Abstract

Systemic inequities being a consistent and sometimes unacknowledged feature of our educational landscape, is a moral failure. Moreover, it's unconscionable that the individuals who suffer from these systemic and structural inequalities are implicitly held responsible when the measured impacts of unequal opportunities are described as achievement gaps. This attribution of academic underachievement as a failure of effort assumes that predictable performance differences arise due to a lack of academic striving, when in fact, the playing field is profoundly unlevel and the result of an education debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (1979) was utilized to examine the factors related to educational disparities. The literature review findings revealed several factors contributing to disparities in academic achievement and decreased sense of belonging.

A conceptual framework was developed based on the extensive literature review, which identified several critical in-school factors contributing to disparities in academic outcomes and a decreased sense of belonging for historically marginalized students. The framework was subsequently used to design the needs assessment conducted in chapter two. The needs assessment findings in chapter two demonstrated the existence of persistent academic disparities for historically marginalized students in the district and stakeholder perception of the impact of lack of representation in the curriculum on the sense of belonging and racial inequality in educational outcomes. The needs assessment results informed the design of a theory of change. The theory of change describes relationships between specific elements of current research and best practices related to culturally responsive and equity curriculum audits, focusing on reducing educational inequities and promoting a sense of
belonging. The literature review in chapter three identified specific elements of audit tools that informed the creation of the tool. The comprehensive audit process was designed to ensure that the curriculum affirms all students’ identities, promotes inclusivity, validates multiple perspectives, and increases student engagement. The curriculum audit handbook provides a transformative approach to education that centers on the experiences of historically marginalized students and promotes equitable and inclusive learning environments. By addressing curricular inequity and pedagogical malpractice, this process provides a pathway for advancing equitable education for all students.

Keywords: equity audit, beliefs, ecological systems theory, curriculum audit, curriculum equity audit, social justice, academic disparities, education debt, achievement inequality

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Secondary Readers and Committee Members: Dr. Chrissy Eith and Dr. Stephanie Flores-Koulisht
Acknowledgments

“If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants.” – Isaac Newton.

I have frequently conveyed to my family, friends, and colleagues that my dissertation has been one of the most demanding but also fulfilling accomplishments in my professional career. However, completing a doctoral dissertation is not an individual accomplishment. A dissertation is the culmination of years of inspiration, apprenticeship, and encouragement from various individuals who contributed throughout the journey.

First and foremost, I am incredibly grateful for my family's tireless support and unconditional love throughout my doctoral journey. Their encouragement and belief in me never wavered, and I could not have made it this far without them. My mom and dad taught me the value of education from a young age and instilled a strong work ethic and a drive to succeed. Your belief and confidence in my work have made challenging moments tolerable and joyful moments even more fulfilling. My mom filled in gaps without being asked, allowing me to read the books that now line over two full bookshelves. She also helped catalog over five notebooks of articles for my first dissertation (that is a story for another day). My spouse, Paul, has been my rock, offering endless support and encouragement. Thank you for your compromises so that I could pursue this dream.

To my precious children, Jacob and Caleb, who inspire me to work tirelessly towards a future filled with hope and possibility that truly honors diversity, equity, and inclusion and embraces the worth and potential of every human being. Jacob seeing your passion for social justice through environmental protection and policy is one of my biggest joys and the source of many of our conversations. Thank you for understanding my unwavering commitment to
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Koulish, and Dr. Eith, thank you for the depth of your intellectual engagement and the meticulousness with which you approached my research. As I progress in my career, I will apply the insights and perspectives you shared with me to new challenges and opportunities. The impact of your contributions will continue to reverberate in my work and in the lives of those I have the privilege to serve.

To my fellow 2018 cohort, I thank you for the sense of community we built together. The intellectual exchange and shared experiences have enriched my learning and broadened my perspective. In particular, Caroline, Jilly, and Nan have been my companions and confidants throughout the various stages and challenges of this journey. We have shared countless hours of studying for comps, discussions, laughter, and at times tears, and I am so grateful for the bond we formed. Their diverse perspectives and insights have challenged me to think critically and creatively. Our shared experience has created lifelong friendships, and I look forward to our continued camaraderie for years to come.

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I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the Johns Hopkins Interlibrary Loan service. I had excellent service and was able to locate almost every article or chapter needed to complete my research. With over 200 requests, I wanted to acknowledge that the thoroughness of my research was due to being able to access materials that were not available in our library. These filled requests helped create a more comprehensive review of both my problem of practice and my audit literature review. Thank you for your commitment to fulfilling these requests in a timely manner. I am deeply indebted to you for your amazing service!

I can only speak of my research on using equity audits to disrupt inequitable education for historically marginalized students if I acknowledge the ground-breaking scholarship of those researchers who have come before me. I am clear that my work is not just an individual reflection but a testament to the collective effort of the academic community. The work of scholars such as Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings, Dr. Geneva Gay, and Dr. James Banks have been instrumental in advocating for the importance of culturally responsive teaching and integrating diverse perspectives and experiences into the curricular design. Their pioneering research on
culturally responsive pedagogy and multicultural education has paved the way for a deeper understanding of how to disrupt inequitable curricular and pedagogical practices and replace them with ones that will affirm and empower all students. Additionally, the scholarship of Paulo Freire, Dr. Luis Moll, Deborah Neff, Dr. Norma González, Dr. Cathy Amanti, Dr. Lilia Bartolome, Dr. Bettina Love, Dr. Gholdy Muhammad, Dr. Christopher Emdin, and Zaretta Hammond provided a deep understanding of using social justice and equity in education to design humanizing spaces. They believe education can be a powerful tool for liberation by addressing issues of power, inequality, and systematic oppression in educational institutions.

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Dedication

To the historically marginalized students who have been underserved for far too long: this dissertation is dedicated to creating schools that will serve you, your children, and your grandchildren for generations to come. In particular, I dedicate this to the students who transparently and courageously shared their educational experiences during the district conversation on race and racism. The commitment to you is bold and unrelenting; the work will not stop until the systems of oppression that have hindered you have been dismantled, and new liberatory spaces have been created to allow your brilliance to shine.

This work is dedicated to recognizing the importance of valuing all student's identities and creating humanizing spaces for learning. The work is unfinished until all schools are places where students can bring their whole selves and where their cultures, languages, and experiences are respected and celebrated. In addition, strong relationships with students and their families will be cultivated because they are experts in their own lives, and their insights and contributions are invaluable to achieving this work.

This work will be challenging, but creating humanizing, equitable, and inclusive classrooms and schools where every student is seen, heard, and valued is imperative. Therefore, the vision is to build a future where schools provide every student with the opportunity to thrive and succeed academically, socially, and personally, regardless of their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, gender identity, ability status, linguistic background, zip code, or life circumstances.
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Chapter 1: Disparities in Academic Achievement for Historically Marginalized Students

America’s educational system has long been unequal in practice (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Edmond, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Lareau, 2001; Shores et al., 2020) even when legislative and regulatory goals seek to provide everyone with free and appropriate public education (34 CFR § 300.101). The lack of equal access reflects sociopolitical priorities and policies that regulate minimum wage, health care, affordable housing, tax rates, and school districting and funding (Johnson, 2013; Massey, 2007; Morgan & Amerikaner, 2018; Reardon et al., 2019; Wodtke et al., 2011). Economic consequences are lifelong and intergenerational (Arenas & Hindriks, 2021; Auguste et al., 2009; Duncan & Murnane, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2006). It is a moral failing that systemic inequities are a consistent, sometimes unacknowledged, and even, by some, unseen feature of our educational landscape. It is a further failing that the very individuals harmed by these systemic and structural inequalities are implicitly blamed when the measured impacts of the unequal opportunities are described as achievement gaps—as if the entirely predictable performance differences, when the playing field is profoundly unlevel, arise because of some failure of effort to achieve educational equity (Carter & Welner, 2013; Duncan & Murnane, 2011, 2014). In her 2006 Presidential address, Ladson-Billings provided a powerful reframing of the term achievement gap into an educational debt owed to individuals historically denied access to quality education for centuries.

Compounding historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral systemic inequalities have resulted in the culmination of this educational debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Reframing the achievement gap narrative to a debt discourse helps educators shift from focusing exclusively on student deficits to recognizing the contributing role of historical systemic inequalities (Dohrmann et al.,
Therefore, the term “education debt” moves from holding individual students, families, or communities uniquely responsible for underachievement in need of being fixed to creating a collective commitment to ameliorate the accumulated debt caused by systemic disparities (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 3).

**Understanding the Problem of Practice**

The problem of practice focuses on the educational debt that has accumulated over time due to unequal or inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities that manifests itself by disparate student achievement by race, socioeconomic status, and English proficiency on almost every standardized measure used to determine academic proficiency (Blaise, 2018; Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Carlson & Knowles, 2016; Fry, 2009; Polat et al., 2016; Reeves & Halikias, 2017; Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015). For example, research examining the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for reading and math, Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), American College Testing (ACT), and the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) reveals profound disparities in student performance by race and ethnicity (Blaise, 2018; Carlson & Knowles, 2016; de Brey et al., 2019; Fry, 2009; Kao & Thompson, 2003; Polat et al., 2016; Reeves & Halikias, 2017). Not only are there disparities in academic achievement, but over time, in some instances, the gap between Black and White students is widening (NCES, 2019). In 2019, the 32-point score difference between White and Black students on the twelfth grade NAEP reading assessment was not notably dissimilar from the 30-point gap observed in 2015 (NCES, 2019). However, it was more substantial than the 24-point score gap reported in 1992, which was the first administration of the reading assessment (NCES, 2019).
Additionally, there is a significant ubiquitous gap in graduation rates for historically marginalized students across the United States (NCES, 2019; Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2015). Students that the education system has traditionally marginalized include students of color, students from economically disadvantaged households, students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and students who identify as LGBTQ+ through reduced educational opportunities, resources, and rights due to systemic racism and other forms of discrimination (Sevelius et al., 2020). With the shifting demographics in U.S. schools, these persistent inequitable outcomes underscore the immediacy and urgency of examining and addressing how to significantly improve and sustain the academic outcomes and sense of belonging for historically marginalized students, disrupting the predictable patterns that have become normalized within the educational system.

**Theoretical Framework**

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) Ecological Systems Theory (EST) is a framework for understanding how the environmental context or ecology surrounding an individual shapes their growth and the development of their identity (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1992). Bronfenbrenner’s EST posits that individuals are surrounded by multiple interconnected systems, including the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Each level interacts and influences the others within their social and environmental context, contributing to the development of an individual’s behaviors and outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Five systems comprise the ecological system: the chronosystem, the macrosystem, the exosystem, and the microsystem surrounding the focal individual at the model’s center (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner’s model arranges the systems in order of impact on
the individual, ranging from direct personal interaction of the microsystem to the macrosystem’s more indirect cultural and societal influence on development (1979).

The growth and progression of an individual’s development can be attributed to proximal processes, which encompass intricate, reciprocal interactions between the individual, their immediate environment, and the people, objects, and symbols inside that environment over an extended period influencing the individual’s experiences, opportunities, and identity development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). These systems are dynamic and interactive and influence each other in complex ways. Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) nested approach provides a structure to examine development across multiple levels of analysis, from the individual to the cultural and historical context (Bronfenbrenner, 1992). Bronfenbrenner’s theoretical framework can also help identify potential points of intervention and support at multiple levels of the ecological system, from individual-level interventions to more extensive systemic changes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1986, 1992). Finally, by recognizing and addressing the complex interplay between various factors that contribute to disparate educational outcomes, the EST can provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the experiences of historically marginalized students in the educational system.
Figure 1.1

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory Applied to Disparities in Academic Achievement for Historically Marginalized Students

Note. Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory Applied to Disparities in Academic Achievement and Sense of Belonging for Historically Marginalized Students. This figure shows nested ecological systems with historically marginalized students as the focal individual. It is adapted from “Ecological models of human development” U. Bronfenbrenner, 1979.
Chronosystem

The "education debt" concept refers to the compounding disadvantage experienced by historically marginalized students over time, resulting from persistent inequalities in the educational system (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 3). These barriers are not limited to a specific point in time. However, they are perpetuated and compounded by various factors within Bronfenbrenner's chronosystem, including the global pandemic, racial unrest, awakening, and outcry for Justice of 2020, and compounded trauma for historically marginalized communities. The chronosystem refers to the temporal dimensions of an individual's environment, including the historical, political, and economic context in which they live (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). Momentous events can impact the experiences and opportunities of individuals and communities within this level. For example, the global pandemic has caused significant disruptions in education systems worldwide, particularly for students from marginalized communities who have already faced significant challenges. The racial unrest and awakening in 2020 have also highlighted the deep-rooted systemic racism in education and other social institutions, emphasizing the need to address systemic inequities. Furthermore, the historical trauma experienced by communities of color has been compounded by the ongoing effects of systemic racism, creating a cycle of oppression and limiting educational opportunities. These factors have contributed to the educational debt affecting students and families from historically marginalized communities.

The chronosystem highlights the dynamic nature of the ecological system and underscores the importance of considering the temporal dimensions of development in understanding educational experiences for historically marginalized students. By recognizing
the importance of historical and developmental time, a more comprehensive understanding of
how significant societal changes and individual experiences intersect to shape educational
outcomes for marginalized students. This section will explore how these multiple interrelated
factors within the chronosystem level have contributed to the educational debt of underserved
and marginalized students.

Effects of Pandemic on K-12 Education

The COVID-19 crisis illuminated and exacerbated pre-existing disparities in health, racial equity,
and economic conditions in the United States, particularly for students with disabilities and
from racially and ethnically underserved communities (Human Rights Campaign, 2020; Jones,
2021; Krause et al., 2022; Nana-Sinkam et al., 2021; Park, 2021; Perry et al., 2021; Tai et al.,
2021; U.S. Department of Education, 2021a; Wilder, 2021; Wilson, 2020; Yip, 2020). The COVID-
19 pandemic profoundly impacted almost every aspect of society, including education
(Schleicher, 2020). Schools in the United States and worldwide closed in March 2020 due to the
necessity of enforcing lockdown measures in order to reduce the transmission of the virus. the
virus (Zviedrite et al., 2021). By July 2020, the pandemic impacted almost 99% of
prekindergarten through higher education learners across 200 countries (United Nations,
2020). In response to the pandemic, educators shifted from in-person instruction to remote
learning through digital platforms, which presented several challenges requiring urgent
solutions and policy changes to provide equitable access to remote learning for all students (Li
& Li, 2021; U.S. Department of Education, 2021a; Zviedrite et al., 2021). As a result, remote
learning became the new norm for students nationwide. However, it severely impacted those
on the margins, including students of color, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer
(LGBTQ+) students, and economically disadvantaged students (Allison & Levac, 2022; Bogan et al., 2022; Fish et al., 2020; Goldberg, 2021; U.S. Department of Education, 2021a; Yip, 2020).

Despite the technological advancements in education, administrators, teachers, students, and families encountered unexpected challenges (Li & Li, 2021; Tate & Warschauer, 2022). For example, school leaders and teachers had to revise their instructional models rapidly, parents struggled to balance work demands with overseeing their children’s remote learning, increasing parental stress, and students needed help staying motivated and connected with their teachers and peers online (Garbe et al., 2020; Roy et al., 2022).

**Unfinished Learning/Learning Loss.** The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted education, with school closures and remote instruction leading to concerns about loss or unfinished learning among students. Unfinished learning, as related to COVID-19, refers to students’ gaps in knowledge and skills due to disrupted or inadequate instruction due to school closures, remote education, and other challenges caused by the pandemic. Challenges included

- a lack of access to technology,
- limited opportunities for interaction with teachers and peers,
- family illness, hospitalizations, and loss,
- unemployment,
- food and housing insecurities, and
- difficulties in maintaining motivation and engagement in the learning process.

Unfinished learning has negatively impacted student growth and achievement (Dorn et al., 2021; Kuhfeld et al., 2022).
Unfinished learning, also described as learning loss, as related to COVID-19, refers to the regression or decline in academic progress that students experience due to interrupted or inadequate instruction due to the pandemic (Dorn et al., 2021). This loss may be due to the disruption of regular classroom routines, missed instructional time, reduced opportunities for interaction with teachers and peers, and limited access to technology and resources (Dorn et al., 2021; Li & Li, 2021). Learning loss can affect students across all grade levels and subject areas and may have long-term consequences on academic achievement, career opportunities, and overall well-being (Dorn et al., 2021). Differential growth rates were observed across student racial/ethnic groups and associated with the degree of vulnerability experienced by their respective communities to the pandemic (Dorn et al., 2021; Kogan & Lavertu, 2021; Kuhfeld et al., 2022). This data suggests that the pandemic has further amplified preexisting sources of educational inequity in the United States (Dorn et al., 2021; Kogan & Lavertu, 2021; Kuhfeld et al., 2022).

Additionally, numerous studies conducted on a global scale have revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic has exerted an adverse impact on children and adolescents diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) to a greater extent than their non-ADHD counterparts (Becker et al., 2020; Roy et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2020). Overall, the recent and thorough analysis of the documented evidence on learning loss after the commencement of school closures in March 2020 until March 2022 reveals further substantiation of learning loss for our marginalized and minoritized students (Kuhfeld et al., 2022; Lewis et al., 2021; Patrinos et al., 2022). Moreover, studies conducted during this time frame validate the substantial and
notable learning loss that has transpired, even compared to the pandemic’s initial year (Di Pietro, 2023).

A survey conducted in May 2020 revealed that 85% of schools provided four or fewer hours of instruction during remote learning, and only 15% provided more than four hours daily (U.S. Department of Education, 2021a). The survey also highlighted that approximately one-fifth of schools were not providing new instruction but only on previously taught concepts (U.S. Department of Education, 2021a). While all students were losing instructional time, a significant finding in this area was that the projections for educational loss reinforced or widened existing disparities and disparities in academic achievement for historically marginalized students (Bailey et al., 2021; Colvin et al., 2022; Domingue et al., 2022; Dorn et al., 2020, 2021; Goldberg, 2021; U.S. Department of Education, 2021a). Statistical models predict that the most significant educational loss has occurred among low-income, Black, and Hispanic students and students from vulnerable populations compounding the existing educational debt (Bailey et al., 2021; Dorn et al., 2020, 2021; Goldberg, 2021; Kuhfeld et al., 2022). The models created to document student learning loss during school closures were based on traditional summer learning loss statistics and grouped students based on different types of remote instruction quality. For example, one study utilized real-time login data from the i-Ready digital instruction and assessment software and found that only 60% of low-income students regularly engaged in online instruction, compared to 90% of high-income students (Dorn et al., 2020).

Due to the nationwide suspension of annual assessments in the spring of 2020, schools had to implement alternative assessment forms and try to remediate while implementing grade-level standards and curriculum. The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted
historically marginalized communities, exacerbating existing educational inequities and resulting in significant learning loss and unfinished learning, further widening disparities in achievement (Bailey et al., 2021; Colvin et al., 2022; Dorn et al., 2020, 2021; Fortuna et al., 2020; Goldberg, 2021; Kogan & Lavertu, 2021; Lewis et al., 2021; U.S. Department of Education, 2021a; West & Lake, 2021). A portion of the learning loss experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic can be directly attributed to technology barriers, disproportionately affecting historically marginalized students.

**Technology Barriers.** The COVID-19 pandemic brought about unprecedented challenges for remote instruction, specifically regarding technology barriers and access and usage (Li & Li, 2021). As schools shifted to remote and hybrid learning models, students who did not have access to reliable technology and high-speed internet faced significant barriers to learning (Gandolfi et al., 2021; Li & Li, 2021; Ong, 2020). Economically disadvantaged households with students ages 3 to 13 experienced technology barriers such as slow internet connections (56%), reaching their data limit (34%), lack of quality technology devices (59%), and one-quarter of families reported having limited devices to share (Katz & Rideout, 2021). Inadequate access to technology and reliable internet connectivity made it difficult for historically marginalized students to participate fully in remote instruction, exacerbating educational inequities. (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2021; Li & Li, 2021).

These barriers significantly impacted historically marginalized students, who already face systemic educational inequalities (Jones, 2021). As a result of these challenges, these students may fall behind academically and experience long-term consequences for their educational and career opportunities. Therefore, in addition to focusing on academic recovery
efforts, there is an urgent need to understand the impact of the pandemic on mental health and well-being concerning educational outcomes.

**Student Mental Health/Social and Emotional Learning.** The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted student mental health and social-emotional learning. The disruption caused by the pandemic has led to increased levels of stress and anxiety among students. One of the significant impacts of the pandemic on student mental health has been increased stress and anxiety levels (Hafstad & Augusti, 2021; Naff et al., 2022; Shoshani & Kor, 2022; Viner et al., 2022). In addition, the pandemic has disrupted many aspects of daily life, including school routines, social interactions, and extracurricular activities. This disruption has increased feelings of uncertainty, isolation, and fear, which can significantly impact students’ mental health and well-being. The increased student mental health needs, have a disparate impact based on socio-economic and housing status, race, ethnicity, LTBTQ+, language, and disability identities (U.S. Department of Education, 2021b).

The pandemic has also increased the risk of students experiencing trauma but reduced access to needed mental health support (Adegboye et al., 2021; Hillis et al., 2021; Treglia et al., 2022; U.S. Department of Education, 2021b). Trauma can significantly impact a student’s mental health and well-being, affecting their ability to learn and engage in school. Trauma caused by the pandemic disproportionality impacted marginalized communities, with 20 percent of Black students having lost a parent to COVID-19 even though they only comprise 14 percent of the total population (U.S. Department of Education, 2021a). American Indian/Alaska Native children had a 4.5 times higher likelihood of losing a parent or grandparent caregiver than white children. Black children had a 2.4 times higher chance, and Hispanic children had a
nearly two times higher probability of experiencing this loss than white children (Hillis et al., 2021; Treglia et al., 2022).

To conclude, it is evident that the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impacted historically marginalized students, thereby magnifying the preexisting educational inequities. Unfinished learning, technology barriers, student mental health, and social and emotional learning contributed to the significant challenges students faced during the pandemic resulting in learning losses, especially for economically disadvantaged students. These challenges have highlighted the urgency to address systemic educational inequalities and provide more equitable opportunities for all students. In addition, the impact of the pandemic on historically marginalized students intersected with other recent events, including the U.S. racial unrest of 2020. The following section will explore the impact of this unrest on traditionally marginalized communities and the implications for educational outcomes.

**2020 United States Racial Unrest/Racial Awakening**

The United States has experienced significant racial unrest recently, with 2020 being exceptionally tumultuous. Various factors, including police brutality, systemic racism, and the COVID-19 pandemic, fueled this unrest (Burch et al., 2021). Beginning in May 2020 with the killing of George Floyd by police officers in Minneapolis, protests erupted across the country (Burch et al., 2021; Njoku et al., 2021). The protests quickly spread internationally, calling for an end to police violence against Black people and demanding greater accountability for law enforcement (Burch et al., 2021; Krieger, 2020). In addition, the demonstrations generated a nationwide discourse surrounding race, law enforcement, and declaring racism a public health crisis (Burch et al., 2021; Krieger, 2020).
Racism in the United States is a complex and deeply ingrained phenomenon that has shaped the country's history and social fabric for centuries (Braveman et al., 2022). At its core, racism is a system of power relations that operates at four levels: individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural (NMAAHC, 2021a). At the individual level, racism refers to personal beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that reflect prejudice and discrimination towards individuals or groups based on their race or ethnicity (NMAAHC, 2021a; Pincus, 1996). Racism at the interpersonal level involves discriminatory behaviors or attitudes exhibited by individuals towards others based on their race or ethnicity. Racism can take many forms, from overt acts of discrimination to more subtle, implicit biases and microaggressions (NMAAHC, 2021a). At the institutional level, racism refers to policies, practices, and procedures that systematically disadvantage or advantage certain racial groups, often without overtly discriminatory intent (Braveman et al., 2022; NMAAHC, 2021a; Pincus, 1996). Finally, at the structural level, racism refers to how societal structures, such as the economy, education, and political systems, create and perpetuate racial inequalities (Braveman et al., 2022; NMAAHC, 2021a; Pincus, 1996).

The origination of racism in the United States began with European colonizers who initiated a system of racial hierarchy, which privileged White individuals of European descent over people of color and Indigenous populations (NMAAHC, 2021b). This country's establishment included exploiting enslaved Africans and the forcible removal of Indigenous people from their lands, subjecting them to brutal and dehumanizing treatment (Equal Justice Initiative, 2023). This displacement and decimation of Indigenous peoples became the foundation of the U.S. economy and society, perpetuating racial inequality and discrimination (Equal Justice Initiative, 2023). Without recognizing the brutality of the kidnapping and
trafficking of Africans to America, one cannot fully comprehend the comprehensive history of racism in the United States (Equal Justice Initiative, 2023). It has left an indelible imprint on the country's traditions and institutions and continues to inform today's pervasive racial disparities (Equal Justice Initiative, 2023). In order to comprehensively understand the problem of practice related to the educational debt, one must understand how dehumanizing systems and structures designed to oppress marginalized communities reinforce institutional and structural racism, deeply protecting power and privilege (Equal Justice Initiative, 2023). This section will examine the impact of the 2020 United States racial unrest on historically marginalized individuals.

2020 was a defining moment for the United States (Hudson & Mehrotra, 2021). It will be a topic of discussion for years by experts in various fields, such as public health, medicine, history, education, sociology, and social science (Howard, 2021). The global pandemic resulted in the loss of over half a million lives and caused an economic crisis, disproportionately affecting Black and Brown communities (Anand & Hsu, 2021; Horsford et al., 2021; Howard, 2020; Krieger, 2020). The spring of 2020 saw a surge in racism and police brutality, leading to the tragic deaths of George Floyd, Ahmad Arbury, Sean Monterrosa, Breonna Taylor, Deon Kay, Jacob Blake, Tyre Nichols, and far too many others (Acheme & Cionea, 2022; Anand & Hsu, 2021; Cobbina-Dungy & Jones-Brown, 2023; Howard, 2021; Krieger, 2020; Lee, 2020; The Southern Poverty Law Center [TSSPLC], 2021). These events sparked massive peaceful protests calling for an end to systemic racism and a renewed commitment to Black Lives Matter, with nearly 15-26 million people participating in protests in 2020 (Buchanan et al., 2020; Chavez, 2020; Cobbina-Dungy & Jones-Brown, 2023). The impact of these incidents has been significant,
sparking marches and rallies throughout the nation, ranging from small rural communities to large urban cities (Burch et al., 2021; Cobbina-Dungy & Jones-Brown, 2023; Walsh, 2021). These demonstrations brought together a diverse group of protestors, including people of different races, genders, and ages, in historical numbers (Walsh, 2021). The protests and public outcry led to increased public awareness of issues related to systemic racism and police brutality, as well as discussions about the need for criminal justice reform and increased accountability for law enforcement, leading to legislative policing reforms (Burch et al., 2021; Chavez, 2020; Cobbina-Dungy & Jones-Brown, 2023; Subramanian & Arzy, 2023).

Nguyen and colleagues conducted a research study combining quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the discourse on race and racism in the U.S. before and after the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd in 2020 (2021). Using Twitter and Google data, the study provided real-time documentation of social trends and revealed significant, short-lived changes in racial attitudes in the United States (Nguyen et al., 2021). Fluctuations in racial sentiment may perpetuate the existing racial status quo, or activists can utilize these moments to mobilize efforts toward promoting equity. Simultaneously, policymakers and political leaders should respond quickly and decisively to public demands for justice by enacting legislation that leads to sustainable and systemic change by providing legislation designed to promote justice (Subramanian & Arzy, 2023).

According to an online survey of almost 4,000 Black adults conducted by Pew Research Center in October 2021, nearly two-thirds of Blacks, including those of multiracial and Hispanic backgrounds, believe that the increased attention to issues of racial inequality after George Floyd's murder did not bring about any positive change (Cox & Edwards, 2022). Only 13% of
respondents expect Black people to achieve equality in the United States. Racism was cited as the top issue facing Black adults today by 82% of respondents, with 68% citing racial discrimination for Black people's inability to advance (Cox & Edwards, 2022). Although 79% of Black adults reported personal experiences with discrimination, a more significant portion (52%) considered racism embedded in laws a bigger problem than individual racism (43%) (Cox & Edwards, 2022). These findings suggest that negative attitudes toward Black people remain deeply ingrained in American society (Nguyen et al., 2021).

One of the most notable impacts of the 2020 racial unrest has been the renewed attention given to systemic racism and police brutality (Anand & Hsu, 2021; Cobbina-Dungy & Jones-Brown, 2023; Dyson, 2020). The protests highlighted law enforcement's disproportionate use of force against Black people and other people of color, leading to calls for reform of policing practices and the criminal justice system (Cobbina-Dungy & Jones-Brown, 2023). The unrest also highlighted the ongoing racial disparities in education, healthcare, housing, and employment, among other areas leading to increased activism and advocacy efforts by organizations and individuals working to address these disparities and promote equity (Anand & Hsu, 2021). Furthermore, the 2020 racial unrest resulted in a reexamination of the country's history and legacy of racism (TSPLC, 2021). The taking down of Confederate symbols and statues sparked a more comprehensive dialogue on the implications of racism in American society and the urgent need for increased education and consciousness (Burch et al., 2021; TSPLC, 2021).

The racial reckoning of 2020 contributed to the ongoing trauma experienced by communities of color in several ways. The repeated exposure to images and videos of police
brutality against Black people, widely circulated on social media and the news, was a significant source of trauma (Lee, 2020; TSPLC, 2021). These images served as a painful reminder of the ongoing history of racial violence and discrimination in the United States for many people of color. (Lee, 2020; TSPLC, 2021).

**Historical, Generational, Educational, and Racial Trauma**

Approximately 46 million school-age children and youth in the United States experience trauma that impacts their schooling experience (U.S. Department of Justice, 2012). Trauma results "from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social-emotional, or spiritual well-being" (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2014, p. 7). Various events such as physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, neglect, witnessing or experiencing violence or criminal activity, separation or loss, bullying or harassment, or chronic illness can cause this trauma (SAMHSA, 2014).

**Generational Trauma.** Generational refers to the psychological and emotional trauma that can be passed down from generation to generation resulting from systemic oppression, violence, and discrimination that members of a community experience over time (Duran et al., 1998; Sotero, 2006). Furthermore, the trauma experienced by a previous generation can influence future generations' cultural beliefs and practices, resulting in a sustained psychological, emotional, and social impact. (Bombay et al., 2014; O'Neill et al., 2018). This type of trauma is particularly prevalent in marginalized populations, such as Indigenous people,
Black Americans, the LGBTQ community, and other communities of color, who have faced systemic oppression, exploitation, and violence for generations (Duran et al., 1998).

**Historical Trauma.** Historical trauma is experienced by groups of people subjected to historical events such as colonization, slavery, genocide, and forced migration, resulting in persistent psychological, social, and cultural effects spanning generations. Sotero introduces a conceptual framework for historical trauma that posits that historical trauma "originates with the subjugation of a population by a dominant group" (Sotero, 2006, p. 99). The framework consists of four elements: "(1) overwhelming physical and psychological violence, (2) segregation and/or displacement, (3) economic deprivation, and (4) cultural dispossession." (Sotero, 2006, p. 99).

