: How Chiefs Will Build High-Quality Education," the authors, Stark and Stark ([2016](#)) stress the benefits of high-quality education programs. The paper outlines five strategies leaders can implement to strengthen student outcomes, including "engaging families and communities in

early learning." The authors argue that the interactions between families and educators help foster early brain development, which is crucial for children in low-income communities. From hearing words to developing vocabulary and reading comprehension skills, some children in poverty often lag behind their peers who come from more privileged backgrounds. In this way, family engagement and the connection between the home and school, establishes habits and expectations to reinforce interaction and dialogue between families and children, placing the onus to support successful learning outcomes on *all* adults involved in the child's life.

Though the ability to build rapport with a child's caregiver or parent fosters positive outcomes between teachers and students, it is a skill set that may come easier for some early childhood educators than others. According to Maurice Sykes ([2019](#)), Executive Director of the Early Childhood Leadership Institute:

> "..teachers need to be knowledgeable of themselves, and they need to be knowledgeable and respectful of others. They need to know their craft to a high level, and they need to know what leadership is because they are a leader in the classroom. The inequity in settings serving young children is unjust, so how do we ensure children, regardless of zip code, surname, or gender, have access to high-quality programs?"

Teacher education programs and early childhood education agencies such as Head Start and KinderCare Learning Centers must provide teachers with access to professional growth

opportunities focusing on equity and social justice awareness. The learning programs should equip educators with tools, resources, and techniques for addressing bias, cultivating critical connections with communities, and empowering them to not falter at addressing and overcoming challenges they encounter in their interactions with others.

2. Respect cultural differences and understand these differences are not deficits

According to Gay (2010), culturally responsive teaching uses the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through students' strengths. The goal of culturally responsive teaching is for educators and leaders to embrace the cultural differences of learners to create a learning environment conducive to all students, no matter their ethnic, cultural, or linguistic backgrounds (Frey, 2010).

Before addressing the classroom let's focus on a definition of culture which comes from Zimmerman (2017), who explains, "Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, encompassing language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music, and art." Early childhood teachers who understand and respect the cultural backgrounds of childhood learners empower their students to thrive in the classroom by imbuing within them confidence and courage. These educators' efforts to help shape the beginning educational journeys of their students, using an asset-based approach, reflect culturally responsive teaching at its best in their practices.

When aiming to hone culturally responsive teaching practices to reach all students, educators can examine the physical environment of their classroom. The following questionnaire will help teachers reflect on how their classroom fairs concerning equity and CRP effectiveness. Answer YES, NO, UNSURE, or NEED IMPROVEMENT when reading the below statement.

1. Are the materials and equipment in my classroom easily accessible to all?
2. Do all children have the opportunity to participate in activities in my classroom?
3. Does my classroom include materials related to the children's background and experiences (e.g., pictures of children and their families)?
4. Does my classroom provide an equal representation of images and materials reflecting different cultures and ethnicities?
5. Does my classroom provide an equal representation of images and materials reflecting different family styles and compositions?
6. Does my classroom provide an equal representation of images and materials reflecting?
7. Does my classroom provide an equal representation of images and materials reflecting genders in non-stereotypical roles?

8. Are dolls and clothing representing male/female and different ethnicities and skin colors?
9. Is there a wide variety of art media students can use to accurately represent their physical characteristics?

Teachers of early childhood learners should perform annual equity audits to assess how their pedagogy and practices meet CRP criteria and foster effective brain development and cognition for all students. Review a brief video of how early childhood teachers at KinderCare Centers foster CRP in the classroom to learn more strategies.

3. Help learners develop empathy, compassion, and a sense of social justice

Some scholars argue that young children cannot understand the nuances of cultural differences or intersecting identities such as race, gender, ability, etc. They also contend that it's detrimental to explicitly teach race and justice to children (Hess, 2021). In comparison, a body of research shows that children are aware of differences in physical appearance and skin color early on in development and benefit from being taught anti-racist education and social justice curriculum (Verwayne, 2018; Gonser, 2020; Weir, 2021). Whichever viewpoint educators hold in the debate on whether or not to teach racial equity and social justice in schools, it is incumbent upon adults—families, communities, and teachers that educate children—to help them process these differences in an age-specific and developmentally appropriate way.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

There's much to learn about implementing CRP in Early Childhood Education classrooms. The collection of CECE Early Childhood Videos at Eastern CT State University highlights the role of early childhood education in promoting a just world. In one of the videos entitled "Helping Children Develop Empathy and a Sense of Justice," renowned educator and author Vivian Paley (2021) explains the importance of supporting the development of children's empathy skills and justice awareness during the earliest stages of development. Below is an excerpt from her video on YouTube that further explains Paley's approach to fostering culturally relevant teaching in the classroom:

Over her long career, Paley observed that young children had a keen sense of fairness and empathy—making early childhood the ideal time to engage in social justice pedagogy. Paley believed children went to kindergarten knowing three things: stories, how to play, and a sense of fairness. She tapped into this knowledge by developing social justice pedagogy that she called "doing stories." By asking children to dictate and then act out the stories they were originally doing in play, Paley found that children would consistently and pervasively act from a deep sense of kindness, empathy, and justice. As children worked together, she found they would center (or re-center) their stories on equity and fairness. As an active observer of children "doing stories," Paley was able to highlight and

support the decisions children made, helping to heighten their self-awareness and awareness of others. In this way, her work demonstrates how educators can and must teach young children on the complexities and importance of social justice and anti-racism. Early childhood is, in fact, the ideal time to teach these concepts (CECE Early Childhood Videos at Eastern CT State U., 2021).

Educators are encouraged to review other related videos from Eastern Connecticut University and organize discussions with colleagues on why it's important to nurture empathy and promote social justice education in preschool settings. See a list of discussion and reflection questions Paley suggests below. Please note: school leaders and teachers may facilitate dialogue themselves or hire external equity consultant(s) to lead the valuable professional learning necessary to build equitable communities and culturally relevant classrooms.

Reflection Questions:

1. Why is it important to foster culturally relevant teaching in a preschool setting?
2. What does implementing CRP look like in a preschool classroom?
3. What support do Early learner teachers need from administration to carry out the tenets of CRP?
4. According to the section on CRP, what skills and behaviors do teachers need to provide evidence of CRP practices and pedagogies? How can you identify those skills in yourself to develop lessons that will engage Early learners in culturally relevant pedagogy?
5. How might you use children's books, puppets, or other tools and props to engage children in CRP?

Resources

Read articles, policy papers and books on culturally relevant pedagogy for early learners

- Bringing a New Vibe to the Classroom (nytimes.com) (Hannon, 2020)
- Culturally Responsive Teaching | Teaching Diverse Learners (brown.edu) (The Brown University Education Alliance, 2021)
- Five Essential Strategies to Embrace Culturally Responsive Teaching (facultyfocus.com) (Singhal and Gulati, 2020)
- Diversity and Inclusion in Early Care and Education (cdacouncil.org) (2014)
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Strategies for Facilitating Conversations on Race (Available on Amazon) (Hollins and Govan, 2015)
- New York State Education Department: Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework (NY State Education Department, year)

- [Paving the Way for Latinx Teachers](#) (newamerican.org) (Garza, 2019)
- [Understanding Culturally Responsive Teaching](#) (newamerica.org) (Muñiz, 2019)
- [Start with Us! Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in the Preschool Classroom](#) (Durden, Escalante-Barrios and Blitch, 2014)
- [Textured Teaching: A Framework for Culturally Sustaining Practices | Paperback](#) (Available at Barnes & Noble) (Germán, 2021)

View webinars on providing early learning children with quality, affirming, and cross-cultural experiences:

- [A Place for Me: Diverse, Engaging Environments for Infants and Toddlers](#) (Maguire-Fong and Clark, 2021)
- [Everyone Belongs: Creating Authentically Inclusive and Equitable Infant and Toddler Care](#) (Greene, 2021)
- [Joyful Reading at School and at Home: A Storybook Reading Routine](#) (Fabian, Garegnani, and Spycher, 2021)
- [Making Meaning Together: Connecting with Dual Language Learners in Infant and Toddler Care](#) (Wiese and Serna, 2021)
- [The Power of Culturally Consistent Care in Home-Based Settings](#) (Shivers, 2021)

Tools:

- [34 Survey Questions for Teachers and Staff About Equity, Inclusion, and Cultural Competency](#) (paronamaed.com) (Buckle, Date not provided)
- CA-1 Course with Micro-Credential Badge: "Culturally Responsive Anti-Bias Teaching" https://www.learningdesigned.org/node/975/initiative-resources
- [Cultural Diversity Toolkit for Early Childhood Educators – Brookes Blog](#) (blog.brookespublishing.com) (2020)
- [Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit | Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity (OIED)](#) (brown.edu) (information not provided)
- [Equity and Inclusion During COVID-19 | UC Diversity](#) (diversity.universityofcalifornia.edu) (Last updated in 2020)
- [Inclusive Teaching Practices Toolkit](#) (acue.org) (Information not provided)
- Tenets of Culturally Relevant Pedagogies and Related Frameworks https://drive.google.com/open?id=1izsHjfTaJqQ7xAkjNkPza-wIiijIqrOUMACq1W1TXu1Q

