

MAY 2021

MOVING FROM AUDIT TO ACTION

FINAL REPORT FROM THE DEI TASK FORCE



TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 02 Superintendent Statement
- 03 DEI Task Force Formation & Composition
- 04 Audit Process & Key Focus Areas
- 06 Equity in Student Outcomes
- 08 Equity in Students' School Experiences
- 10 Equity in Student Access to Opportunities
- 12 Equity in Families' School Experiences
- 16 Equity in Resources & Supports
- 18 Equity in Staff Members' School Experiences
- 20 Recommendations for District Action
- 22 Ongoing Learning Recommendations
- 23 Moving from Audit to Action! Next Steps
- 24 Community Pledge For Fairness

Academy District 20 Community,
 Each student, staff, family member and patron who walks through our doors, learns in our classrooms, and spends time in our schools must be accepted, supported, and valued. We envision a district where everyone belongs and is treated fairly - regardless of disability, socioeconomic, race, ethnicity, religion, political differences, or any other characteristic.



We cannot simply “hope” this takes place. And these can’t be just words in a report. What started with an audit of our district became action - and the report you are now reading is a narrative and overview of what we learned and potential paths forward.

Creating and sustaining a school district that values each member takes intentionality. We must listen to all members of our community to understand the array of experience, feelings of belonging, and obstacles.

Further, we must fully understand where we are today. To strategically grow means placing stakes in the ground and establishing a baseline of all the experiences in our schools.

Although the events of 2020 and 2021 sparked national social unrest, our journey toward belonging was well on its way. In fact, during the fall of 2019 we began looking more closely at the experiences in our school district. Personal experiences, combined with quantitative data, pointed toward the need for growth, for better understanding and for more open, honest, and frequent dialogue.

We are committed to high quality education. We must prepare students for success after high school. To do this we must make people a priority, honor relationships, and assure everyone is valued. Achieving these goals means creating a culture where all feel safe, supported and welcome.

This is only the beginning of our journey. In the months and years ahead we will continue to push forward until every member of our community feels that Academy District 20 is where they belong.

Be safe and be well.

Tom Gregory
 Superintendent of Schools, Academy District 20

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: *The Academy District 20 leadership thanks the Colorado Education Initiative, who partnered with the district to design the Equity Audit process, organize and analyze the data, and facilitate our community’s Equity Task Force meetings. Their expertise and support made this process meaningful, open, and productive.*

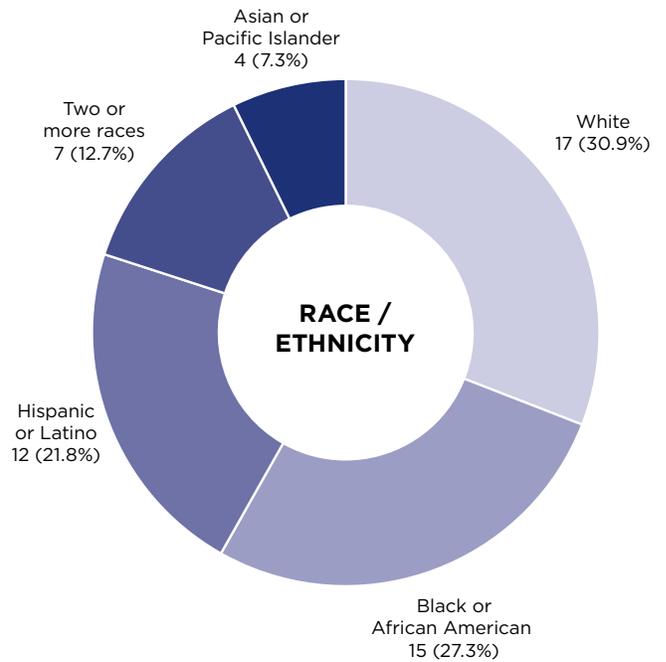
DEI Task Force Formation & Composition

A representative body of interested Academy District 20 community members, made up of students, parents, community members, teachers, and school and district leaders was convened to form the Academy District 20 Equity Task Force. This task force was charged with reviewing data, practices, and policies related to outcomes, experiences, and systems related to the district's schools. The primary purpose of the task force was to provide high-level recommendations for immediate action to the district as well as longer-term commendations for further study and discussion. This process presented a powerful opportunity for the community to co-create and co-produce recommendations with an equity lens.