**Educational Trauma.** Educational trauma is a cycle of harm perpetuated and perpetrated in educational environments that negatively impacts individuals from diverse socioeconomic, racial, gender, and ethnic backgrounds, including students, parents, families, teachers, staff, administrators, and communities (Gray, 2019). This phenomenon exists on a spectrum with mild examples, including age-inappropriate expectations, standardized curricula, and testing causing anxiety among students (Gray, 2019). Gray (2019) identifies four specific types of educational trauma: (1) spectral educational trauma; (2) in-situ educational trauma; (3) ex-situ educational trauma; and (4) social-ecological trauma. Gray (2019) frames the impact of educational trauma by applying Bronfenbrenner's EST understanding that students are inseparable from their social and cultural context. Educational trauma can have long-lasting impacts on students' academic and personal development. These negative experiences can include bullying, discrimination, abuse, neglect, and more subtle forms of mistreatment, such
as exclusion, marginalization, and low expectations from teachers and peers. The impact of educational trauma can lead to various adverse outcomes, including decreased academic performance, disengagement from school, and mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Gray, 2019). Educational trauma is not just a health concern. However, it is also a significant social justice issue due to the disproportionate impact on historically marginalized students at multiple points of intersectionality (Gray, 2019).

**Racial Trauma.** Within the chronosystem, exploring racial trauma is crucial for comprehending the long-term effects of racism on historically marginalized communities to understand the complex and intergenerational impact of historical and ongoing systemic racism (American Psychological Association, 2020; Chumburidze, 2015). The concept of race has been and continues to be a social construct that reflects unequal access to power and valuable resources within a society (Coates et al., 2021; Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Therefore, understanding the definition of racism is paramount for comprehending the intergenerational transmission of racial trauma and its resulting impact. Racial trauma or race-based traumatic stress (RBTS) refers to the physiological, psychological, and emotional damage resulting from the cumulative effect of stressors from racial bias, ethnic discrimination, oppression, and hate crimes based on an individual's racial identity (Carter et al., 2017a, 2017b; Hargons et al., 2022; Helms et al., 2010; Jones, 2021; Ponds, 2013).

Individuals can experience racial trauma as direct or vicarious experiences of racism or as systemic, structural, or cultural racism (Bernard et al., 2021; Bernstein et al., 2007; Saleem et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2019). For example, as cited in Newman-Bremang, Crawford described
being Black in America as "like wearing a heavy wetsuit, day in and day out. Various forms of trauma — including microaggressions — stick with you and continue to weigh you down. And it's exhausting to have to carry these; it weighs you down and wears you out physically and emotionally" (Newman-Bremang, 2021). Indigenous people, Latinx, Asian Americans, and African Americans all experience racial discrimination and suffer from race-based traumatic stress (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019). Racial trauma can significantly impact an individual's mental health and well-being, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and increased risk for physical health (Dush et al., 2022; Saleem et al., 2020). In addition, psychological and biological responses to race-based traumatic stress can contribute to disparities in educational attainment for racially marginalized groups (hooks, 1994; Levy et al., 2016; Ogbu, 1979; Saleem et al., 2022).

The effects of historical and ongoing systemic racism, including discrimination, oppression, and violence, can result in intergenerational trauma (Brave Heart et al., 2017; Duran et al., 1998). In 2000, the United States Surgeon General posited that the causative factors behind the marked discrepancies in health outcomes experienced by individuals from distinct racial and ethnic groups were most plausibly rooted in racial discrimination (Satcher, 2001). These impacts can include ongoing mental and physical health effects, including increased risk for trauma-related mental health disorders (Brave Heart et al., 2017; Chou et al., 2012; Duran et al., 1998). Generational racial trauma has enduring consequences for communities that have been historically and continuously oppressed, such as Black and Indigenous communities (Chumburidze, 2015; Duran et al., 1998; The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, 2020). The ongoing effects of systemic racism can create a
sense of hopelessness and despair (Duran et al., 1998). In addition, it can make it difficult for individuals and communities to address the root causes of racial trauma and work toward healing and resilience (Brave Heart et al., 2017; Chumburidze, 2015).

Trauma can impact academic achievement, school belonging, and psychological, mental, and social well-being (Goodman et al., 2012; Porche et al., 2011). The following section will explore the trauma experienced by historically marginalized communities and the resulting impact on educational outcomes and a sense of belonging in school. This section, specific to the chronosystem, will focus on how trauma influences individuals' development and educational experiences in oppressed communities.

**Native American Trauma.** Generational Native American trauma in the United States refers to the ongoing psychological and cultural effects of historical and ongoing colonialism, oppression, and genocide experienced by Indigenous people in the country (Brave Heart et al., 2017; Duran et al., 1998). The traumatic experiences include the forced removal of Indigenous people from their ancestral lands, the Indian boarding school system, and the widespread loss of language, culture, and identity, "nothing short of cultural and linguistic genocide" (Love, 2019, p. 27). These experiences have had a profound and lasting impact on Indigenous communities, leading to high poverty rates, unemployment, and health disparities (Brave Heart et al., 2017). While generational Native American trauma in the United States is an intricate and complex issue, this section will focus on the trauma caused by the educational practices enforced upon Indigenous people (Brave Heart et al., 2017).

The U.S. government-funded Indian boarding schools were established in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to forcibly assimilate Native American children into White American
culture (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; National Museum of the American Indian, 2020; Running Bear et al., 2018). The Federal Government established boarding schools under the premise that Native American culture and values were inferior to European-Americans and that the only way to civilize Native American children was to remove them from their families and communities and assimilate them into Euro-American culture (Adams, 2020). When he opened the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania in 1878, Captain Richard H. Pratt was credited by many with establishing the model for boarding schools (Zalcman, 2016). Pratt is infamous for saying, "Kill the Indian in him and save the man" (Zalcman, 2016, p. 79). The model for federal off-reservation U.S. boarding schools was based on separating students from their home communities to teach them military discipline, farming skills, literacy, and Christianity, assimilate them, and grant them citizenship (Adams, 2020). Ultimately, the schools were part of a more comprehensive policy of forced assimilation that included the allotment of Indigenous lands, the imposition of federal Indian policies, and the suppression of Indigenous languages and cultures (Adams, 2020; Chumburidze, 2015).

The boarding school experience was traumatic for Native American children (Bradford, 2002; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Chumburidze, 2015; Duran et al., 1998; National Museum of the American Indian, 2020; The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, 2020). Children were forcibly taken from their families as young as four and were forbidden from speaking their native language or practicing their cultural traditions (Bradford, 2002; Peterson, 2001; The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, 2020). In addition, many children experienced physical, emotional, and sexual abuse from their teachers and school officials (Adams, 2020; Bradford, 2002; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Charbonneau-
Dahlen et al., 2016; Chumburidze, 2015; Duran et al., 1998; Peterson, 2001). The impact of the boarding school system on Native American communities was significant and long-lasting (Adams, 2020; Duran et al., 1998; Peterson, 2001). The forced removal of children from their families and communities disrupted traditional Native American ways of life and undermined the cultural continuity of Native American communities (Bradford, 2002; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Charbonneau-Dahlen et al., 2016).

Many Native Americans who attended boarding schools experienced trauma resulting in the ability to develop healthy relationships with their families and communities (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Peterson, 2001). However, the legacy of the boarding school system remains a painful and complex issue that continues to have enduring consequences on Native American communities today (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Brave Heart et al., 2011, 2017; Smith, 2004).

In 2022, The U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) released a comprehensive report on the federal Indian boarding school system as part of the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative (Newland, 2022). According to the Department’s findings, from 1819 to 1969, the Federal Indian boarding school system comprised 408 schools established in 37 states or territories, with 21 schools in Alaska and 7 in Hawaii (Newland, 2022). In addition, some of these Federal Indian boarding schools had multiple locations. Therefore, the 408 Federal Indian boarding schools comprised 431 separate sites (Newland, 2022). As of 1926, the percentage of school-aged Indigenous children attending boarding schools had reached almost 83% (The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, 2020).

The enduring consequences of Indian boarding schools comprise a range of adverse outcomes, such as heightened levels of physical, emotional, and sexual violence within Native
communities, high rates of unemployment and under-employment, an increase in suicide rates, an upsurge in substance abuse, a loss of language and erosion of religious and cultural customs, as well as more significant instances of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and child abuse (Brave Heart et al., 2011, 2017; Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Smith, 2004; Skewes & Blume, 2019). Ultimately, the boarding schools perpetuated the generational trauma experienced by Indigenous people, as they disrupted traditional family and community structures and contributed to the loss of language, culture, and identity (Brave Heart et al., 2011).

**Black American Trauma.** Educational injustice and trauma have characterized the history of Black Americans in schools in the United States. For 250 years (1619-1865), African Americans faced significant obstacles in obtaining an education due to restrictions and prohibitions on teaching free and enslaved African Americans how to read and write in every American colony and state (Dohrmann et al., 2022; Span, 2005). Nearly all Southern states implemented legislation that prevented the education of African Americans. As a result, most enslaved African Americans were illiterate by the end of the Civil War, limiting the educational opportunities for Black children (Span, 2005). The denial of education and literacy to enslaved people has left a legacy of unequal educational practices resulting in inequitable outcomes. From the era of slavery to Jim Crow segregation and beyond, Black Americans have faced systemic discrimination and exclusion from educational opportunities. Systemic discrimination has had lasting impacts on Black communities and has contributed to intergenerational trauma. Therefore, the historical impact of slavery continues to contribute to the reproduction of racial
inequality, forming the basis of the accumulated education debt resulting in disparate academic outcomes (Bertocchi, 2015; Bertocchi & Dimico, 2012, 2014).

Black and White segregation in schools across the United States remains a persistent issue influencing racial inequality. (Reardon, 2016; Reardon & Owens, 2014). During the era of slavery, enslavers denied Black Americans access to education and frequently punished them for attempting to learn to read or write. Even after the abolition of slavery, Black Americans faced discrimination and exclusion from educational opportunities. Discrimination was particularly prevalent in the Southern states, where Jim Crow laws enforced racial segregation in schools and other public institutions. In addition, black schools were underfunded and often lacked essential resources, while white schools received more resources and better facilities (Dohrmann et al., 2022). This legacy of discrimination and exclusion from educational opportunities has impacted Black Americans (Dohrmann et al., 2022). Studies have shown that the achievement gap between Black and white students persists. In addition, black students are more likely to experience disciplinary action and less likely to receive access to advanced courses and programs (Patrick et al., 2020).

The trauma of this history is not just limited to educational experiences but also extends to the broader society. The ongoing effects of systemic racism, discrimination, and violence against Black Americans can contribute to psychological trauma and stress. The trauma can manifest in various ways, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). By understanding and confronting the historical legacy of slavery and racism through education, individuals and communities can work towards creating a more just and equitable society.
**Latinx Trauma.** Latinx families and communities in the United States have also experienced historical trauma passed down through generations. The legacies of colonialism, political violence, and migration-related stressors have significantly impacted Latinx individuals and communities, reflected within the chronosystem. Colonialism and political violence in Latin America have led to displacement, forced migration, and political instability (Cerdeña et al., 2021). These experiences left lasting emotional and psychological scars on individuals and communities, impacting how Latinx individuals navigate their new environment in the United States.

Additionally, migration-related stressors such as language barriers, discrimination, and economic insecurity can exacerbate the trauma experienced by Latinx families and communities, creating a sense of disconnection, loss of cultural identity, and ongoing stress and anxiety. These stressors can lead to social isolation, mental health challenges, and other adverse outcomes impacting academic achievement. In Figure 2, Cerdeña and colleagues developed a conceptual model to illustrate the multiple factors contributing to intergenerational trauma in historically marginalized communities (2021).
LGBTQ+ Trauma. Historical trauma experienced by the LGBTQ+ community refers to the ongoing impact of historical events and structural oppression, including discrimination, violence, and marginalization, that have affected individuals and communities for generations. The ongoing discrimination and violence against LGBTQ+ people also contribute to historical trauma (Greene-Rooks et al., 2021). Examples of violence include the Stonewall riots in 1969, the murder of Matthew Shepard in 1998, and ongoing hate crimes and discrimination against LGBTQ+ people (Greene-Rooks et al., 2021). Moreover, this trauma has contributed to ongoing
fear and anxiety for LGBTQ+ students, including in educational settings (Friedman et al., 2011; Meyer, 2003).

Research has consistently shown that individuals with minority sexual orientation (LGBTQ+) are more likely to experience physical and sexual abuse during childhood, persisting throughout their lifetime (Friedman et al., 2011; Roberts et al., 2010). Additionally, sexual orientation minorities are at a greater risk of violence in their communities, including hate crimes demonstrating sexual orientation disparities in exposure to trauma throughout one’s life (Roberts et al., 2010). One example is the history of pathologization of LGBTQ+ identities (Toscano & Maynard, 2014). Furthermore, the classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder persisted until recently. Despite the lack of evidence, conversion therapy, which aims to alter a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, was widely practiced (Green et al., 2020; Toscano & Maynard, 2014). This trauma has contributed to ongoing mental health challenges for LGBTQ+ people, including in educational settings. The lingering impact of historical trauma on LGBTQ+ students in K-12 education includes ongoing experiences of discrimination, marginalization, and violence (Meyer, 2003; Mooney, 2017). The trauma can transpire in various ways, including bullying, harassment, assault, and exclusion from educational opportunities (Day et al., 2018; Meyer, 2003; Mooney, 2017; Moyano & del Mar Sánchez-Fuentes, 2020). This results in increased absenteeism for students due to fear for their safety (Friedman et al., 2011)

Many LGBTQ+ students experienced other forms of discrimination, including being disciplined for public affection, being prevented from writing about or doing school projects about LGBTQ+ issues, and being prevented from playing sports (Denison et al., 2021; Kosciw et
LGBTQ+ students who experienced higher levels of in-person victimization because of their sexual or gender orientation were likelier to miss school (Friedman et al., 2011). Additionally, LGBTQ students also experience less belonging to their school community, perform worse academically, and have lower self-esteem and higher levels of depression than those who experience lower levels of victimization (Kosciw et al., 2022; Meyer, 2003).

Erasure and Resilience: The Experiences of LGBTQ Students of Color is a research study that examines the experiences of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI), Black, Latinx, and Native and Indigenous LGBTQ youth (Truong et al., 2020a, 2020b; Zongrone et al., 2020a, 2020b). The study explores how the intersection of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, and ethnicity impacts students' school experience. Findings indicated that LGBTQ students experience institutional and interpersonal discrimination compounded by the intersectionality of their identities. The feelings from the discrimination can manifest in several ways, such as feelings of alienation and disconnection, self-doubt, and feeling unsafe in school. Intersectionality plays a significant role in the experiences of LGBTQ students of color. The study found that these students face multiple forms of discrimination and oppression due to their intersecting identities making it difficult for them to find support and feel a sense of belonging on campus (Truong et al., 2020a, 2020b; Zongrone et al., 2020a, 2020b).

Historical trauma experienced by the LGBTQ+ community has significantly impacted the experiences of LGBTQ+ students in K-12 education. Unfortunately, only 8.2% of LGBTQ+ students reported that their school or district had official policies or guidelines to support transgender or nonbinary students (Kosciw et al., 2022). LGBTQ+ students are more likely to experience bullying and harassment in schools, which can lead to adverse educational and
mental health outcomes (Kosciw et al., 2022; Meyer, 2003; Mooney, 2017). Understanding this trauma and its ongoing impact on the LGBTQ+ community, particularly when intersecting with other marginalized identities, is crucial for creating safe and supportive educational environments for all students.

Trauma can have a profound and enduring effect on a learner's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral functioning, potentially leading to various difficulties that can negatively impact academic performance. For instance, a student who has experienced trauma may exhibit decreased attentional capacity, impaired memory recall, reduced ability to regulate emotions, and a propensity for heightened reactivity to environmental stimuli (Gray, 2019; MacDonald et al., 2015). Additionally, these learners may be more susceptible to experiencing academic underachievement, disengagement from the learning process, and general apathy toward school-related activities (Gray, 2019). Such outcomes can arise due to the neurological, physiological, and psychological alterations that trauma can induce, which may compromise one's capacity to learn, retain information, and engage with academic content productively (Gray, 2019; MacDonald et al., 2015).

In conclusion, examining the chronosystem level helps to understand how the multiple layers of historical and contemporary factors interact and impact the educational experiences of historically marginalized students. The global pandemic, racial unrest of 2020, and historical and generational trauma have all contributed to the accumulated education debt for traditionally marginalized communities. The pandemic forced schools to close, exacerbating existing educational inequalities and further marginalizing already underserved communities. Racial unrest highlighted the pervasive and persistent nature of systemic racism in education
and society. Finally, historical and generational trauma stemming from past injustices, ongoing discrimination, and prejudice negatively impacts minoritized and marginalized students' educational experiences and outcomes. Addressing this accumulated education debt will require a comprehensive and sustained effort, including addressing structural inequalities, investing resources and opportunities for underserved communities, and confronting the historical and ongoing legacies of racism and discrimination.

Macrosystem

The macrosystem, one of the levels in Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, refers to the larger cultural and societal context in which individuals develop. Several factors within the macrosystem play a significant role in the context of academic disparities and reduced sense of belonging of historically marginalized students. These factors include culture, school, Eurocentric curriculum, curriculum violence, and children and young adult literature. The impact of these factors on historically marginalized students results in educational inequities and the sense of alienation and reduced sense of belonging that they often experience in educational settings. This section will examine these factors, highlighting their impact on historically marginalized students and their educational experiences.

Culture

Culture is a crucial aspect of the macrosystem, profoundly impacting the individual's development. It shapes their beliefs, values, attitudes, norms, and behaviors and determines the types of experiences and opportunities available to them. Culture represents the shared identity and common understanding cultivated by a group of individuals, encompassing customs, language, spirituality, values, traditions, and behaviors (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997;
Woolfolk, 2016). Culture is how learners perceive their world, specific to the context in which they live, influencing their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (Berry, 2005; Irvine, 1990; Muhammad, 2020; Saifer et al., 2011; Stairs et al., 2012). Culture plays a significant role in shaping students' acquisition of knowledge and their ability to engage effectively with instructional materials in the classroom (Irvine, 1990). The impact of cultural values on cognition manifests by determining which knowledge is deemed essential, and creating culturally supportive learning environments is essential for preserving cultural identity while acquiring knowledge (Emdin, 2021; Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997; Love, 2019; Nieto & Bode, 2018; Paris & Alim, 2014; Saifer et al., 2011). Cultural identity is the intersectionality of membership within various microcultures, including but not limited to ethnicity, gender, language, class, age, religion, and geographic region (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997; Stairs et al., 2012). Therefore, the influence of culture as a crucial aspect of the macrosystem is extensive. It significantly shapes individuals' development by impacting their beliefs, values, attitudes, norms, and behaviors while determining their experiences and opportunities (Cummins et al., 2015; Emdin, 2021).

Bourdieu posits that cultural, social, and economic capital directly influence the ability to gain or have power and privilege in society through access to resources (1986). Cultural capital refers to non-economic resources that enable social mobility, such as knowledge and skills, and leads to an understanding of the unwritten rules of school that contribute to the individual's educational success (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Social capital refers to the social networks, connections, and relationships an individual has within their community providing access to gain additional capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Lareau, 2015). Finally,
economic capital refers to an individual’s wealth, financial resources, and assets (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu suggests that individuals with higher levels of cultural, social, and economic capital have an advantage in accessing resources and opportunities (1986).

In contrast, those lacking these forms of capital are disadvantaged, perpetuating social inequality (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Those with more resources and power maintain dominance, while those with limited access to the various forms of capital struggle to access resources and improve their power and privilege (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Cultural capital positively correlates to school performance playing a significant role in educational outcomes (Cheadle, 2008; DiMaggio, 1982; Farkas et al., 1990; Kalmijn & Kraaykamp, 1996; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999; Sullivan, 2001; van de Werfhorst & Hofstede, 2007). Students with cultural capital recognized and valued by educational institutions are better equipped to succeed in academic settings, navigate social norms, and achieve higher educational attainment and post-secondary opportunities (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Accordingly, it is essential to consider the role of culture and cultural capital in student performance, closely related to the perpetuation of the dominant culture in schools and begin to examine how to build bridges to recognize the brilliance of the non-traditional cultural capital that historically marginalized students provide to our communities (Emdin, 2017).

Yosso (2005) offers an asset-based approach to understanding cultural capital through community cultural wealth. Yosso presents six types of cultural capital that schools can utilize to transform the educational experiences of historically marginalized students (Yosso, 2005). The six types of cultural capital are aspirational, familial, linguistic, navigational, social, and
resistant capital. Aspirational capital pertains to an individual's goals and aspirations, while familial capital encompasses the resources and support provided by family members. Linguistic capital refers to an individual's command over different languages and dialects, while navigational capital involves the ability to navigate institutional structures and protocols. Social capital relates to an individual's connections and networks, and resistant capital involves resisting and challenging dominant structures and narratives. This framework provides a paradigm shift in understanding whose cultural capital matters and how marginalized communities can productively engage with educational institutions, highlighting the implications of recognizing, valuing, and utilizing diverse forms of cultural capital.

**Schools**

Schools, as institutions embedded within the larger macrosystem, shape the learning experiences of children and adolescents (Deal & Peterson, 2016). White male students were privileged from the early establishment of formal schooling experiences. Schools were established during the early colonial period to benefit White Christian males of a specific social status, as evidenced by the first commencement of Harvard College in 1642 (Neklason, 2019). The exclusivity of education was further reinforced by Harvard's ranking of its graduates based on their family's social status rather than academic performance, perpetuating a system that favored the elite (Neklason, 2019). Schools maintained power and privilege for the dominant culture by ensuring that only those with the proper social status and economical means had access to education (Apple, 2012; MacLeod, 2009). When marginalized groups did obtain access, they were frequently inadequately serviced or educated in segregated institutions, either by legislation or by customary practices.
As discussed within the chronosystem, the utilization of violence and racism has been deeply ingrained within the fabric of American history and has permeated throughout the educational system, manifesting in various forms such as systemic racism, ethnic and religious discrimination, and intolerance (Emdin, 2021; Spring, 2018). Moreover, this unfortunate reality has persisted from colonial to contemporary times, resulting in unequal schooling experiences (Spring, 2018).

Another foundational purpose of the American school system was the assimilation of immigrants into the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture to create a nation of one culture designed to maintain cultural hegemony (Banks, 2019; de los Ríos & Seltzer, 2017; Giroux, 1984; Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997; Ogbu, 1992; Spring, 2021). This goal was heightened in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when many immigrants from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds entered the country (Spring, 2021). Consequently, schools became a primary means for shaping American identity (Apple, 2013). Educators developed a standard curriculum to teach English, American customs and values, and maintain cultural, economic, political, and societal order (Apple, 2013). Unfortunately, this assimilationist approach was often accompanied by efforts to suppress or eradicate minoritized groups' cultural traditions and languages, leading to a complex and contentious history of schooling and cultural assimilation in the United States (Spring, 2021). The design of schools was never intended to be neutral but rather to cater to the preferences, attitudes, and behaviors of the dominant class (Apple, 2018; Cochran-Smith, 2003; Delpit, 2006; Freire et al., 2018; Gay, 2018; Giroux, 2010, 2020; Howard, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 2009; MacLeod, 2009; Nieto & Bode, 2018; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).
Schools have historically perpetuated cultural hegemony by privileging the dominant group’s culture and marginalizing or erasing non-dominant students’ cultural practices and histories, reinforcing power imbalances and social inequalities (Freire, 1985; Giroux, 1980). Cultural hegemony is the spread of dominant ideologies through social institutions such as schools, religious organizations, media, and courts (Feagin & Ducey, 2019; Giroux, 1981; Omi & Winant, 2018). The dominant group promotes and maintains its values as the norm and universal for all members of society to maintain its power and influence (McLaren, 2016). The values and beliefs of the dominant culture become interwoven into the tapestry of society through institutions such as schools and become the normative filter through which an individual views the world (Bartolomé, 2008; Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren, 2016). Therefore, schools legitimize social and cultural reproduction through policies and practices resulting in structural inequality (Anyon, 1981; Apple, 2012; Artz & Murphy, 2000; Au, 2012; Banks, 2012; Bourdieu, 1986; Collins, 2009; Love, 2019; MacLeod, 2009). Many times, this results in the cultural and social capital of Black and Brown students not being considered as valuable as the cultural and social capital of the dominant culture (Emdin, 2021; Nieto & Bode, 2018; Yosso, 2005). Understanding the sociohistorical influence of the dominant culture on the policies, procedures, and structures of schools helps to understand the disparate academic outcomes for historically marginalized students. Schools maintain cultural hegemony through the written, taught, and hidden curriculum (Apple, 2018; Bernstein, 2003; McLaren, 2016).

**Curriculum**

The curriculum encompasses the policies, values, and beliefs that guide the design and implementation of educational programs and experiences and the larger cultural and historical
context in which they exist. The curriculum in American schools has been historically structured to privilege the cultural norms, values, and perspectives of White American culture, focusing on catering to White students' educational needs while being predominantly taught by White teachers (Emdin, 2021; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Spring, 2022). This practice has resulted in an educational system failing to cater to students' needs from non-dominant cultural backgrounds and perpetuating existing social hierarchies and biases (Emdin, 2021; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1998). The curriculum and textbooks utilized in most public schools are often biased and presented from the dominant culture representing White Eurocentric middle-class values as a universal experience (Asante, 1991; Au, 2009; Banks, 2019; Banks & Banks, 2019; Cabello & Burstein, 1995; Delpit, 2006; Emdin, 2021; Foster, 1999; Hilliard, 1992a; hooks, 1994; Irvine, 1990; Johnson, 2021; Nieto & Bode, 2018; Niyozov & Pluim, 2009; Sleeter, 2018; Woodson, 1933). Marginalization of the cultural and linguistic strengths of students outside of the dominant culture often results from using a Eurocentric curriculum (Banks, 2019; Emdin, 2021; González et al., 2005). The curriculum narrative privileges the dominant culture and perpetuates inequalities based on race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation (Giroux, 2001; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

The curriculum is pivotal in constructing students' knowledge, values, attitudes, and perspectives in the educational system (McCarthy, 1990). The curriculum introduces students to various subjects, historical events, social norms, and cultural practices that shape their understanding of the world. The curriculum influences students' thinking patterns and cognitive processes, providing them with the tools and frameworks to comprehend complex ideas and concepts (Hammond, 2015). It also shapes their values, instilling a sense of right and wrong,
fairness and justice, and forming their moral compass (Pinar, 2004). Moreover, the curriculum is instrumental in developing students' attitudes toward society, culture, and diversity and their perspectives on various issues, including politics, social justice, and ethics. As such, the curriculum directs students' educational experiences, influences their personal development, and prepares them for their future.

Critics of school curriculum describe how it reinforces White supremacy, perpetuating social hierarchies and biases that benefit White students and marginalize those from non-dominant backgrounds (Brown & Au, 2014; Emdin, 2021; hooks, 1994; Johnson, 2021; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Love, 2019; Muhammad, 2020; Woodson, 1933). Traditionally the curriculum was developed from a White, Eurocentric viewpoint, emphasizing endorsing White Americans' values, norms, and accomplishments while minimizing the experiences and contributions of individuals of color (Emdin, 2021; Johnson, 2021). For example, the history curriculum often emphasizes the accomplishments of White Americans while erasing the contributions of people of color, including Native Americans, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans (Leonardo & Grubb, 2018). The English curriculum is also known for favoring works by white authors while ignoring the contributions of non-white authors (Dyches, 2018). Moreover, the curriculum frequently promotes standardized testing, which critics argue has a cultural bias that favors White students and undermines the educational knowledge of non-dominant groups (Au, 2023; Irvine, 1990; Johnson, 2021; Muhammad, 2020). Ultimately, the curriculum frequently perpetuates the myth of meritocracy, which asserts that individual merit rather than systemic advantages or disadvantages determines societal success (Bartolomé, 2008). In addition, the curriculum reinforces white supremacy by perpetuating dominant cultural norms and silencing
non-dominant perspectives, undermining the goal of creating a genuinely liberatory and
humanizing educational system (Emdin, 2021; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Love, 2019).

Picower (2021) uses the term "curricular tools of Whiteness" to refer to the practices,
policies, and materials that perpetuate a White supremacist narrative in the curriculum (p. 25).
Picower describes seven curricular tools, including White Out, No One is to Blame, Not That
Bad, All Things Being Equal, White Gaze, Embedded Stereotypes, and Racist Reproduction that
characterizes the pervasive societal construction of White identity ubiquitous throughout the
educational curriculum. The first tool, "White Out," involves the omission or
underrepresentation of people of color, their history, and their experiences within the
curriculum. This tool allows for the erasure of non-dominant groups and reinforces the
centrality of White experiences. The second tool, "No One is to Blame," deflects responsibility
away from individuals and towards systemic issues, obscuring the role of individuals in
perpetuating racism. The third tool, "Not That Bad," downplays the severity of racial inequality
and discrimination, painting them as minor issues rather than systemic problems. The fourth
tool, "All Things Being Equal," assumes a level playing field, ignoring the systemic biases that
exist within society. The fifth tool, the "White Gaze," frames non-white experiences and
perspectives within a white cultural framework, reinforcing the dominance of White
experiences. The sixth tool, "Embedded Stereotypes," reinforces negative stereotypes about
non-dominant groups through the language, images, and narratives presented in the
curriculum. Finally, the seventh tool, "Racist Reproduction," perpetuates racial inequality by
reproducing existing power structures and privileging White experiences, history, and
perspectives. These curricular tools operate insidiously within the educational system,
sustaining social hierarchies and biases that inflict harm upon marginalized students while privileging their White counterparts.

The schools utilize what has been coined as the hidden curriculum in addition to the written curriculum. The hidden curriculum, or the implicit messages, consists of the attitudes, beliefs, expectations, and values that schools and teachers convey and reinforce (Alsubaie, 2015; Pascoe, 2011). The hidden curriculum implicitly transmits values around race, gender, culture, language, and sexuality (Au et al., 2016). In addition, the hidden curriculum often is designed around the values of the dominant culture to create a homogenous society (Apple, 2018; Delpit, 2006; Freire, 1985; Jackson, 1968; Kamasak et al., 2019; Kharem, 2006; Loewen, 2018; Macedo, 2018; Orelus, 2020; Spring, 2021; Sue, 2004). These implicit messages serve to reinforce societal norms and beliefs that maintain the existing power structures and social hierarchies, ultimately marginalizing those from non-dominant backgrounds. For example, the hidden curriculum may promote the value of individualism over collectivism, emphasizing competition and personal success rather than community values and social responsibility. The hidden curriculum that values individualism can result in prioritizing standardized testing and individual achievement over more collaborative, community-oriented approaches to learning. The hidden curriculum can also reinforce stereotypes and biases, for instance, through disciplinary practices that disproportionately target students from non-dominant backgrounds (Dohrmann et al., 2022). Such practices perpetuate inequities and can negatively impact students' sense of belonging and engagement in the school environment, ultimately contributing to their academic disengagement and underachievement.
In a 1994 interview China Achebe, a prominent Nigerian novelist, shared the Zimbabwean proverb, "Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter" in direct response to the colonial narratives that currently exist (Quinn, 2013, para. 1). This quote highlights how dominant groups maintain power and control over the record of history, perpetuating a biased and incomplete understanding of the past. Within the context of the school curriculum, this quote suggests that until historically marginalized groups can share their perspectives and experiences, the curriculum will continue to promote a narrow and biased view of history that glorifies the dominant group. Furthermore, narratives that exclude entire communities reinforce the existing power structures and social hierarchies, ultimately marginalizing those from non-dominant backgrounds (Johnson, 2021). Currently, most of the curricula are written from the conquerors' point of view (Au, 2009; Banks & Banks, 2019; Finley, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2001; MacCann, 1997; Nieto & Bode, 2018; Waters, 2007), which results in the whitewashing of the curricula (Emdin, 2021; Houchin, 2017; Leonardo, 2009; Woodson, 1933) often justifying slavery and segregation (Spring, 2021). Additionally, only select events or people are included and often appear isolated when African American history and culture are included in the curriculum (Emdin, 2021; Kharem, 2006).