Selected References

- Center for Early Childhood Education. (2022). *Helping Children Develop Empathy and a Sense of Justice: THE ROLE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN PROMOTING A JUST WORLD.* Eastern Connecticut State University. Retrieved from https://www.easternct.edu/center-for-early-childhood-education/equity/empathy-and-justice.html
- Dover, A. G. (2013). Teaching for social justice: From conceptual frameworks to classroom practices. Multicultural Perspectives. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 15(1), 3–11.
- Frey, C. (2010). Enhancing the Learning Opportunities through Culturally Responsive Practices. St. Mary College Rising Tide/ Education Studies, Vol. 3.
- Gay, G. (2010). Culturally responsive teaching theory, research, and practice. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Gonser, S. (2020, July 24). *How to Start Talking About Race in the Early Elementary Classroom.* Edutopia. Retrieved from https://www.edutopia.org/article/how-start-talking-about-race-early-elementary-classroom
- Hammond, Z. (2015). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students.* Corwin.
- Hess, R. (2021, June 29). *Resisting 'Anti-Racist' Education Is Neither Racist Nor Unreasonable (opinion).* Education Week. Retrieved from https://www.edweek.org/leadership/opinion-resisting-anti-racist-education-is-neither-racist-nor-unreasonable/2021/05
- Kindercare. (2021, September 22). *Culturally Responsive Teaching.* YouTube. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrS9s8eaaN4
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2001). Crossing Over to Canaan: The Journey of New Teachers in Diverse Classrooms. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. Educational Researcher, 41(3), 93–97.
- Paris, D., & Alim, H. S. (2017). *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: teaching and learning for justice in a changing world.* New York: Teachers College Press.
- Sensoy, Ö., & DiAngelo, R. (2017). *Is everyone really equal? an introduction to key concepts in social justice education.* New York ; London: Teachers College Press.
- Stark, D. R., & Stark, F. H. (2016, March). *Equity Starts Early: How Chiefs Will Build High-Quality Early Education.* CCSO (Council of Chief State School Officials). Retrieved from https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/EquityStartsEarly3242016.pdf
- The Editors. (2019, November). *Maurice Sykes: Building Leadership, Equity & Social Justice in early learning.* Early Learning Nation. Retrieved from https://earlylearningnation.com/2019/11/maurice-sykes-building-leadership-equity-social-justice-in-early-learning/
- Verwayne, K. D. (2018, May). *Becoming Upended: Teaching and Learning about Race and Racism with Young Children and Their Families.* naeyc. Retrieved from https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/may2018/teaching-learning-race-and-racism
- Weir, K. (2021, June 2). *Raising anti-racist children: Psychologists are studying the processes by which young children learn about race—and how to prevent prejudice from taking root.* Monitor on Psychology. Retrieved from https://www.apa.org/monitor/2021/06/anti-racist-children
- Zimmerman, K.A. Live Science Contributor, July, 2017.

Social Emotional Learning

Portions of this section were written during the COVID-19 period. Schools closed, children and their families sheltered in their homes, distance learning was quickly developed, and many teachers and students experienced a rupture to the relationships that they had developed through daily interactions. With an understanding that public schools and childcare facilities provide much more than an academic education to children and youth experiencing poverty, racism, and health issues, numerous articles and reports were published advocating for the need for social and emotional learning (SEL), perspectives, and practices in this moment (here is one). From an equity perspective, SEL is fundamental to schooling every single day.

What is Social Emotional Learning?

All learning is social and emotional because all learning starts with human relationships. According to the *Handbook of Social and Emotional Learning*, social and emotional learning (SEL) is:

> A process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2015).

As contributing author and Community Health Outreach Worker for Santa Clara High School, Dupe Thomas, MSW writes:

> In my experience, I have recognized the importance of self-reflection and personal self-awareness as an adult and educator. The person in environment (PIE) theory comes to mind. We must look at the environment in which a person lives and creates in, incorporating the various factors and their implications, which can contribute to our understanding of self, students, and others.

Authentic SEL also requires that educators honor and take feelings seriously. As Professor Eve Ewing discussed in her May 14, 2020 virtual talk, *What a School Means*, it is necessary to make space for feelings. Young people need this. So much of schooling is the emotional experiences that come from being in schools—and this is easy to forget or not see. But in order to improve a student's experience in school, educators must understand how students experience school. This can be best done by taking time and making space to express and articulate feelings.

Social Emotional Learning and Equity: Relationships Matter

Strong relationships and connectedness lie at the heart of equity work. In fact, equity cannot be achieved without building systems that allow for authentic human connection. Without a foundation of solid relationships, physical and emotional safety and the culti-

vation of a positive school environment cannot be accomplished. While SEL alone cannot solve the social problems that affect students, without providing social and emotional safety nets, the effects of these inequities will be even harder felt. In the words of the National Equity Project, "The promise of social and emotional development as a lever for increasing educational equity rests on the capacity of educators to understand that *all learning is social and emotional* and all learning is mediated by relationships that sit in a sociopolitical, racialized context—for all children, not just those who are black and brown."

CASEL Wheel & Competencies

Used with permission: © 2020. CASEL. All rights reserved. www.casel.org

Creating strong relationships using SEL requires adults to dedicate time, energy, effort, and some level of vulnerability into understanding their own personal relationship(s) with SEL and the impacts to their individual lives. Once a personal relationship is identified and meaning is created, the work can begin both internally and externally. Meaningful, timely and easily accessible resources for adults and educators is crucial for the growth and development of SEL on campuses. When educators and adults are given opportunities to explore SEL and give themselves permission to do so, students benefit when adults share what they've learned about human interaction and connection.

All students and Black, Indigenous, and people of color, in particular, have been over-looked, dismissed, and marginalized within the educational system. SEL is for every person—for every student representing any race, language, gender, disability status, or religion. It is important to acknowledge and engage with each other and with students in humanizing ways, rather than in a rushed or robotic manner. Whether in meetings, classes, conference settings or in passing social interactions, people want to be seen and to connect with one another, to belong and be accepted. Relationship building and social emotional learning is a process; it is the foundation that creates meaning in the trajectory of students' lives.

Transformative/Culturally Responsive SEL

An emergent area of research and practice is called "transformative SEL". Jagas, Rivas-Drake, and Williams (2019) write that "for SEL to adequately serve those from underserved communities—and promote the optimal developmental outcomes for all children, youth, and adults—it must cultivate in them the knowledge, attitudes, and skills required for critical examination and collaborative action to address root causes of inequities. Toward this end, transformative SEL is aimed at educational equity—fostering the learning environments that will produce equitable outcomes for children and young people furthest from opportunity."

This is to say that SEL cannot be implemented in a vacuum. Its practices must take into account that children come from diverse cultures, have lived through different experiences, and express a range of assets (not all of which are valued by the school system). Because SEL operates on a relational level, and relationships are expressed in varying ways across culture, it is possible that well-intentioned SEL practices result in inadvertently alienating some students. A transformative or culturally responsive approach to SEL addresses this problem by including and engaging students in the co-construction of respectful relationships. In addition, an important facet of transformative SEL is to understand that meaningful relationships are developed when all people involved are listened to, their cultures, experiences, and knowledge valued. Furthermore, the scope of impact does not stop at the relationship but extends to the potential in collaboration in addressing community and social problems. As Simmons (2019) writes, "Social-emotional learning (SEL) skills can help us build communities that foster courageous conversations across difference so that our students can confront injustice, hate, and inequity."

'Trauma-Informed'/'Trauma-Sensitive' Approaches

The Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) study helps in understanding the effects of childhood trauma throughout the lifecycle. The research finding that many experience great amounts of trauma in childhood (especially those who are BIPOC[1], live in poverty, or have one or more parents who have been incarcerated) led educators to adopt "trauma-informed" or "trauma-sensitive" approaches to teaching and counseling. The Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI) explains on their website, 'In a trauma-sensitive school, educators make the switch from asking 'what can I do to fix this child?' to 'what can we do as a community to support all children to help them feel safe and participate fully in our school community?'" Recognizing that children who experience trauma require therapeutic

---

[1] BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. This term is used "to highlight the unique relationship to whiteness that Indigenous and Black (African Americans) people have, which shapes the experiences of and relationship to white supremacy for all people of color within a U.S. context" (The BIPOC Project). In effect, the term illuminates the fact that U.S. concepts of race were built on white supremacist notions of blackness and indigeneity.

Social Emotional Learning

environments, it is vital that focus is placed on cultivating a positive school climate so that they can thrive. This is key to equity work: Developing a mindset that focuses on changing the system rather than the individual.