55 Equity Task Force Members

Task Force Composition



GENDER



| STAKEHOLDER GROUP* | # OF MEMBERS |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Family/Parent | 25 |
| Community Member | 20 |
| Teacher | 12 |
| School Administrator | 8 |
| Other Educational Professional | 7 |
| Current Student | 7 |
| Institution of Higher Education | 5 |
| District Administrator | 4 |

*Members may belong to multiple stakeholder groups

Audit Process & Key Focus Areas

The audit process and task force experience was anchored in six focus areas. These categories were informed by equity audit research and best practices. Over the course of five months in early 2021, task force members reflected on summarized data results in each of the six focus areas and participated in or listened to related panel discussions with subsets of the task force.



PHASE 1:

DEI Audit Preparation & Data Collection

JAN - MARCH 2021

PHASE 2:

Launch & Facilitate District-Wide DEI Task Force

FEB - MAY 2021

PHASE 3:

Reporting & Recommendations

MAY - JUNE 2021

PHASE 4:

DEI Strategies in Action!

JULY 2021 - BEYOND

TASK FORCE HOPES AND DREAMS

The district is “moving toward change” and “wants to do this work deeply and well,” with a hope that “this task force will make a difference.”

Task Force Session Comments

In order to provide a comprehensive look into multiple components of Academy District 20, data were reviewed in each of the six focus areas of the equity audit framework, and task force members were provided guidance and encouraged to share insights about additional elements of those focus areas beyond the data shared.

The data examined through this equity audit process were prioritized using the following criteria.

- Data available in Academy District 20, generally prioritizing data able to be disaggregated by race/ethnicity.
- Data not commonly reviewed by or familiar to multiple stakeholder groups (e.g., administrators, teachers, students, families, community members) in Academy District 20.
- Data aligned with priority areas named by district staff and task force members, often reflecting potential areas of concern.

Equity Audit Focus Areas

(referenced on page 4)



Equity in student outcomes



Equity in student access to opportunities



Equity in resources and supports



Equity in students' school and district experiences



Equity in families' school and district experiences



Equity in staff members' school and district experiences

TASK FORCE HOPES AND DREAMS

**“A student’s racial diversity will be seen as...
[bringing] a new, deeper conversation to
the table, with much to contribute.”**

Task Force Session Comment



Examining students' academic and non-academic results

EQUITY IN STUDENT OUTCOMES

The task force examined graduation rates over time (see graph on page 7) and Northwest Evaluation Association's (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment data from the current school year, both disaggregated by race/ethnicity. The group noticed both bright spots, such as significant increases in graduation rates for Hispanic or Latinx and African American male students over the past decade, and areas of concern, including persistent academic equity gaps in performance and graduation between racial/ethnic groups. Similar gaps shown across graduation rates exist in the NWEA MAP assessment results from 2020-21, where across grade levels, white students generally saw the highest growth and achievement, and Black or African American students often had some of the lowest growth in the district.