A recent analysis of American government textbooks reveals that historically marginalized groups have received insufficient textual coverage (Brandle, 2020). Except for one textbook, all eleven textbooks analyzed allocated over 20% of their coverage of historically marginalized groups to chapters that specifically address civil rights (Brandle, 2020). Moreover, the coverage varies significantly among different groups, with general terms and women
receiving more inclusion than African Americans, who have received more coverage than Latinx, LGBTQ+, and Asian American/Pacific Islanders (Brandle, 2020). Furthermore, of six books, 18 chapters did not reference any historically marginalized groups (Brandle, 2020). Therefore, the curricula privilege students with European ancestry who are white, male, middle-class, heteronormative, and native English speakers (Banks, 2019; Black, 2018; Cherry-McDaniel & Young, 2012; Fox & Short, 2003; Harris & Watson-Vandiver, 2020; Washington, 2018; Yoon et al., 2010). The written, taught, and hidden curricula can perpetuate curriculum violence through their content, practices, and policies that reinforce harmful stereotypes, exclude diverse perspectives and experiences, and contribute to the minoritization and erasure of individuals with marginalized identities (Brandle, 2020; Cummins et al., 2015; Emdin, 2021; Johnson et al., 2019).

**Curriculum Violence.** Curriculum violence is a term used to describe the harm students from historically marginalized communities experience from the content, practices, and dominant sociocultural knowledge included as the curriculum norm (Johnson et al., 2019; Picower, 2021). This harm can manifest in several ways, such as through the erasure or marginalization of cultural and historical experiences or through the reinforcement of stereotypes and oppressive ideologies of individuals and groups that are not part of the dominant narrative (Baker-Bell et al., 2017; Emdin, 2021; Johnson, 2021; Johnson et al., 2019; Petrone & Stanton, 2021; Warren & Coles, 2020). In addition, curriculum violence intentionally or unintentionally manipulates educational experiences, compromising students' physical, intellectual, linguistic, spiritual, or psychological well-being through trauma and suffering (Boutte & Bryan, 2021; Cridland-Hughes & King, 2015; Emdin, 2021; Ighodaro & Wiggan, 2010;
Johnson et al., 2019). When stakeholders report problematic examples to schools or districts, they often respond that it was not the lesson's intent. However, the intent of the curriculum designer or teacher does not have to be intentional to be harmful. Johnson and colleagues offer that schools perpetuate physical, symbolic, linguistic, and systemic violence in addition to curricula and pedagogical violence, leading to dehumanizing educational experiences (2019). An example of curriculum violence is when a teacher brought each student a cotton plant to illustrate how difficult it was to pick cotton (Jones, 2020). This experience, while not physically violent, was what Jones describes as emotionally destructive (2020). In addition, historically marginalized students are particularly vulnerable to the effects of curriculum violence because the curriculum often reflects dominant cultural values and beliefs that are not representative of their experiences and perspectives (Johnson et al., 2019). As a result, even unintentional acts of curriculum violence can lead to disconnection and marginalization for these students, negatively impacting their sense of self, motivation to learn, and hope (Johnson et al., 2019). Another example of curriculum violence is the erasure of Indigenous presence in schools, curricula, and literature. As a result, American schools rarely teach about Native Americans, either the past or current. Additionally, even when included in the curriculum, the information is often biased, wrong, or incomplete about Native Americans, often depicting Native people as uncivilized or primitive (Reese, 2018; Zinn, 2015).

In conclusion, the written, taught, and hidden curricula play a significant role in perpetuating curriculum violence by reinforcing harmful stereotypes, excluding diverse perspectives and experiences, and contributing to the minoritization and erasure of individuals with marginalized identities (Johnson, 2021; Johnson et al., 2019; Kosciw et al., 2022). The consequences of
curriculum violence can be profound, including perpetuating educational disparities and decreasing a sense of belonging (Emdin, 2021). However, by promoting multiple perspectives, valuing various forms of knowing, and honoring the identity of all students, the curricula can help to create a more humanizing experience for all students (Emdin, 2017, 2021; Howard, 2021; Love, 2019). One way is by considering the intentional selection and use of children and adolescent literature in the classroom.

**Children and Adolescent Literature**

As a macrosystem component, children and adolescent literature can impact historically marginalized students' experiences and outcomes. Therefore, selecting literature in the curriculum and classrooms is paramount. Books reflect a society's social, political, and cultural values (Albrecht, 1954, 1956; Barry, 1998; Duhan, 2015; Naidoo, 2011). Currently, most children and adolescent literature in the United States predominantly feature White, male, heterosexual, middle-class characters resulting in the marginalization or erasure of entire identity groups (Berchini, 2016; Bishop, 2007; Botelho, 2015, 2021; Brown & Brown, 2021; Burns et al., 2013; Gangi, 2008; Goncalves, 1994; Kohl, 1995; Pescosolido et al., 1997; Schieble, 2014; Smolkin & Young, 2011; Varga-Dobai & Wilson, 2008). The cultural and historical context of the literature can influence students' beliefs, attitudes, and perspectives about themselves and others. The disproportionate prevalence of White authors, characters, and frames of reference within the literature included in the curriculum can potentially communicate to students, whether intentionally or not, that Whiteness represents the normative standard (Bishop, 1990; Borsheim-Black & Sarigianides, 2019).
For the last 35 years, data consistently reveals that the number of books with Africans and African Americans, Asians and Asian Americans, Latinxs, and Indigenous peoples as authors and main characters is significantly lower than those with white or animal main characters, despite some gradual improvement. For example, when examining texts published in the United States and Canada from 1994-2014, only 10% of children's books contained multicultural content in the past 21 years. Each spring, the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) compiles data for the number of children and young adult (YA) books featuring people of color for the previous year (CCBC, 2018). In 2014, when CCBC examined more detailed statistics, they found that out of the 393 books published about people of color that 57% were written or illustrated by someone, not from that race, culture, or identity group (CCBC, 2018). According to Figure 2, a more significant percentage of children's books feature White characters (50%), books featuring animals and non-human subjects (27%), whereas all other categories of diverse backgrounds (American Indians, Latinx, Asian Pacific Islander/Asian Pacific American, and African/African American combined only accounted for 23% of the characters represented in books. In 2015, books published about people of color increased by 13% (Huyck et al., 2016).

In 2018, the jump appeared to be even more dramatic, with 23% of books published about people of color. The infographic of Diversity in Children's Books 2018 illustrates through the cracked mirrors that despite a significant increase in the number of books depicting characters from diverse backgrounds, the text often misrepresents or inaccurately portrays these characters, often authored by someone outside of the culture (Huyck & Dahlen, 2019). Therefore, including characters from marginalized groups in children's and adolescent literature
transcends the concern about the absence of representation. When selecting culturally and linguistically diverse literature, problems such as stereotyping, caricature, and marginalization of historically underrepresented groups have persisted. A lack of representation can impact historically marginalized students' self-esteem and sense of belonging and reinforce or challenge societal power dynamics and stereotypes. Additionally, the selection and availability of children and adolescent literature within the school curriculum and book collections in classrooms and libraries impact students' access to diverse perspectives and experiences.

The absence, harm, misrepresentation, or limited representation of historically marginalized groups in the literature available to students can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and biases (Nel, 2017). For example, a book can contain diverse characters; however, if the images and text about those characters are stereotypical or disproportionality portray people of color as victims of struggles, needing to be saved from a character from the dominant culture, or portrayed in stereotypical ways, then that book will be culturally destructive when included in the curriculum (Aronson et al., 2018; Barry, 1998; Cai, 2002; Naidoo, 2011; Roethler, 1998). In addition, the texts that students read become a vehicle of self-affirmation, and students seek to see themselves represented in the books they are assigned to read in school (Bishop, 1990; Sims, 1982, 1983). Therefore, when the curriculum does not provide texts that can be mirrors for all students, it can negatively impact how students view themselves, how teachers view students, and how other students view students not part of the dominant culture. Consequently, the content of the curriculum and books often serves as a means of social and cultural reproduction (Bishop, 1990, 2007; Dyson & Genishi, 1994; Galda & Beach, 2001;
Authenticity is critical when selecting culturally and linguistically diverse books in the classroom (Bishop, 1992; Fox & Short, 2003). It ensures that students have access to high-quality literature that accurately represents the experiences and perspectives of diverse communities. In children and adolescent literature, the authenticity of literary works refers to narratives generated from an insider perspective according to the authors' and illustrators' identities and experiences (Barrera et al., 1993; Boyd et al., 2015; Fox & Short, 2003). When teachers expose students to authentic literacy works that resonate with their own experiences, they are more likely to be engaged and invested in the material, which can enhance their overall literacy achievement. In addition, authentic literature can help to counteract negative stereotypes and biases that students may encounter in the media and society. Finally, by engaging with diverse perspectives and cultures, students can develop a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of the world around them, which helps foster a sense of social responsibility and a commitment to social justice.

An audit of texts included in the K-5 ELA curriculum in New York City Schools showed that White authors write 84% of books. Furthermore, in 51% of the texts, the main character is White, while the demographics of NYC public school students are majority Black, Latinx, or Asian (Aboulafia et al., 2020). Another study analyzed Dr. Seuss's books and found that out of the 2,240 characters across all books, only two were Black, and both were portrayed as monkeys (Ishizuka & Stephens, 2019). In addition to this blatant racism, throughout the
collection of Seuss books, racism is prevalent with embedded messages around White Supremacy, anti-Blackness, and Orientalism (Ishizuka & Stephens, 2019).

Increasing the presence of multicultural literature in the classroom has been an essential step in promoting diversity and representation. However, in some cases, this effort has created a single story about an identity group, which can be limiting and inaccurate. Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie popularized the concept of a single story in her TED talk. She explained that when we hear only one perspective or narrative about a particular group, we risk creating a narrow and incomplete understanding of that identity (Adichie, 2009).

When educators choose literature that portrays a specific identity group in a stereotypical or one-dimensional way, it reinforces limiting and inaccurate ideas about that group (Bacon & Lalvani, 2019). This limited representation can also negatively impact students identifying with that group (Bacon & Lalvani, 2019). Students from marginalized groups who only see themselves represented negatively or stereotypically may feel misunderstood, isolated, or even ashamed of their identities (Bacon & Lalvani, 2019).

Naidoo (2007) explores the representation of Latino representation in the books selected for the Américas and Pura Belpré literary awards. Naidoo argues that despite the increasing diversity of the Latino population in the United States, the dominant representations of the Latino culture in these collections often reinforce stereotypes and present Latinos as a monolith. Naidoo suggests this monolithic representation results from a lack of attention to intersectionality and how multiple social identities interact and intersect to shape experiences of oppression and privilege. By focusing solely on a superficial understanding of Latino culture, these award-winning collections fail to accurately represent the social and cultural mosaic of
Latinos (Naidoo, 2007). In addition, an overemphasis on certain characters' physical traits characterizes the books' illustrations. Latino characters who have disabilities or who come from mixed racial or cultural backgrounds are notably absent, and those who identify with an alternative lifestyle are absent (Naidoo, 2007). Naidoo's research demonstrates the need for greater attention to intersectionality in children's literature and the importance of valuing and respecting marginalized communities' diverse experiences and identities.

In English Language Arts, the traditional literary canon perpetuates dominant cultural norms and values while devaluing the experiences and perspectives of students from marginalized identity groups (Bishop, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Macedo, 2018; Nieto, 2010). As a result, the canon becomes an institutional relic where teachers take for granted that only the included books have literary merit and are worthy of teaching (Applebee, 1989; Banks & Banks, 2019; Schieble, 2014; Watkins & Ostenson, 2015). Furthermore, the traditional canon reflects and reinforces the racial, ethnic, and cultural ideologies of the dominant group sending messages about whose stories matter (Borsheim-Black & Sarigianides, 2019; Morrell, 2005). While many schools have started to diversify their canon by adding multicultural texts, this approach reinforces the message that White, male, heterosexual, middle-class characters are the norm we must add to instead of decolonizing the entire canon (Jewett, 2017). In this sense, children's and adolescent literature, as a component of the macrosystem in Bronfenbrenner's EST, can significantly impact the experiences and outcomes of historically marginalized students. Therefore, it is crucial to consider the representation of diverse perspectives and experiences in the selection of literature to promote inclusivity, increase academic outcomes, foster empathy, and create a sense of belonging for all students.
Children and adolescent literature in social and cultural contexts influence students' cognitive and social-emotional development. Culturally responsive and inclusive literature can provide opportunities for children and adolescents to see themselves reflected in the stories they read and can promote empathy and understanding of diverse experiences and perspectives (Cummins et al., 2015). Conversely, literature that is not culturally responsive may reinforce stereotypes or exclude the experiences of historically marginalized communities. The macrosystem factors of culture, school, Eurocentric curriculum, curriculum violence, and children and young adult literature have all contributed to the academic disparities and reduced sense of belonging experienced by historically marginalized students. These factors have significantly impacted their educational experiences, making it more difficult for them to succeed academically and feel a sense of belonging in the school environment. In conclusion,
American schools have played a significant role in perpetuating white supremacy and maintaining power and privilege for the dominant culture throughout history. Recognizing and confronting the influence of white supremacy in American schools is crucial for creating a more equitable and just educational system. In addition, developing an inclusive and culturally responsive curriculum that centers on the experiences and perspectives of all students can help address the pedagogical malpractice that has perpetuated educational injustices.

Exosystem

The exosystem level encompasses the broader socio-political, economic, and cultural contexts that impact individuals and their immediate environments. Within this framework, two key factors contributing to educational malpractice for students from marginalized communities are school segregation and the opportunity to learn.

School segregation, which refers to separating students by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or other characteristics, has been a persistent issue in the United States throughout its history (Logan et al., 2012). Segregation has resulted in unequal access to educational resources, including funding, facilities, and qualified teachers (Logan et al., 2012). As a result, segregation has led to unequal academic achievement and limited opportunities for students from marginalized communities (Logan et al., 2012). Opportunity to learn refers to the extent to which students can access high-quality educational resources and opportunities, such as advanced coursework, extracurricular activities, and supportive learning environments. Historically, students from marginalized communities have often been denied these opportunities through discriminatory policies or the lack of resources in their schools and communities (Patrick et al., 2020). School segregation and the opportunity to learn have
profoundly impacted the educational experiences and outcomes of students from historically marginalized communities. Segregation can manifest between schools due to neighborhood composition and school boundary decisions, or segregation can occur within the school due to school practices and policies regarding access to the advanced magnet and GT programs and tracking of classes (Lee, 2007). Exploring these factors and their historical roots is crucial for understanding educational inequities.

**School Segregation**

Although the United States no longer practices legalized or de jure segregation, the historical legacy of slavery, discriminatory practices, and policies such as redlining have created de facto segregation in housing, employment, and schools (Perry & Harshbarger, 2019). Even though it has been almost 70 years since the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation in public schools violated the fourteenth amendment to the Constitution (Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 1954), the number of segregated schools doubled between 1996 and 2016 (Garcia, 2020; Stancil, 2018). As of 2018, more than half of Hispanic/Latino, Black, and Pacific Islander students attended schools where minoritized students compose at least 75 percent of the total school population (Irwin et al., 2022).

While the Fair Housing Act (42 U.S.C. 3601) was enacted in 1968 to prohibit racial discrimination in the sales and rentals of housing, the impact of redlining still exists today when examining educational outcomes in formerly redlined neighborhoods (Lukes & Cleveland, 2021). Schools receive funding based on property taxes determined by the value of the real estate in the neighborhood; therefore, students living in formerly redlined housing districts are at a distinct disadvantage because of reduced property values and funding allocations (Darling-
In addition, research shows that formerly redlined neighborhoods have lower test scores, more significant percentages of non-white student demographics, and spend significantly less per student (Lukes & Cleveland, 2021). Based on these findings, education policies must consider the implications of the lingering effect of redlining practices when considering the educational debt owed to our minoritized students.

A recent study conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) examined the relationships between the Black-White achievement gap and student achievement as related to the percentage of students in a school who were Black. NCES found that Black students attending schools with a demographic composition of 40–60% of Black students performed 4.07 NAEP mathematics points lower than their peers that participated in schools with a demographic composition of 0–20% Black (Bohrnstedt et al., 2015). Additionally, Black students attending schools with a demographic composition of 60–100% Black students performed an additional 5.32 points lower than their counterparts in schools that were 0–20% Black (Bohrnstedt et al., 2015). Racial segregation strongly predicts school academic achievement gaps (Reardon et al., 2019, 2021).

Family poverty and the poverty within their schools and community significantly impact students' academic achievement. Schools in the United States show segregation by income, social class, and race/ethnicity. Reardon and colleagues claim it is not just about race, but that racial segregation brings unequal concentrations of students in high and low-poverty schools (2021). In 1988, Black students typically attended schools with 43 percent economically disadvantaged students, but by 2006 this number had risen significantly to a concentration of
three-fifths of the school population (Orfield, 2009). School segregation mirrors residential segregation, which resulted from discriminatory structures and policies such as redlining. Lenders labeled neighborhoods with high concentrations of minoritized residents as high-risk areas for loans, a practice known as redlining, resulting in individuals residing in these neighborhoods being unable to secure mortgages and loans. (Schaefer, 2008). Because of former redlining practices, low-income Black Americans are less likely to attend socioeconomically and racially integrated schools (Quick & Kahlenberg, 2019). When examining the effects of the school's socioeconomic composition on student achievement, researchers found that students in high socioeconomic-status schools had more positive academic growth compared to their counterparts in low socioeconomic-status schools (Belfi et al., 2016). Data from the 2009-2010 academic year revealed that while 9% of secondary students attended high-poverty schools (designated by 75% of student eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch), a disproportionate 21% of Black and Hispanic students attended such schools, compared to only 2% of White and 7% of Asian students (Aud et al., 2012).

Over four decades ago, sociologist James Coleman discovered that a student's academic performance correlated to the characteristics of other students in their school more than any other factor (Coleman, 1966). Additional research confirmed that the racial/ethnic and social class composition of schools was a more determining factor in educational outcomes than a student's race, ethnicity, and social class (Borman & Dowling, 2010). As students progress through schools, the association between low socioeconomic status school and academic achievement becomes even more pronounced (Reardon, 2016). The impact of school and district economic segregation can contribute to inequitable access to resources and
opportunities creating educational disparities (Owens et al., 2016). The current funding policies and tax systems create resource disparities between urban and suburban districts but also perpetuate resource inequities within communities, with almost a 40% variance in schools serving higher concentrations of marginalized students (Bifulco & Souders, 2023).

Historically marginalized students, such as Black and Latinx students, are disproportionately impacted by school segregation (Cardichon et al., 2020). Segregated schools are often under-resourced, staffed with less experienced teachers, and lack access to rigorous curricula and enrichment opportunities (Darling-Hammond, 1998). These factors limit learning opportunities for these students, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and inequality. Therefore, historically discriminatory practices and policies have directly impacted the educational outcomes for traditionally marginalized students (Cummins et al., 2015).

**Opportunity to Learn**

Educational inequity results from historical, systemic, and institutional racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; Carter & Welner, 2013; Howard, 2019; Lewis & Diamond, 2015; Nieto & Bode, 2018). While the educational community describes the achievement gap as the gap in performance in student groups, the opportunity gap refers to inequitable access to courses and allocation of resources (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Great Schools Partnership, 2013; Tyson, 2013). The impact of disparities in learning opportunities has demonstrated that students from marginalized communities often face systemic barriers that limit their access to educational resources and opportunities (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Cardichon et al., 2020; Cummins et al., 2015; Muhammad, 2015). In fact, between the years 2005 to 2017, schools serving some of our most vulnerable students in the U.S. were significantly underfunded by the federal government.
by almost 600 billion dollars (The Century Foundation, 2020). As a result, minoritized students are substantially more likely to sit in crowded classrooms, be taught by untenured or uncertified teachers, attend schools with high teacher turnover, experience discriminatory curriculum policies and practices, reduced access to school counselors, and have higher levels of suspension and exclusion (Cardichon et al., 2020; Darling-Hammond & Darling-Hammond, 2022; Flores, 2007; Muhammad, 2015; The Century Foundation, 2020). Therefore, when educational institutions systematically deny students access and opportunities, it directly impacts academic outcomes (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Cardichon et al., 2020; Cummins et al., 2015; Muhammad, 2015).

Schools serving communities of color often have insufficient resources and lower-quality teaching staff, contributing to disparities in academic achievement (Cardichon et al., 2020; Clotfelter et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond & Darling-Hammond, 2022; Kalogrides & Loeb, 2013). An example of this is a study conducted in Tennessee, which found that elementary school students assigned to ineffective teachers over three years achieve nearly 50 percentile points lower on standardized achievement tests compared to students assigned to highly effective teachers during the same timeframe (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Notably, minority students are significantly less likely to be assigned to the most effective teachers and are approximately twice as likely to be assigned to the least effective teachers (Sanders & Rivers, 1996).

Critics widely scrutinize school tracking practices for sustaining the educational inequities of historically marginalized students. School tracking practices separate students into different classes or educational pathways based on their perceived academic abilities or potential (McCardle, 2020). Although tracking is often presented as a means to offer students
personalized instruction, its effects result in significant educational inequalities as it reinforces social stratification. (Gamoran & Mare, 1989; Oakes, 2005).

First, tracking students produces disparities in academic achievement and post-secondary opportunities between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds or racial and ethnic groups (Darling-Hammond, 1998; de Brey et al., 2019; Oakes, 1982). For example, students from more affluent families or who attend better-funded schools are often placed in higher-level tracks (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Oakes, 1982; O'Day & Smith, 2019). In contrast, students from low-income families or under-resourced schools are likelier to be placed in lower-level tracks (Oakes, 1982). This placement perpetuates achievement disparities and limits opportunities for students from marginalized communities to access advanced coursework and other educational resources (McCardle, 2020).

Second, tracking can decrease expectations and opportunities for students in lower-level tracks (Oakes, 2005; Rosenbaum, 1976). For example, students placed in lower-level tracks may receive less challenging coursework (Donaldson et al., 2017; Oakes, 2005). This limitation may deny them opportunities to take advanced courses or participate in extracurricular activities that could enhance their academic and social development, thereby restricting their future educational and career opportunities. (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Oakes, 2005; Parker et al., 2020). Finally, tracking can also result in a self-fulfilling prophecy where students in lower-level tracks internalize the belief that they cannot achieve at higher levels (Oakes, 2005). This internalized belief can limit their motivation and confidence, leading to further academic underachievement, decreased opportunities, and a reduced sense of belonging (Donaldson et al., 2017; Oakes, 1982 ). Consequently, school tracking practices can perpetuate educational
inequities by limiting opportunities for students from marginalized communities and reinforcing existing disparities in academic achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Donaldson et al., 2017; McCardle, 2020; Oakes, 1982, 2005). Additionally, minoritized students are more likely to experience discrimination and bias in schools, which can negatively impact their academic performance (Chin et al., 2020; Harris-Britt et al., 2007; Morris et al., 2020).

The cumulative effect of these barriers is that students from marginalized communities often receive a lower-quality education than their more privileged peers, which can have lasting and detrimental impacts on their academic achievement and overall life outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2001). Students who do not have access to high-quality education are less likely to graduate from high school, attend and succeed in college, and achieve their full potential in the workforce (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Oakes, 2005). Therefore, the opportunity to learn is crucial in determining students' academic and life outcomes, particularly those from historically marginalized communities (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Oakes, 2005).

Overall, the exosystem intersects with issues of school segregation and the opportunity to learn in complex ways and has significant implications for historically marginalized students' educational experiences and outcomes. Significant racial and economic segregation among schools, disproportionate distribution of student needs across racial groups, and insufficient allocation of resources to adequately fund high-need school districts collectively erode equity of educational opportunity for students of different races and incomes. The segregation of schools limits students' access to quality education, while the lack of opportunity to learn combined with structural inequalities and discriminatory policies exacerbates educational disadvantage. In conclusion, various factors within Bronfenbrenner's exosystem level create
significant barriers perpetuating disparities in achievement for students from marginalized communities and hindering their sense of belonging.

**Mesosystem**

Bronfenbrenner's mesosystem refers to the interactions and relationships between different microsystems, such as the family, school, and community, that influence a child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The mesosystem acknowledges that each microsystem is interconnected and does not exist independently of the other. The interaction of the school and home microsystem is vital because it serves as a bridge for the development of the individual student across contexts (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022; McCarthey, 1999; Roksa & Potter, 2011).

The mesosystem encompasses the interactions and relationships between various microsystems that contribute to the disparities in academic performance and outcomes between marginalized student groups. For historically marginalized students, the mesosystem encompasses cultural discontinuity, where their families' cultural values and practices may differ from those of the dominant culture in schools. This discontinuity can create a sense of dissonance and conflict for students as they navigate the expectations and norms of both their home and school environments. In addition, negative stereotypes and biases about marginalized communities can also impact the interactions between schools and families, potentially leading to a lack of trust and communication.

**Cultural Discontinuity**

Cultural discontinuity is a “school-based behavioral process where the cultural value-based learning preferences and practices of many ethnic minority students—those typically
originating from home or parental socialization activities—are discontinued at school” (Tyler et al., 2008, p. 281). While all students might experience the difference between cultures between home and school (Ogbu, 1992), the differences are even more prominent in students outside of the dominant culture (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b; Nieto, 1999). This mismatch can result in adverse student outcomes, including reduced academic achievement. In addition, when a student's cultural background is not recognized or valued in the classroom, they may feel disconnected or alienated from the learning environment, leading to disengagement and a lack of motivation (Altugan, 2015). Cultural discontinuity can also result in a lack of understanding and communication between students and teachers, leading to misinterpretation and miscommunication. For example, a teacher may use examples or teaching methods unfamiliar or irrelevant to a student's cultural background, making it difficult for the student to understand and engage with the material (Altugan, 2015; Au, 2009; Gay, 2018; Lovelace & Wheeler, 2006; O' Connor, 1989). In addition to academic consequences, cultural discontinuity can negatively impact a student's social and emotional well-being. For example, students may feel like they do not belong or are not valued in the school community, leading to feelings of isolation and low self-esteem.

In one study examining cultural discontinuity, researchers used hierarchical multiple regression to investigate the differences between students who do and do not experience a cultural discontinuity in academic outcomes such as grade point average (GPA) and standardized test scores (Taggart, 2017). Researchers examined two high schools in South Central Texas and found that cultural discontinuity had an inverse relationship with GPA (Taggart, 2017). An interesting finding from this study is that while GPA was a significant
predictor of cultural discontinuity, it was not a predictor of mathematics Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) scores (Taggart, 2017). This finding should be explored further in terms of understanding the subjectivity of teacher grading versus a more objective assessment having implications for examining teacher implicit bias (Taggart, 2017). The cultural and linguistic differences between most American teachers and their students and their families can create cultural barriers or discontinuity, contributing to the opportunity gap and resulting in decreased engagement and academic performance (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Gay, 2013; Irvine, 1990; Milner, 2014; Reynolds, 2010; Tyler et al., 2008).

The School Family Connection and Relationships

As a mesosystem factor, the school-family connection and relationships are particularly significant for historically marginalized communities who often experience significant structural barriers impacting their educational experiences and outcomes. Collaborative relationships between the home and school positively benefit student academic achievement (Castro et al., 2015; Chen & Gregory, 2009; Dotterer & Wehrspann, 2016; Epstein, 1987, 2010; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Jeynes, 2005, 2007, 2012). These educational benefits can include lower rates of school dropout, increased on-time graduation rates, increased attendance, better grades, and improved standardized achievement test scores (Barnard, 2004; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Jeynes, 2016; Ou & Reynolds, 2014; Parr & Bonitz, 2015; Sheldon, 2007; Wilder, 2014; Zaff et al., 2017). Research has promoted a strong home/school connection to narrow educational disparities (Colombo, 2006; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Marschall & Shah, 2020; McCutcheon, 1999; Ream & Palardy, 2008; Wong & Hughes, 2006). Additionally, family involvement at home and school significantly predicts school
belongingness among adolescents (Uslu & Gizir, 2017). Educational institutions and teachers, unfortunately, view White middle-class parental involvement as the standard, resulting in a deficit view of historically marginalized communities because their engagement deviates from that myopic definition (Cooper, 2009; Dillard, 2020; Marchand et al., 2019; Trumball & Rothstein-Fisch; Williams, 2020). When teachers perceive a cultural incompatibility between languages, practices, beliefs, and values between the home and school culture, it can result in both decreased academic achievement and a decreased sense of belonging for both students and families (Boykin et al., 2006; Cooper, 2007; Henderson et al., 2020; LaRocque, 2013; Malone, 2015; Warzon & Ginsburg-Block, 2008; Williams et al., 2017).

One of the most widely used parent engagement frameworks used in school is Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement for Comprehensive Programs of Partnership (2010). According to Epstein's framework, six types of school and family partnerships can positively impact children's learning and development. The first type of involvement is parenting, which includes creating a supportive home environment, establishing routines, and encouraging positive attitudes toward learning. The second type is communicating, which involves establishing regular and effective communication between parents and teachers and sharing information about children's progress and needs. The third type of involvement is volunteering, which encourages parents to volunteer in classrooms, school events, and extracurricular activities. The fourth type is learning at home, which provides parents with opportunities to engage in learning activities with their children, such as reading together, playing educational games, and helping with homework. The fifth type of involvement is decision-making, which encourages parent participation in school decision-making processes, such as joining school
committees or actively participating in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Finally, the sixth type of involvement is collaborating with the community, which encourages partnerships between schools, families, and community organizations to support children's learning and development. Overall, Epstein's model emphasizes the importance of a partnership between schools and families, with both parties working together to promote positive outcomes for children. Schools can better support children's academic and social success by recognizing the importance of parent involvement and providing opportunities for parents to engage in various ways.