Importance of SEL for Adults

SEL is not just for students. To improve social, emotional, and academic outcomes for students, it has become increasingly clear that support is needed for the social-emotional development and well-being of educators and staff. Increasing our self-awareness and dedication to self care practices positively impacts one's level of social emotional availability and learning. The level at which educators are able to show up for themselves and practice self-kindness affects the level at which they are able to show up for students. This is a mirroring effect. One cannot pour from an empty cup. Intuitively, educators know when they are operating from an empty cup and students see, feel and can identify this within adults. Adults and educators must model and practice what is taught. SEL is woven into every human interaction, and educators are given the beautiful task of guiding students and promoting SEL education for them. This is a gift.

Reflection Questions:

1. What do teachers, administrators, staff, and parents believe about the role of relationships in learning?
2. How can you shift adult mindsets and help them understand, develop, and model SEL skills for students?
3. How does the unofficial and official curriculum honor feelings or "affect" in the educational process?
4. How can you develop programs, resources, and activities to support adults' own self-care and well-being in schools?

Tools:

- CA-1 Courses with Micro-Credential Badge: "Supporting Positive Behavior" & "Relationship-Centered Schools" https://www.learningdesigned.org/node/975/initiative-resources
- Universal Screening Assessments (a list of universal screening assessments for behavior/SEL) https://assets-global.website-files.com/5d3725188825e071f1670246/5d8393c-fa70460bf54f37f21_Screener%20Tools%20Table.pdf
- CASEL: SEL Competencies https://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/CASEL-Competencies.pdf
- Teaching Pyramid: Framework to Support the Social Emotional Needs of Young Children https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Pyramid/overview/index.html

Resources:

- PBIS Technical Assistance Center https://pbis.sccoe.org/home/Pages/default.aspx
- CASEL:
  - CASEL CARES SEL Resources During COVID-19 https://casel.org/resources-covid/
  - Equity and Social and Emotional Learning: A cultural analysis https://measuringsel.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Frameworks-Equity.pdf
  - Toward Transformative SEL: Using an equity lens https://measuringsel.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Framework_EquitySummary-.pdf
- Panorama: Adult SEL Toolkit https://go.panoramaed.com/adult-sel-social-emotional-learning-toolkit
- Child Trauma Academy https://www.childtrauma.org/
- Trauma Learning and Policy Initiative https://traumasensitiveschools.org/about-tlpi/
- Suggested readings:
  - Perry, B. & Szalavitz, M. (2017). The Boy who was Raised as a Dog. Basic Books.
  - Howard, J. R., Milner-McCall, T., & Howard, T. C. (2020). No More Teaching Without Positive Relationships. Heinemann.

Works Cited

- Jagers, R.J., Rivas-Drake, D. & Williams, B. (2019). Transformative Social and Emotional Learning (SEL): Toward SEL in Service of Educational Equity and Excellence. *Educational Psychologist*. 54:3, 162-184.
- Simmons, D. (2019). Why We Can't Afford Whitewashed Social-Emotional Learning. *ASCD Education Update*. 61:4.
- Weissberg, R. P., Durlak, J. A., Domitrovich, C. E., & Gullotta, T. P. (2015). Social and emotional learning: Past, present and future. In J. A. Durlak, C. E. Domitrovich, R. P. Weissberg, & T. P. Gullotta (Eds.). *Handbook of social and emotional learning: Research and practice* (pp. 3–19). Guilford Press.

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning aims to engage all students through multiple means. This section provides an overview of UDL, as well as resources and tools for further exploration and implementation.

What is Universal Design for Learning?

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is defined by the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) as *a research-based set of principles to guide the design of learning environments that are accessible and effective for all*. The goal of UDL is to be able to recognize potential barriers and then to design accordingly so that these potential barriers can be eliminated thus allowing for the cultivation of expert learners.

The UDL framework is rooted in three principles:
- Engagement: The affective network of learning or the "why".
- Representation: The recognition network or the "what" of learning.
- Action and Expression: The strategic network or the "how" of learning.

In addition to the principles, this framework also includes the UDL Guidelines and linked checkpoints. It provides a method by which educators and others can use to design curriculum and instruction to support the development of "Expert Learners". UDL defines "Expert Learners" as those who are: purposeful and motivated; resourceful and knowledgeable; and strategic and goal-directed.

UDL: There is No 'Average Learner'

When educators realize that the average learner is a myth and begin to design their lessons "to the edges", the students who have been historically marginalized in school settings are centered in pedagogies and learning processes. This means that not only is content revised, but the *experience* of learning is also reimagined. As Meyer, Rose and Gordon (2014) explain in their book, *Universal Design for Learning Theory and Practice*:

> The unnecessary barriers in traditional education extended beyond those that impeded students from accessing content and expressing knowledge. Even more important in motivating our work were the affective barriers. Students coming to school with curiosity and a strong desire to learn found that fire quenched when they were stigmatized—not because of anything that was in their control but because of inaccessible learning environments.

Within a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), UDL is a tier one support. When used with fidelity, UDL minimizes the need for interventions and creates space for enrichment oppor-

Key questions to guide UDL Implementation (Murawski & Scott, 2019):

1. Was a specific learning goal identified that was flexible enough to allow for learner variability? To write a flexible goal, remove words that specify exactly how the goal must be met.

2. Were multiple options for assessment provided? Assessments should allow students to have options to demonstrate their learning.

3. Does the design consider students' strengths, interests, preferences, and barriers related to learning? Does the design consider curriculum and learning environment barriers?

4. Were the UDL guidelines and checkpoints applied?

tunities. UDL principles further reduce barriers and ensure equitable access for students across all tiers of support. If UDL is applied in tier one the students who are at the margins of learning in the classroom (e.g. students with disabilities, English learners, students in poverty) receive the supports (scaffolds, assistive technology, etc.) they need in an inclusive environment. The added benefit of UDL is that by removing barriers to learning, instruction can be designed to maximize the learning opportunities for all students in the classroom. In tier two (targeted) and tier three (intensive) instruction is designed and differentiated specifically for the student's success and has frequent progress monitoring. The scaffolds and strategies that have been proven successful in tiers two and three should then be implemented as supports in tier one. UDL provides for a more vigorous instruction for all students since it is a proactively and intentionally designed framework that removes barriers to learning and supports all students.

UDL in Early Childhood Settings

In California, there is a rich and diverse student population that enters early childhood programs across the state. About half of the overall population in 2010 of children between the ages of 0-5, residing in California, were Latinos (U.S. Census Bureau,

Universal Design for Learning

The Universal Design for Learning Guidelines

CAST | Until learning has no limits™

Provide multiple means of **Engagement**	Provide multiple means of **Representation**	Provide multiple means of **Action & Expression**
Affective Networks The "WHY" of Learning	Recognition Networks The "WHAT" of Learning	Strategic Networks The "HOW" of Learning

Access

Provide options for **Recruiting Interest**	Provide options for **Perception**	Provide options for **Physical Action**
• Optimize individual choice and autonomy • Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity • Minimize threats and distractions	• Offer ways of customizing the display of information • Offer alternatives for auditory information • Offer alternatives for visual information	• Vary the methods for response and navigation • Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies

Build

Provide options for **Sustaining Effort & Persistence**	Provide options for **Language & Symbols**	Provide options for **Expression & Communication**
• Heighten salience of goals and objectives • Vary demands and resources to optimize challenge • Foster collaboration and community • Increase mastery-oriented feedback	• Clarify vocabulary and symbols • Clarify syntax and structure • Support decoding of text, mathematical notation, and symbols • Promote understanding across languages • Illustrate through multiple media	• Use multiple media for communication • Use multiple tools for construction and composition • Build fluencies with graduated levels of support for practice and performance

Internalize

Provide options for **Self Regulation**	Provide options for **Comprehension**	Provide options for **Executive Functions**
• Promote expectations and beliefs that optimize motivation • Facilitate personal coping skills and strategies • Develop self-assessment and reflection	• Activate or supply background knowledge • Highlight patterns, critical features, big ideas, and relationships • Guide information processing and visualization • Maximize transfer and generalization	• Guide appropriate goal-setting • Support planning and strategy development • Facilitate managing information and resources • Enhance capacity for monitoring progress

Goal

Expert learners who are...

Purposeful & Motivated	Resourceful & Knowledgeable	Strategic & Goal-Directed

udlguidelines.cast.org | © CAST, Inc. 2018 | Suggested Citation: CAST (2018). Universal design for learning guidelines version 2.2 [graphic organizer]. Wakefield, MA: Author.