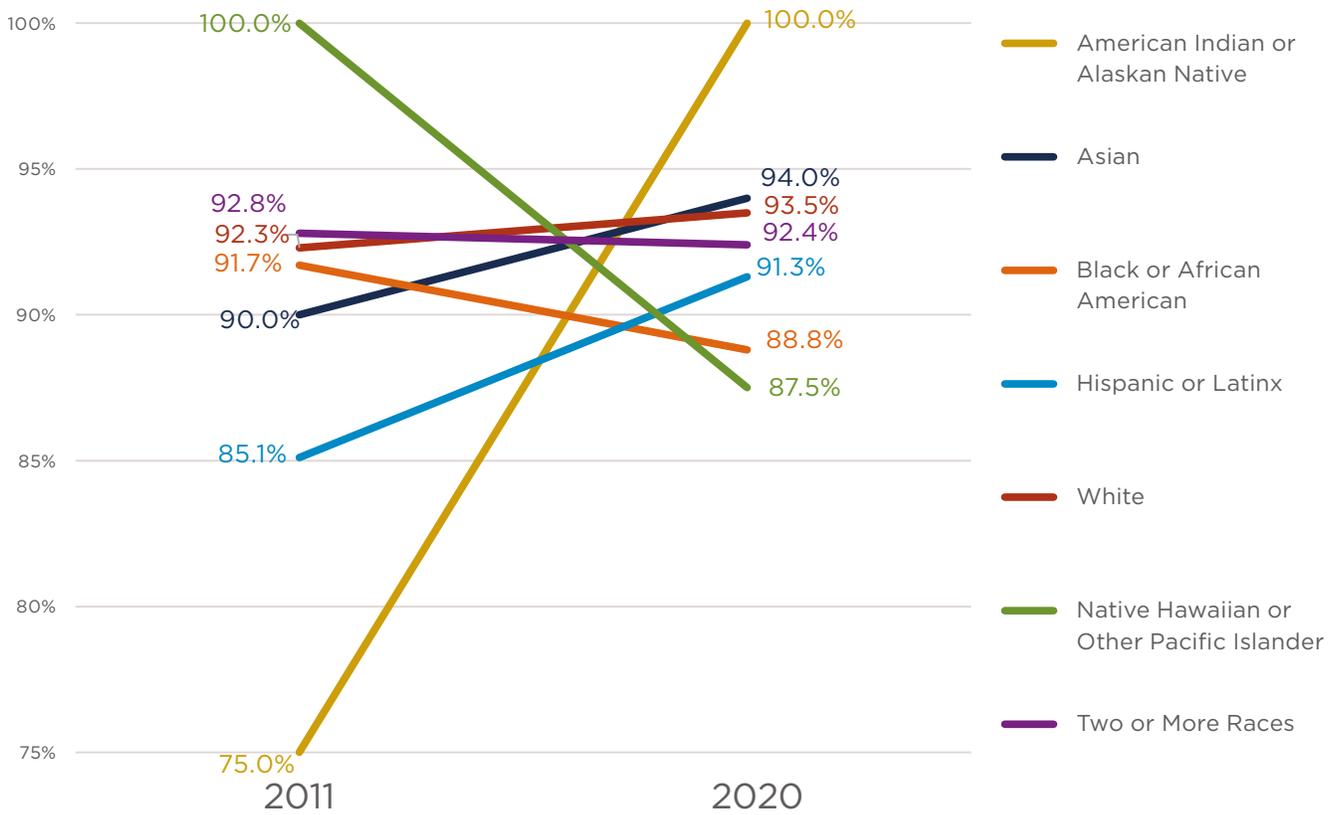


BRIGHT SPOT:

*Black or African American and Hispanic or Latinx male students both graduated at **historically high rates in the district in 2020.***

The graph below shows the on-time, or four-year, graduation rate for Academy District 20 students since 2011.

Percentage of Students Graduating in Four Years by Race/Ethnicity 2011 to 2020



Note that the American Indian or Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander groups were fairly small (n<15 for both years). Use caution when interpreting the large graduation rate changes during this time for these two groups.



Exploring how different students experience and feel about school

EQUITY IN STUDENTS' SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

The task force members reviewed discipline data by race/ethnicity, gender, neighborhood, and school level (i.e., elementary, middle, high), as well as Character and Climate survey results, though race/ethnicity data have not been collected through that survey and therefore results cannot be disaggregated by race/ethnicity. Task force members reflected on the differences between students' and adults' perceptions on the reviewed survey items, with larger gaps typically between students and staff, and there was a great deal of discussion about the disproportionate discipline rates between white students and students of color, also summarized in this section.



Discipline policies, as outlined in student handbooks, vary across schools in Academy District 20, though most secondary schools follow the district's suspension and expulsion policy. There are some schools without any anti-bullying policies, and policies related to dress code violations, which can lead to detention or suspension, are different across Academy District 20 neighborhoods.


FEMALE STUDENTS

Black or African American females were in-school suspended **3.3x** more than white females.

Hispanic or Latina females were in-school suspended **2.7x** more than white females.

Black or African American males were **2.1x** more likely to be in-school suspended than white males.

Black or African American males were out-of-school suspended **2.3x** more than their white male peers.

MALE STUDENTS

STUDENT VOICES

Student task force members spoke bravely and authentically about their experiences in Academy District 20 during their panel session in March 2020 with the full task force. They surfaced both strengths for the district to leverage further—such as resources and supports for student organizations like gay-straight alliances, Sources of Strength, “No Place for Hate”, and existing anti-bias training—and demonstrated the need for continued growth and improvement by sharing some first-hand experiences of discrimination and microaggressions. One student, who noted they were often the only student of color, felt tokenized, sharing their classmates, “might not even know they’re doing it.” They provided the example of everyone looking to them for input when discussing slavery in class.

“[My school] has had things happen that shouldn’t have... [I] reported it but nothing happened.”

Academy District 20 Student

These discipline data are from the 2018-19 school year (to reflect the most recent year without any remote learning).