Unfortunately, schools and teachers often use a deficit view when interacting with culturally and linguistically diverse families (Arce, 2019; Emdin, 2021; Malone, 2015; Posey-Maddox, 2017; Watson & Bogotch, 2015; Yull et al., 2018). Black parents have expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of collaboration and school and home communication (Brandon et al., 2010; Cooper, 2007; Emdin, 2021; Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016; Thompson, 2004). There are various reasons for this, which may include historical legacies of exclusion and marginalization, cultural differences between educators and families, parent perception of low expectations for their children, and a lack of understanding of the unique needs and experiences of Black families (Cooper, 2007; De Luigi & Martelli, 2015; Emdin, 2021; Malone, 2015). Overall, the traditional parent engagement model has failed to adequately engage families from culturally and linguistically diverse families (Cooper, 2007; Goldman & Burke, 2017; Wong & Hughes, 2006).

Using Epstein's model to define parental involvement is problematic because it does not contextualize race or class within the framework (Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016). When
schools and teachers assume that families are uninvolved and make the more significant assumption that lack of involvement equals lack of caring, it can lead to a climate of mistrust and create adversarial relationships that ultimately impede student academic achievement and social and emotional well-being (Arce, 2019; Cooper, 2007, 2009; Emdin, 2021; LaRocque et al., 2011; Leath et al., 2020; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2009; Williams et al., 2017). This stigma and judgment that parents of color face from school staff can be particularly harmful as it reinforces negative stereotypes and creates a barrier to building trust and effective communication between families and the school (Piper et al., 2022). The assumption that families with disadvantaged economic statuses or minority racial backgrounds are unwilling or unable to participate in their child's education is inaccurate and perpetuates systemic inequalities (Piper et al., 2022). In order to strengthen partnerships with families of students of color impacted by trauma, schools must recognize and value families as active partners in decision-making processes (Piper et al., 2022). It is crucial to create safe spaces where families can express their concerns (Piper et al., 2022). Schools should also provide family-centered services and enhance cultural responsiveness, considering families' diverse backgrounds and experiences (Piper et al., 2022).

One framework developed as an asset-based approach to family engagement is Ecologies of Parent Engagement (EPE), reconceptualizing parent involvement (Barton et al., 2004). EPE conceptualizes parent engagement as the convergence between parents' strengths, assets, worldviews, and surrounding social and institutional environments (Barton et al., 2004). This social-ecological perspective broadens the concept of parent engagement beyond the behaviors and responses of individual parents to encompass the broader social connections and
interactions among parents, educators, and other agents within the school community (Barton et al., 2004). Yosso's (2005) work on cultural wealth is evident in this framework (Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2016). Schools can utilize the various "resource capital" families possess to enhance parental involvement in their children's education (Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2016; Yosso, 2005). These forms of capital comprise (a) "aspirational capital," which refers to the family's ability to preserve their hopes and ambitions for the future despite challenging circumstances; (b) "familial capital," pertaining to the capacity of parents to establish strong bonds with extended family; and (c) "navigational capital," denoting the ability of families to navigate and obtain resources from intricate social and institutional systems that were designed for families from the dominant culture (Yosso, 2005, pp. 77-80). This framework is a way schools can reframe parent involvement from an asset-based lens designed to serve their culturally and linguistically diverse families.

A well-established research base asserts that the school-family relationship is pivotal for a sense of belonging and academic achievement. Therefore, it is incumbent upon schools to revise their definition of parental involvement and engagement and create more comprehensive approaches that can encompass and involve families of color, multilingual families, and non-traditional family structures using a strengths-based model (Emdin, 2021; Marchand et al., 2019; Marschall & Shah, 2020).

Microsystem

The microsystem includes the home, peers, religious institutions, school, and extracurricular activities - all of which have direct contact with the individual student and comprise their immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The microsystem, particularly
the family unit, serves as the initial arena for socialization in children. Interactions between family members are particularly influential in shaping the messages children receive about themselves and the world around them. Children born into families that differ from the mainstream American culture may learn about the possibility of facing discrimination and prejudice. Research also indicates that families play a significant role in buffering negative experiences that children may have with their peers.

The microsystem level includes individuals' immediate interactions and relationships with their family, peers, and teachers. Within the microsystem level, there are significant contributing factors that have a profound impact on the academic achievement of historically marginalized students. This section will explore the research on teacher preparation, representation, attitudes, beliefs, expectations, bias, sense of belonging, bullying, graduation rates, and dropout rates through the lens of the accumulated educational debt that has resulted in disparate academic outcomes and a reduced sense of belonging for historically marginalized students.

**Representation**

Representation, or the extent to which teachers reflect the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the student population, can significantly influence marginalized students' experiences (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Students who see teachers who look like them may feel a greater sense of belonging and be more motivated to succeed academically. Research demonstrates that teacher representation can have a positive impact on the academic performance of historically marginalized students within the microsystem of the school (Blazar, 2022; Bristol & Martin-Fernandez, 2019; Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Gershenson et al., 2022;
Gottfried et al., 2022; Redding, 2019). When students from marginalized communities see themselves reflected in their teachers, it can help to build a positive and supportive school environment, increase students’ sense of belonging and engagement, and foster their motivation to learn (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Black students assigned to teachers of the same racial background show improved performance on standardized assessments and encounter more positive teacher perceptions (Gershenson et al., 2022). Furthermore, the data reveals that exposure to a minimum of one Black teacher during grades 3-5 increases the probability of low-income students who have consistently faced financial hardships to aspire towards attending a four-year university (Gershenson et al., 2022).

The demographic of American teachers continues to be predominantly middle-class, White, female, European-American, and monolingual (Acquah & Commins, 2013; Bodur, 2012; Griner & Stewart, 2013; Kahn et al., 2014; Kumar & Hamer, 2013; Vázquez-Montilla et al., 2014; Villegas et al., 2012). Around 80 percent of teachers are white and female, while less than half of the student population is White (Irwin et al., 2022; Schaeffer, 2021; Taie & Goldring, 2018). Many current teachers in the U.S. will teach students who are culturally and linguistically different from their background (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Dedeoglu & Lamme, 2011; Reiter & Davis, 2011). Teachers’ lack of awareness of their cultural identity or discomfort with discussing race influences their teaching identity and positionality in the classroom. (Bonilla-Silva et al., 2006; Johnson, 2002; Milner & Laughter, 2015; Morgan, 2004; Picower, 2009, 2021; Shah & Coles, 2020; Sleeter, 2001).
Teacher Preparation

With the shifting demographics of students in schools that are becoming increasingly diverse, the role of teacher preparation in working with culturally and linguistically diverse students is critical (Abbate-Vaughn, 2008; de Jong & Harper, 2005; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Lucas et al., 2008). Since many teachers are from a different cultural background than the students they teach, teacher preparation programs are responsible for helping teachers understand how their culturally based perspective influences their beliefs and expectations of their students (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Unfortunately, the current teaching force often lacks the necessary training and resources to address the unique needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students, which is essential for reducing educational inequities (Abbate-Vaughn, 2008; Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Asher, 2007; Bissonnette, 2016; Sleeter, 2001, 2012). Many White female teachers report experiencing a sense of inadequacy in teaching a culturally diverse classroom due to perceived differences in life experiences and identities compared to the students they teach (Abdullah et al., 2015; Bennett et al., 2019; Curry, 2013; Kumar & Lauermann, 2018). Additionally, White preservice teachers encountered challenges establishing a correlation between racial privilege and systemic inequities, instead blaming minoritized students for their failures (Amos, 2010; Bennett et al., 2019). When teachers do not feel adequately prepared to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students, their self-efficacy decreases (Chun & Dickson, 2011; Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; O'Neal et al., 2008; Siwatu, 2007, 2011). Conversely, when teachers have a strong belief in their efficacy in teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students, they are more likely to be successful in teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students
(Bandura, 1986; Barnes, 2006; Brown, 2007; DeCapua, 2016; García & Chun, 2016; Gay, 2002; Milner & Hoy, 2003; Woolfolk, 2016). Additionally, when teachers have an affirming attitude toward students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, it positively influences the overall academic performance of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 2009; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Culturally responsive teaching acknowledges the importance of culture in the learning process (Brown, 2007; Gay, 2002, 2015, 2018; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 2009, 2014; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014, 2017). It helps by bridging the gap between the mainstream culture and the culture of the students resulting in increased learning and belonging for culturally and linguistically diverse (Hammond, 2015). Culturally relevant teaching recognizes the cultural strengths of all students and capitalizes on their strengths to maximize their learning potential (Byrd, 2016; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b; Morrison et al., 2008; Paris & Alim, 2017). A substantial research base supports links culturally responsive teaching practices enhance academic achievement and student engagement (Christianakis, 2011; Ensign, 2003; Rodriguez et al., 2004; Tate, 1995).

**Implicit Bias**

Implicit bias is unconscious attitudes or stereotypes that can influence an individual's behavior and decisions. (Chin et al., 2020; DeCuir-Gunby & Bindra, 2022). In education, implicit bias can significantly impact the academic performance of historically marginalized students, such as students of color, low-income students, and students with disabilities (DeCuir-Gunby & Bindra, 2022; Ferguson, 2003; Staats, 2016; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007). Examining implicit bias is of utmost significance since it impacts all aspects of education, from evaluating student
assignments and making placement suggestions, interpreting data, and making scheduling decisions (Benson & Fiarman, 2019). Ultimately, a lack of examination of implicit bias toward culturally and linguistically diverse students impacts teachers' beliefs resulting in deficit thinking and language toward students (Batchelor et al., 2019; Bloom et al., 2015; Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Milner et al., 2011; Shapiro, 2014; Valencia, 2012). Deficit thinking involves ascribing a student's academic or behavioral challenges to an inadequacy within the student, their family, or their culture, frequently resulting in lowered expectations (Dohrmann et al., 2022). Educators interacting with students of color, those with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and multilingual learners tend to exhibit more deficit thinking (Gregory et al., 2010). Inaccurate interpretations of historically marginalized students' behavior or abilities, a higher prevalence of students in special education programs, and disproportionate use of punitive measures such as suspension and expulsion can result from deficit beliefs. (Gregory et al., 2010).

Implicit bias can manifest in various ways in the classroom, from teachers' interactions with students to their disciplinary practices. (Gregory et al., 2010; Staats, 2016). For example, studies have found that teachers are more likely to call on Black students less often than their White peers and that Black students are more likely to be disciplined for behavior viewed as disrespectful or disruptive, even when the behavior is not more severe than that of their White peers (Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015). In addition, compared to their White peers, Black students encounter more significant instances of exclusionary disciplinary actions and less inclusive and welcoming educational environments (Dohrmann et al., 2022; Fisher et al., 2020).
School-level discipline gaps have been associated with Black students' perceptions of equity and decreased sense of belonging (Bottiani et al., 2017; Fisher et al., 2020).

In 2016, Okonofua and colleagues examined how a vicious cycle of biased perceptions and behaviors from teachers and students perpetuates racial disparities in school discipline. Black students are disproportionately punished more severely than their white peers due to negative stereotypes and unconscious biases held by educators. As a result, black students experience a heightened sense of threat and frustration due to disproportionate discipline, often leading to their defiant or withdrawn behavior, reinforcing negative perceptions, and ultimately resulting in further punishment. The article explores factors contributing to this cycle, including teacher expectations, implicit bias, and stereotype threat. The authors also offer potential solutions for breaking the cycle, such as promoting empathy and understanding among teachers and students, increasing cultural competence, and implementing restorative justice practices.

Pedagogical practices in the classroom can be impacted by implicit bias, resulting in marginalized students' academic performance being affected (Inan-Kaya & Rubie-Davies, 2022). For example, research has shown that teachers, who are majority White, tend to hold lower expectations for marginalized students, which can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy where they provide fewer challenging assignments and fewer opportunities, resulting in lower academic achievement (Cherng, 2017; Jacoby-Senghor et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Malone et al., 2023; Muhammad, 2015).
Teacher Attitudes, Beliefs, and Expectations

Teacher attitudes, beliefs, and expectations significantly shape historically marginalized students' academic experiences and outcomes (Bartolomé, 2007). Students from economically disadvantaged families, historically underserved students based on race and ethnicity, students with disabilities, students identifying as LGBTQ+, and multilingual learners have historically faced systemic barriers to academic success (Cummins et al., 2015; Kosciw et al., 2022). Teachers are crucial in providing equitable and inclusive learning environments for all students, and their attitudes and beliefs can reinforce or challenge these barriers (Bartolomé, 2007). This section will explore the complex relationships between teacher attitudes, beliefs, and expectations in understanding the academic experiences of historically marginalized students.

Educators' pedagogical disposition and beliefs form their actions and conduct in the classroom setting (Collie et al., 2012; Loreman et al., 2013; Ozder, 2011; Schmidt & Buchmann, 1983). Research has shown that teacher attitudes and beliefs significantly impact student learning (Bohlmann & Weinstein, 2013; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1993; Papageorge et al., 2020; Reeves, 2006; Richardson, 1996; Rubie-Davies). The attitudes and beliefs of teachers influence their expectations for student learning and achievement and the relationships they build with the students in their classroom (Coady et al., 2011; Olson & Jimenez-Silva, 2008; Pennington & Salas, 2009; Schmidt & Buchmann, 1983; Walker et al., 2004; Walker & Greene, 2009). Black students perceived teachers' expectations with concern for their well-being, significantly impacting their sense of belonging (Pringle et al., 2010).

Research establishes that teachers have differential academic expectations for White and minoritized students (Burris et al., 2008; Cherng, 2017; Flores, 2007; Hanushek & Rivkin,
2009; Kelly & Carbonaro, 2012; McKown & Weinstein, 2008; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007; Tyler & Boelter, 2008). A recent research study revealed that students of color routinely encounter less demanding instructional and academic coursework than their white and socioeconomically privileged peers (TNTP, 2018). This academic disparity results in inadequate preparation for college, even when students of color have obtained a high GPA (TNTP, 2018). When teachers believe that ability is a fixed commodity, this directly impacts how they instruct students and what they believe they can or cannot do (Dweck, 2006). When teachers have the belief that students have a fixed intelligence, they are less likely to invest time and energy into providing multiple learning experiences for all students to have the opportunity to be successful (Dweck, 2006). Hammond asserts that when teachers hold fixed or deficit views, they cognitively redline students' instructional opportunities in the classroom and the school (2021). In one study, English teachers were more likely to underestimate the academic abilities of non-White students (Cherng, 2017).

**Sense of Belonging**

The microsystem within the school context is a crucial factor in shaping students' sense of belonging. Humans have an innate desire to belong to a community, which involves forming meaningful connections with people, finding common ground with their cultural and subcultural identities, and feeling a sense of inclusion within their social systems (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Maslow, 1954). Believed to be rooted in our biology, even within our human genome, is the fundamental need to belong (Slavich & Cole, 2013). The sense of belonging refers to an individual's psychological perception and experience of being accepted, included, and valued as a member of a particular social group or community (Booker, 2006; Cobb &
Krownapple, 2019; Goodenow, 1993; Williams & Downing, 1998). Belonging contributes to an individual's overall academic, social, identity, and psychological development (Allen et al., 2017; Korpershoek et al., 2020; St-Amand et al., 2017).

True belonging is when individuals can sincerely be themselves (Brown, 2017). Various factors, such as the quality of interpersonal relationships, the degree of cultural and social diversity, and the availability of support and resources within the academic community, can influence a sense of belonging (Allen et al., 2017). Positive relationships with teachers and peers, engagement in extracurricular activities, and a sense of connection to the school community can all contribute to a sense of belonging (Allen et al., 2017; Korpershoek et al., 2020; Uslu & Gizir, 2017). Students who perceive that their teachers are empathetic, caring, and fair in their approach and are available to help them with their problems tend to have a stronger sense of school belonging than those with a negative perception of their teacher-student relationship (Allen et al., 2017). Contrarily, negative experiences embedded at the microsystem level, such as exclusion or discrimination, can result in a reduced sense of belonging (Giraldo-García et al., 2023; Kosciw et al., 2022).

While belonging is often considered a positive construct, it can also have negative consequences (Allen, 2020). One of the main issues is that the desire to belong can lead individuals or groups to engage in behaviors that exclude, discriminate against, or even harm others perceived as not belonging (Allen, 2020). In such cases, belonging becomes a mechanism for othering and reinforcing social hierarchies, which can harm individuals and society. For instance, if a group defines their identity based on a specific characteristic, such as race, religion, or nationality, they may use belonging to exclude or discriminate against others who
do not share that characteristic (Allen, 2020). Prejudice, stereotyping, and even violence towards marginalized groups can result from exclusionary practices, perpetuating systemic inequalities and social injustices. Additionally, when students feel they must conform to mainstream cultural traditions to belong, it creates tension and leads to “belonging uncertainty” (Walton & Cohen, 2007; Woodcock et al., 2012). As a result, historically marginalized students have an increased chance of feeling belonging uncertainty due to stereotypes, bias, and being stigmatized (Walton & Cohen, 2007).

Another negative aspect of belonging is that it can limit individuals’ autonomy and independent thinking. A group’s members may feel pressure to conform to its norms, beliefs, and behaviors, even if they do not fully agree, leading to groupthink, where individuals prioritize group cohesion over critical thinking and personal values. As a result, individuals may compromise their beliefs and interests, leading to inner conflict and dissatisfaction. Belonging can also lead to a sense of complacency and stagnation. When individuals feel a strong sense of belonging to a particular group, they may resist change or new ideas that challenge the status quo. Conforming to social norms and fitting in may limit essential personal growth and societal development components, such as innovation, progress, and creativity. While belonging is often portrayed as a positive construct, it can have negative consequences when used to exclude, discriminate, limit autonomy, and resist change. Therefore, it is crucial to approach belonging critically to ensure it promotes inclusion, diversity, and individual agency.

Teachers are essential in creating a classroom community where all students feel included and belong (Williams & Downing, 1998). When students feel connected and have a sense of belonging, it leads to increased academic achievement (Anderman, 2003; Ma, 2003;
Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Pittman & Richmond, 2007; Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2006), motivation (Gonida et al., 2009; Walker & Greene, 2009) and engagement (Booker, 2006; Fredricks et al., 2004; Goodenow & Grady, 1993). Conversely, when students feel disconnected, it diminishes academic achievement and motivation (Isakson & Jarvis, 1999). If students experience bullying and struggle academically, it can increase their risk of dropping out, resulting in feelings of failure and a reduced sense of belonging. On the other hand, a supportive school environment that helps students overcome challenges and succeed academically can increase their sense of belonging and promote graduation.

Bullying

Peer relationships and school culture play a significant role in the prevalence of bullying at the microsystem level. If students experience bullying, it can significantly impact academic achievement and reduce their sense of belonging, resulting in an increased risk of dropping out. However, a supportive school environment that helps students overcome challenges and succeed academically can increase their sense of belonging and promote graduation.

In 2018, the Southern Poverty Law Center researched hate and bias incidents occurring at school, compiling the data into the report *Hate at School* (The Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019). First, they searched the news and counted over 800 verified verbal, written, or physical incidents. Next, the Southern Poverty Law Center surveyed elementary, middle, and high school teachers across the United States because they believed the news only reported a small percentage of incidents. Around 2,700 educators completed the survey and reported witnessing 3,265 hate and bias incidents in the fall of 2018. The educators categorized hate incidents into race/ethnicity (33%), anti-LGBTQ (25%), anti-immigrant (18%), antisemitic (11%),
anti-Muslim (6%), and other (7%). The incidents of hate and bias occurred in various locations, such as inside a classroom (32%), in a hallway, bathroom, or elsewhere in a school building (37%), outside of a building on school grounds (12%), in the community (3%), and on social media (3%). However, 13% of the incidents were unreported. A majority of the incidents occurred at the secondary level (64%), the most at high school (37%), followed by middle school (27%), and the least amount at elementary school (21%). Fifteen percent of the incidents occurred at non-graded or combined schools.

Bullying participation results from a decreased sense of safety, reduced sense of belongingness, and an unfavorable school environment conducive to bullying (Bradshaw et al., 2008; Goldweber et al., 2013). Additionally, adults do not adequately address bullying by taking preventive measures, intervening appropriately, or responding to students' reports of bullying (Goldweber et al., 2013).

**Student Dropout Rate**

Multiple factors within the microsystem, such as the quality of teaching, school culture, and peer relationships, influence the likelihood of students dropping out of high school. A hostile school environment characterized by low academic expectations, a lack of support, and a sense of disconnection from the school community contributes to high dropout rates. High dropout rates can also result from underfunded schools, inadequate teacher preparation, and a reduced sense of belonging in the school community.

Nationally, racial disparities exist in high school dropout rates (Irwin et al., 2022). For example, dropout rates are lowest for Asian, Multiethnic, and White students and highest for American Indian/Alaska Native, Black, and Latino students (Irwin et al., 2022). The trend data
shows an overall decline in the dropout rate from 2010 to 2019, with all racial/ethnic groups declining except for Pacific Islander students, which has remained consistent (Irwin et al., 2022). Other student groups with high dropout rates include students with limited English, homeless students, students in foster care, and special education students.

Doll and colleagues examine why high school students drop out by conducting a comparative analysis of seven nationally representative studies spanning more than 50 years (2013). The article compares the findings of these studies using the framework of push, pull, and falling out factors (Jordan et al., 1994; Watt & Roessingh, 1994). In addition, it explores the differences and similarities in why students drop out and how they describe their experiences of dropping out. The study finds that students drop out of high school for various reasons, including academic struggles, disengagement, and personal/family issues such as poverty, family responsibilities, and health problems. The study also finds differences in why students drop out based on gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Doll et al., 2013).

Significantly, the study finds that students from historically marginalized communities, such as low-income students, students of color, and English language learners, are more likely to drop out of high school due to push factors, such as negative school experiences and disengagement, rather than pull factors, such as attractive work or family opportunities. These findings highlight the importance of addressing the root causes of disengagement and negative school experiences for marginalized students and providing support and resources to help them stay engaged and overcome their challenges (Doll et al., 2013). Overall, the study's findings have important implications for educators, policymakers, and advocates working to address high school dropout rates, particularly for historically marginalized students. Understanding why
students drop out and how these reasons differ based on their backgrounds makes it possible to design interventions and policies that effectively support students in staying in school and achieving academic success.

The 2021 National School Climate Survey for LGBTQ+ investigated why high school students, ages 13-21, may drop out of school or express uncertainty about graduation (Kosciw et al., 2022). For LGBTQ+ students who reported such intentions, multiple reasons were cited, with the majority identifying mental health factors, such as depression, anxiety, or stress (92.3% of those who provided reasons for leaving high school). Two-thirds (65.5%) of these students also identified academic factors, such as poor grades, high absenteeism, or inadequate credit hours. Further, half of the students (51.5%) cited a hostile school climate as a contributing factor, which included harassment, unsupportive peers or educators, and gender-based policies or practices. Finally, nearly half of the respondents (49.5%) cited reasons related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Snapp and colleagues (2015) explore the experiences of LGBTQ+ youth in the U.S. educational system and their disproportionate representation in the school-to-prison pipeline. The authors contend that the school-to-prison pipeline is not just a phenomenon affecting straight and cisgender youth but significantly impacts LGBTQ youth, particularly those identifying as gender non-conforming, butch, and masculine. The over-representation of LGBTQ youth in the school-to-prison pipeline is rooted in various factors, including school disciplinary policies that disproportionately target marginalized students and a lack of support for LGBTQ youth within the school system. The authors conclude by calling for policy changes and
educational interventions to support LGBTQ youth and reduce their involvement in the school-to-prison pipeline.

The report, *Educational Exclusion: Drop Out, Push Out, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline among LGBTQ Youth*, provides insight into the experiences of LGBTQ youth in American schools and highlights the pervasive issues of discrimination, harassment, and exclusionary policies that disproportionately affect this demographic, resulting in a high rate of school disengagement and involvement with the criminal justice system (Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, 2016). The report emphasizes the pressing need for educational institutions to address these issues and establish inclusive, safe, supportive environments for LGBTQ students to thrive.

**Graduation Rate**

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (EST) emphasizes the complex interplay between individuals and their environment, highlighting the importance of multiple contextual factors in reducing educational disparities and fostering a sense of belonging. In the context of high school completion, this theory suggests that successful graduation is not simply a result of individual effort. Instead, it results from policies and structures that support or hinder a student's academic achievement.

During the 2018-19 academic year, the adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) for public high school students in the United States reached its highest level since its initial measurement in the 2010-11 academic year, at 86% (Irwin et al., 2022). In addition, a breakdown of the ACGR by ethnic group reveals that Asian/Pacific Islander students achieved the highest graduation rate at 93%, White students at 89%, Hispanic students at 82%, Black students at 80%, and American Indian/Alaska Native students at 74% (Irwin et al., 2022).
Nationally, there are significant disparities in the graduation rates between different student racial groups.

According to empirical research, high school graduation rates in urban schools nationwide are 15 percentage points lower than in suburban schools (Swanson, 2008). Moreover, in 12 cities, predominantly located in the Northeast and Midwest regions of the country, the disparity in graduation rates between city and suburban schools exceeds 25 percentage points (Swanson, 2008). These observed disparities relate directly to contextual factors such as the concentrated poverty prevalent in urban areas, the inadequate allocation of resources and funding, and the comparatively lower level of teacher qualification (Clotfelter et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Kalogrides & Loeb, 2013; Morgan & Amerikaner, 2018).

When looking at individual states, there are significant graduation disparities for Black students (CCD, 2020). The graduation rate for Black students was the lowest in the District of Columbia, at 67% (CCD, 2020). Additionally, there were several states, including Minnesota, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, and Wisconsin, where the graduation rate for Black students was below 70% (CCD, 2020). In every state, the graduation rate for White students was higher than that of Black students (CCD, 2020). In Wisconsin, the disparity was particularly pronounced, with the Black student graduation rate being 24.1 percentage points lower than that of White students (CCD, 2020).

At the microsystem level, teacher preparation, representation, attitudes, beliefs, expectations, bias, sense of belonging, bullying, graduation, and dropout rate have perpetuated educational inequities for historically marginalized students. Teachers who lack culturally responsive training and preparation struggle to effectively engage and support students from
diverse backgrounds, leading to lower academic achievement and increased dropout rates. Additionally, the lack of representation of teachers from historically marginalized communities limits students' sense of belonging, and their opportunities to see themselves reflected in the classroom. Furthermore, bullying and discrimination in the classroom can create a hostile learning environment that affects students' academic success and overall well-being. Finally, graduation and dropout rates reflect the systemic barriers faced by students from marginalized communities.

**Conclusion**

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory framed the literature review of factors contributing to racially predictable disparate academic outcomes for historically marginalized students. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (EST) highlights the interconnectedness of various environmental factors that shape individual development and behavior. For example, when applied to the issue of redlining, the theoretical framework accentuates the interrelated nature of the five interconnected levels. At the chronosystem level, the long-term impact of redlining has persisted across generations. These structural inequities have perpetuated the concentration of poverty, environmental hazards, and limited access to healthy food, education, and healthcare services in historically redlined neighborhoods. Chronic stress caused by poverty, exposure to environmental toxins, and lack of access to healthcare services has resulted in higher rates of chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, and asthma, in these communities. In addition, according to recent research, a greater incidence of COVID-19 risk factors exists within formerly redlined neighborhoods.
Moreover, the effects of redlining have persisted across generations, leading to a perpetuation of health disparities. As a result, children who grow up in redlined neighborhoods are more likely to experience adverse health outcomes throughout their lives, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage. These factors contribute to the reproduction of inequality over time. In addition, broader cultural and societal norms perpetuate systemic inequities that influence redlining at the macrosystem level. For example, redlining reflects a long history of racial and economic oppression in the United States deeply embedded in social structures and institutions. At the exosystem level, redlining policies have segregated communities based on race and socioeconomic status, resulting in underfunded schools with unequal resources, services, and opportunities. As a result, students from historically marginalized communities face significant barriers to post-secondary education, leading to improved economic opportunities. At the mesosystem level, redlining can affect the interactions between different educational systems, such as schools and community organizations. For example, redlining may lead to a lack of extracurricular activities and community programs in marginalized communities that can help support students' academic success. Finally, redlining can directly impact students' educational experiences at the microsystem level. Moreover, these norms can impact educational outcomes by reinforcing stereotypes and biases about students' intellectual capacity from marginalized communities.

By using Bronfenbrenner's EST to examine educational disparities, it illuminates the complex interplay between seemingly unrelated factors across the systems. Understanding the interrelated nature of the factors at multiple levels is critical in understanding the complexities of inequitable educational outcomes for historically marginalized communities.
In conclusion, the literature review revealed many factors contributing to the ongoing educational debt owed to marginalized communities. Based on the factors revealed through the literature, a conceptual framework was developed (see Figure 1.4). The framework highlights the impact of a heterogeneously Eurocentric curriculum and pedagogy, a lack of equity consciousness, inadequate teacher training for working with culturally and linguistically diverse students, and teacher attitudes, beliefs, and expectations on student achievement and sense of belonging. These factors are deeply rooted in historical and systemic inequities perpetuating educational disparities. Addressing pedagogical malpractice and advancing equitable education is essential to addressing this issue. In addition, educators must intentionally address the underlying cultural and institutional norms perpetuating these inequities and prioritize the needs and experiences of marginalized students. Only by taking proactive and intentional steps toward equity can educational institutions begin to pay the educational debt that continues to impact our most vulnerable communities. Therefore, thoroughly examining these factors in the current context is necessary and the next chapter will examine students' academic performance and sense of belonging in a large suburban school system in the Northeast United States.
Figure 1.4

Conceptual Framework of Factors Impacting Disparities in Academic Outcomes and Sense of Belonging of Historically Marginalized Students
Chapter 2: Needs Assessment

This chapter presents the needs assessment findings regarding patterns in student academic outcomes and sense of belonging among students and community members. In addition, this chapter discusses findings on the systemic factors introduced in Chapter 1, including both in and out-of-school factors. A conceptual framework was developed and introduced in chapter one (Figure 1.4) based on an extensive literature review, which identified several critical in-school factors contributing to disparities in academic outcomes and a decreased sense of belonging for historically marginalized students. The framework emphasizes the impact of heterogeneously Eurocentric curriculum and pedagogy, a lack of equity consciousness, inadequate preservice and in-service training for teachers working with culturally and linguistically diverse students, and teacher attitudes, beliefs, and expectations on student sense of belonging and academic proficiency. Thus, these factors were thoroughly examined within the current context to confirm these salient factors and create a theory of action to address disparities in academic achievement and improve the sense of belonging for historically marginalized students.

Context of the Study

The researcher works in Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS), the 22nd largest school district in the United States and the third largest in Maryland, with a student population that is racially, linguistically, and culturally diverse (BCPS, 2023). The district, in the mid-Atlantic, comprises over 175 schools, centers, and programs. The district has 109 elementary schools (including one charter school), 26 middle schools, and 24 high schools (BCPS, 2023). The school district has an 86.2% graduation rate (BCPS, 2023). The school district employs 10,555 teachers.
with a demographic composition of 79.9% white, 14.6 African American, and 5.5% identified as other (includes Asian, Hispanic, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Two or More Races) (MSDE, 2021). The district employs 286 administrators with a demographic composition of 71.7% white, 24.8 African American, and 3.5% identified as other (includes Asian, Hispanic, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Two or More Races) (MSDE, 2021). The student racial demographics in the district are 40.1% African American, 35.9% White, 11.9% Hispanic or Latino, 7.3% Asian, 5% multiracial, 3% American Indian, and .1% Pacific Islander. 53% of students are eligible for free and reduced meals (Baltimore County Public Schools, 2023).