2010). That was about half of 2.5 million children. According to the Census Bureau, Latinos may be of any race, and demographically they make up a huge majority of the children in California. "White non-Latino children make up 30 percent of children under five in California, Asian-Pacific Islanders make up 10 percent, Black or African Americans make up 6 percent, and the remaining 4 percent represent a wide range of ethnic groups" (Esquivel, Elam, Paris, & Tafoya, 2018). Additionally, in 2018, .8% of California's population with disabilities were children between the ages of 0-4 (California Disability Status Report, 2018). To address the varying needs, cultural and linguistic diversity of young students entering early childhood settings, frameworks like UDL must be incorporated. In an article published in 2006 which discusses the alignment of UDL to early childhood education, six avenues that align directly to the three UDL principles of engagement, representation, action, and expression are outlined. They are:

- **The physical environment** enables all children to have access and equitable opportunities for full participation in all program activities. This includes structures, permanent and movable equipment and furnishings, storage, and materials.
- **Health and safety components** promote wellness and minimize risks and hazards for all children. All children, regardless of health status or conditions, have ongoing access to learning without interruptions due to illness and injury.
- **The social-emotional environment** offers all children equitable access to and full membership in the social-emotional life of the group, and it supports their social-emotional development.
- **The teaching environment** gives all children equitable access to learning opportunities through information and activities in multiple formats and multiple means for engagement, expression, and learning. This includes the curriculum, teaching practices, materials, and activities.

- **Individual assessment and program evaluation practices** provide multiple approaches to finding out what children know and can do in order to equitably assess individual learning, development, and educational progress.
- **Family involvement practices** support the equitable access and engagement of all families in the full range of experiences. This includes ongoing communication, learning opportunities, and program involvement activities (Conn-Powers, Frazeur Cross, Krider Traub, Hutter-Pishgahi, 2006).

UDL in ECE will ensure that inclusive practices are incorporated so that all students regardless of language, ethnicity, or cultural identity can succeed and thrive. The earlier we start meeting the needs and removing barriers to education for students, the more prepared they will be for a more formal academic setting in K-12 classrooms.

Reflection Questions:

1. In what ways do you currently incorporate UDL principles into your early learning environment?
2. How do you involve parents and caregivers in understanding and supporting UDL principles at home?
3. What are some ways teachers can support and design instruction for student engagement?
4. How can teachers create variations in the actions and expression needed to demonstrate learning?
5. How can teachers design increased opportunities for student choice in the engagement, representation and action/expression of student learning?

Tools:

- **CA-1 Course with Micro-Credential Badge: "Universal Design for Learning Associate Credential"**
  https://www.learningdesigned.org/node/975/initiative-resources

- UDL Lesson Planning Tool
  http://lessonbuilder.cast.org/
- **Free Technology Toolkit for UDL in All Classrooms**
  https://www.thinglink.com/scene/830135641269338112?buttonSource=viewLimits

Resources:

- **UDL Guidelines**
  http://udlguidelines.cast.org/
- **Fifty Ways to Reach Your Learners Using UDL as a Guide**
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGuwggVAQpM
- **UDL Progressions**
  http://castpublishing.org/novak-rodriguez-udl-progression-rubric/
- **UDL YouTube Channel**
  https://www.youtube.com/user/UDLCenter
- **IRIS UDL Module**
  https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/udl/#content

Books:

- Novak, K. (2016). *UDL now! A teacher's guide to applying universal design for learning in today's classrooms*. CAST Professional Publishing.
- Ralabate, P. & Nelson, L. (2017). *Culturally Responsive Design for English Learners: The UDL Approach*. CAST Publishing.

References:

- Meyer, A., Rose, D.H., & Gordon, D. (2014). *Universal Design for Learning: Theory and Practice*. CAST Professional Publishing.
- Murawski, W. W. & Scott, K. L. (2019). *What really works for universal design for learning?* Corwin Press.
- Esquivel, K., Elam, M., Paris, J., and Tafoya, M. (2018). The role of equity and diversity in early childhood education. An Open Educational Resources Publication by College of the Canyons. https://www.childdevelopment.org/docs/default-source/pdfs/role-equity-and-diversityenglish-2-8-20.pdf?sfvrsn=3bf4a9a6_2
- Erickson, W., Lee, C., & Von Schrader, S. (2020). 2018 Disability status report: California. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability(YTI). https://www.disabilitystatistics.org/StatusReports/2018-PDF/2018-StatusReport_CA.pdf
- Conn-Powers, M., Frazeur Cross, A., Krider Traub, and Hutter-Pishgahi, L. (2006). The universal design of early education: Moving forward for all children. Beyond the Journal: Young Children on the Web. https://fpg.unc.edu/sites/fpg.unc.edu/files/resources/presentations-and-webinars/ConnPowersBTJ%281%29.pdf

Suspension Rates and School Discipline

In this section, types of school suspensions are defined. Suspensions, as well as overall school climate, are discussed in relation to its negative impacts on early leaners. This section also provides resources that may be used to begin addressing the inequity of how school suspensions function.

Overview of School Suspensions

School suspension is a form of punishment intended to decrease the likelihood of future negative behaviors in a student. However, suspensions have been shown to be ineffective and come with a multitude of other negative effects on students and school climate. Negative impacts have been shown to affect the student's well-being, academic achievement, contribute to entry in the juvenile justice system, and increase the likelihood of dropping out of school (Haight, Kayama, & Gibson, 2016). Research shows that Black, Native American, and Latinx students are disproportionately disciplined through exclusionary practices, what has been termed a "racial discipline gap" (Losen, et. al., 2015; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). Moreover, a punitive environment can impact a school's overall climate of well-being and fairness. However, practices, policies, and resources exist that promote positive discipline over punitive discipline, as discussed below.

There are two types of school suspensions. The more common out-of-school suspension (OSS) is when a student is not permitted to be on school premises. In-school suspension (ISS) involves the student being removed from their typical classroom and away from peers, but without being removed from the school campus. It has been shown that OSS is more strongly associated with poor student achievement, higher suspension rates, and dropout rates than ISS (Noltemeyer, Ward, & Mcloghlin, 2015). However, evidence shows that because ISS removes students from their classrooms, it decreases the amount of instruction they receive (Losen, et. al., 2015). Taking into account the numerous negative consequences of school suspension, especially OSS, brings up the question of what equity looks like when schools address negative student behaviors.

Our Early Learning Students and Suspensions

Thousands of American students are suspended and expelled each year, however students in pre-K are expelled at 3 times the rate than those in K-12 schools (Gilliam, 2005). Our pre-K students and K-3 learners who are subjected to these disciplinary measures, resemble the populations that are disproportionately represented in our correctional facilities. This population includes students of color, male students, students with neurodiverse needs, students living in poverty, and houseless youth (Gilliam & Shahar, 2006). In 2014, while Black children only represented 18% of the nationwide preschool enrollment, 42% of this population were suspended (United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights [OCR], 2014). The school to prison pipeline
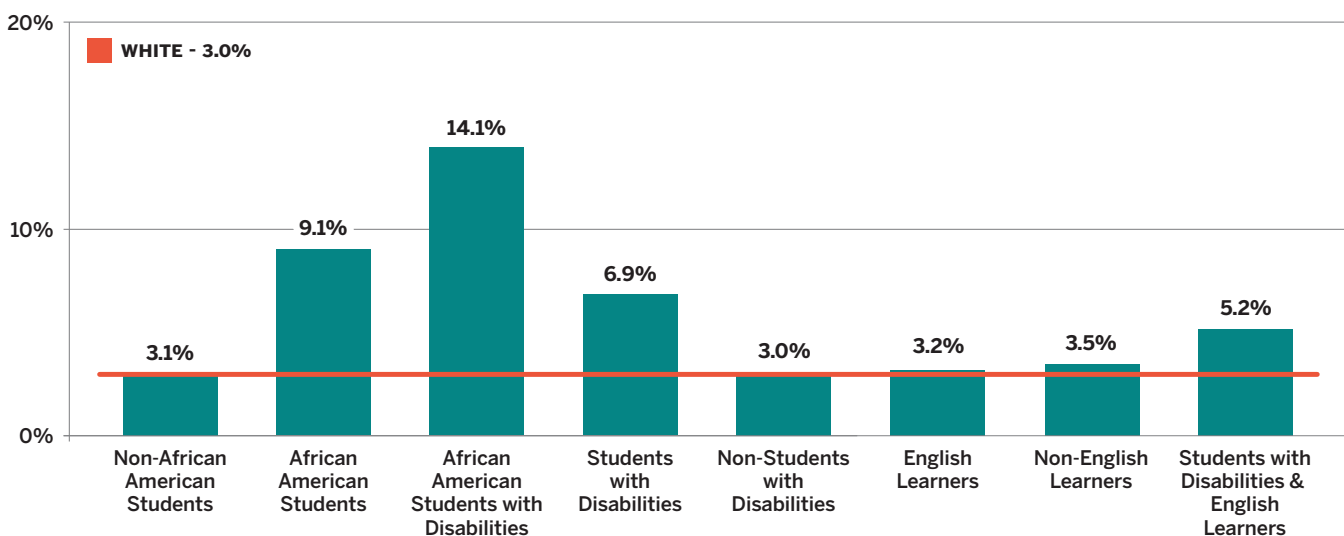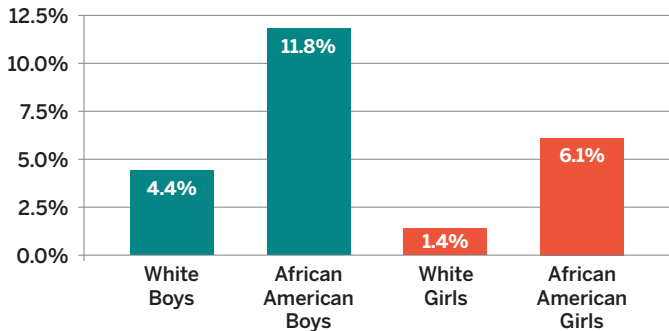
Figure 2. 2018-19 Statewide Suspension Rates