Reviewing students' access to academic and non-academic resources, courses, and extracurricular activities



EQUITY IN STUDENT ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES

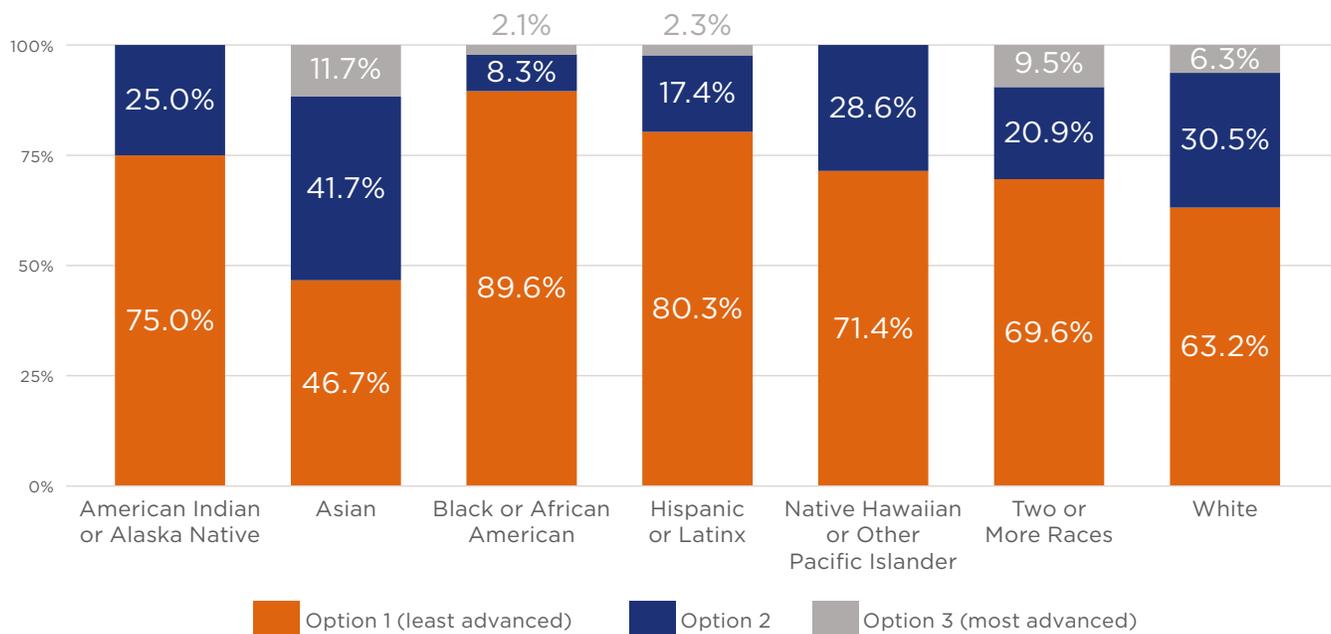
In this category, task force members reflected on students' placement into different math pathways within the district, as well as IB, AP, and Gifted/Talented enrollment, all disaggregated by race/ethnicity.



The graph below shows the proportion of each race/ethnicity group enrolled in the three math pathways in 8th grade. Option 1 is the least advanced pathway (Linear Algebra in 8th grade), while Option 3 is the most advanced (Geometry in 8th grade). Math placement decisions are made in 6th grade initially. Though students do not move across pathways often, 8th grade math enrollment was explored to

account for any potential changes in math enrollment in groups of students in middle school. Task force members discussed the differences across different race/ethnicity groups, and raised questions about how parents, families, and students are informed about the implications of these pathway placement decisions.

Percentage of Total 8th Grade Student Enrollment by Math Pathway



“We are limiting our students by essentially deciding for them how successful they can be. There must be a better way.”

Task Force Session Comment



Elevating the perceptions and experiences of parents, guardians, and family members of students, as well as the broader school community

EQUITY IN FAMILIES' SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

The task force reviewed survey questions focused on parent/community engagement from the district's 2020-21 Character and Climate survey, and listened in on parent/family panel discussions, in order to gain insight into family and community members' experiences in Academy District 20.