Over the past twenty years, the proportion of minority students grew by 27 percent, from 38 percent to 64 percent (The Office of Strategic Planning, 2022). From 2016 to 2020, special education enrollment increased by 8 percent (The Office of Strategic Planning, 2022). Over the past five years, English Language Learners (ELLs) enrollment increased by 50 percent from 6,840 to 10,272 students, as illustrated in Figure 1(The Office of Strategic Planning, 2022). While systemwide student enrollment has decreased, the percentage of the student body that is multilingual learners increased from 7.9 percent in 2019 to 9.2 percent in 2021 (The Office of Strategic Planning, 2022). BCPS is privileged to have students from 140 countries who speak over 125 languages enrolled in the district (Baltimore County Public Schools, 2023).
Notably, data on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) student identification status are not generally disaggregated; however, as a minoritized and historically marginalized group, it is also essential to examine perceptions from these students when their safety and wellbeing can be assured. As discussed in Chapter 1, many factors are related to academic achievement, such as dropout rate, sense of belonging, bullying, absenteeism, and discriminatory practices and policies at the school and district level that severely impact students who identify as LGBTQ. It is crucial to contextualize the data collected in this needs assessment against the COVID-19 global public health crisis significantly impacting the K-12 educational system nationwide and in the local district. The COVID-19 global pandemic had a disproportionate academic impact on racially marginalized groups, including communities of color, multilingual learners, low-income populations, and LGBTQ+ students (Dorn et al., 2021;
Naff et al., 2022). Students of color and low-income students suffered the most during the pandemic finishing the school year four months behind in reading (Bailey et al., 2021; Dorn et al., 2020, 2021; Goldberg, 2021; Kuhfeld et al., 2022). For Black and Hispanic students, the adverse impacts were not only substantial but also compounded by persistent disparities in access to opportunities and academic attainment (Bailey et al., 2021; Colvin et al., 2022; Domingue et al., 2022; Dorn et al., 2020, 2021; Goldberg, 2021; U.S. Department of Education, 2021a).

**Purpose of the Study**

Scholars and educators have noted discrepancies in opportunities afforded to groups of children within different racial, socioeconomic status (SES), and language proficiency. Subsequently, across almost every measure of academic proficiency, the children who are afforded more opportunities achieve greater success. The reasons for these disparities are complex and reflective of historic and systemic inequities. The problem of practice stems from these pervasive systemic inequities and includes a decreased sense of belonging and predictable differences in academic outcomes. When students from historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups do not feel a sense of belonging in their school, this can contribute to lower academic achievement, motivation, and engagement, further exacerbating existing disparities in educational outcomes. Historically marginalized students, including students of color, low-income students, multilingual learners, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) students, often struggle with a sense of belonging in academic settings due to institutional barriers and a lack of representation in the curriculum. Seven research questions
guided the needs assessment to examine as described in the conceptual framework problem of practice by focusing on the in-school factors explored in Chapter 1.

**Research Questions**

The following quantitative (RQ1-5) and qualitative (RQ6 and 7) questions guided this needs assessment.

- **RQ1.** What is the academic achievement by race as measured by the MCAP ELA Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and English 10, the Measures of Academic Progress in Reading (MAP-R), and the graduation rate by race for the original year of graduation?
- **RQ2.** Do students feel a sense of belonging in the school system?
- **RQ 3.** What is the chronic absenteeism rate by race?
- **RQ 4.** Do students experience bullying in the school system?
- **RQ 5.** How does the racial composition of students in the district compare to the teacher and administrator racial composition?
- **RQ 6.** What are student and community member perceptions of the role of race in the elements reflected in the conceptual framework?
- **RQ 7.** What are student and community member perceptions of belongingness?

**Methods**

A convergent parallel design was selected to use in this mixed methods research study. The qualitative and quantitative data were collected simultaneously, analyzed separately, and then merged to provide a more nuanced understanding of the problem of practice (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). A strength of this approach is collecting different but complementary data on the same phenomena allowing for a more thorough
investigation of the research questions (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006). The mixed methods convergent parallel design enabled the researcher to triangulate and identify convergent and divergent findings from the collected data; it also draws on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research while minimizing the risk of the limitations of each type of research (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Maxwell & Loomis, 2003).

Instrumentation

This section describes the data sources for the constructs that were examined in the needs assessment including district surveys, district reports, *A Conversation about Race and Racism in America and the Public School System*, and a review of publicly released data by the Maryland State Department of Education (2022).

*English Language Arts and Literacy State Assessment*

The district administers the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program in English Language Arts and Literacy to students in grades 3-8 and 10 to measure student proficiency on the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards (Maryland State Department of Education, 2022). The researcher will utilize this measure to display the academic achievement of all students compared to the academic achievement of each racial group, revealing any academic disparities by race. In addition, MCAP for ELA reports student results based on given performance level bands that report how students demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and practices for their grade-level standards providing teachers with information to inform instruction and support students (Maryland State Department of Education, 2023).
The data reported by the state for the English Language Arts assessment measure grade-level standards through a literary performance task, a single informational passage, and an informational performance task (Maryland State Department of Education, 2023). Students read literary and informational passages to show their reading comprehension and literacy skills by responding to text-based questions and writing prompts (Maryland State Department of Education, 2023). In addition, the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) serves as a valuable resource for school districts to increase student achievement and eliminate existing inequities by measuring students’ progress toward college and career readiness and evaluating the efficacy of educational programs.

Report on the Bullying Experiences of Nonbinary Secondary Students: The Protective Role of Relationships with School-Based Adults

The district published a report on the bullying experiences of nonbinary students in the district addressing the four research questions:

- How many secondary students in the sample identify as nonbinary, and what are their demographic characteristics?
- What school-level variables predict a higher percentage of nonbinary students in a school?
- Do nonbinary students report different outcomes from male and female students in terms of peer relationships, bullying, and relationships with school-based adults?
- Do positive relationships with adults in school protect nonbinary students from lower school belonging and bullying?
The measures for the study were gender, race/ethnicity, school-level demographic characteristics, bullying, belonging, and student support (McGill-Wilkinson & Koth, 2020).

**District Stakeholder Survey**

The district stakeholder survey polls all community members, focusing on the five strategic plan areas, and compiles the results reporting the data back to the stakeholders (Division of Research, Accountability, and Assessment, 2019). The survey results offer valuable insight into evaluating and improving key activities that impact student and organizational performance. The Division of Research, Accountability, and Assessment (DRAA) organized the survey under the following domains of student perception: academic aspirations, belonging, and student support. The survey uses a four-point Likert scale that ranges from strongly disagree to agree strongly. The online survey is available approximately one month early in the second semester, and stakeholders can access it across various devices. In addition, the survey is available to take in 15 languages. BCPS reports the data at the school level but is not publicly available in a disaggregated form by race. The survey uses 11 items to determine student perception of belonging at school. DRAA compiles the aggregate of the belonging items into a domain index score and reports it on a scale of 0 to 100. A higher score indicates a more favorable opinion. The district provides descriptors of the belonging domain's low and high index scores (see Table 2.1).
Table 2.1

Descriptors of Low and High Index Scores for the Belonging Domain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>At low end of index score</th>
<th>At high end of index score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>“Students experience and witness peer relationships and interactions that are characterized by unresolved conflict. They may find their school to be unsafe and not welcoming.”</td>
<td>“Students experience and witness peer relationships and interactions that are characterized by mutual respect. They also perceive their school environment as safe and welcoming.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quantitative Data Collection

Multiple forms of quantitative data were utilized to answer the research questions.

**Existing State Date**

In 2018, in response to the Every Student Succeeds Act, a federal law that ensures public schools provide a quality education for all children, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) released a new Accountability Report Card for every school district in the state (MSDE, 2022). This report card measures the success of schools and identifies areas for improvement. Publicly available quantitative data for the district provided student achievement data to describe student achievement by race. Student outcomes were described by visually reporting trend data from the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program in English Language Arts and Literacy, graduation rate data for the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate, and the dropout rate. The Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) measures the proportion of students who completed high school within four years and earned a regular high school diploma. As defined by MSDE, the adjusted cohort consists of students who entered grade 9 and any students who joined the cohort in grades 9-12, minus any students who left
the cohort due to transfer or relocation outside of the country or death. The researcher used multiple data sources to triangulate or validate the findings of the research question.

**Existing District Data**

The Measures of Academic Progress in Reading, district data reporting student achievement in literacy, were used to analyze and visually report results (NWEA, 2020). Student outcomes were described through visually reporting trend data from the District Stakeholder Survey for the Belonging Domain for the 2019-2021 school year. Additionally, the bullying questions were utilized from the District Stakeholder Survey. Finally, the District Published Report on the Bullying Experience of Nonbinary Students was used to answer the research questions.

**Qualitative Data Collection**

For the qualitative portion of this research study, the participant’s perception of academic performance and sense of belonging will be examined using a transcript from the district’s publicly released recording of *A Conversation about Race and Racism in America and the Public School System*. The constructs identified in the conceptual framework were used to examine student and community perceptions about race in the school district.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Operational Definition</th>
<th>Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ 1</td>
<td>Academic Achievement</td>
<td>Academic achievement is the extent to which students are able to meet educational benchmarks such as Grade Point Average (GPA), success on standardized tests, and graduation.</td>
<td>English Language Arts State Assessment in Grades 3-8 and 10 MAP-R Graduation Rate 4 Year Cohort, Dropout Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 2</td>
<td>Sense of Belonging</td>
<td>Students feel like they are connected to the school community and included both academically and socially</td>
<td>Stakeholder Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 3</td>
<td>Chronic Absenteeism</td>
<td>Students are chronically absent when absent 10% or more of the school days while enrolled at that school. covid</td>
<td>MSDE Chronic Absenteeism Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 4</td>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>Bullying is aggressive conduct in which an individual intentionally and systematically causes harm or distress to another person</td>
<td>2019 Bullying Experience of Nonbinary Students Stakeholder Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 5</td>
<td>Racial Composition</td>
<td>The racial composition refers to the proportion or number of people who can be identified according to racial identities.</td>
<td>Maryland Public School Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 6</td>
<td>Racial Experiences</td>
<td>The ongoing social and academic experiences of students of a particular racial identity</td>
<td>District Conversation about Race and Racism*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 7</td>
<td>Sense of Belonging</td>
<td>Students feel like they are connected to the school community and included both academically and socially</td>
<td>District Conversation about Race and Racism*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted specifically to the methodology used to collect the data. Quantitative analysis was employed for research questions one through five, while qualitative analysis was utilized for research questions six and seven.

Quantitative Analysis

Due to the small sample size and annual fluctuations in the number of students, extreme care was taken during the analysis and interpretation of the results for the American Indian or Alaska Native and the Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander student groups. In instances when the percentage was suppressed since it was less than three percent, the percentage used for the data analysis and visual representation was 3 percent for consistent data analysis.

Research Question 1

Existing publicly released state and district data were used to answer research question one. First, the data were acquired from the state and district website. The analysis plan was designed to use the data to find out the academic achievement by race as measured by the MCAP ELA Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and English 10, the Measures of Academic Progress in Reading (MAP-R) and the graduation rate by race for the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate. Then, all data were turned into visual representations to show patterns and trends for the data set by race and grade for each measure that was examined.

Research Question 2

The eleven questions pertaining to the belonging domain (see Table 2.3) were extracted from the district stakeholder survey results and analyzed for the years 2019, 2020, and 2021.
The data were obtained from the district website, and a three-year trend analysis was performed for each question in the domain of belonging, stratified by school level.

**Table 2.3**

*Questions for the Belonging Domain*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most students do their best, even when their school work is difficult.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel safe at my school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I can be myself when I am at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students at my school treat me with respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most students in my school are accepting of other students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel welcome at my school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most students in my school stop and think before doing anything when they get angry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At my school, students cooperate with one another to complete school work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At my school, students help each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At my school, students do things that are good for the school community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question 3**

The chronic absenteeism data were accessed from the system-level demographics section of the Maryland Public Schools Report Card to analyze the trend data desegregated by race for the years 2018-2022. The data were analyzed by comparing chronic absenteeism across years and racial groups to examine if disparities existed. Then, all data were turned into visual representations to show patterns and trends for the data set by race and grade for chronic absenteeism.

**Research Question 4**

The district stakeholder survey results for all the bullying questions were analyzed for the 2019, 2020, and 2021 school years (Division of Research, Accountability, and Assessment, 2019, 2020, 2021). For the 2019 administration, several student items related to bullying were
The survey first asked students if they had been bullied at their school and the second asked if students had witnessed others bullied at their school. Students who answered ‘yes’ to either of these items were asked questions about the location and frequency of the bullying (Division of Research, Accountability, and Assessment, 2019). The other question posed to parents/caregivers, school-based staff, and school administrators was related to their perception of bullying at school. Additionally, the publicly released data provided in the 2019 Bullying Experience of Nonbinary Students were analyzed for this research question (McGill-Wilkinson & Koth, 2020).

Research Question 5

Research question five utilized the Professional Staff by Assignment, Race/Ethnicity, and Gender in Maryland Public Schools publication released by the Maryland State Department of Education in October 2021 (Maryland State Department of Education, 2021). The demographic makeup of the teachers and administrators will be documented and presented visually, enabling a comparison to the racial/ethnic composition of the students.

Qualitative Analysis

For research questions six and seven, a thematic analysis strategy utilized both apriori and emergent codes to examine perceptions related to academic achievement, race, and sense of belonging in the district. The data analysis began with transcribing the district Conversation on Race and Racism and then doing a thorough review of the transcript to get to know the data (Saldaña, 2021). The initial a priori coding identified achievement, graduation, gap, dropout, critical reflection, curriculum, bias, race, belonging, and culturally responsive teaching (Lochmiller & Lester, 2015; Miles et al., 2020). During the first cycle of coding, structural coding
was used to identify and categorize sections relevant to the research question using a priori codes (Saldaña, 2021). The data were then reviewed again, and pattern coding was used for the second cycle coding (Miles et al., 2020; Saldaña, 2021). Patterns included examining similarity, difference, frequency, sequence, correspondence, and causation (Saldaña, 2021). Pattern coding allowed the researcher to identify key concepts and relationships within the data, and to develop a deeper understanding of the problem of practice. Additional themes emerged when reviewing the transcript, informing the creation of additional codes. After multiple reviews and discussions with a peer reviewer, themes were finalized from the coding and patterns that emerged through the data coding cycles (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldaña, 2021).

The emergent nature of qualitative research requires flexibility regarding predefined codes leaving space for unanticipated pathways to emerge during the collection and analysis of the data (Lochmiller & Lester, 2015). After the themes were developed, the data were reviewed again to ensure that the thematic findings were consistent with the data and supported by evidence (see Appendix A). The researcher reviewed the transcript multiple times during the coding process and utilized a peer reviewer to increase the credibility of the research findings. After completing the coding process manually, the data were imported into coding software to increase the validity of the results. Additionally, the software assisted in creating powerful visualizations.

Mixed Method Analysis

Upon completion of the separate analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data, an examination of the data in tandem was undertaken (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Mertens, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). An assessment was made of areas of convergence and
divergence and insights were interpreted. Correlations between patterns in the identified constructs that were studied in the needs assessment were derived and used to identify selected findings and suggested response options (See Table 2.15).

Findings

Findings for Research Question 1

What is the academic achievement by race as measured by the MCAP ELA Grades 3-8 and English 10, the Measures of Academic Progress in Reading (MAP-R), and the graduation rate by race for the original year of graduation?

Maryland State Assessment in English Language Arts

An examination of trend data for the State Assessment for English Language Arts in Grades 3-8 and English 10 from the years 2016-2019 reveals racial disparities in outcomes between White and Asian students and students identifying as American Indian/Alaska Native, Black/African American or Hispanic/Latino (See Figure A1-A7). Students identifying two or more ethnicities exhibited smaller disparities, while the performance of Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students was inconsistent, with some years exhibiting substantial disparities and other years the performance was comparable. In certain years, scores for certain racial groups were not reported because the student population represented less than five percent of the total population, in accordance with privacy protection policies for such small student groups. Due to the small sample size and annual fluctuations in the number of students, extreme care should be taken when analyzing and interpreting the results for the American Indian or Alaska Native and the Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander student groups.
**Measures of Academic Progress in Reading**

An analysis of disaggregated data for elementary and middle schools revealed a persistent gap of over 20% between Black students and their non-Black peers (see Figure A8-9). In middle school, there was a persistent gap in 80% of all middle schools and was widening in over a third of these schools between Black students and their non-Black peers (Division of Research, Accountability, and Assessment et al., 2020). The gap was considered persistent if it existed in two of the three years examined and was designated widening if the gap in the current school year was wider than the gap in the earliest examined school year (Division of Research, Accountability, and Assessment et al., 2020).

**Dropout Rate by Racial Demographic**

The district trend data from 2017-2021 shows that the dropout rate of all students has remained steady between seven and eight percent (See Figure A10). The Asian student group had the smallest percentage of students dropping out at 3 percent or less. The student group with the highest percentage of students dropping out was Hispanic/Latino ranging from 16% to 25% for the years from 2017 to 2021.

**Graduation Rate by Racial Demographics**

The Cohort Graduation Rate data reported on the Maryland Report Card was used to examine the graduation rate by racial demographics (MSDE, 2022). As shown in Figure A11, the trend data from 2017-2021 shows that the graduation rate of all students has remained steady at almost 90 percent for the aggregate of all students. However, the 2021 disaggregated data reflect disparities in graduation rates by race between White (90%), Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (91.67%), and Asian (94.75%) students and students who identify as American Indian/Alaska
Native Students (82.14%), Black/African American (85.04%), two or more ethnicities (83.24%), and Hawaiian/Pacific Islander. The Asian student group had the largest percentage of students graduating across all years at 95 percent or greater. The largest disparity present was for Hispanic/Latino students and of particular importance to note is the decline in graduation rate for this student group from almost 75 percent in 2016 to 70.4 in 2020. In 2021, the graduation rate for Hispanic/Latino students increased to 73 percent. In some years due to the small data set, a score was not reported for Hawaiian/Pacific Islander because the student group was smaller than five percent.

Findings for Research Question 2: Student Sense of Belonging in the District

*Baltimore County Public Schools 2019 Stakeholder Survey*

In 2019, the stakeholder survey was completed by 62,925 students (Division of Research, Accountability, and Assessment, 2019). The survey completion rate for elementary students was the highest at 90.1%, followed by middle school students at a 78.3% completion rate, followed by high school students with a 56.1% completion rate. While the responses to the questions are not disaggregated by student racial demographics, the demographics are reported for the completion of the survey (see Table 2.4). Approximately a third of all responses were from Black students and slightly more than a third of the respondents were White. When comparing the survey responses to the student demographics of the district (see Table 2.5) it reveals that Black and Hispanic/Latino students are underrepresented in the stakeholder survey data (Division of Research, Accountability, and Assessment, 2019).

In elementary and middle school, students had the highest agreement (including both agree and strongly agree) for the question, “I feel safe in my school “(see Figures B8-B9). In high
school, students had the highest agreement (including both agree and strongly agree) for the question, “I feel welcome in my school” (see Figure B22). The question that had the highest level of disagreement for elementary (33.4%) and high school students (51%) was, “students at my school treat me with respect,” (see Figures B2 & B4). In middle school, the question with the highest level of disagreement was, “most students in my school stop and think before doing anything when they get angry.” (see Figure B24). Out of the 11 questions included in the belonging domain, there were multiple questions that had 50 percent or higher disagreement including three in elementary, six in middle, and four in high school (see Tables 2.6-2.8)

**Table 2.4**

*Percentage of Student Responses by Race/Ethnicity in 2019*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Demographic</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>33.2%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>37.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.5**

*District Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity in 2019*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Demographic</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Ethnicities</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2.6

*Questions Scoring 50 percent or Higher for Disagree or Strongly Disagree in Elementary*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belonging Domain Question</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most students do their best, even when their schoolwork is difficult.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most students in my school stop and think before doing anything when they get angry.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students at my school treat me with respect.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2.7

*Questions Scoring 50 percent or Higher for Disagree or Strongly Disagree in Middle*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belonging Domain Question</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most students in my school are accepting of other students.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At my school, students do things that are good for the school community.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most students in my school try to work out their disagreements with other students by talking to them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most students do their best, even when their schoolwork is difficult.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most students in my school stop and think before doing anything when they get angry.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students at my school treat me with respect.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2.8

*Questions Scoring 50 percent or Higher for Disagree or Strongly Disagree in High*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Belonging Domain Question</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most students in my school try to work out their disagreements with other students by talking to them.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most students do their best, even when their schoolwork is difficult.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most students in my school stop and think before doing anything when they get angry.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students at my school treat me with respect.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Baltimore County Public Schools 2020 Stakeholder Survey

In 2020, the completion of the stakeholder survey increased slightly with 65,117 student submissions. The survey completion rate for elementary students was the highest at 90%, followed by middle school students at a 78 percent completion rate, followed by high school students with a 56% completion rate. While the responses to the questions are not disaggregated by student racial demographics, the demographics are reported for completion of the survey by school enrollment level (See Table 2.9). The completion rate can be compared to the student enrollment for the entire district (See Table 2.10). Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students make up roughly 40% and 12% of the total BCPS student population, respectively. However, their responses were not adequately reflected in the data, with the representation being particularly low among parents. The combined responses from Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino parents were less than 30% of the total parent responses.

The results of the 2020 survey were remarkably like the 2019 survey results. There was only one question showing any significant improvement across all three school levels. Out of the 11 questions included in the belonging domain, there were multiple questions that had 50 percent or higher disagreement including two in elementary, six in middle, and three in high school (see Tables 2.6-2.8). In the belonging domain, the question that resulted in the highest agreement in elementary (68%) and middle (66%) school students was, “I feel safe in my school,” (see Figures B7-B8). High school students had the highest agreement for the question, “I feel welcome in my school,” (see Figure B22). For all three levels, the belonging domain scores were remarkably similar in 2019 and 2020 for ten of the eleven questions ranging from a
-1.5-1.7 difference in agreement responses. In elementary school, the question that showed the greatest gain in student agreement was, \textit{most students do their best, even when their schoolwork is difficult}, where there was a 32 percent increase in agreement (See Figure B5).

\textbf{Table 2.9}

\textit{Percentage of Student Responses by Race/Ethnicity in 2020}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Demographic</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{Table 2.10}

\textit{District Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity in 2020}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Demographic</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>40.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Ethnicities</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{Baltimore County Public Schools 2021 Stakeholder Survey}

In 2021, the stakeholder survey completion rate declined by almost half (48%) with only 31,401 students completing the survey. It is extremely important to note that while there is a significant increase from 2020 to 2021 for all grade levels, 2021 had the lowest participation of the three years and this was the year that students were learning from home. When the survey was administered, most students had not yet returned to school. The survey completion rate
for elementary students was the highest at 52.4%, followed by middle school students at a
45.5% completion rate, followed by high school students with an 18.6% completion rate. While
the responses to the questions are not disaggregated by student racial demographics, the
demographics are reported for the completion of the survey (see Table 2.11). For example,
while 40% of the district is comprised of Black/African American students, the survey was
completed by less than one-third of Black/African American students. The survey completion
rate can be compared against the student enrollment for the entire district (see Table 2.12).

In elementary and middle school, students had the highest agreement (including both
agree and strongly agree) for the question, “I feel welcome in my school “(see Figures B20 and
B21). In high school, students had the highest agreement (including both agree and strongly
agree) for the question, “I feel safe in my school “(see Figure B10). Notably, the question that
showed the greatest gain in student agreement across all three levels was, “students at my
school treat me with respect,” where in 2020 almost 70 percent of all students disagreed with
that statement, and in 2021 only 13 percent of elementary and 34 percent of middle and high
school students disagreed with that statement (See Figures B2-B4). In 2021, the question that
had the highest disagreement for elementary (33.4%), middle (53%), and high school students
(51%) was, “Most students in my school stop and think before doing anything when they get
angry,” (see Figures B23-B25). In elementary and middle/high school, the other question that
had a high level of disagreement (22% and 40% respectively) was, “most students in my school
try to work out their disagreements with other students by talking to them,” (see Figures B17-
B19). It is important to note that even though the question “students at my school treat me
with respect,” was the question with the largest gain in agreement that there was a high level
of disagreement in middle (40%) and high school (34%) student responses. In high school, the other questions that had a high level of disagreement (35% and 39% respectively) were, “Most students do their best, even when their schoolwork is difficult,” (see Figure B7) and “Most students in my school are accepting of other students (See Figure B16).

Out of the 11 questions included in the belonging domain, there was only one question in middle school and one question in high school students scored higher than 50 percent disagreement (see Tables 2.6-2.8). However, the results of the 2021 survey must be analyzed by considering the drastic reduction in overall completion rate and the fact that students had been learning remotely since March 2020 and not all students had returned to school when the survey was administered.

Overall, of the three domains measured through the stakeholder survey, the belonging domain scored the lowest across elementary, middle, and high school. Elementary students scored the highest and middle school scored the lowest (see Figure B1). Of particular note, the belonging domain index score for middle school was the lowest of all the domain scores in 2019 and 2020 and the lowest of all domain scores for high school students in 2021.

### Table 2.11

**Percentage of Student Responses by Demographic Group in 2021**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Demographic</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.12

District Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity in 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Demographic</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>40.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Ethnicities</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings for Research Question 3: What Is the Chronic Absenteeism Rate by Race?

The chronic absenteeism rate trend for all students was relatively consistent in the years 2018-2020 at slightly under 20 percent. In 2021, there was a slight increase; whereas in 2022 there was a significant increase in the number of students chronically absent with close to 31 percent of students missing 10 or more days of school. The chronic absenteeism rate trend for American Indian/Alaska Native students was relatively consistent in the years 2018-2020 at slightly over 20 percent. In 2021, there was an increase to close to 27 percent; whereas in 2022 there was a significant increase in the number of students chronically absent with close to 35 percent of students missing 10 or more days of school. The chronic absenteeism rate trend for Asian students was the lowest of all student groups and remained relatively consistent in the years 2018-2021 at slightly under 10 percent.

In 2021 the percentage of Asian students chronically absent almost doubled from the previous year. The chronic absenteeism rate trend for Black/African American students was relatively consistent in the years 2018-2019 at around 25 percent. In 2020, there was a slight decrease to 22 percent, whereas in 2021 there was an almost 10 percent increase in the
number of Black students chronically absent. In 2022, Black students had the highest chronic absenteeism rate at 37.6%. The chronic absenteeism rate trend for Hispanic/Latino students was relatively consistent in the years 2018-2020 at slightly under 24 percent. In 2021, there was an increase to just under 30 percent and in 2022 it increased again to 36 percent. The chronic absenteeism rate trend for Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander students was relatively consistent in the years 2018-2021 at around 20 percent.

In 2022, the chronic absenteeism rate increased to almost 30 percent. The chronic absenteeism rate trend for students identifying as two or more races students was relatively consistent in the years 2018-2021 at approximately 20 percent. In 2022, there was an increase to just over 31 percent. The chronic absenteeism rate trend for White students was relatively consistent in the years 2018-2021 at around 14 percent. In 2022, there was an increase to 24 percent of students missing 10 or more days of school. Across all years from 2018-2022, Black students had the highest rate of chronic absenteeism and Hispanic/Latino students had the second highest rate of chronic absenteeism. Asian students had the lowest rate of chronic absenteeism.

Findings for Research Question 4: Do Students Experience Bullying in the School System?

**Reported Bullying in 2019**

Over half of the surveyed students reported observing bullying among peers (See Appendix C1), while just a quarter reported being bullied themselves (See Appendix C2). Personal bullying experiences were most prevalent among elementary students, while the highest rate of bullying witnessed was among middle school students (See Appendix C1-2). Parents and school staff perceive bullying as a more significant issue compared to school
administrators (See Appendix C3). Across all grade levels, students reported being bullied most often within the school building, with similar rates for bullying inside the classroom and in common areas like the cafeteria, gym, hallway, or stairs. The frequency of bullying on the school bus was consistent among all grade levels. However, older students reported a higher frequency of bullying through online or text methods (See Appendix C4).

**Reported Bullying in 2020**

Elementary students reported a rate of bullying of one-third, which decreased from elementary to secondary grades, with high school students reporting the lowest experiences of bullying (See Appendix C1). About half of all students reported witnessing bullying among peers in their schools (See Appendix C2). Middle school students reported the highest rate of witnessing bullying. The reports of being bullied were significantly lower than the reports of witnessing bullying among peers across all grade levels.

Across all grade levels, students reported being bullied most often within the school, with comparable rates inside the classroom and in common areas like the cafeteria, gym, hallway, or stairs. The frequency of bullying on the school bus was consistent across grade levels. However, older students experienced more bullying through online or text methods. The frequency and location of students witnessing bullying followed similar patterns, except for middle school students who reported witnessing notably more bullying on the school bus compared to elementary and high school students (See Appendix C5).

**Reported Bullying in 2021**

Around a quarter of elementary students reported being bullied, with secondary students reporting lower rates of bullying (See Appendix C1). Approximately one-third of students across
all levels reported witnessing bullying among peers in their schools (See Appendix C2). Reports of being bullied were lower than reports of witnessing bullying among peers at all grade levels. Compared to the previous year, reports of witnessing bullying decreased across all grade levels. About a third of surveyed students reported witnessing bullying among peers, while fewer than a quarter reported being bullied themselves. The highest rate of personal bullying experiences was among elementary students, while the rates of witnessing bullying were consistent among all grade levels.

Across all grade levels, students reported experiencing bullying most frequently inside the school. The frequency of bullying on the school bus was consistent among all students. However, older students reported a higher frequency of bullying through online or text methods. The patterns for the frequency and location of students witnessing bullying were similar across grade levels (See Appendix C6).

**Bullying Experiences of Nonbinary Secondary Students**

A study was conducted in 2019 to examine the bullying experiences of nonbinary secondary students in a large diverse school district on the East coast (McGill-Wilkinson & Koth, 2020). The proportion of nonbinary students among respondents in a school ranged from 0% to 3.0%. On average, middle schools had a mean proportion of 1.4% (SD = .72) nonbinary students, while high schools had .94% (SD = .57). All 28 high schools had at least one nonbinary student respond to the survey. Table 10 presents the number and proportion of each gender that reported experiencing bullying in their school. Nearly half of the nonbinary students reported being bullied, while less than 20% of male and female students reported the same. A significant difference was found between groups for the variables of bullying frequency,
belonging, and student support by gender, with nonbinary students having lower means for belonging and student support, and a higher mean for bullying frequency, indicating that these students generally had worse outcomes compared to male and female students. Half of the male and female students felt positively about their peer relationships at school, while only a third of nonbinary students felt the same. The average score of 2.64 for bullying frequency among nonbinary students was halfway between “Once or Twice” and “Once a Month”. Close to two-thirds of male and female students had positive relationships with adults at school, while less than half of nonbinary students felt the same.