Figure 3. 2018-19 Statewide Suspension Rates by Race/Gender

refers to the phenomenon wherein youth are funneled from public education into the juvenile and criminal justice system (Mallet, 2016). While few youth are arrested in schools, consequences such as removing students from the school environment through out-of-school suspensions or other exclusionary measures, significantly increase the likeliness of drop out, which in turn, increases the likeliness of incarceration (Mallet, 2016). In fact, about one in every 10 male high school dropouts is in jail or juvenile detention facilities. This is compared with one in 35 young male students who graduate (Sum et al., 2009). Dismantling the school to prison pipeline involves closely examining disciplinary policies (e.g. suspension, expulsion, zero tolerance policies and educating those working in the educational system more supportive and appropriate consequences.

Developmental experts have found, the most critical and formative years for brain development occur in the first 3 years of a child's life (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Early experiences are what pave the way for future growth, development, and long-term learning. Preschool gives children the opportunity to build strong connections with both adults and children, develop listening skills, and develop learner skills that are prerequisites for skills that they will need for their entire educational careers(Duncan et al., 2007). Developing prosocial behaviors such as sharing, taking turns, coping skills, playing games will set children up for success across all contexts they come into contact with (school, home, after school setting, etc.). Research has suggested children's relationships with their early childhood teachers can be a predictor for academic and behavioral outcomes through 8th grade. When young learners have access to attentive and trustworthy adults who cultivate safe and nurturing environments, their individual needs can be met and the development of social-emotional learning skills are greatly enhanced (Hamre & Pianta, 2000).

When students are removed from the academic environment as a result of suspensions or expulsions, they are denied the opportunity to gain critical social-emotional skills, learner skills, and pro-social skills. Gaps in educational access impact the

health, well-being, and safety of children. Data also suggests children who were suspended or expelled in their early education where more likely to be suspended or expelled again during their educational careers (Gilliam, 2005). This can lead to a culmination of school days lost as a result of discipline, which widens the achievement gap and increases likelihood of dropout (Simmons, 2013). Exclusionary practices impede the learners ability to learn and grow from the challenges they experienced in the classroom. Additionally, school may quickly become an environment associated with rejection and a sense of unwelcoming versus the supportive environment our early learners need to thrive. At-promise youth are the students most greatly impacted by suspensions and expulsions and often require the most care, yet are disproportionately suspended and expelled from the public school setting. Early childhood education has the opportunity to provide an environment that fosters confidence and a sense of trust for students who may otherwise not get this outside experience outside of the school setting. We owe it to our children to find other means to address challenging behaviors in the classroom that keep students in our schools and creates opportunities for life-long positive outcomes.

Students and Suspensions

Research supports the prevalence of suspensions for certain student groups. In addition, the data underline the intersectional nature of this discipline issue, as presented below:

- In California, students with disabilities have the **second highest** rate of suspension after African American students, and they are more than **twice as likely** to receive an OSS than students without disabilities. (**Figure 2**.)
- The exclusion rate for California's English Learners with no reported disabilities is 3.2% while the rate of English Learners with disabilities is 5.2%. In one study, California was found to have one of the highest rates of exclusionary discipline for English Learners with disabilities (Whitford, Katsiyannis, Counts, et al., 2018). (**Figure 2**.)

Figure 4. K-3 Student Suspension Rates among African American and Native American or Alaskan Native Students
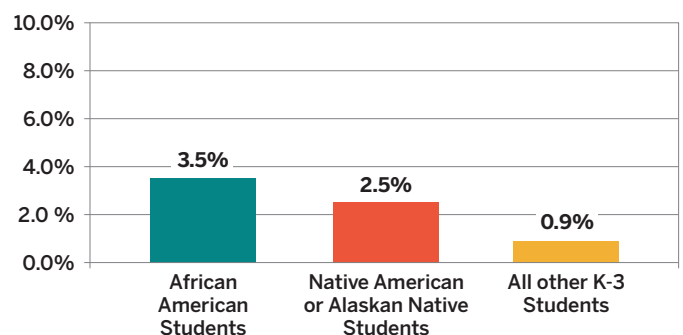
Suspension Rates and School Discipline

- African American students are **no more likely** than other groups of students to engage in unsafe or rule-breaking behaviors at school, but are **3 times** more likely than their white peers to be suspended nationally (Parker, 2015). More specifically, California suspension rates have shown that African American girls experienced OSS at a rate about **4 times** higher than White girls, and African American boys were suspended about **3 times** more than White boys. (**Figure 3**.)

- 3.5% of African American students and 2.5% of Native American, or Alaskan Native students, make up the suspension rates compared to .9% of all suspension rates of K-3 students in California. (**Figure 4**.)

- In many cases, teachers, administrators, and school resource officers disproportionately discipline students for "discretionary offenses with vague definitions," authors Ajmel Quereshi, Senior Counsel, and Professor Jason Okonofua argue (NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc., 2017).

- Other populations of students that disproportionately experience suspension include Latinx and Native American students. These students not only experience suspensions more often than their White peers, but also for longer periods of time.

- Reports of 50,000 children under age five were suspended, while 17,000 were expelled in a single year according to a national parent survey that was conducted.
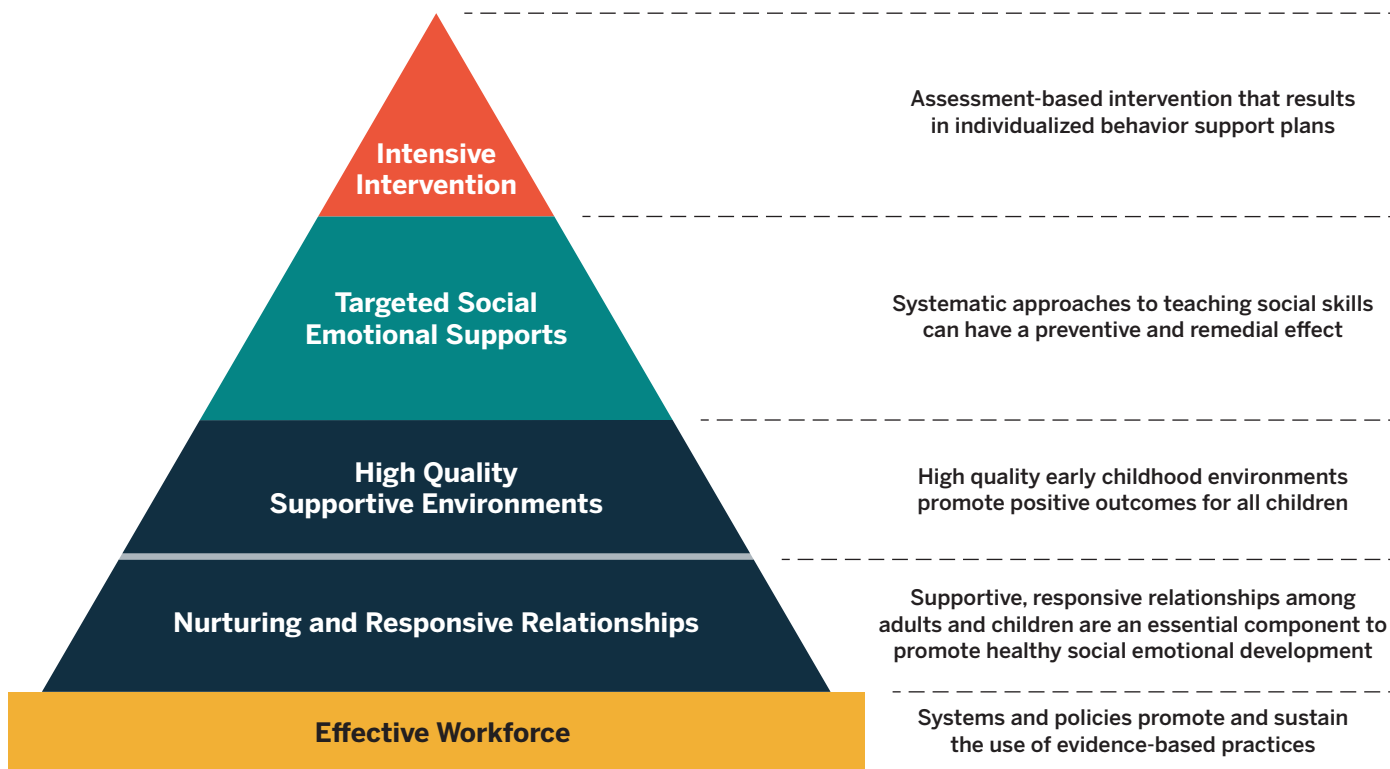
Promising Practices

Restorative Practices

Conflicts in schools and childcare settings are inevitable. However, one way to bring students together and encourage them to practice conflict resolution is through restorative justice. Restorative justice is intended to be more than sitting students involved in conflict in a circle. Restorative justice practices invite members of the learning community to be heard, to reflect on the impact of their actions on others, to take responsibility, and to make amends. Here are some resources:

- *Edutopia* Implementing restorative justice: A guide for schools
  https://www.edutopia.org/blog/restorative-justice-resources-matt-davis

- SFUSD's Restorative Practices Whole-School Implementation Guide
  https://www.healthiersf.org/RestorativePractices/Resources/documents/SFUSD%20Whole%20School%20Implementation%20Guide%20final.pdf

Whatever practice a school decides to use, the emphasis is on creating a school culture that serves to best support our students.