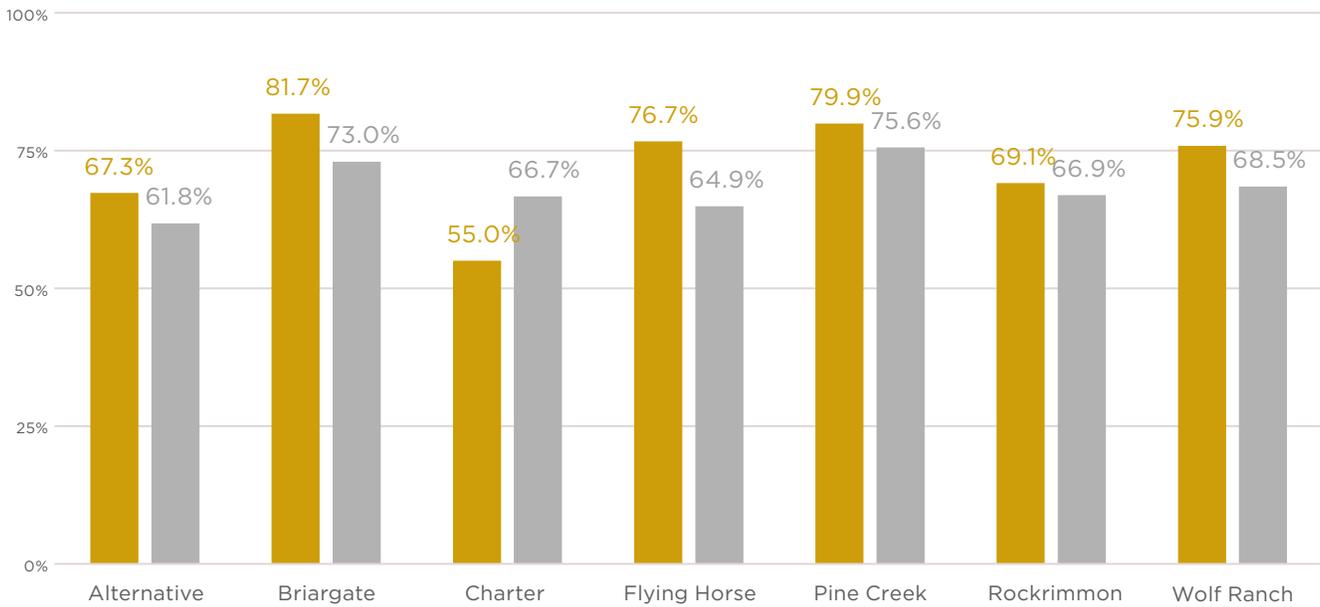
As shown in the graph below, the percentage of parents who agree that stakeholders know their input is considered in district decisions is relatively consistent across school levels, but it's important to note that there is some substantial variation across different neighborhoods, with favorable responses ranging from 55% to 82%.



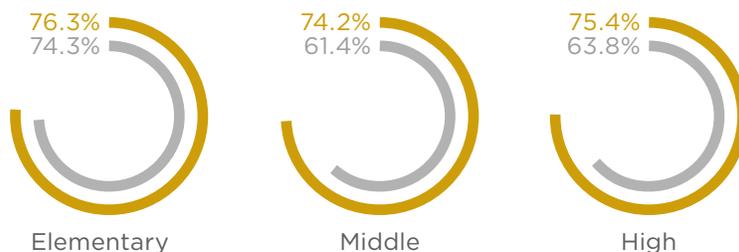
BRIGHT SPOT:

*The vast majority of parents—over 90% at all school levels—reported that they feel respected by school administrators, and a number of parents shared that they have **positive and professional experiences with district and school staff.***

Within the district, stakeholders know their input is considered when the district makes decisions.
Percentage of respondents who “agreed” or “strongly agreed”



Parents (n ≈ 1520) Staff (n ≈ 750)







PARENT VOICES

One Black parent shared about her son's experience with differential treatment following a physical altercation at school, a culminating event after years of race-related bullying. Ultimately, they decided to transfer her son to a different and more diverse school in the district. "Although we don't hold [the school] entirely responsible...we do know that an opportunity was missed to have constructive conversations about race and the way students from different backgrounds and ethnicities interact. Many white students think it's okay and funny to make racist remarks and just call them "jokes". Black parents who move into the district will often seek the advice from other Black parents to find out what schools are best for our kids. And those that can afford it will...opt for alternative learning environments."

"I am a product of ASD20 and 30+ years later I see my children progressing through the same district, [and] unfortunately as it relates to diversity and equality, in many ways **their experiences are not much different from mine.** I endured racism and moments of being isolated when I was a student... more recently I've observed first-hand inequitable treatment of my...son as well as other students."