Out of the 696 nonbinary secondary students in the district, one in eight reported being bullied daily in all four locations assessed by the survey (classroom, outside the classroom, school bus, and online/text). Despite representing less than two percent of the total secondary student population, nonbinary students make up over 20 percent of students who experience daily bullying in all locations. Half of the female and male students reported feeling accepted by their peers in school, whereas only a third of nonbinary students reported the same. Similarly, close to two-thirds of female and male students reported feeling supported and respected by adults at their school, while less than half of nonbinary students reported feeling the same.

The results revealed that gender did not have a significant interaction with social support from school-based adults in predicting bullying experiences, but nonbinary students with high social support reported less frequent bullying and higher levels of school belonging. Social support from school-based adults was beneficial for all students but was especially impactful for nonbinary students. For instance, when nonbinary students received high social support from school-based adults, their reported bullying frequency was no different from that
of male and female students, contrasted with when they had low social support (McGill-
Wilkinson & Koth, 2020).

**Table 2.13**

*Count and Percentage of Each Gender Group Experiencing Bullying*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2,776</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3,420</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonbinary</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings for Research Question 5: How Does the Racial Composition of Students in the District Compare to the Teacher and Administrator Racial Composition?

**Staff Representation**

This report provides data on the distribution of professional personnel at the central office and school levels in Maryland's local school systems (LSSs), categorized by race and gender. The information pertains to the current state as of October 15, 2021 (Maryland State Department of Education, 2021). It was reported that a majority of elementary (87%) and secondary teachers (78%) are White. Additionally, many teachers are female, the highest being at the elementary level (90%), 71% of middle school teachers, and 59% of high school teachers. The percentage of Black students at the elementary level is nearly four times greater than the number of Black tenured teachers. At the elementary school level, only 20% of administrators are Black and less than 3% are members of any race/ethnicity other than Black or White. At the middle school level, approximately 1/3 of principals are Black and 40% of assistant principals are Black; however, there is only 1 administrator with a race/ethnicity other than Black or
White. At the high school level, while the gender demographics are more equal, the teacher population is still predominantly White. At the high school administrator level, one-quarter of principals and one-third of assistant principals are Black and approximately only 6% of the administrators are not classified as Black or White. Interestingly, the Hispanic/Latino high school principal demographics are proportional to the Hispanic/Latino student population. Overall, the data presented in Appendix D illustrate a large demographic divide between the teachers and administrators and our student population.

Findings for Research Question 6

**Achievement Gap**

During the conversation on Race and Racism, two students mentioned the achievement gap and the disparity of standardized testing and how sometimes students of color and low-income students don’t score as high, and low scores sometimes affect how to get into colleges or they get into specialized programs. “And we just were just wondering, how does [the district] handle that?” (BCPS, 2020). One district panelist in response offered the following, “let’s start this discussion with having a conversation about the achievement gap...because I think this is really important for students to appreciate in terms of what is in the literature around issues of equity and access. ...gaps in achievement tell us more about institutions than they do about students, and so very often our young people are reading these data, and they are internalizing these messages that will suggest that there is a problem inherent in their ability to learn” (BCPS, 2020).

A principal on the panel offered the following response to the student panelist, “As a white woman, leading a school that’s predominantly made up of about 60% black
students...year after year that this achievement gap where my black students are not achieving at the same rate as my white students...we’re putting in all of this work year after year, and we keep seeing the same result...we really haven’t done a lot of work where we as white educators are really looking at the implicit bias that we have, because we have been brought up in this system of institutionalized racism, where we have bias and that we may not even realize that we are ending our unintended impacts, or might be causing some of these gaps” (BCPS, 2020). Another principal on the panel remarked, “I see some connection in the conversation the panel had earlier with this idea of the gap and academic achievement. When we look at the Baltimore County stakeholder survey in the category of belonging, our black students as a school system have a larger disagreement that they are supported in our schools. And I think that speaks loud and clear” (BCPS, 2020). Another panelist discussed the relationship between the achievement gap and teacher performance ratings, “I think that’s one thing that another thing also is that 97% of teachers across [the state], are rated highly effective or effective, but we have these large achievement gaps...as a teacher, I plan to hold principals, assistant principals, coordinators, everyone accountable, because what we’re not serving our Black and Brown students, and we need to do better” (BCPS, 2020).

Findings for Research Question 7

**Sense of Belonging**

The district conversation about race and racism included a robust discussion on the sense of belonging in the school district. A sense of belonging can be described as feeling a sense of connection, acceptance, respect, inclusion, safety, and support in the school community (Goodenow, 1993). In the *Conversation about Race and Racism* (BCPS, 2020), one
panelist discussed what happens when a student feels othered, I think what I would like to say as this concept of othering, is what’s also damaging to our students. You know, we all love our kids. But, you know, people say you can’t love black kids if you don’t know them...But this concept of othering is also what needs to be changed. Because [if] we come in thinking kids often have deficiencies, just because they don’t speak the language doesn’t mean they’re deficient in something else. When students feel othered, they are less likely to feel like they belong which ultimately can impact school engagement, persistence with schoolwork, and overall success (Baleria, 2021). While the publicly released Stakeholder Survey data are not publicly available disaggregated by race, during the panel discussion one participant commented, “When we look at the Baltimore County Stakeholder Survey in the category of belonging, our black students as a school system have a larger disagreement that they are supported in our school” (BCPS, 2020).

**Sense of Belonging in the Curriculum**

During the district panel conversation about race and racism, it was articulated several times by both teachers and students that the curriculum needs to include mirrors for all our students because identity matters, and so do the stories that students read in class (BCPS, 2020). One panelist explained students do not currently feel included, “Another major issue is kids do not see themselves in the things that are being taught to them to the books that they’re reading to the videos that are being shown to the materials that are being presented” (BCPS, 2020). Another panelist remarked, “So as white educators in our building some simple things like what does your classroom library look like? Can the kids even see themselves in the books that they read every day? What books are you choosing to model your lessons when you’re
doing your direct instruction?” (BCPS, 2020). A board member on the panel exclaimed, “I think the students made a great point that we need to rethink our curriculum and make it more diverse and inclusive of everyone. (BCPS, 2020). Another panelist discussed how teaching and learning is centered in Whiteness, “all of the work around black excellence, right, we don’t necessarily get access to in the same ways that we get exposure to Eurocentric models” (BCPS, 2020). Another panelist connected the achievement gap to interrogating teacher and leader instructional practices, “when they’re planning instruction when we’re selecting curricular materials? And when we’re making those choices about what we’re presenting for our kids? And how is that impacting, you know, our everyday choices, and then the long-term achievement” (BCPS, 2020). Another panelist discussed how damaging it is for students when they do not see themselves represented in the curriculum materials, every facet of this country was built by the black community. And for us to strip that away and not have our students from kindergarten all the way until they graduate. Not seeing that reflected until you have snippets of the curriculum is also damaging. Kids need to see themselves; we also need to speak up for the kids who cannot speak such as our students who are from immigrant countries. (BCPS, 2020). When considering the teaching of the written conversation, a panelist remarked about understanding even within identity groups that students are not all the same,

when I talk about Muslim students, we are not a monolith. But we are the most diverse group of people in the world. So, if I’m going to come into a conference, and I’m going to talk about Muslim students...because again, going back to the issue is anti-Muslim bigotry, or what people call Islamophobia is the flattest form of bigotry, that’s actually most acceptable. And we see it all the time. So, when we have our students in the
classroom, and they’re watching the news, and then they come home, that fear is real. So, the sense of identity is very important, because they’re going to be they’re going to feel safe, to speak, to, to flourish, to do whatever it is. So, it’s always that support.

(BCPS, 2020)

**Sense of Belonging Staff Representation**

The representation of staff who share demographic characteristics with students has been shown to foster a sense of belonging and inclusiveness in educational institutions, therefore positively impacting academic outcomes. During the panel discussion on Race and Racism, one panelist remarked,

*It’s true that panelists have implicit bias when they interview candidates of color. And that shows up in who gets passed through to the next level. That’s how we start to attack that idea that black lives matter. Black staffing matters, that we figure out, we examine those biases, and we figure out how to mitigate them. And when we’re aware of them, then we train people in terms of those interview panels to think and listen and move differently in terms of how they interact with the people that they interview. So, I think you raise a great point. If we believe Black Lives Matter, Black Lives Matter, then we have to believe staffing matters. And black administrators matter how they’re chosen, how they’re treating others, how they’re interviewed, all that has to be examined, because our implicit biases show up. And that’s where racial, racial and institutional racism starts to gain a foothold within the organization. (BCPS, 2020)*

Another participant remarked, “I’m looking at how are we being culturally responsive to our students if we don’t know our students, and so it’s important that they do have representation
of that look like them and possibly lived like them” (BCPS, 2020). A principal on the panel discussed the importance of teachers and administrators with different cultural backgrounds from their students taking the time to really, I think, you know, it kind of goes back again, to really knowing who our kids are knowing that knowing their interests, knowing and not generalizing, what their interests are, like, truly, really knowing I’m really knowing about their culture, and not judging based on my lived experience, or my culture, or my teachers experiences and having them not be judged and using that information when we are doing the teaching and learning (BCPS, 2020). One student remarked, “the diversity with teachers is really important, especially for an African American student. And if we don’t have people look like us, it might affect how you perform in schools, especially low-income school students” (BCPS, 2020). The presence of staff members who reflect the demographic diversity of students has been shown to enhance a sense of belonging and inclusiveness within the school environment.

Discussion

When analyzing the data for research question two, do students feel a sense of belonging in the district, there was a significant increase in agreement with many of the questions. In 2021, of the eleven questions comprising the belonging domain, only one question in middle school and one question in high school indicated more than 50% disagreement (see Tables 2.6-2.8). Significant caution should be taken when interpreting these results because students began the 2020-2021 school year engaged in virtual instruction which continued through the week of March 1, 2021, due to the global pandemic (See Figure 2.6)
During the week of March 1, parents/guardians of students in public separate day schools and students in preschool through Grade 2, were given the choice to return to in-person instruction on a rotational basis or to remain fully virtual. During the week of March 15, parents/guardians of students in Grades 3-12 whose Individualized Education Program included a least restrictive environment that is primarily outside of the general education classroom setting and students in select Career and Technical Education programs that required hands-on learning experiences were given the choice to return to in-person instruction on a rotational basis or to remain fully virtual. During the week of March 22, parents/guardians of the remaining students in Grades 6 and 9 were given the choice to return to in-person instruction on a rotational basis or to remain fully virtual. During the week of April 6, parents/guardians of the remaining students in grades 3–5; 7–8; and 10–12 were given the
choice to return to in-person instruction on a rotational basis or to remain fully virtual. All students returning for in-person instruction were assigned to Cohort A or Cohort B. Students who elected to remain fully virtual were assigned to Cohort C. Students in Cohort A attended school for in-person instruction on Monday and Tuesday and participated in virtual learning on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Students in Cohort B participated in virtual learning on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday and attended school for in-person instruction on Thursday and Friday. Students in Cohort C participated in virtual instruction Monday through Friday. At no point during the 2020-2021 school year did all students return to the school building at the same time. Therefore, the district 2021 stakeholder survey administered from February 22 through March 26, 2021 (see Table 14) should be interpreted with caution.

The needs assessment investigated factors influencing racial disparities in academic outcomes. The findings reveal the persistence of unequal and unjust educational outcomes, evidenced by predictable patterns. The racial disparities, which vary in size and intensity, persist across years across student groups. As discussed in chapter one, disparate academic achievement by race (and by extension other minoritized groups can be at risk) is a multifaceted, complex issue influenced by both in-school and out-of-school factors (see Table 2.14). These factors contribute to a systemic problem that requires a root cause approach to address by designing a comprehensive and systemic solution. Potential solutions to the disparities uncovered through the mixed-method research study is increasing representation in curriculum, promoting culturally responsive teaching, and providing professional development for teachers and administrators on implicit bias and equity consciousness. District policies and practices should be reviewed and revised to ensure they are equitable and fair for all students.
By addressing these issues, we can work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable educational environment that promotes academic success for all students.

Table 2.14

*Selected Findings and Suggestions for Possible Responses*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>Suggested Response Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Racial and Cultural Discrimination, Bias, and Deficit Beliefs | *• Create a systematic equity professional development plan and require teachers, counselors, administrators, and staff participate in regular trainings including implicit bias, cultural competence, intersectionality, and racial equity*  
  *• Critical reflection*  
  *• Facilitate productive dialogue regarding issues of discrimination and equity in schools*  
  *• Provide training on how to critically reflect on how our beliefs, practices, and interactions can contribute to inequitable outcomes by race* |
| Lack of Representation in Curriculum               | *• Conduct a comprehensive equity audit process to examine the current English Language Arts Curriculum PreK-12 to determine areas of strength and areas of growth*  
  *• Use the results of the ELA audit to revise the curriculum to reflect the experiences and contributions of people from historically underrepresented racial, ethnic and/or cultural backgrounds*  
  *• Develop and/or implement a comprehensive vision and mission for antiracist curriculum and culturally sustaining practices*  
  *• Provide training for all individuals responsible for professional learning and curriculum development to understand how the prioritization of the dominant culture in our curriculum, texts, and instructional practices contribute to racial inequities* |
| Lack of Teacher and Administrator Representation   | *• Develop recruitment practices to intentionally build a pipeline of diverse candidates that represent the demographics of the student population of the district*  
  *• Review the hiring process (interview protocol, questions and performance tasks) to mitigate opportunities for implicit bias*  
  *• Allocate sufficient resources to the Grow Your Own Program*  
  *• Develop an exit interview process for positions at all levels to collect data around staff of color attrition*  
  *• Create teacher racial affinity groups to increase support and retention of staff of color* |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>Suggested Response Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Lack of Culturally Responsive Teaching      | • Professional development that culturally sensitive  
• Instructional practices  
• Provide training in leading classroom discussions about race, culture, religion, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation  
• Diverse learning needs  
• Ensure culturally responsive lessons are integrated throughout the curriculum and not presented as isolated units |
| Inequitable District Policies and Practices  | • Identify and eliminate inequitable district policies, practices, and procedures that are barriers to access, opportunity and equitable outcomes for students  
• Develop and institute antiracist practices and policies that create access, opportunity, and equitable educational outcomes for students, staff, and families of color  
• Examine representation in advanced coursework and programs including AP, dual enrollment, IB, gifted and talented programs, and completion of Algebra by grade 8  
• Develop a district strategic plan |
| Sense of belonging                          | • Encourage the district to use the disaggregated data by race to understand how students and family members experience belonging based on race/ethnicity  
• Disaggregate the school and district bullying questions by race  
• Have regular focus groups by racial/ethnic affinity groups to understand the unique needs of historically marginalized students  
• Culturally responsive Family and community engagement strategies including PTSA  
• Provide professional development on Funds of Knowledge  
• Develop intentional and systematic support for students that have been historically denied access to advanced coursework |
| Disparate Academic Achievement by Race      | • Identify racial inequities in the district and collaborative problem solve with staff, students, families, and community members to address them and hold each other accountable.  
• Ensure equitable access to resources, facilitates and classes regardless of students race ethnicity or culture  
• Use of data to produce equitable learning outcomes  
• Strategic use of funds to create equitable learning outcomes  
• Community schools  
• Equity based budgeting  
• Train leaders on eliminating racial disparities |
Implications for Research and Practice

Research has shown that racial and cultural discrimination can significantly impact academic achievement. Studies have found that students from marginalized racial and cultural backgrounds often face barriers in their educational experiences, such as discrimination from teachers and peers, lack of access to resources, and limited representation in curriculum and leadership. These experiences can lead to lower self-esteem, motivation, and engagement in school, as well as higher rates of absenteeism and dropping out. Moreover, research has shown that experiencing discrimination-related stress can negatively affect students’ cognitive and emotional development, further impeding academic achievement. Ultimately, these experiences can lead to significant disparities in educational outcomes for students from marginalized backgrounds, highlighting the need for policies and interventions to reduce discrimination and promote equity in education (Darling-Hammond, 2015; Herman, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2007; Musu-Gillette et al., 2018).

Using a mixed methods approach, this needs assessment study provided an opportunity to examine the constructs influencing racial disparities in academic outcomes. Analyzing the qualitative and quantitative data resulted in multiple actionable findings working towards equitable outcomes for historically marginalized students. For example, when conducting a classical content analysis, the word curriculum was mentioned more than three times as any other code (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). In particular, the curriculum intersected with statements about representation, sense of belonging, and racial disparities in educational outcomes from students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Research has shown that students who see themselves and their cultures reflected in the curriculum are likelier to
engage in the material, feel a sense of belonging in the school, and achieve higher levels. Therefore, a theory of change was developed based on the conceptual framework and the needs assessment results presented in this chapter (See Figure 2.7).

The theory of change posits that developing equity consciousness before, during, and after implementing a culturally responsive curriculum audit is imperative to change belonging and academic outcomes for students. The comprehensive audit process will affirm all students' identities, promote inclusivity, validate multiple perspectives, and increase student engagement within the curriculum. Building culturally responsive practices into the curriculum can help teachers facilitate a welcoming and affirming environment in several ways (Gay, 2018). First, teachers can create a more inclusive and welcoming classroom atmosphere by acknowledging and valuing students' diverse cultural backgrounds, identities, and experiences. Second, when teachers integrate students' prior knowledge and experiences into classroom lessons, it can help to bridge the gap between students' lives outside of school and the content they are learning, making learning more relevant and increasing student motivation and engagement (Johnson & Johnson, 2016; Moll et al., 1992; Vygotsky, 1978). Third, integrating collaborative practices and teamwork can foster strong teacher-student relationships and encourage positive student-student interactions, creating an inclusive learning community (Brown et al., 1989; Hammond, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978). Fourth, a culturally responsive classroom can foster a sense of belonging and increase student motivation, leading to improved academic outcomes (Byrd, 2016). This theory of change provides a roadmap to reduce the current disparities in academic outcomes, creating a more equitable educational system,
including increased graduation rates, improved district, and state achievement test scores, and an increased sense of belonging for historically underserved students.
Figure 2.7

Theory of Change

- Affirm all students’ identities
- Promote inclusivity for all students
- Validate multiple perspectives
- Cultivate empathy
- Increase student engagement

Measured by:
1. A decrease in racial disparities in the following academic measures
   a. Graduation Rate data by OYG
   b. MCAP ELA Grades 3-8, 10
   c. MAP-R
   d. Dropout Rate

Academic Outcomes:
1. Improved graduation rate
2. Improved district achievement test scores
3. Improved state achievement test scores

Belonging Outcomes:
1. Increased student perception of belonging
2. Increased student engagement

Measured by:
1. Districtwide Stakeholder Survey Belonging Domain
2. Student Focus Groups
3. Decrease in racial disparities of dropout rate
4. Decreased Bullying rate
5. Increased Attendance Rates
Chapter 3: Intervention Literature Review

Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological System Theory is a valuable framework for exploring complex problems of practice in education and framed the examination of the pervasive racial disparities in academic outcomes for historically marginalized students. The literature review in chapter one showed that numerous interrelated factors, including historical, structural, economic, sociopolitical, and cultural elements inside and outside of schools, contribute to the current inequitable school conditions that manifest as disparate academic outcomes. For example, the needs assessment findings in chapter two demonstrated the existence of persistent academic disparities for the historically marginalized students in the district. In addition, a lack of equity consciousness and critical reflection among educators can perpetuate the implementation of a Eurocentric curriculum that may contribute to implicit bias, negative attitudes and beliefs, and a lack of culturally responsive instruction. In this environment, marginalized students may experience a poor sense of belonging, exacerbating existing disparities and perpetuating cycles of inequality. Addressing these interconnected factors requires a comprehensive approach that prioritizes equity consciousness, culturally responsive curriculum and instruction, and ongoing professional development for educators to develop equity consciousness.

In 2015, Congress established The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to ensure that all students have access to high-quality educational opportunities that prepare them for college and career success (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). ESSA emphasizes advancing equity for marginalized students and holds schools accountable for the progress of all student groups to ensure all students can reach their full potential (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).
Equity audits provide a crucial framework for education leaders to identify and address inequity patterns within their districts and schools. Equity audits have a long and significant history in the United States, rooted in the enforcement and compliance of federal laws related to civil rights.

Equity audits have emerged as a crucial tool for promoting fairness and equity in education, providing a systematic and comprehensive examination of educational practices, policies, and outcomes to identify and address disparities based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other factors. Through the rigorous collection and analysis of data, equity audits offer a means of holding educational institutions accountable for providing equitable opportunities and outcomes for all students and serve as a powerful means of advancing social justice and promoting educational equity. For example, in *Savage Inequalities*, Kozol (2012) identified a growing number of class-action equity lawsuits initiated by local school districts because of the unequal allocation of educational funding among different school districts in the same state and to challenge discriminatory policies and practices. Additionally, curriculum audits, dating back to the 1860s during the Common School Movement, evolved to encompass a focus on equity, as seen in the Curriculum Management Solutions’ audit process implemented in over 450 school systems across 46 states and several countries (Curriculum Management Solutions Inc, 2023).

The Theory of Change, *Increasing Sense of Belonging, and Academic Outcomes for Historically Marginalized Students* (See Figure 3.8) reflect the literature reviewed in Chapter 1 and the results of its synthesis with a discussion about the Empirical Project described in Chapter 2. This model describes relationships between specific elements of current research
and best practices related to culturally responsive and/or equity curriculum audits, focusing on reducing educational inequities and promoting a sense of belonging. The specific elements are highlighted within a table to emphasize their unique or otherwise essential features, which will inform the creation of a usable tool for school communities undertaking an equity audit.

**Theoretical Framework and Theory of Change**

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Learning (1978) posits that social interactions and cultural context significantly influence an individual's cognitive development and learning. According to his theory, culture and belonging play a critical role in shaping a person's sense of identity and their experiences in academic settings. Culture is critical in shaping and transmitting knowledge, values, and norms. The tools and practices a particular culture or society uses, such as language and communication, can significantly impact how individuals think, reason, and make sense of the world around them (Brown et al., 1989; Bruner, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978). By emphasizing the dynamic interplay between human development, knowledge acquisition, and the environment's socio-historical-cultural features, Vygotsky (1978) provides a comprehensive framework for understanding students' schooling experiences, including those from marginalized communities.

Vygotsky's theoretical framework postulates that educational institutions ought to construct their systems to foster social interaction and collaborative activities between students to enhance the student's sense of belonging within the academic community. By creating an environment where students can interact and exchange ideas, they can simultaneously develop their language and cognitive abilities contributing to their sense of belonging in the school community and enhancing their academic performance (Vygotsky,
A curriculum equity audit can operationalize Vygotsky's approach within a systematic and comprehensive approach to examining the curriculum and teacher practices for evidence of cultural responsiveness and equity consciousness (Furman, 2012; Skrla et al., 2004). This holistic perspective will help inform more inclusive and equitable curriculum and pedagogical practices that respond to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students.
Figure 3.8

Theory of Change: Increasing Sense of Belonging and Academic Outcomes for Historically Marginalized Students

- Affirm all students' identities
- Promote inclusivity for all students
- Validate multiple perspectives
- Cultivate empathy
- Increase student engagement

**Equity Consciousness Training**

- Understand rationale for

**Culturally Relevant Curriculum**

- with

**Culturally Responsive Practices**

- which should

**Measured by:**
1. A decrease in racial disparities in the following academic measures
   - Graduation Rate data by OYG
   - MCAP ELA Grades 3-8, 10
   - MAP-R
   - Dropout Rate

**Academic Outcomes:**
1. Improved graduation rate
2. Improved district achievement test scores
3. Improved state achievement test scores

**Belonging Outcomes:**
1. Increased student perception of belonging
2. Increased student engagement

**Measured by:**
1. Districtwide Stakeholder Survey Belonging Domain
2. Student Focus Groups
3. Decrease in racial disparities of dropout rate
4. Decreased Bullying rate
5. Increased Attendance Rates
Audit Overview

Purpose of an Audit

An audit is a systematic, objective examination of a process, service, event, belief, or entity involving a comparison against established standards (Basu, 2009; Bula & Niedzielski, 2023; English, 1988; Hayes et al., 2014; Russell, 2013). The word "audit" originated from the Latin word "audire," which means "to hear" (Basu, 2009; Bula & Niedzielski, 2023; Cavenagh & Rymill, 2019). The history of audits can be traced back to ancient Mesopotamian where dots and checks symbolized a verification system, and later in China and Egypt, where auditors had the responsibility for supervising the accounts of the Emperor and Pharaoh, respectively (Bula & Niedzielski, 2023; Cavenagh & Rymill, 2019; Hayes et al., 2014; Lee, 2021). The government of the Zhao dynasty in China also conducted audits in their accounting system, and they used audits to validate that public funds were appropriately utilized (English, 1988; Hayes et al., 2014; Lee, 2021; Ramamoorti, 2003). In medieval times, an auditor listened to the presentation of financial accounts, where the concept of auditing originated (Ramamoorti, 2003). Auditors were highly esteemed and were considered one of the most prestigious occupations (Hayes et al., 2014). Based on the historical use of audits, a conventional audit provides an independent and unbiased opinion on the accuracy of financial statements, the effectiveness of internal controls, compliance with laws and regulations, and the efficiency of operations (Parker & Johnson, 2017). An audit helps ensure that an organization's financial statements are reliable and assures investors, creditors, and other stakeholders of the responsible management of the organization (Parker & Johnson, 2017). Traditional auditors were considered fact finders, and
audits helped to identify areas of risk and potential areas of improvement in financial organizations (Dodwell, 1966).

In modern times, the practice of auditing has evolved to include not only financial audits but also automotive, operational, health, security, social work, competitive intelligence, sales, compliance, environmental, legal compliance, and information system audits (Bedard et al., 2005; Darnall et al., 2009; English, 1988; Izquierdo Triana et al., 2017; McKenzie & Skrla, 2011; Moon et al., 2003; Packard, 2000; Stamatis, 2021; van Daalen et al., 2021). An audit is an examination of the current state versus the ideal state, which will determine if there is a gap between the two states and identify a plan to achieve the ideal state (Pain, 2018). The evolution of the audit function results from a need for individuals or groups in society to obtain information or assurance about the actions and performance of those in which they have a legitimate interest (Ramamoorti, 2003).

Types of Audits

An audit is a systematic and independent examination of an organization's financial or operational activities to ensure compliance with established standards, regulations, or best practices. There are several types of audits that an organization may conduct, including environmental system, financial, product, service, and systems audits. While each audit type has a unique focus and purpose, they share similarities and differences. This section will briefly explore each of these various types of audits.

**Compliance Audits**

Compliance audits are essential to ensuring that organizations adhere to legal and regulatory requirements (Bula & Niedzielski, 2023; Gantz, 2014). In recent years, compliance
audits have gained increasing importance due to the growing complexity of laws and regulations governing businesses. Compliance audits involve a comprehensive review of an organization's policies and procedures to ensure they align with applicable regulations and laws (Gantz, 2014). Such audits also evaluate the effectiveness of the organization's internal controls to mitigate risks associated with noncompliance.

**Environmental System Audit**

An environmental system audit aims to evaluate the effectiveness of an organization's environmental management system (EMS) and identify improvement opportunities (Nasrudin, 2021). An EMS is a framework that helps organizations to manage their environmental impacts and comply with relevant environmental regulations and standards (Nasrudin, 2021). An environmental system audit typically involves a systematic review of an organization's policies, procedures, and practices related to environmental management, including using natural resources, waste management, pollution prevention, and energy efficiency (Happer, 2022). The audit process may also include assessing the organization's compliance with environmental regulations, evaluating its environmental performance metrics, and identifying areas for improvement (Nasrudin, 2021). The ultimate objective of an environmental system audit is to enhance the organization's environmental performance, reduce its environmental risks, and improve its overall sustainability (Nasrudin, 2021).

**Financial Audits**

The main goal of a financial audit is to provide stakeholders, such as investors, creditors, and regulators, with reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatements and fairly represent the organization's financial position, performance, and cash
flows (Gantz, 2014; Hayes et al., 2014). Financial audits examine an organization's financial statements and related disclosures to ensure they are accurate, complete, and compliant with accounting standards (Bula & Niedzielski, 2023; Gantz, 2014). They typically involve analyzing financial data, testing internal controls, and identifying risks that could impact the organization's financial health (Gantz, 2014). In addition, External auditors often conduct financial audits since they are independent of the organization (Gantz, 2014).

**Operational Audits**

The primary objective of operational audits is to provide management with insights and recommendations to improve operational performance, reduce costs, and enhance overall organizational effectiveness (Chambers & Rand, 2010; Gantz, 2014; Murdock, 2021). These audits typically involve thoroughly reviewing an organization's internal processes, procedures, and systems to identify improvement areas (Chambers & Rand, 2010; Gantz, 2014). Operational audits are future-oriented, focusing on identifying areas where an organization can improve its efficiency, effectiveness, and overall performance to achieve organizational goals and objectives (Murdock, 2021). Unlike financial audits, which focus on historical data and compliance with accounting and regulatory standards, operational audits are forward-looking and seek to identify opportunities for improvement (Murdock, 2021).

**Process Audits**

A process audit identifies any inputs, processing, or outputs inefficiencies, deviations from established standards, and risk areas to recommend process improvements and mitigation (American Society for Quality [ASQ], 2023). Moreover, process audits can help organizations to enhance their quality management systems, optimize resource utilization, and
increase customer satisfaction (Cain, 2023). These audits typically involve reviewing the organization's policies and procedures, assessing their effectiveness, and identifying areas for improvement (Cain, 2023). Process audits may also examine the organization's risk management practices to ensure they are adequate and effective. Process audits can be overwhelming due to the comprehensive nature of the scope (Cain, 2023). Therefore, a recommendation is to conduct the process audit over a one-to-two-year period and use a team approach to divide the responsibilities (Cain, 2023). Establishing a systematic approach to routine audits of all operational processes can lead to continual efficiency and operational performance enhancements (Cain, 2023). By adhering to this disciplined practice, one can avoid relying on the outdated and unproductive mentality of "we've always done it this way" (Cain, 2023, p. 43).

**Product Audits**

The purpose of a product audit is to evaluate the quality and conformity of a company's products to internal standards or external regulations (Bedard et al., 2005; Russell, 2013). In addition, product audits help ensure that products are safe and effective for their intended use and meet customer expectations regarding quality, functionality, and reliability (ASQ, 2023). These audits typically involve reviewing the product specifications, production processes, and quality control measures to ensure that the product meets customer expectations and industry standards (ASQ, 2023). Product audits may also examine the marketing and advertising of the product to ensure that it is accurate and truthful.
Service Audits

A service audit aims to evaluate the effectiveness, efficiency, and quality of a service provided by an organization (Russell, 2013). The audit typically involves a systematic review of the service's operations, policies, procedures, and outcomes to identify areas of improvement and ensure compliance with relevant regulations and standards. The ultimate objective of a service audit is to enhance the value and quality of the service for the customers and stakeholders and to help the organization achieve its strategic goals and objectives. Service audits may also examine the organization's service level agreements and customer satisfaction metrics.