Figure 5. CSEFEL Pyramid Model: Promoting Social Emotional Competence in Infants & Young Children

Pyramid Level	Description
Intensive Intervention	Assessment-based intervention that results in individualized behavior support plans
Targeted Social Emotional Supports	Systematic approaches to teaching social skills can have a preventive and remedial effect
High Quality Supportive Environments	High quality early childhood environments promote positive outcomes for all children
Nurturing and Responsive Relationships	Supportive, responsive relationships among adults and children are an essential component to promote healthy social emotional development
Effective Workforce	Systems and policies promote and sustain the use of evidence-based practices

The Pyramid Model

Developed by the Center for Social and Emotional Foundations (CSEFEL housed at Vanderbilt University), and the Technical Assistance Center on Social and Emotional Intervention (TACSEI at Georgetown University), the Pyramid Model is a framework to address tiered behavioral supports for early learners. (**Figure 5**.) The idea behind this framework is to support caregivers, educators, and professionals with evidence-based strategies that will address young children's social emotional needs through promotion, prevention and intervention. The Pyramid Model, also referred to as the Teaching Pyramid, fosters the ability for early learning educators to support the teaching of appropriate behaviors, prevention of challenging behaviors, as well as being able to address problematic behaviors.

Reflection Questions

1. How can a student's experience with suspension, or being sent home, connect with their experiences beyond the early years?

2. What can you do to help reduce the disparities shown in suspensions?

3. How often do you revisit discipline policies? In what ways do you examine if discipline policies disproportionately affect and/or target certain students and families? What alternatives to suspension might you implement?

4. Go deep: For what behaviors are students most often disciplined?

Tools

- **Alternatives to Suspension Fact Sheet: Targeted Tier II Interventions**
https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/sped/alt/058197

- **PBIS World Alternatives to Suspension**
https://www.pbisworld.com/tier-2/alternatives-to-suspension/

Resources

- **PBIS Technical Assistance Center**
https://pbis.sccoe.org/home/Pages/default.aspx

- **"Don't Suspend Me: An Alternative Discipline Toolkit"**
https://www.middleweb.com/36090/a-principals-tool-kit-for-suspension-alternatives/

Select References

- Children's Equity Project & Bipartisan Policy Center (2019). From the early years to early grades: Data, research, and an actionable child equity policy agenda. https://childandfamilysuccess.asu.edu/sites/default/files/2020-10/CEP-report-101320-FINAL_0.pdf

- Chu, E. M., & Ready, D. D. (2018). Exclusion and urban public high schools: short- and long-term consequences of school suspensions. *American Journal of Education, 124*(4), 479–509.

- Duncan, G. J., Dowsett, C. J., Claessens, A., Magnuson, K., Huston, A. C., Klebanov, P., ... & Japel, C. (2007). School readiness and later achievement. *Developmental psychology, 43*(6), 1428.

- Gilliam, W. S. (2005). *Prekindergarteners left behind: Expulsion rates in state prekindergarten systems.* New York, NY: Foundation for Child Development.

- Gilliam, W. S., & Shahar, G. (2006). Preschool and child care expulsion and suspension: Rates and predictors in one state. *Infants & Young Children, 19*(3), 228-245.

- Gregory, A., Skiba, R.J., Noguera, P.A, (2010). The achievement gap and the discipline gap: Two sides of the same coin? *Educational Researcher, 39*(1), 59-68.

- Haight, W., Kayama, M., & Gibson, P. A. (2016). Out-of-school suspensions of black youths: culture, ability, disability, gender, and perspective. *Social Work, 61*(3), 235–243.

- Hamre, B. K., & Pianta, R. C. (2001). Early teacher–child relationships and the trajectory of children's school outcomes through eighth grade. *Child development, 72*(2), 625-638.

- Losen, D., Hodson, C., Keith II, M. A., Morrison, K., & Belway, S. (2015). *Are We Closing the School Discipline Gap?* The Center for Civil Rights Remedies.

- Mallett, C. A. (2016). The school-to-prison pipeline: A critical review of the punitive paradigm shift. *Child and adolescent social work journal, 33,* 15-24.

- Noltemeyer, A. L., Ward, R. M., Mcloughlin, C. (2015). Relationship between school suspension and student outcomes: A meta-analysis. *School Psychology Review 44*(3), 224-240.

- Shonkoff, J. P., Phillips, D. A., & National Research Council. (2000). The developing brain. In *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development.* National Academies Press (US).

- Simmons, J. (2013). Broadband Helps Bridge the Achievement Gap. *Our Children: The National PTA Magazine, 38*(3), 12-13.

- Sum, A., Khatiwada, I., McLaughlin, J., & Palma, S. (2009). The consequences of dropping out of high school. *Center for Labor Market Studies Publications, 23.*

- US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. (2014). Civil rights data collection data snapshot: School discipline. *Issue brief no. 1.*

- Whitford, D. K., Katsiyannis, A., Counts, J., Carrero, K. M., & Couvillon, M. (2019). Exclusionary discipline for English learners: A national analysis. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 28*(2), 301–314.

Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism results in lost instructional time and, as a result, decreased student achievement. This section defines chronic absenteeism and provides an explanation of why and how chronic absenteeism is a result of multiple equity issues for particular student groups.

What is Chronic Absenteeism?

The passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015 required that schools attend to the role that school climate, student engagement, and student health play in student achievement. Schools use rates of student absenteeism as an indicator to measure student engagement. Chronic absenteeism is a measure of how many students miss a defined number of school days (often around 15 or more days) for any reason. It is not the same as truancy (Attendance Works, 2016). Research shows that in addition to lower academic achievement, chronic absenteeism is associated with a number of negative consequences for students, including disengagement from school, course failure, and increased risk of not graduating (Garcia & Weiss, 2018). In California, recent research shows that rates of chronic absenteeism are slowly increasing.

As explained by the California Department of Education:

> The Chronic Absenteeism indicator is based on the number of students who were absent for 10 percent or more of the total instructional school days. For example, most schools have 180 instructional days; if a student is absent 18 or more of those days, the student would be considered chronically absent. The Dashboard reports chronic absenteeism only for grades K–8 (i.e., it is not an indicator reported for high schools). However, the viewer can access chronic absenteeism rates for high schools on DataQuest since it reports these rates for all grade levels (K–12).

There is a correlation between student achievement and number of days a student is absent; the reason for the absence is of little significance when it comes to measuring loss of instructional opportunity (Ginsburg, Chang, & Jordan, 2014). Therefore, in calculating the rate of chronic absenteeism no distinction is made between unexcused absences (truancy) and excused absences. By measuring chronic absenteeism, then, students who may be at risk for chronic absenteeism can be identified, and support for the student and family can be provided.

Early Childhood and Absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism in preschool and kindergarten is a predictor of school attendance for learners as they continue in their edu-

cational careers. Absenteeism in the early and most formative years of a child's education can have negative effects on a young learner's social-emotional growth as well as their academic achievement. Research has found that students who attended preschool more consistently demonstrated more growth in their literacy skills than their peers who had more frequent absences (Gottfried, 2019). Nationally, children coming from low-income households are 4 times more likely to be impacted by chronic which subsequently results in adverse effects on literacy being 75% greater for children impacted by poverty when compared to their middle class peers (Ready, 2010).

Equity & Chronic Absenteeism

According to a report by the U.S. Department of Education, chronic absenteeism in early childhood can prevent children from reaching important milestones. In addition, chronic absenteeism is a better predictor of whether students will graduate from high school than test scores alone. As efforts are put into place to improve school attendance, it is important to remember that students and families may face considerable barriers when it comes to attending school. When examining the data on chronic absenteeism, it is necessary to continue to ask "why" we see patterns in the data across student

---

[1] The detrimental consequences of structural health inequities have been made radically visible in the COVID-19 period when African Americans have disproportionately accounted for 34% of COVID-19 deaths but make up 13% of the U.S. population (Aubrey, 2020). African Americans are more likely to experience poverty (and, therefore, stress) and have underlying health conditions (see interview with Dr. Uché Blackstock). Like other institutionalized racial inequalities, these health disparities have a long history in the United States.