Investigating how resources and supports, including financial resources and staffing, are distributed across the district

EQUITY IN RESOURCES & SUPPORTS

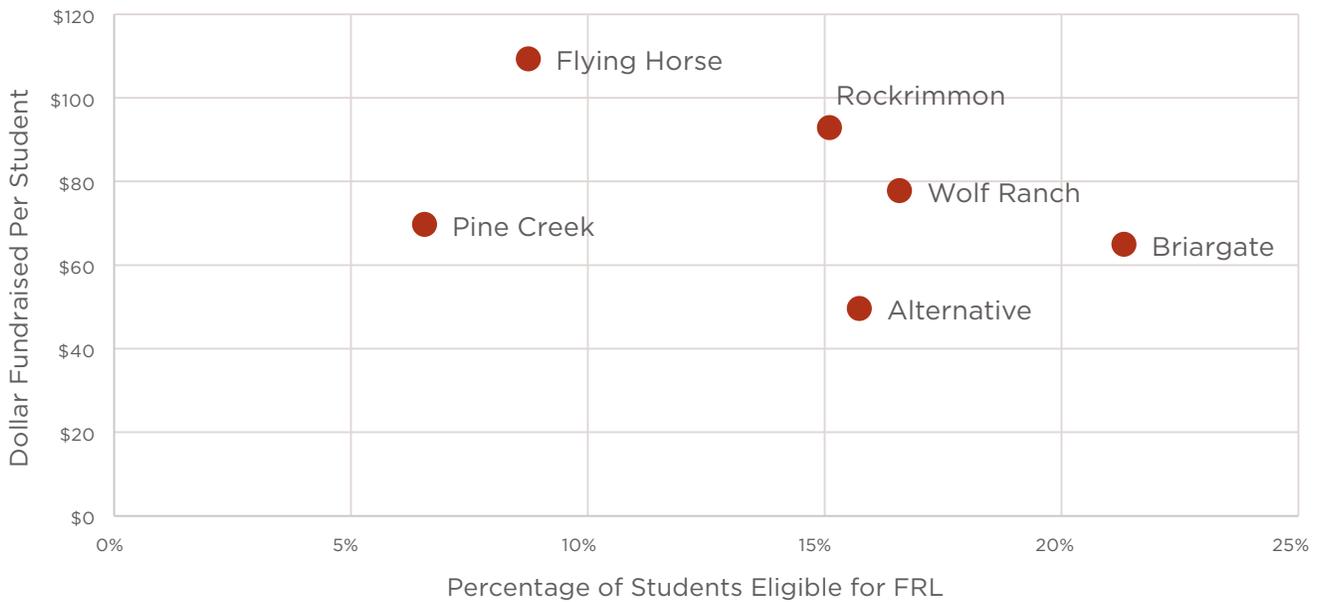
This category included a deeper dive into policy audit findings, including an explanation of the district’s site-based model and a summary of different equity-related policies in schools’ student handbooks, as well as fundraising data. To help task force members understand the policy and student/staff handbook context within Academy District 20, CEI provided an overview of the site-based management model used in the district based on an interview with district staff and a review of literature about site-based management. This

overview included an explanation of decisions that are made at the school level—such as budgeting/fundraising, hiring non-administrative staff, instructional strategies, and school-level policies and handbooks—and a summary of the variation across schools’ handbooks. For example, only 32% of the 38 Academy District 20 schools for which handbooks were available have an equal educational policy in their handbook, 55% include an individual dignity policy, 84% have an anti-bullying policy, and 60% include a non-discrimination policy.

Additionally, task force members looked at the data shown in the graph below, reflecting supplemental dollars raised by schools during the 2018-19 school year by neighborhood. These dollars include funds raised by ticket and concession sales at sporting events, dances, theatre events, etc., as well as fundraising events such as book sales and fun runs. Note fundraising dollars from charter schools were not available. The task force session,

including the data review and staff panel, also surfaced related discrepancies across schools for funding based on the state of their facilities, though these data were not examined through the audit process. Newer schools are both better positioned to rent out their facilities to generate revenue and require less investment in facilities management and maintenance.

Percentage of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (FRL) vs. Dollars Fundraised Per Student by Neighborhood 2018-2019



Only 32% of the 38 Academy District 20 schools for which handbooks were available have an equal educational policy in their handbook, 55% include an individual dignity policy, 84% have an anti-bullying policy, and 60% include a non-discrimination policy.



Reflecting on staff perceptions of their sense of support and belonging, as well as hiring, retention, and comparisons across staff and student demographics