Systems Audits

The purpose of a systems audit is to evaluate the entire organization's systems conducted by an internal or external auditor (Driessen & Molenkamp, 1993). System audits can also be known as quality system audits, management audits, quality program audits, and procedures audits (Murdock, 2021). Systems or quality systems audits evaluate the effectiveness of an organization's quality management system (QMS) in achieving its objectives and meeting customer and regulatory requirements. The primary purpose of a systems audit is to ensure that an organization's QMS is well-designed, fully implemented, and continuously improving. The audit assesses the organization's compliance with established policies and procedures and relevant industry standards and regulations. The audit evaluates the effectiveness of the QMS in achieving the organization's quality objectives and identifies areas for improvement. The audit results can help an organization improve its QMS, enhance customer satisfaction, and demonstrate compliance with industry standards and regulatory
requirements. Overall, a systems or quality systems audit aims to provide assurance that an organization's QMS is operating effectively and efficiently and delivering value to its customers and stakeholders.

Elements of Audits

All audits share certain common elements, regardless of their type or scope. These elements include the purpose of the audit, the audit scope, the audit criteria, the audit process, and the need for independence and impartiality. These elements are fundamental to ensuring that the audit process is objective, thorough, and reliable and that the audit results are credible and valuable for the organization and its stakeholders. Audits also involve producing an audit report and implementing a follow-up process to monitor and verify the effectiveness of any corrective action taken. This section will explore these common elements in greater detail, highlighting their importance to the audit process and their contribution to promoting effective management and continuous improvement within organizations.

Purpose of an Audit

One of the most fundamental elements of an audit is its purpose, which is to evaluate the performance of an organization, system, process, or product against established criteria. The purpose of an audit may vary depending on the type of audit and the needs and objectives of the organization. The auditor must understand the organization's purpose and objectives, including the risks it faces, to effectively plan and execute the audit. Additionally, the purpose of the audit can vary depending on the type of audit being conducted, such as a financial audit, compliance audit, or operational audit. For example, a financial audit's purpose is to provide an opinion on the fairness of the organization's financial statements, while a compliance audit's
purpose is to determine if the organization is following applicable laws and regulations.

Ultimately, the element of purpose in conducting an audit is crucial in ensuring that the audit meets the organization's needs and objectives, and that the auditor can provide relevant and valuable insights and recommendations.

Audit Scope

The element of scope is a crucial aspect of conducting an audit (Hubbard, 2000). The scope of an audit refers to the range of activities an auditor plans to undertake during the audit process (English, 1988). The scope of an audit is typically defined by the audit objectives and the nature and complexity of the organization being audited (Hubbard, 2000). Various factors, including time constraints, budgetary limitations, and the availability of relevant data and documentation, may limit the scope of an audit. Therefore, the element of scope in conducting an audit is critical in ensuring that the audit is conducted effectively and efficiently and that the audit's objectives are achieved. In the absence of a clearly defined scope, there can be confusion and uncertainty for both the auditor and the auditee regarding the limits of the audit (Hubbard, 2000). This can result in the inefficient use of time and resources, as there may be unnecessary checking and verification of information that is beyond the defined scope of the audit (Hubbard, 2000).

Audit Criteria

Audit criteria are a fundamental element of the audit process, as they provide the basis for evaluating the organization's performance and determining compliance with established standards, regulations, and policies. Audit criteria are the specific benchmarks against which the organization's performance is measured, including legal requirements, industry standards,
best practices, and internal policies and procedures. The audit criteria are established at the outset of the audit and serve as the basis for defining the scope and objectives of the audit (Dew, 1994). Effective audit criteria must be relevant, reliable, and verifiable and communicated clearly to the auditee. The auditors must also ensure that the audit criteria are applied consistently and objectively throughout the audit process and that any deviations from the criteria are documented and explained. When the audit criteria are not explicitly documented, there is a possibility of divergent views between the auditor and the auditee regarding the expected standards. Therefore, it is critical to agree on the criteria before the audit begins to ensure the audit findings are meaningful, practical, and credible linking back to the identified scope of the audit.

Core Competencies of Auditors

The Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) has established a set of Core Principles for internal auditing, which provides a framework for effective and ethical internal audit practices (2023). The first principle is integrity, which requires internal auditors to perform their duties honestly, objectively, and diligently (Hayes et al., 2014; The Institute of Internal Auditors, 2023). The second principle is objectivity, which requires internal auditors to be independent and unbiased in their evaluations and reporting and have no conflicts of interest (Hayes et al., 2014; The Institute of Internal Auditors, 2023). The third principle is confidentiality, which requires internal auditors to protect the confidentiality of information obtained during their work (Hayes et al., 2014; The Institute of Internal Auditors, 2023). The fourth principle is competency, which requires internal auditors to possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform their duties effectively (Hayes et al., 2014; The Institute of Internal Auditors, 2023). The fifth
principle is compliance, which requires internal auditors to adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and professional standards (The Institute of Internal Auditors, 2023). Finally, the sixth principle is quality assurance and improvement, which requires internal auditors to establish and maintain a quality assurance and improvement system to ensure their work's effectiveness and continuous improvement (The Institute of Internal Auditors, 2023). These Core Principles serve as a foundation for the internal audit profession. They guide internal auditors in fulfilling their responsibilities to stakeholders and supporting organizational success (The Institute of Internal Auditors, 2023).

The role of an auditor is critical in ensuring that the results of their audit findings are accurate and reliable. Additionally, auditors also play a crucial role as organizational change agents. Therefore, understanding change management is essential for auditors because it allows them to identify potential risks associated with changes in a company's business processes, systems, and personnel. For example, auditors who understand change management can assess whether a company has adequately planned, tested, and implemented changes and whether the organization communicated the changes to all relevant parties. Additionally, auditors who have a thorough understanding of change management can help companies improve their change management processes by providing recommendations for best practices and identifying areas for improvement. Ultimately, auditors who understand change management can help companies minimize the risks associated with changes, ensure compliance with regulatory requirements, and increase the effectiveness of their internal controls.
There are several methods auditors can use to manage the change process within organizations. One method proposed by a Harvard Business School professor, John Kotter, is an eight-step process for organizational transformation (2007). The first step is to establish a sense of urgency by communicating the need for change and the potential consequences of inaction (Kotter, 2007). The second step is forming a powerful coalition of individuals with the necessary skills, authority, and credibility to lead the change effort (Kotter, 2007). The third step is to create a vision for the change and communicate it widely throughout the organization (Kotter, 2007). The fourth step is communicating the vision using every available channel and opportunity to reinforce the message (Kotter, 2007). The fifth step is to empower others to act on the vision by removing barriers and providing resources and support (Kotter, 2007). The sixth step is creating short-term wins demonstrating progress and building momentum for the change effort (Kotter, 2007). The seventh step is to consolidate gains and produce more change by building on the momentum of the initial successes (Kotter, 2007). The final step is to anchor new approaches in the organization's culture by creating new norms, values, and beliefs that support the change (Kotter, 2007). Kotter's eight-step process for leading change provides a comprehensive framework for leaders to navigate change management challenges and achieve sustainable change (2007).

Audit Frameworks and Models

In 1988, Flint proposed a seven-step auditing process that provides a comprehensive audit framework. The first step is establishing the audit objectives, aligning with the organization's overall goals and strategy. The second step is to plan the audit, including defining the scope, identifying the audit team, and developing a detailed audit program. The third step is
to gather evidence, which involves collecting and analyzing data related to the audit objectives. The fourth step is to evaluate the evidence and assess the effectiveness of the organization's internal controls. The fifth step is to develop audit findings and recommendations, which should be clear, concise, and actionable. The sixth step is communicating the findings and recommendations to the appropriate stakeholders, including management, the audit committee, and other interested parties. The seventh and final step is to follow up on implementing the recommendations and monitor the organization's progress in addressing the identified issues. This seven-step auditing process provides a structured and systematic approach to auditing, which ensures that the audit is conducted efficiently and effectively and that the audit results are communicated clearly and acted upon appropriately (Flint, 1988).

Another comprehensive and robust framework is the 8E model for operational audits, which enables auditors to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, economy, excellence, ethics, equity, ecology, and emotion of an organization's operations (Murdock, 2021). The effectiveness aspect of the model focuses on how well an organization achieves its objectives and goals aligned with its vision and mission (Chambers & Rand, 2010; Murdock, 2021). At the same time, efficiency assesses how well an organization accomplishes its objectives and goals through productive activity by examining the ratio between outputs and inputs (Chambers & Rand, 2010; Murdock, 2021). The economic aspect ensures that an organization obtains and utilizes its resources cost-effectively, including an overall assessment value (Chambers & Rand, 2010; Murdock, 2021). The excellence aspect of the model assesses the extent to which an organization's operations meet or exceed industry standards and best practices (Murdock, 2021). Finally, ethics are an essential consideration in any audit, and the ethics aspect of the 8E
model ensures that auditors examine the established ethical expectations and how the organization has standardized, supported, and held employees accountable for adhering to those expectations (Chambers & Rand, 2010; Murdock, 2021). Next, equity pertains to the treatment of individuals with dignity and respect in a consistent manner by all parties. It is frequently associated with fairness, reciprocity, and impartiality (Chambers & Rand, 2010). To determine the evidence of equity in the organization, internal auditors can ask questions such as the ones that follow (Murdock, 2021):

- Does the organization demonstrate care in establishing trust via transparent policies and practices?
- Are there established mechanisms to ensure that the principles of interdependence and collaboration are incentivized and promoted in theory and practice?

Ecology or environment is also critical in ensuring that an organization's operations are environmentally responsible and sustainable (Chambers & Rand, 2010; Murdock, 2021). Finally, the emotional aspect of the model recognizes that emotional connections to each other and emotional investment in the vision and mission plays a significant role in organizational engagement, motivation, and community creation (Murdock, 2021). Therefore, auditors should consider the element of emotion in an organization's operation as, when present, it increases operational effectiveness (Murdock, 2021). Overall, the 8E model provides a comprehensive and balanced framework to operationalize audits, which will assist auditors in evaluating an organization's operations through a strategic process. In addition, the 8 Es can provide a manageable scope and focus for the audit and an organization to report on key findings and overall recommendations (Murdock, 2021).
In conclusion, understanding the rich history of audits and the research on the application of audits in various fields is essential to understanding how to conduct an equity audit on the curriculum. This foundation provides a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of audits and the practical implications of their use. By examining the historical evolution of audits, including the development of their methodologies, it is possible to identify best practices that can inform the application of equity audits on curricula. Additionally, research on the application of audits in various fields provides insights into how audits can promote social justice and equity effectively and comprehensively. Ultimately, conducting an audit can contribute to a more equitable education system, ensuring all students have access to high-quality educational opportunities. An examination of the research on the curriculum audit process, an examination of the educational equity audit process, and finally, an examination of the limited research on curriculum equity audits will be explored to inform the creation of an applied project to reduce educational disparities and increase the sense of belonging of historically marginalized students.

**Curriculum Audits**

Curriculum auditing has a long history in education, dating back to 1837 when Horace Mann used his questionnaire to create a report for the Massachusetts State Board of Education (Steffy, 2000). In the 1860s, county superintendents conducted school inspections (English, 1988). Between 1911-1925, educational administrators applied various auditing procedures to classroom learning, teachers, programs of studies, organization of the schools, and to the entire school system (Caswell, 1929). During this survey movement, stakeholders developed surveys to conduct school investigations and inquiries when there were concerns of misuse of school
funds or student underperformance (Caswell, 1929). These investigations identified and highlighted shortcomings in the school system (Caswell, 1929). The surveys that followed inherited this approach of uncovering malpractice, resulting in studies that primarily focused on identifying faults and weaknesses without offering many solutions (Caswell, 1929). External experts administered the survey to evaluate the performance of school administrators and teachers (Caswell, 1929). A curriculum audit systematically evaluates a school or program's educational curriculum, including its goals, content, instructional materials, and assessments, to improve the quality and effectiveness of the curriculum (English, 2000). The audit process is a continuous improvement model to identify strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum, resulting in recommendations based on the identified standards and criteria (English, 2000).

Curriculum Audits in K-12 Education

In the 1960s, the focus of curriculum audit in K-12 schools shifted towards developing curriculum standards and using standardized tests to measure student performance. The development of the National Curriculum in the United Kingdom and the adoption of the No Child Left Behind Act in the United States are examples of this trend. The completion of the first curriculum management audit in 1979 in the Columbus Public Schools in Ohio marked a significant milestone in the evolution of educational analysis and evaluation (Frase et al., 2000). The completed audit comprised 80 pages containing 20 findings and 12 recommendations across five standards (Frase et al., 2000).

In 1983, A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform was published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education to provide an examination of the state of education in the United States (A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform, 1983).
The report concluded that the nation's education system was failing to adequately prepare students for future challenges and that urgent action was needed to improve educational quality. The commission made recommendations for courses of study for high school students. It also recommended that students should be studying a world language in elementary school. The report underscored the importance of K-12 schools and institutes of higher education increasing the rigor of their standards. English declared that this report could be categorized. English (1988) contends that this report could be classified as a national educational audit.

In response to *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, the report *The Nation Responds: Recent Efforts to Improve Education* documented the response at the national, state, and local levels (U.S. Department of Education, 1984). The volume is divided into three parts: (1) The Nation Responds: An Overview; (2) State Initiatives; and (3) Sample Activities (U.S. Department of Education, 1984). The first part of the volume provides an overview of national developments in education during this period and summarizes state and local efforts to improve education. The report notes a surge of public support for educational reform, reflected and reinforced by the press and broadcast media. The education profession and the business community also showed enthusiasm for sponsoring educational improvement. The second part of the volume provides information on ongoing educational reform efforts in each state. Finally, the third part highlights selected local school districts, postsecondary institutions, associations, and private sector organizations working to improve education.

Overall, the volume aims to demonstrate the widespread response to "A Nation at Risk" and the efforts being made at all levels to improve education. In addition, it addresses the concerns
raised in the original report by highlighting the need for reform and documenting the various initiatives being undertaken to address the issues identified in A Nation at Risk. This response also lends credence to English’s assertion of A Nation at Risk being classified as a national audit as there were significant changes implemented in response to the report one of the defining features of an audit.

In 1994, the National Curriculum Audit Center conducted a curriculum management audit for Wichita Public Schools. Despite containing only eight additional findings and two additional recommendations, the descriptive analysis had increased by two-thirds in the 14 years between the two audits demonstrating the increasingly rigorous data collection, analysis, and interpretation (English, 2000).

Recently, there has been a renewed interest in the curriculum audit process to improve student learning and close achievement gaps. Some scholars argue that a curriculum audit should focus on the content and alignment of a curriculum and the implementation and impact on student learning. The history of curriculum audits traces back to the early 20th century, focusing on measuring and improving performance. It progressed through the formalization of the process in the 1960s, standardization in the 1970s and 1980s, and renewed interest in recent years with an emphasis on improving student learning and closing achievement gaps. Scholars and practitioners have developed various frameworks to guide the curriculum audit process.

*Curriculum Audit Designed by Dr. Fenwick English*

In the late 1960s, Dr. Fenwick English, a renowned educator and curriculum theorist, developed a systematic and structured approach to curriculum auditing to evaluate the
effectiveness and alignment of educational curricula. English defines the pre-conditions of the audit as the establishment of objectives, the formulation of plans, measuring outcomes or results, and comparing results/outcomes to objectives (English, 2000). The comprehensive curriculum audit design proposed by Fenwick English consists of several stages, including defining the purpose of the audit, collecting and analyzing data, identifying strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum, and developing recommendations for improvement. The audit design also involves the engagement of all stakeholders in the educational community, including teachers, students, parents, and community members, to ensure the evaluation process considers the perspectives and experiences of all participants. In addition, English provides sample interview questions to use with board members, superintendents, school principals, classroom teachers, students, parents, and citizens (English, 1988).

English identifies eight conditions for determining the necessity of completing an audit in an organization, including: “(1) when the stakes are high; (2) when the status quo is not acceptable; (3) when objectivity is necessary; (4) when enhanced expertise is required; (5) when the past and present are not well understood; (6) when public confidence and trust must be re-established or retained; (7) when results count, and (8) when cost is essential” (English, 1988, p. 17-20).

The book, *Curriculum Auditing*, details the implementation of the curriculum audit process in four school districts (English, 1988). Each case study includes the background, purpose, scope of work, methodology, findings, recommendations, and a summary (English, 1988). In addition, the book includes an essential curriculum audit reader, a survey instrument on good curriculum management practices, and a sample board policy to establish curricular
quality control. The limited availability of time and resources in a school system makes it imperative to prioritize proposed changes (English, 1988). Excessive recommendations can overwhelm the school system, resulting in the perception that the ability to change is unrealistic (English, 1988). Therefore, concentrating on the essential improvements will increase the probability of operationalizing the recommendations contained in the audit report.

English asserts that conducting a curriculum audit requires bravery and a willingness to scrutinize past practices and decisions publicly (1988). The decisive measure of success is the ability of the leader to implement adaptive solutions to the technical problems uncovered during the audit process.

Curriculum Audits in Institutes of Higher Education

Curriculum audits have been an important tool used in institutes of higher education to evaluate and improve the quality of academic programs. The concept of curriculum auditing traces back to the 1970s when accreditation agencies began to emphasize the importance of assessing and monitoring the effectiveness of educational programs. Curriculum audits assess the alignment between a program's intended outcomes and students' actual experiences. IHEs conduct curriculum audits to identify gaps or weaknesses in the curriculum and make recommendations for improvements. The audit process typically involves a review of program goals, course content, teaching methods, and student assessments. Curriculum audits have become an increasingly important part of institutional quality assurance and accreditation processes in recent years. They help ensure that academic programs meet students' needs and align with the institution's goals. Usually, curriculum is just one of many standards when meeting the standards for accreditation.
Literacy Curriculum Audit

This literacy curriculum audit is an approach that faculty in Institutes of Higher Education can employ (Stahl & Armstrong, 2022). The primary aim of the literacy curriculum audit is to examine the current practices, expectations, and requirements relevant to literacy, intending to identify the most effective ways to support students’ transitions to and advancement in college-level literacy practices and expectations (Stahl & Armstrong, 2022). The audit design detailed in this study is rooted in and expands upon the previously established work on reality checks which are assessments or descriptive studies aimed at identifying the literacy demands placed on students across various disciplines. In addition, the authors provide a methodology for conducting literacy audits within postsecondary institutions designed to yield data that can facilitate a greater congruence between courses. Although literacy is the example used in this paper, the application of the proposed audit methodology to other core areas, such as composition, speech, and mathematics, can be considered.

Three Critical Questions That are Rarely Asked in a Curriculum Audit

By 2000, many different methods for conducting a curriculum audit had surfaced. As a result, some scholars began to interrogate whether the audits truly captured data that would benefit the most vulnerable students (Scott, 2001). Villarreal and Scott (2008) posit that the design of many curricula audits is not sensitive to the unique needs of marginalized students because they neglect to interrogate several vital areas. Curriculum audits that do not center equity in the process result in problematizing the students, families, and communities instead of the intricate and interconnected historical and systemic inequities impacting student
performance. To augment the traditional curriculum audit process, they offer three questions that should be incorporated to provide an equitable focus.

The first question they recommend is, “Are administrators, teachers, and other school personnel articulating and showing evidence of high academic expectations for traditionally underserved students?” (Villarreal & Scott, 2008, p. 1). Research shows that how students are treated, respected, and valued by administrators, teachers, and other education professionals, has a profound impact on their sense of belonging, self-concept, self-efficacy, and persistence, all of which significantly contribute to their level of school success. For marginalized students, a teacher’s implicit bias, lack of culturally responsive instruction, and preconceived beliefs become significant barriers to achieving their maximum potential for personal, social, and academic achievement.

The next question they suggest is, “Does the school’s vision specifically speak to the academic performance and college preparation of traditionally underserved student groups, and if so, is the school showing evidence that adequate and timely progress is being achieved?” (Villarreal & Scott, 2008, p. 2). In the creation of a school vision, it is imperative to center the student groups who have been traditionally underserved. Creating an equity-focused vision becomes a shared responsibility for the success of all students by developing a plan for eliminating current disparities in achievement. An equitable vision should incorporate multiple measures of success, including evidence of social and academic belonging, not reflected in standardized assessments (Villarreal & Scott, 2008). To mitigate this issue when implementing a curriculum audit, they suggest conducting self-surveys of teachers and students and conducting reflection and action sessions to emphasize research-based instructional practices.
Finally, the third question proposed is, “Do teachers demonstrate a level of confidence, self-efficacy, and expertise necessary to successfully address the challenges of traditionally underserved students?” (Villarreal & Scott, 2008, pp. 6-7). School administrators and educators working with traditionally underserved students must exhibit content knowledge and culturally responsive self-efficacy. While school districts routinely provide professional learning to increase teacher content knowledge, schools rarely plan opportunities to increase their ability to serve underrepresented student groups. Research demonstrates that culturally responsive self-efficacy improves positive academic outcomes for traditionally underserved students.

When evaluating the quality of instruction provided to historically marginalized students in a school district or campus, including a diverse range of stakeholders is essential (Villarreal & Scott, 2008). At a minimum, parents and teachers of marginalized students, educators proficient with working with culturally and linguistically diverse students, administrators at the district and campus level, representatives from the private sector, activists, support personnel from the district and campus, and students from marginalized groups. Villarreal and Scott (2008) posit that the drive for change must stem from within the educational institution rather than relying on external organizations or consultants. School improvement plans that do not actively consider these stakeholders risk neglecting the range of instructional needs for historically marginalized students (Villarreal & Scott, 2008). To develop a thorough plan for school reform, a more extensive examination of the factors affecting the quality of teaching underserved students is necessary, along with a commitment to creating a shared vision for success that ensures equity and access to an exceptional education for all students. (Villarreal & Scott, 2008)
In conclusion, curriculum audits have become increasingly essential tools for ensuring that educational programs align with their intended goals and objectives. English (1988) posited that the primary purpose of curriculum audits is to evaluate the effectiveness and relevance of educational programs in achieving their intended outcomes. The literacy curriculum audit developed by Stahl and Armstrong (2022) is an example of a curriculum audit that focuses on assessing literacy programs' quality and effectiveness. However, it is essential to note that curriculum audits have limitations. For example, Villarreal and Scott (2008) argued that many curriculum audits fail to address critical equity and social justice questions for historically marginalized students. Equity can be centered in the curriculum audit process by embedding critical questions. By addressing these critical questions, curriculum audits can better support all students' educational needs and goals, particularly those from historically marginalized backgrounds. Ultimately, a comprehensive and equitable curriculum audit can ensure that educational programs prepare all students to graduate ready for post-secondary opportunities. The next section of the literature review will synthesize the application of equity audits for educational improvement.

**Equity Audits in Education**

Equity audits have emerged as a critical tool for addressing the persistent achievement and opportunity gaps that exist in our educational system. The purpose of equity audits is to identify and address disparities in educational outcomes for historically marginalized and underrepresented groups of students. Equity audits are grounded in the belief that every student has the right to an education that prepares them for success and that systemic barriers and biases must be addressed to achieve this goal. The equity audit serves as a tool to collect
and evaluate classroom, school, and district data to expose disparities in outcomes, access, opportunities, and resources (Johnson, 2020; McKenzie & Skrla, 2011; Skrla et al., 2004, 2009). The interrogation should go beyond the mere analysis of student outcome data, encompassing the examination of the root causes underlying the systems and determinants that produce these inequitable results (Fabillar, 2018; Johnson, 2020; Palmer et al., 2019; Valdez et al., 2020). Utilizing a combination of qualitative and quantitative data creates a more comprehensive representation of the current state of educational equity within a school or institution (Fabillar, 2018; Green, 2017). To ensure a focus on equity, the data analysis should be conducted through the lens of underrepresented and marginalized student populations based on race, gender and gender identity, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, language proficiency, and abilities (Green, 2017; Groenke, 2010; Khalifa, 2018; Palmer et al., 2019). A thoughtful analysis of data provides a means of identifying patterns of inequity and devising strategies to address these patterns (McKenzie & Skrla, 2011). Finally, equity audits provide a way to document inequitable social, political, and economic opportunities and outcomes, intending to ensure compliance with civil rights legislation (Marshall & Oliva, 2006; Skrla et al., 2004). Some equity metrics for analysis include policies, curriculum, resources, academic and disciplinary data, staffing diversity, funding allocation, school demographics, and overall school climate (Capper & Young, 2015; Khalifa, 2018; Skrla et al., 2004).

Equity Audits in K-12 Education

The application of equity audits in K-12 education is a crucial step toward mitigating the persistent disparities affecting underserved students. Such audits can help to identify and address systemic barriers that hinder equal educational opportunities and outcomes for all
students. An equity audit provides a comprehensive evaluation of a school’s policies, practices, and culture, with the goal of uncovering any unintended biases and unequal distribution of resources that may contribute to disparities. For instance, a recent equity audit conducted in a school district in the state of Washington found the disproportionate suspension, expulsion, and placement in special education programs of students of color. The district then used this information to implement changes, such as cultural competency training for teachers and staff, which led to a reduction in the disparities. In conclusion, equity audits offer a valuable tool for promoting educational equity and addressing the assiduous disparities in K-12 education.

Research Studies on Equity Audits in Education

Poston Equity Audit

William Poston and Jacqueline Mitchell, in collaboration with Poston, put forth a design for conducting equity audits in schools, which was a modification of Standard 3: A School System Demonstrates Internal Connectivity and Rational Equity in its Program Development and Implementation from a comprehensive curriculum audit design proposed by Fenwick English (1988). In his proposal, Poston outlined 15 areas of analysis for use in conducting equity audits, including administrative and supervisory practices, access to course offerings, financial resources, individual differences, materials and facilities, special program delivery, student management practices, class size, demographic distribution, grouping practices and instruction, utilization of instructional time, promotion and retention practices, staff development and training, provision of support services, and teacher assignment and workload (Poston, 1992).

In 1992, Mitchell and Poston reported implementing this equity audit design through a case study conducted in three school districts. They postulated that the efficacy of school
reform to achieve equitable outcomes is contingent upon the tools utilized in the improvement process. The equity audit has demonstrated remarkable potential to recognize, analyze, and evaluate the quality of instruction in school districts (Mitchell & Poston, 1992). The three case studies revealed considerable discrepancies in student placement practices, promotion and retention, decision-making, staffing, employment practices, and curricular program offerings (Mitchell & Poston, 1992). These discrepant findings refute the practice of blaming historically marginalized students and families for deficits in achievement. Schools, teachers, and curricula significantly influence students’ educational attainment; however, if resources, personnel, and practices are not equally distributed, inequitable outcomes will persist.

The equity audit provides a comprehensive overview of the problems existing in a school district, along with recommendations for action to dismantle inequitable practices (Mitchell & Poston, 1992). This equity audit tool provides an actionable process to address achievement disparities among various student groups. Mitchell and Poston (1992) assert that equitable educational opportunities are now attainable with this tool. Unfortunately, after an exhaustive literature review, Mitchell and Poston created no additional studies on their equity audit (1992). However, since that points multiple tools, approaches, and frameworks have been proposed and are available to conduct equity audits. The different approaches to using equity audits to interrogate the current state of inequitable outcomes in schools will be described.

**Documenting Effective Strategies in Closing Achievement Gaps**

Brown conducted a mixed-method research design to investigate state-designated “Schools of Excellence” to examine if the schools foster and sustain high expectations and equitable outcomes for all students (2010). In the first phase, an equity audit approach was
used in 24 schools using quantitative data to examine multiple measures of student success and
document patterns and trends of inequitable outcomes. In the second phase, the 24 schools
were ranked based on minority achievement and divided into small (SG) and large (LG) schools.
The collection of qualitative data through site visits (16 visits) and semi-structured interviews
with principals, assistant principals, teachers, and parent leaders (80 interviews) identified and
documented effective strategies and best practices used by school leaders to challenge and
change inequitable school policies and practices. The data were analyzed using the academic
optimism theoretical framework (Hoy et al., 2006). Results of the study suggest that academic
optimism can positively impact student achievement when school leadership promotes and
observes: a teamwork approach, a balanced approach, a strong sense of purpose, and an
insistent disposition. This study problematizes designating schools as excellent without
considering equity and offers that equity and excellence are inseparable in working towards
achieving equitable outcomes for all students.

**Equity Audit Pilot**

Bleyaert (2011) studied the efficacy of an equity audit instrument and implementation
of the process in five high schools with varying demographics. The state-mandated these
schools to enhance their math requirements for all students. The study revealed that the
schools that embraced the equity audit process and the state mandate became “mission-
focused” schools demonstrating a commitment to enhancing their equity practices. In addition,
the school exhibited a commitment to centering student needs in the decision-making process.
In contrast, the “compliance-focused” schools that failed to address many of the equity audit
questions saw the process as a policy compliance measure and displayed through their
language and planning anticipation of student failure. Additionally, the compliance schools did not leverage equity in their decision-making or implementation decisions and centered teacher comfort over student needs. Bleyaert (2011) contends that many schools may need an external facilitator to complete an equity audit. The pilot illustrated that the equity tool is not the central part of the process but rather the process of collaborative response and reflection around the intentionally designed audit questions. The study underscored the necessity of developing the equity literacy of both teachers and administrators to create and sustain equitable school practices. The results of this pilot provide direction for Educational Leadership programs, including developing visions centered on equity and using equity audits to identify inequitable programs, policies, and practices resulting in unequal student performance.

**Using Equity Audits to Create a Support System for Marginalized Students**

Palmer and colleagues (2019) conducted research on the role of instructional leadership in providing leadership an educational system that is socially just for all learners. The stated objective of this study was to examine the utilization of equity audits, action plans, and self-reflections by an aspiring principal preparation program to support the learning and engagement of all students with a laser focus on multilingual learners and special education students. The curriculum framework, aligned to national and state standards, encompasses six domains: data-driven decision-making, culture, and equity access, instructional leadership, communication systems, school and district systems, and human capital development. First, the principal fellows carry out an equity audit of their respective campuses, utilizing existing school and district state data to identify the potential problem(s) of practice, such as disciplinary inequities. The equity audit constitutes a critical component of the learning process for
principals, as it provides a mechanism for identifying and addressing areas of disparity and need (Furman, 2012; Skrla et al., 2004). Upon completion of the equity analysis, the principal fellow engages in a comprehensive root cause analysis of each identified problem of practice, formulating specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely (S.M.A.R.T.) goals and intervention strategies to continuously monitor progress using the Texas Accountability Intervention System (T.A.I.S.). Using the results of the equity audit, each principal selects and focuses on five areas of need, including a low-performing content area, two low-performing teachers, a highly-at-risk English Language Learner (E.L.L.) student, and a highly-at-risk Special Education (SPED) student, utilizing the T.A.I.S. process and data tracking to drive school improvement and increase student achievement.

The researchers identified three questions for their study: (1) What needs did the principal fellow identify using the equity audit? (2) What impact did the principal fellows have on English language learners and special education students using the Texas Accountability Intervention System (T.A.I.S.) instrument? (3) In what ways did the principal preparation residency program prepare aspiring school leaders to advocate and support students’ engagement and learning?

The results of this study indicate that the principals participating in the job-embedded principal preparation program could perform equity audits, formulate action plans, and reflect on their experiences in alignment with the Culturally Responsive School Leadership (C.R.S.L.) quadrants proposed by Khalifa (2018). Thus, the researchers recommended that principal preparation programs utilize equity audits to drive action toward supporting all students.
Additionally, current educational leaders must cultivate a school environment that is culturally and linguistically responsive.