Figure 6. 2018-19 Statewide Chronic Abenteeism Rates
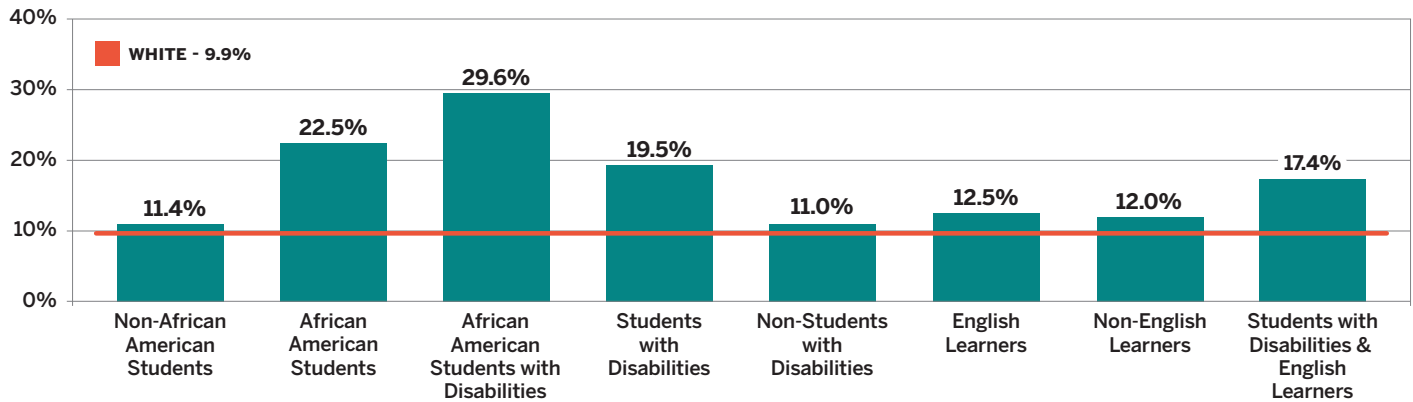
demographics that are aligned with overall academic outcomes for the state. (**Figure 6**.) According to a 2016 report by the National Association for Elementary School Principals (NAESP), there are six common causes of chronic absenteeism across the grade levels:

1. Poor grades
2. Bullying
3. Illness
4. Caring for another family member
5. Mental or emotional health issues
6. Difficulties securing housing or food

In addition to the above, the U.S. Department of Education reports reliable transportation as another barrier to attending school.

It is paramount to keep at the forefront what this list shows: the most common reasons for absenteeism exist beyond the control of students and their families. The highest rates of chronic absenteeism in California are experienced by students who are African American (22.5%), Native American (21.8%), and Pacific Islander (20.2%). Black children are 40 percent more likely than their Hispanic peers to be chronically absent. The reasons vary, but can include: poor health, limited transportation, and a lack of safety—which can be acute in economically disadvantaged communities and areas of poverty (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2019).

Absenteeism and Health

Especially amongst our early learners, health-related issues can be in indicator for pervasive absenteeism. Common illnesses like a cold, asthma, and dental problems can severely impact attendance, especially for families impacted by factors such as poverty (Kerr et al., 2012). In a study in Santa Clara, California families who were provided access to health resources had greater attendance, even families living in poverty. A study by Kerr and colleagues (2012) found that schools with school nurses and educational systems with school-based health centers increased attendance and promoted healthier populations. When there is contact and outreach between schools and the communities they serve, education on the importance of attendance with additional access to resources can have a significant impact on the lives of the families and children in the school community.

What can schools and communities do?

- Pay attention to attendance
- Reach out to at-promised youth and their families and first sign of chronic absences
- Educate community on why attendance matters and implications of missed school on academic and emotional development
- Include the students- incentivize coming, embed fun and meaningful rituals and routines into the school day
- Increase access to health resources

Chronic Absenteeism

Reflection Questions

1. Given the common reasons for chronic absenteeism presented, how might you change your current practices so that students can come to school with greater frequency?

2. What is your current process for tracking attendance?

3. Reflect on the presence of health care practitioners at your school site. What is going well? What could maybe change?

4. Are you aware of the barriers the families of your students may have that impact the ability to have their children attend school consistently? How can those barriers be removed? What team of school-site members would need to be involved?

Tools

- **California Department of Education Chronic Absenteeism Indicator Explanation** https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/cm/documents/chronicabsenteeism.pdf
- **Alum Rock Union School District Attendance Tracker** https://tinyurl.com/ARUSDAttTra
- **The Education Trust – West: Chronic Absenteeism Fact Sheet** https://tinyurl.com/y48c8qgf

Resources

- **8 Ways to Prevent Chronic Absenteeism** https://www.educationdive.com/news/8-ways-to-prevent-chronic-absenteeism/527794/
- **Attendance Works: Take Action for Educators webpage** https://www.attendanceworks.org/take-action/educators/

Selected References

- Garcia, E. & Weiss, E. (2018). "Student Absenteeism: Who Misses School and How Missing School Matters for Performance." *Economic Policy Institute*. Accessed May 12, 2020.
- Ginsburg, A., Chang, H. & Jordan, P. (2014). "Absences Add Up: How School Attendance Influences Student Success." *Attendance Works*.
- Gottfried, M. A. (2019). Chronic absenteeism in the classroom context: Effects on achievement. *Urban Education, 54*(1), 3-34.
- Kerr, J., Price, M., Kotch, J., Willis, S., Fisher, M., & Silva, S. (2012). Does contact by a family nurse practitioner decrease early school absence?. *The Journal of School Nursing, 28*(1), 38-46.
- Ready, D. D. (2010). Socioeconomic disadvantage, school attendance, and early cognitive development: The differential effects of school exposure. *Sociology of Education, 83*(4), 271-286.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2016/2019). Chronic Absenteeism in the Nation's Schools: A hidden educational crisis. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education.

ATTEND TODAY, ACHIEVE TOMORROW

GOOD SCHOOL ATTENDANCE MEANS...

| PRESCHOOLERS	ELEMENTARY STUDENTS	HIGH SCHOOLERS	COLLEGE STUDENTS	WORKERS
build skills and develop good habits for showing up on time	read well by the end of third grade	stay on track for graduation	earn their degrees	succeed in their jobs

Too many absences—excused or unexcused—can keep students from succeeding in school and in life. How many are too many? 10% of the school year—that's 18 missed days or 2 days a month—can knock students off track.

Attendance Works
Advancing Student Success By Reducing Chronic Absence
www.attendanceworks.org
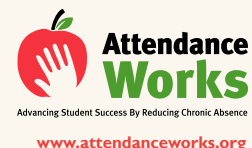
Glossary of Terms

Ableism
Refers to the discriminatory beliefs and behaviors directed against people with disabilities.

Asset-based Approach
A mindset in which educators view and treat their students for the strengths, gifts, and talents that their students bring into the classroom. "Asset-based teaching seeks to unlock students' potential by focusing on their talents. Also known as strengths-based teaching, this approach contrasts with the more common deficit-based style of teaching which highlights students' inadequacies" (Association of College and Research Libraries, 2018).

Bias
A tendency, inclination, or prejudice towards or against something or someone.

BIPOC
Stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. This term is used "to highlight the unique relationship to whiteness that Indigenous and Black (African Americans) people have, which shapes the experiences of and relationship to white supremacy for all people of color within a U.S. context" (The BIPOC Project). In effect, the term illuminates the fact that the U.S. concepts of race were built on white supremacist notions of Blackness and indigeneity.

CA-1
A road for schools and districts to follow in their efforts to provide a world-class education for each and every student in the state. CA-1 provides information on effective practices that focus on improving equity overall for underperforming student populations" (CA1 website).

California Equity Performance and Improvement Program (CEPIP)
A two year, 2.5 million dollar grant authorized in 2018 by Assembly Bill 99 to "support and build capacity within County Offices of Education (COEs), Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and schools to promote equity for disadvantaged student populations in California schools.

California School Dashboard
A tool that "provides parents and educators with meaningful information on school and district progress so they can participate in decisions to improve student learning." The California School Dashboard is where much of the data seen in the *W2EPB* has been sourced.

California Statewide System of Support
The objective of the California Statewide System of Support is to support Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and their schools in meeting the needs of each student they serve, with a focus on building local capacity to sustain improvement and effectively address disparities in opportunities and outcomes using models of continuous improvement.

California Way, The
The California Way is the belief of the California State Board of Education that education decisions should be state driven, not federally driven.