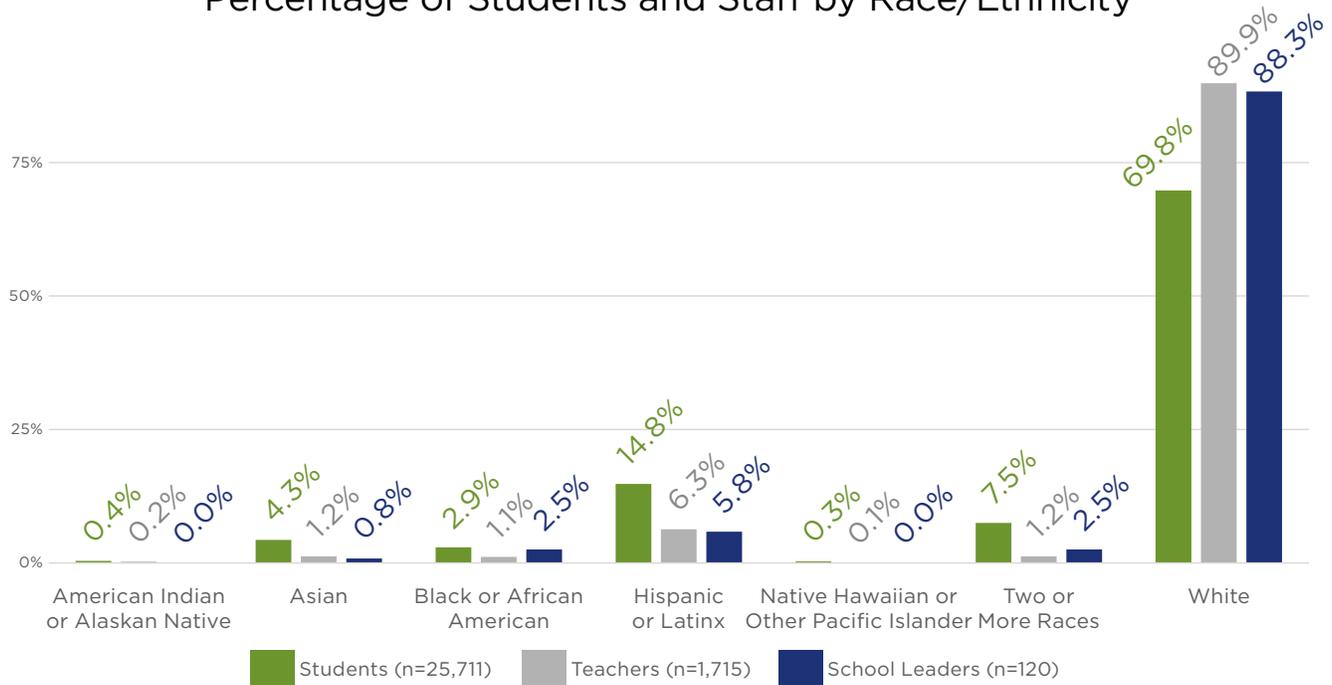
EQUITY IN STAFF MEMBERS’ SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

In the staff experiences category, task force members examined the race/ethnicity of Academy District 20 staff compared to students (graph on page 19), summaries of hiring policies and interview protocols related to equity, and a selection of Character and Climate survey results related to staff perceptions. They also heard from the parent and community task force members in a panel discussion.



As shown below, nearly 90% of teachers and school leaders—some of the educators with whom students most frequently interact—are white. Hiring and retaining a more diverse workforce was a consistent theme of the task force discussions.

Percentage of Students and Staff by Race/Ethnicity



DISTRICT INTERVIEW POLICIES AND PRACTICES

As part of the policy audit process, interview and hiring policies and practices were examined across Academy District 20 schools, including 114 interview protocols. Academy District 20 screens all candidates, and applicants who pass the screen are entered into a pool to which all traditional (non-charter) Academy District 20 schools have access. From there, there is no standard interview process, though the district provides an interview question bank that schools can use as desired. Of note, across all interview protocols, there were only four questions pertaining to DEI (e.g., “[School] will be a school in which every student’s diversity is valued. What does equity mean to you and how do you create an equitable learning environment?”), all at the elementary level, and the majority of parent-related questions were framed in a negative way at the secondary level (e.g., “Describe a difficult/tough parent interaction you have dealt with and how it was resolved.”).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISTRICT ACTION

At the end of the Equity Audit process, the task force used a consensus model to suggest a set of recommendations for district action for the district to consider. The task force was asked to propose and come to consensus (90%+ agreement) about the language, structure and ideas. The task force was also asked to weigh perspectives on each of these ideas. These completed recommendations were then presented to the entire group and to district leadership.

These recommendations are presented below:

-
1. Every Academy District 20 school includes policies related to individual dignity, equal educational opportunity, anti-bullying, and non-discrimination in their student handbooks and/or establish a baseline of standard district policies to which schools can then add on.
 2. Academy District 20 should consider a pilot program for academic tutoring from the community for schools that have academically at-risk students.
 3. Academy District 20 should provide additional intervention staffing based on identified student needs.
 4. To close academic gaps, the district should identify a menu of best practices, use data to identify schools that have more/larger gaps, guide schools in selecting from those best practices, support them with training to implement, and provide follow-up/accountability to do so.
 5. Within the first quarter of the 2021-22 school year, all Academy District 20 schools will hold meetings with staff, parent, and student stakeholders to determine the justification and facilitate buy-in for ongoing equity work in the district.
 6. Create a district discipline overview committee to review discipline data and ensure alignment between school policies and practices and flag any disparities among student groups. The district then follows up with schools that are flagged by the discipline overview committee.
 7. Academy District 20 establishes a Director of Equity and Diversity position to hold the district accountable to a set of district-wide policies.
 8. Centralize building rental dollars so that all money raised goes into one pot, and then share funds across the district based on pupil count. Use facilities rental dollars to offset student activities' costs. (Resources and Supports Group)
 9. Have a marketing advisory board or panel that works with the schools to establish programs they might not think about to raise dollars, and create some mechanisms for principals to share facilities usage ideas with one another.



10. Make district-wide SEL program targeted at adults a centralized decision (rather than site-based). Allow all educators to be involved in self-wellness initiatives.
11. The district will create an integrated college and career program. This program will expand CTE offerings across the district. The district will also increase access to these programs by providing and funding transportation (rather than transportation provided and funded by schools). The district and schools will continue monitoring program participation across schools and subgroups to ensure equitable access and avoid targeted tracking (de facto segregation).
12. The district will provide transportation and paraprofessional support for students to access all after-school events/activities and/or enrichment opportunities. This should be paid for by the district (not site-based) so the same opportunities are available to all students, regardless of campus.
13. The district will provide DEI professional development to all staff members annually, including potentially targeted/specialized training for administrators and an embedded equity lens across all professional development (rather than just a one-time training).
14. Each school will have one designated DEI liaison to work with and be supported by the district Director of Equity and Diversity (per district recommendation #7), to coordinate DEI efforts at that school and address equity issues as needed.
15. The district should engage in more proactive outreach to families and provide a way for families to have a voice without retribution, with particular focus on high school parents and families.

ONGOING LEARNING RECOMMENDATIONS

The task force also came to consensus around a set of recommendations for continued study and discussion for the district to consider.

These recommendations are presented below:

1. Research additions to the curriculum to include more diverse perspectives and primary sources from non-dominant perspectives, based on state standards and including options for higher level classes. Additionally, examine resource allocation for curriculum across Academy District 20 schools.
2. Explore alternatives to suspension and expulsion, such as restorative practices and student and staff education and training.
3. Learn more about how students are placed into honors/accelerated pathways across different content areas (grades 3-12), especially in ELA and math. Explore opportunities for shifting across pathways, especially at key transition points (grades 5-6, grades 8-9).
4. Learn about how families are informed about pathway placement policies and processes across schools.
5. Investigate how principals address facilities management from an equity lens, including how they spend money when facilities need fixes or upgrades and from what areas this takes money away.
6. The district should explore the possibility of establishing a “youth court” and/or “student advisory council”, representative of the student body, at each secondary school to support the adoption of restorative disciplinary practices and to increase student voice and agency.
7. Examine more staff retention data from the district, including by race/ethnicity, gender, role, subject area, and other important variables, and research best practices in retention strategies through a DEI lens based on areas of focus identified by the data review.
8. Conduct a deep dive into family communication, engagement, and partnership (e.g., examining how the district and schools hold meetings) and potentially explore different strategies and methods.
9. Examine the extent to which there is equity of access (e.g., lack of busing/transportation, burden of travel) to Academy District 20 schools and district/school programming.



MOVING FROM AUDIT TO ACTION! NEXT STEPS

Although we have evaluated data and research, examined our policies, attitudes and behaviors, and provided recommendations, there is still much work to be done. As we said before, our journey is just beginning.

During the summer of 2021 district leadership will review these recommendations and place them in priority order. We will also work to identify the intersections and alignment between these recommendations and the district strategic framework and plan.

We will then begin building action plans for the roll-out of all the identified recommendations.

ACADEMY DISTRICT 20

COMMUNITY PLEDGE FOR FAIRNESS

Academy District 20 is excited to have the support of the community on the journey to becoming a system that is more fair, more equitable, and more supportive of every member of Academy District 20. **We hope you join us in the commitment to create a learning community where each and every person feels safe, supported, and that they belong.** With that in mind, we know that each of us has a part to play in this journey. We invite you to use this page to think about your potential role. We would love to hear from you about how you plan to be a part of this important work.

As a _____,

(Student, Parent, Staff Member, Community Member)

I will support Academy District 20
in this important work by:

(How you will support Academy District 20)