Continuous Improvement
An ongoing effort to improve services or processes within an organization. These efforts, methodically integrated into daily work of individuals, are consistently measured to understand what is working for whom, and under what conditions.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
Acknowledges and utilizes the cultural and historical backgrounds, knowledge, and experiences of students to inform the teachers' classroom and methodology. Employing culturally relevant pedagogy helps teachers to create a bridge between the identities and communities to which students belong, while simultaneously meeting learning objectives and expectations in the classroom.

Glossary of Terms

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy
The cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of racially and ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant.

Culturally Responsive Teaching
A teaching pedagogy that emphasizes using students' customs, characteristics, experience, and perspectives as tools for better classroom instruction.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy
CSP describes teaching and learning that seeks to perpetuate and foster linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic schooling project and as a needed response to demographic and social change." (Paris et al., 2016)

Deficit Perspective/Thinking/Frameworks
Views students through what they do not have, or what they lack, as opposed to seeing them for the assets they possess. This framework is most often applied to students who are BIPOC, students whose first language is not English.

Digital Divide
The gap in access to technology (i.e. a computer, a computer with a webcam, reliable/high-speed internet) among groups, particularly students in the online classroom setting.

Disability Rights
Legally ensures accessibility and safety in transportation and the physical environment; equal opportunities in education, living arrangements, and employment; and freedom from discrimination, abuse, and neglect.

Disability Justice
Challenges the idea that any person's worth as individuals has to do with our ability to perform as productive members of society. It insists that a person's worth is inherent and tied to the liberation of all beings (thebodyisnotanapology.com).

Disparity
The unequal outcomes of one racial or ethnic group as compared to outcomes for another racial/ethnic group.

Disproportionality
The underrepresentation or overrepresentation of a racial or ethnic group compared to its percentage in the total population.

Distributed Leadership
Also referred to as "shared leadership," a conceptual framework for undertaking the challenge of transforming leadership processes, attitudes, and arrangements so that they are profoundly relational, shared, and non-hierarchical.

Early Childhood Education (ECE)
ECE is a branch of education theory that relates to the teaching of children from birth up to the age of eight. Traditionally, this is up to the equivalent of third grade.

Equality
An understanding that all students "should have access to the same exact opportunities" (Noguera, 2019).

Equity
Acknowledging students' differences and giving them what they need to be successful" with a focus on both academic and developmental outcomes (Noguera, 2019).

Equity Literacy
Equity literacy is a framework for cultivating the knowledge and skills that enable us to be a threat to the existence of inequity in our spheres of influence. More than cultural competence or diversity awareness, equity literacy prepares us to see even subtle ways in which access and opportunity are distributed unfairly across race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, language, and other factors. (equityliteracy.org)

Equity-mindedness
A set of attitudes and beliefs that lead to individual and collective behaviors that favor providing people with the resources and support they need to achieve objectives.

Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE)
Accessible education that meets the individual educational needs of students with disabilities.

Full Day Program
An early childhood education and assistance program that offers child care for at least six hours per day, a minimum of one thousand hours per year, and at least four days per week.

Gentrification
The territorial expansion of a wealthy community into a disinvested neighborhood" (City Lab). Gentrification changes the social and cultural makeup of communities to fit those of the neighborhood's newcomers.

Geo Lead
"Geographical Lead Agencies" and resource/initiative lead agencies were established among the county offices of education (COE) to ensure that they are equipped to meet the needs of local education agencies as they address student outcomes within the state priorities.

Head Start Program
Early childhood learning programs that promote the school readiness of children ages 3 to 5. Most of these programs are based in centers. In other programs, children and families may receive services from educators and family service staff who regularly make home visits.

High Leverage Practices
A group of researched based practices that are foundational to supporting student learning, particularly for students with disabilities in inclusive settings.

High-Quality Early Care and Education
A type of early learning program which successfully promotes children's development and learning and narrows socioeconomic and racial/ethnic inequalities.

Homophobia
The prejudice, fear, contempt, and hatred of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people and associations. Homophobia includes misinformation about and prejudices against people who do not perform the expected gender roles assigned to them at birth. Homophobia affects everyone because it is a powerful tool for enforcing gender roles.

Implicit Bias
"Refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner" (Kirwan Institute, 2015). Implicit bias is unconscious, but it still affects our judgement of others based on factors (i.e. race, disability, gender, culture, language). Also sometimes used interchangeably with "unconscious bias".

Improvement Science
Use of the continuous improvement cycle to solve problems in schools. Improvement science helps guide districts to identify problems of practice and analyze root causes of behavioral and academic challenges in schools.

Innovations Collaborative
An equity resource by the Santa Clara County Office of Education. "The The Inclusive Collaborative of SCCOE promotes a culture that values all children by strengthening, sustaining, and ensuring inclusive practices" (Inclusion Collaborative).

Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)
The goal of IDEA is to provide a free and appropriate education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) for all children with disabilities.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
The range of settings in which a student with a disability may receive their education and services. The least restrictive environment would be the educational setting where the student would spend the most time with their peers.

LGBTQIA+
tands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, plus other groups marginalized due to gender and sexual identities.

Liberatory Design
"Builds from the tradition of human-centered design (aka design thinking), which shifts traditional power dynamics related to decision-making and brings forth deeper innovation and agency amidst institutionalized norms and structures" (National Equity Project).

Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP)
A tool for local education agencies to set goals, plan actions, and leverage resources to improve student outcomes (CDE).

Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)
A system that changed local educational agencies (LEAs) support, funds, and measurement of results needed to help students achieve goals (CDE).

Local Education Agency (LEA)
A public board of education or other public authority within a state that maintains administrative control of public elementary or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a state.

Glossary of Terms

Marginalization
The placement of students on the "sidelines," further facilitating inequitable treatment of vulnerable students.

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)
An integrated, comprehensive framework that focuses on CCSS, core instruction, differentiated learning, student-centered learning, individualized student needs, and the alignment of systems necessary for all students' academic, behavioral, and social success (CDE).

On-Ramp
A starting point on the way to equity. On-ramps are designed to help schools, LEAs, and COEs discern where they are at in the process of their equity work.

Opportunity Gap
Relating to the "achievement gap," describes the disparities in academic achievement due to an inequitable distribution of resources and support given to marginalized students.

Part Day Program
An early childhood education and assistance program that offers child care for less than five (5) hours per day.

Racial Equity
Race would not be a predictor of advantages or disadvantages experienced by an individual. Achieving racial equity entails eliminating inequality rooted in the "policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race" (Racial Equity Resource Guide).

Racism
A system of privilege and penalty based on one's race.

Reflection/Critical Reflection
Giving thought or consideration to one's own beliefs, understanding, or perspective about a topic. Critical reflection involves assessing these beliefs, where they come from, and their interpersonal or social implications.

School to Prison Pipeline
Describes how the excessive use of exclusionary discipline in schools pushes students, particularly Black males, into the prison system.

Social Justice
The equal access to wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society.

Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA)
All school districts and county school offices are mandated to form consortia in geographical regions to provide for all special education service needs of children residing within the region boundaries. Each region, (SELPA), develops a local plan describing how it will provide special education services (CDE).

State-Subsidized Child Care and Development Programs
Describes voucher-based programs (e.g., licensed child care centers, licensed family child care homes, or license-exempt care offered through the State for families to choose the type of care their child receives.

Systemic Oppression
Manifests on four levels. 1) the individual (personal beliefs and actions); 2) the interpersonal (interactions between people); 3) the institutional (practices in an organization); and 4) the structural (across institutions). It is a complex interaction of people, practices, institutions, and ideology that perpetuate inequality (National Equity Project).

Targeted Universalism
This framework sets a universal goal while considering all groups involved. The consideration of all groups involves acknowledgement of advantages and disadvantages present.

Teaching Pyramid
A tiered behavioral framework to support early learners that incorporates evidence strategies that address the social-emotional well being of young children through promotion, prevention and interventions.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
With an understanding that "one size does not fit all," UDL is a framework of instruction that takes into account that different students learn in different ways. The goal of UDL curriculum is to be understood by all students and is designed to be flexible for the needs of students (CAST).

Universal PK
Also known as "preschool for all," is a policy framework that would allow families the option, and opportunity to enroll their preschool aged kids (typically ages 3-4) voluntarily, in publicly funded programs.

Universal TK
Would extend access to all 4 year olds in California to participate in transitional kindergarten, voluntarily, in publicly funded programs.

Xenophobia
Dislike of or prejudice against people from other countries.

Acknowledgements

For Additional Resources and Tools, on the Below Listed Sections, Visit the *Ways 2 Equity Playbook*:

African American Students

Students with Disabilities

English Learners

Building an Equity Team

Developing an Equity Communication Plan

Implicit Bias and Cultivating Equity Mindedness

Using Data to Inform and Drive Equity Work

Academic Achievement: The Opportunity Gap

Student Engagement

Family Engagement

Santa Clara County Office of Education

1290 Ridder Park Drive, San Jose, CA 95131
www.sccoe.org

v.03.19.2025