The researchers concur that it is essential for principals to continuously analyze and monitor teacher and student data to drive school improvement. This study used the Texas Accountability Intervention System (T.A.I.S.) to monitor content areas, teachers, and students. The findings showed that establishing annual and quarterly goals, intervention strategies, and monitoring processes built human capital, enhanced instructional strategies, and improved student achievement. Moreover, the learning experiences acquired by the principal fellows through the job-embedded residency program provided equitable solutions for targeted E.L.L. and SPED students.

An effective equity audit exposes the contributing factors to disparities in opportunities available to students, including implicit biases, lack of culturally responsive practices, teacher attitudes, beliefs, and expectations, and unequal distribution of resources. This overlooked, often unseen discrimination leads to disparities in opportunities available to students, which subsequently manifests as disparities in academic achievement. The ultimate goal of an equity audit is to disrupt and dismantle systemic barriers and biases that perpetuate inequities to eliminate disparities for historically marginalized students.

**Hanover Equity Framework**

In the fall of 2020, Hanover’s research team uncovered differences in the academic literature concerning the tools and approaches suitable for recognizing disparities in K-12 school systems (Groundwater et al., 2022). In response, the team capitalized on this opportunity to establish a methodology for equity audits rooted in previous research. The team
embarked on a mixed-method multiyear research study designed to assist leadership in improving diversity, equity, and inclusiveness in their districts and schools. The method and instruments outlined in this report provide a structure for holding educational systems accountable for fulfilling every student’s needs. Additionally, the report highlights the outcomes of two tools designed by the research team to assess the extent of inclusiveness in school environments and to uncover disparities resulting from unequal opportunities. The research teams analyzed student data from 44 member districts over five years, representing nearly one million students from diverse regions, urbanities, and demographics. The creation of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Diagnostic and Equity Scorecard can district leaders use for an equity audit, strategic planning, and continuous improvement initiatives. The report provides a comprehensive overview of stakeholder perceptions, including data from 100,000 students, parents, and staff and results from historically underrepresented respondents. An interactive dashboard allows users to filter the data by specific subsets and segmentations of interest.

Hanover Research designed the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Diagnostic survey to help district leaders collect stakeholder perceptions on equity, school environment, academic environment, social environment, staff perceptions, engagement and outreach, and district priorities (Groundwater et al., 2022). Hanover determined the survey instrument was most appropriate for students in grades six and above. In addition, Hanover optimized the survey’s flow and presentation to ensure that each respondent group only received relevant and appropriate questions for their age and relationship to the district. Hanover reported vital findings and trends from the DEI diagnostic national dataset. Some findings included that over
80% of parents and staff indicated that ensuring a welcoming and safe school environment for students of diverse backgrounds was essential. The research findings indicated that schools are currently thriving in that area. Conversely, the survey results indicated that only 41% of staff concur or strongly concur that resources are distributed evenly across all schools within the district. Only 54% of respondents reported that teachers in their school, their child’s school, or district schools engage students in discussions related to diversity. A disparity of 20 points existed between students’ self-reported satisfaction with school (57% agreement) and parents and staff’s reports of student satisfaction with school (78% and 77% agreement, respectively). A lower proportion of respondents who identify or whose child identifies as non-binary agreed or strongly agreed (46%) that their school supports individuals of all gender identities and expressions.

Between 2016-2017 and 2020-2021, Hanover Research analyzed student-level data collected from 44 member districts across the country using the equity scorecard analysis (Groundwater et al., 2022). This data was used to create individual Equity Scorecards and later aggregated to form the national dataset analyzed in this report. The participating districts varied in size, region, urbanicity, and the demographic makeup of their student population. However, the national dataset does not represent the entire country’s student population. Limitations of the data included unweighted representation and limited representation among smaller districts, districts in rural areas, and districts in the Northeast. The national dataset encompasses nearly one million students for each year of data between 2017 and 2020 and 652,154 students in 2021. Out of the 44 districts, 30 provided data for the most recent year at
the time of analysis, compared to 40-44 districts between 2017 and 2020. Hanover plans to continue to expand on this dataset in the future.

The dataset includes district and student characteristics, such as enrollment, region, urbanicity, diversity, economic disadvantage, gender, race/ethnicity, economic disadvantage status, English learner status, participation in special education, and Section 504 plan status, facilitating comparative analysis across different student groups and district types (Groundwater et al., 2022). The Hanover research team aggregated and compiled the data into a comprehensive Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) dashboard and dataset. The report provides valuable insights into the perceptions and experiences surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion challenges.

The data collected from Hanover’s member districts indicates disparities in successful outcomes for historically marginalized student groups, including American Indian or Alaska Native, Black, Hispanic or Latinx, multiracial, economically disadvantaged (as determined by free or reduced lunch status), English Learners, and students receiving Special Education services (Groundwater et al., 2022). Historically marginalized student groups were found to be underrepresented in measures of success, such as proficiency on standardized assessments, enrollment in advanced courses, and achieving a GPA of 3.0 or higher, over the five years from 2017 to 2021. Unfortunately, these same student groups were found to be overrepresented in undesirable risk outcomes such as chronic absenteeism, disciplinary incidents or suspensions, and failing English or math courses in high school, hindering on-time graduation. The overrepresentation in risk outcomes was particularly striking for Black students, students who received free or reduced lunch, and students receiving Special Education services.
Disproportionate numbers of Hispanic or Latinx students fail English or math courses in school districts nationwide.

The findings presented in this report provide implications for research and practice including that a significant amount of work still needs to be done to allow students to reach their full academic, social, and personal potential (Groundwater et al., 2022). Various barriers exist, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, or gender, that prevent students from receiving equal access and achieving equitable outcomes within the K-12 education system. It is a moral imperative for those involved in the field of education to prioritize and critically evaluate the policies, programs, and practices contributing to these barriers, not only for students but also for staff and families. The relentless pursuit of equitable outcomes requires a concerted effort from education leaders characterized by the facilitation of consensus building among stakeholders, asset-based thinking and action, and a shared commitment to a vision rooted in equity. This report provides strategies, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

**Equity Audit Frameworks and Approaches**

**INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION**

In 2001, Scott described systemic equity as the transformation of systems to ensure that every student has optimal opportunities for growth and development facilitated by access to all necessary resources and supports. To achieve systemic equity, he proposes conducting an equity audit using the goals of educational equity and the equity issue questions to guide the process (Scott, 2001). The first goal is comparably high outcomes which refer to all groups of learners exhibiting high levels of performance with minimal or no disparities in achievement.
Goal two is equitable access and inclusion, which ensures unimpeded access and opportunity to all programs and activities within the school community. Goal three is equitable treatment characterized by belonging, acceptance, safety, and support from all community members. Goal four is equitable opportunity to learn, which provides rigorous learning experiences designed to ensure that every student receives the academic, social, emotional, and programmatic support to reach their full potential. Finally, goal five describes equitable resource distribution, allocating financial, human, and material resources to promote equity and excellence in education.

Barriers impeding educational equity include curriculum reformation, reform in professional development, enhanced access to technology, increased involvement and engagement of parents, the provision of safe and secure learning environments, and high school and college graduation. (Scott, 2001). It is impossible for a school to achieve excellence where certain groups of students are unsuccessful and disengaged. A steadfast commitment to excellence and educational equity repudiates discrimination based on factors such as racism, sexism, and classism, striving to eliminate these harmful and toxic behaviors (Scott, 2001). Scott contends that when teachers and administrators observe disparities in student outcomes, they will commit to eliminating inequitable school and classroom practices that are creating inequities (2001). One way to reveal existing disparities is through an equity audit.

The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) proposed a process for equity audits aligned to their six goals (including the addition of accountability) of educational equity and school reform (IDRA, 2020). Each goal is the foundation for the audit tool that allows users to rate each criterion with the equity ranking scale (IDRA, 2017). The equity ranking scale
comprises four ratings: (a) 1- nothing has occurred in that area, and no effort exists for responding positively to the question; (b) 2-nothing has occurred in response to the question, but extensive efforts exist for being able to respond to the question positively; (c) 3- the question can be answered positively and some efforts to uphold and exceed that positive response exist; and (d) 4-the question can be answered positively, and extensive efforts to uphold and exceed that positive response exist (IDRA, 2017).

**SKRLA EQUITY AUDITS**

In 2004, Skrla and colleagues introduced a framework for conducting equity audits consisting of observing twelve distinct indicators that fall into three categories: teacher quality equity, programmatic equity, and achievement equity (Skrla et al., 2009). They described equity audits as systematic evaluations designed to examine the distribution of resources and opportunities within an educational organization. In addition, the audit aims to identify patterns of disparity and assess the extent to which the educational institution provides equal access and support for all students. The seven phases of the audit include: (1) assemble stakeholders; (2) collect and graph data with the committee; (3) discuss the data and the existing equity gaps (4) discuss and develop solutions; (5) implement solutions; (6) monitor and evaluate results; (7) celebrate if successful or return to step 3 and repeat the process (Skrla et al., 2009). Skrla and colleagues (2009) emphasize that the true power of the equity audit is derived from the auditing process and not just the results.

**Teacher Quality Equity**

The four indicators of teacher quality, teacher education, teacher experience, teacher turnover, and teacher certification, serve as clear measures to depict the patterns of equitable
or inequitable access to highly qualified teachers for various student groups within a particular educational institution. The most crucial element influencing student learning outcomes is teacher quality. The distribution of exceptional teachers is inequitable, particularly in high schools, restricting access to specific student groups. The equity audit assesses the distribution of teacher quality within a specific school. Studies have demonstrated that teacher education, experience, mobility, and certification can significantly impact student performance. Reardon and colleagues (2021) research findings collectively indicate that disparities in teacher experience and absenteeism among different races contribute to the formation of achievement gaps. The distribution of teacher quality, teacher education, teacher experience, teacher turnover, and teacher certification across different grade levels, classes, and student demographics within the school is essential in determining the level of equitable decision-making. Skrla and colleagues propose that educational institutions utilizing the equity audit should collect data on the teacher quality indicators over multiple years to establish patterns and trends of unequal access to qualified teachers over time. During a single year, unavoidable circumstances could arise, resulting in poor teacher assignment decisions; however, it is an altogether separate issue if similar inequitable patterns persist yearly.

**Programmatic Equity**

The second aspect of the equity audit concerns programmatic equity, where attention focuses on which student groups have access to school programs. Due to the wide range of programs offered in most schools, the number of potential indicators for this component of the equity audit is substantial. Consistent research findings indicate four critical program areas as potential sites for inequity. These are (a) special education, (b) gifted and talented education
(G/T), (c) bilingual education, and (d) student discipline. These disparities stem primarily from the existing systems within schools. Educators’ beliefs, attitudes, and expectations contribute to the data displayed in these areas and can be changed to achieve programmatic equity. The initial step towards creating change involves acknowledging the current state of inequity and accepting responsibility for the problem.

**Achievement Equity**

The third category in this equity audit framework pertains to achievement equity. The focus goes beyond the narrow focus on outcomes of state test results to encompass other indicators of student achievement. According to research, there needs to be a broader definition of achievement; therefore, four indicators identified to include in the achievement equity category are (a) state achievement tests, (b) dropout rates, (c) high school graduation tracks, and (d) SAT/ACT/AP/IB results. Skrla and colleagues (2009) conceptualize these three areas into a simple formula: teacher quality equity plus programmatic equity equals achievement equity. However, they acknowledge that their proposed model is complex and that achieving educational equity will be an ongoing process.

In conclusion, Skrla and colleagues’ equity audit framework provides a valuable tool for educational institutions seeking to evaluate the distribution of resources and opportunities and identify patterns of disparity. The framework consists of twelve indicators organized into three categories: teacher quality equity, programmatic equity, and achievement equity. The seven phases of the audit process involve assembling stakeholders, collecting and graphing data, discussing existing equity gaps, developing solutions, implementing them, monitoring and evaluating the results, and celebrating successes or returning to step three to repeat the
process. Skrla and colleagues (2009) emphasize that the power of the equity audit lies in the auditing process itself and not just the results.

**Frattura and Capper Equity Audit**

Frattura and Capper (2007) outlined a step-by-step process for conducting an equity audit. The process design assists educational leaders in creating a comprehensive and equitable plan for their schools and districts. Based on an integrated services philosophy, it includes fifteen components of a school educational plan. Additionally, it combines qualitative and quantitative points of inquiry to ensure educational equity for marginalized students. Finally, the audit examines data around race, ethnicity, class, gender, (dis)ability, sexual identity, and multilingual learners to create continuous equity-driven accountability to ensure inclusivity.

The equity audit’s four cornerstones are (1) core principles: focusing on equity, (2) establishing equitable structures: location and arrangement of educational services, (3) providing access to high-quality teaching and learning: building teacher capacity and curriculum and instruction, and (4) implementing change: funding and policy (Frattura & Capper, 2007). The steps for their audit process are (1) define the purpose of the equity audit; (2) determine the scope of the audit; (3) identify data sources; (4) select indicators of equity; (5) analyze data; (6) interpret findings; (7) develop recommendations; and (8) implement recommendations. Each of these steps will be detailed below.

The first step in conducting an equity audit is clearly defining the audit’s purpose. The audit should include a statement of the values and principles that guide the equity audit and the goals and objectives that the audit aims to achieve. The next step is to determine the scope of the audit. This step involves specifying which areas the educational institution will include in
the audit, such as programs, services, policies, or practices. Furthermore, there should be a clear definition of the scope that is consistent with the purpose of the audit. The scope of the audit informs the third step of identifying the data sources needed to gather the necessary information. The data sources may include demographic data, program enrollment data, student achievement data, or other relevant information. The fourth step is to select indicators of equity. Indicators are variables or measures used to assess the presence of equity or inequity. Frattura and Capper (2007) suggest using a variety of indicators to triangulate data and ensure a comprehensive evaluation of equity. The fifth step is to analyze the data collected to identify any disparities or inequities. This step involves comparing data across different groups or programs or analyzing trends over time. In the sixth step, the analyzed data are interpreted and synthesized into findings. The stakeholders will identify the existing inequities and determine the root causes of these disparities. Based on the findings and interpretations, the seventh step is to develop recommendations for addressing any disparities or inequities identified. These recommendations should be specific, feasible, and based on best practices. The eighth and final step in conducting an equity audit is implementing the recommendations developed in the previous step. During this step, stakeholders will collaboratively implement the recommendations and monitor progress.

In conclusion, the process of conducting an equity audit, as outlined by Frattura and Capper (2007), provides a comprehensive and systematic approach to evaluating equity in educational institutions. By following this process, educational institutions can work towards ensuring that all students have equal access to high-quality educational opportunities.

CAPPER AND YOUNG EQUITY AUDIT
Capper and Young (2015) present a six-stage equity audit process encompassing the following steps: (1) Attaining proportional representation, (2) establishing an equity audit team, (3) designing the equity audit, (4) gathering and examining data, (5) establishing and prioritizing goals based on data, and (6) formulating an implementation plan. Uniquely, Capper and Young built their equity process around proportional representation, requiring every setting, experience, and activity within the school community to reflect its demographics.

Frattura and Capper (2007) posit that narrowing the achievement gap is an unattainable goal without eliminating the substantial equity gaps hindering students' learning opportunities. In order to achieve educational equity, school leaders must possess the necessary knowledge and skills to comprehend educational inequity, pinpoint its origins, and transform the practices and conditions that perpetuate it within schools. As more educational leadership programs integrate equity audits into their curricula, aspiring leaders will be better equipped to lead schools that effectively serve diverse student populations. Moreover, Capper and Young (2015) posit that positive and substantial changes in the educational system will occur by enhancing educational leaders' proficiency in understanding, identifying, and transforming inequity through equity audits.

Community-Based Equity Audits

In 2017, Green expanded the use of equity audits into a holistic community-based model supporting educational leaders in improving educational outcomes by viewing historically underserved communities from an asset-based lens. The theoretical framework for this audit is grounded in the tenets of Freirean Dialogue: (1) love; (2) humility; (3) faith; (4) hope; and (5) critical thinking. The community-based equity audit consists of four distinct
phases based on the Freirean tenets: (1) disrupting deficit views about community - love; (2) conducting community inquiry–critical thinking; (3) establishing a community leadership team–humility; and (4) collecting asset-based community data–faith and hope (Green, 2017). Green describes the audit as an approach, process, strategy, and tool to assist school leaders in creating equitable outcomes for all students.

The community-based equity audit is distinguished from traditional equity audits by six distinct characteristics:

- It is a flexible approach tailored to address specific concerns identified by community stakeholders rather than an inflexible prescriptive process.
- It addresses systemic problems by transforming deficit mindsets and valuing the funds of knowledge within the students, families, and communities rather than offering a quick fix.
- The community-based equity audit can concurrently occur with leadership equity audits.
- The principal should not be regarded as the sole solution provider but rather as an ally of and for the community.
- An asset-based lens engages community members differently than past engagement efforts.
- A dedicated commitment to equity is crucial for the successful implementation of this approach.

To that end, Green proposes four phases to guide the community-based audit: (1) challenging the traditional deficit-based views about the community, (2) conducting a community inquiry
that helps to understand the community’s assets, needs, and challenges, (3) the establishment of the community leadership team, and (4) the use of asset-based community data.

Phase one of the community-based equity audit focuses on challenging the traditional deficit-based views about the community, which emphasize the problems and shortcomings of the community rather than its strengths and assets. This phase aims to foster a culture of love that nurtures the community’s positive aspects, including its people, organizations, culture, and history. This phase aligns with the Freirean tenet of love, which recognizes that love is essential in transforming communities. In phase one, the team should discuss and consider the adoption of Henderson and colleagues (2007) four core beliefs around equity:

1. All parents have dreams for their children & want the best for them.
2. All parents can support their children’s learning.
3. Parents and school staff should be equal partners.
4. The responsibility for building partnerships between school & home rests primarily with school staff, especially school leaders.

Additionally, the team should generate at least three more core beliefs specific to their context. The discussion and development of these norms as a leadership team will help critically reflect on the alignment of the school and district policies to the core equity beliefs.

Phase two of the community-based equity audit focuses on conducting a community inquiry that helps to understand the community’s assets, needs, and challenges. The objective of this phase is to engage community members in a collaborative process of inquiry and critical thinking, which enables them to gain a deeper understanding of the community’s strengths and challenges. This phase aligns with the Freirean tenet of critical thinking, which is concerned
with developing critical consciousness that allows individuals and communities to reflect on their experiences and understand the world around them.

During phase three of the community-based equity audit, the establishment of the community leadership team guides and supports the community in its efforts to address equity issues. The aim of this phase is to empower community members to take ownership of their development and to help build capacity for change. This phase aligns with the Freirean tenet of humility, recognizing the importance of collective action and the need for community members to work together to achieve their goals.

In phase four, the use of asset-based community data aids in the development of a comprehensive understanding of the community’s strengths and assets. This phase empowers community members to identify and prioritize their strengths, leveraging support for the community’s efforts to address equity issues. This phase aligns with the Freirean tenet of faith and hope, which recognizes the importance of collective action and the power of community members to effect positive change.

In conclusion, Green’s community-based equity audit is a comprehensive and holistic approach to equity assessment that focuses on the empowerment of communities and the development of critical consciousness. Each phase of the equity audit aligns with a Freirean tenet designed to help communities understand their strengths and challenges and work collectively to address equity issues.

**Khalifa Approach to Equity Audits**

Khalifa defines culturally responsive school leadership by critical behaviors, including being introspective, developing and sustaining culturally responsive teachers and curricula,
promoting an anti-oppressive school environment, and actively engaging communities in non-colonizing ways. Khalifa’s (2018) belief that culturally responsive school leadership requires direct, constant discussion of equity data informed his approach to equity audits. Khalifa (2018) recommends using an equity audit as a comprehensive way to uncover oppressive structures, policies, and programs that marginalize students. An equity audit is an iterative cycle that requires school and district leaders to continually engage in self-reflection and prioritize equitable reform of policies, programs, and practices that will create a more equitable school experience for minoritized students (Khalifa, 2018). To that end, Khalifa proposes the examination of four areas: (1) equity trends, (2) survey data, (3) policy analysis, and (4) culturally responsive curriculum, pedagogy, and leadership.

The first area, equity trends, focuses on the review of data to identify any existing disparities in academic achievement or opportunities for student populations. This data review provides a foundation for further examination of the factors contributing to these disparities. The second area of the equity audit, survey data, seeks to gather information on the school culture, community engagement, and other core areas that impact students. This audit phase involves collecting data through surveys to understand better the experiences and perspectives of minoritized students, families, and staff. The third area of the audit, policy analysis, involves critically examining policies that may disproportionately impact minoritized students. This phase of the audit seeks to identify any policies or practices contributing to the existing inequities in the education system and make recommendations for improvement. The fourth area of the equity audit, culturally responsive curriculum, pedagogy, and leadership, seeks to determine the extent to which the educational system addresses the diverse needs of all
students. This audit phase includes examining the curriculum, teaching strategies, and leadership practices to determine if they are culturally responsive and sustaining for all students.

Khalifa’s (2018) approach to equity audits centers on the relationship between culturally responsive school leadership and transformational equity practices. By focusing on the four identified areas, the audit provides a comprehensive view of the educational system and helps to promote equity for all students. Khalifa (2018) provides an example of a multiyear implementation plan with specific action steps. Additionally, an entire checklist describes ways to respond to the opposition that will inevitably arise when conducting an equity audit.

**Equity Audits in Institutes of Higher Education**

Equity curriculum audits in higher education are crucial in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within academic institutions. These audits serve as a comprehensive examination of the curriculum to assess its alignment with the values and principles of equity and inclusion. The purpose of conducting equity curriculum audits is to identify areas of the curriculum that may perpetuate systemic barriers and biases and to ensure that the curriculum is representative of the diverse perspectives, experiences, and identities of all members of the academic community. By regularly conducting equity curriculum audits, higher education institutions can foster an inclusive and equitable learning environment that supports all students' academic and personal growth.

**Equity Audits in Practitioner Inquiry**

This article describes an approach to prepare preservice English teachers to enact social justice in public schools using a practitioner inquiry approach to conduct equity audits.
Practitioner inquiry in teacher education is one method for equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge to become equity leaders who possess a nuanced comprehension of equity and inequity correlations, can critically evaluate current accountability policies, and create equity-focused outcomes within their local school communities. To achieve this goal, it is imperative that beginning teachers have access to effective strategies and tools; the equity audit represents one such tool. This article details the equity audit and application in an action research course to offer other faculty in institutes of higher education the opportunity to utilize this valuable tool in their equity-oriented work with novice teachers.

When introducing the equity audit to students, the participants are encouraged to consider the data obtained through the equity audit as potential ideas for their action research project. First, the class collects and compiles the data, then a visualization of the data is presented to the class. After each presentation, the students engage in a discourse on their findings, including surprising discoveries, insights, and a comparison of similarities and differences among schools within the same school district. The outcome of conducting the equity audits prompts novice teachers to contemplate the reasons behind the lack of clarity regarding the extent of inequity in schools and to examine how the suppression of such data contributes to the preservation of the status quo. Many of these beginning teachers often express dissatisfaction that specific data are difficult or impossible to obtain due to the absence of data collection by the state or the school in certain areas pertaining to equity. The novice teachers present their noticings, wonderings, and disequilibrium surfacing from the equity audits and class discussions as prompts for their practitioner inquiry. Through these discussions and subsequent inquiry projects, it became evident that the equity audits enhanced the equity awareness of novice
English teachers. Students began to comprehend how inequity, under the guise of reform and achievement, operates within schools, and they felt empowered to scrutinize and critique these inequities in their schools. Additionally, the beginning teachers came to recognize that practitioner inquiry can serve as a form of “witnessing” (Groenke, 2010). The novice teachers viewed themselves as potential change agents and equity leaders, working to transform inequitable school policies, practices, and procedures that serve as barriers to access, opportunity, and equitable outcomes for marginalized students.

**Diversity Scorecard**

In 2001 the Center for Urban Education in the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California developed the Diversity Scorecard in conjunction with Estela Mara Bensimon to assist with closing the achievement gap for historically underserved and underrepresented students in higher education intuitions (Bensimon, 2004). Bensimon modeled the design of the Diversity Scorecard on Kaplan and Norton's balanced scorecard for business. Subsequently, Bensimon renamed the diversity scorecard to the Equity Scorecard (Harris & Bensimon, 2007). The Diversity Scorecard was field tested in 14 institutions in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. Bensimon designed the Equity Scorecard as an approach for systemic change in Institutes of Higher Education. The solitary focus of the work was the status of educational outcomes for underrepresented students attending their institutions. The framework for the Equity scorecard includes four distinct perspectives:

1. Access, which focuses on the availability and distribution of educational opportunities and resources.
2. Retention examines the ability of students to persist in their studies and avoid attrition.
3. Institutional receptivity considers the extent to which an educational institution is welcoming and supportive of diversity and equity.

4. Excellence, which evaluates the achievement of high academic standards and academic success by diverse student groups.

Each of these perspectives provides a holistic and nuanced understanding of equity and assists in identifying areas of racial inequalities in educational outcomes.

Using the equity scorecard includes engaging various stakeholders through a collaborative action process (Harris & Bensimon, 2007). What is unique about this process is that the stakeholders complete the action research instead of relying on an outside consultant to conduct the research (Bensimon, 2004). The first step is for the institution to complete the diversity vital signs profile and to disaggregate the data by race and ethnicity. The vital sign data provides a place to begin the examination of potential gaps and inequities in student outcomes that currently exist at the institution. The next step for the institution is to determine performance goals around the four perspectives. Finally, at the end of the second year, participants utilizing the equity scorecard prepare a status report on equity for the campus president. The long-term goal of the Equity Scorecard is to inform and guide the continuous improvement process to institutionalize processes and procedures that regularly monitor outcomes for historically underserved students.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION SELF-ASSESSMENT RUBRIC FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

The New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE) created a self-assessment rubric for institutionalizing diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education (NERCHE, 2016). NERCHE adapted its format from Furco’s self-assessment rubric for
institutionalizing service learning in higher education. The self-assessment rubric contains six dimensions that represent the key areas to examine to institutionalize diversity, equity, and inclusion: (1) philosophy and mission; (2) faculty support; (3) curriculum; (4) staff support; (5) student support; and (6) administrative leadership. Each dimension has a set of components that characterize the dimension, and accompanying indicators provide evidence of change in policy, practices, structures, culture, and climate. The ratings of the components involve identifying one of three stages of development; (1) stage 1- emerging; (2) stage 2 - developing; and (3) stage 3- transforming. The rubric measures a campus’s level of institutionalization of diversity, equity, and inclusion at a given time. The creators acknowledge many appropriate ways to operationalize the rubric, as the value comes from the discussion that the rubric ratings stimulate. However, NERCHE provides three protocols as models for the application of the rubric by institutions which include (1) small group/high-level protocol; (2) large group/ broad-based/multi-level protocol; and (3) limited group/multi-level protocol.

**Equity Curriculum Audits**

As identified through the needs assessment in chapter two, the absence of an authentic, culturally inclusive, equitable curriculum is a prominent issue of concern globally. The curricula enacted in schools across the United States inadequately represent the diverse race, ethnic, class, gender, ability, sexual, and cultural identities reflective of society, often problematizing marginalized groups (Gay, 2015; Love, 2019; Paris, 2012; Woodson, 1933). While the formal process of auditing the written curricula with a laser focus on equity is relatively new, there is a robust history of challenging the existing social, political, and economic power structures included in the school curriculum (Skrla et al., 2004).
Curricular activism refers to using the school curriculum to include underrepresented perspectives and experiences and encouraging critical engagement with the dominant narratives and ideologies that shape it. Bourdieu posited that schools reinforce existing power imbalances by differentiating and ranking students based on their social background, cultural capital, and academic ability, thus reproducing social, political, and economic structures in society (1986). Furthermore, the school curriculum is used as a vehicle to maintain the status quo by transmitting cultural and institutional knowledge, as well as by socializing students into the norms and values of dominant groups perpetuating and reinforcing oppressive systems of race, gender, and class oppression (Anyon, 1981; Bourdieu, 1986; Giroux, 1983; hooks, 1994; Lareau, 2011). Curricular activism and equity or culturally responsive curriculum audits share a common goal of promoting social justice and combating oppression in education. Both approaches aim to critically examine the curriculum and address imbalances in the representation of historically marginalized groups. Curricular activism may inform and guide the process of equity or culturally responsive curriculum audits as educators and advocates work to formally audit the existing curriculum and implement changes that reflect all students’ diverse identities, experiences, and perspectives. In turn, the results of equity and culturally responsive curriculum audits can provide actionable feedback supporting the efforts of curricular activists to promote more inclusive and socially just education.

The theory of change (see Figure 3.8) posits that using equity curriculum audits can reduce racial disparities in academic outcomes and increase the sense of belonging of historically marginalized students. One of the goals is to identify ways in which the curriculum reinforces dominant cultural perspectives and limits or problematizes the representation of
marginalized student groups aligning with Vygotsky’s theory that cultural and historical context is integral to learning and cognitive development. The use of curriculum equity audits can facilitate the identification of any biases or stereotypes present in the materials and any gaps in the representation of different cultures. Research demonstrates that the representation of students’ culture in the curriculum and teaching materials results in higher academic engagement, motivation, and achievement (Gorski, 2020; Trumbull & Rothstein-Fisch, 2011). Additionally, when students see themselves and their cultures represented in the curriculum, they are more likely to develop a positive sense of identity and belonging in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Therefore, by evaluating the curriculum to ensure that it is inclusive and representative of all students, these audits can foster a sense of belonging for historically marginalized groups and promote equity in educational outcomes.

Equity Curriculum Audits in K-12 Education

Equity curriculum audits ensure that K-12 education systems are equitable, inclusive, and reflective of the diverse student populations they serve. These audits examine the content, materials, and resources used in the classroom and assess their representation of different identities, cultures, and perspectives. In addition, equity curriculum audits aim to identify areas where the curriculum may lack diversity and inclusiveness and provide recommendations for improvement. The vision is to promote equity, cultural competence, and critical thinking among students and create humanizing spaces for all students.

* Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecards

The Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools (N.Y.U. Metro Center) developed two comprehensive rubrics for English Language Arts and
Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics. The rubrics facilitate the evaluation of the extent to which a curriculum is culturally responsive. Bryan-Gooden and colleagues (2019) define curriculum as the complete materials used to achieve the learning goals, including but not limited to textbooks, lesson plans, stories/books, worksheets, homework assignments, teacher materials, multimedia materials, and activities.

Bryan-Gooden and colleagues (2019) provide a seven-step process to complete the curriculum scorecard: (1) Obtain the curriculum; (2) Select a curriculum evaluation team; (3) choose the grades, units, and lessons to analyze; (4) pull out keywords; (5) conduct the evaluation; (6) score the evaluation (7) discuss with your team, and (8) share the results. The scorecard comprises three components (1) representation; (2) social justice; and (3) teacher’s materials. The scorecard users evaluate the components along a four-point rating scale: (1) very satisfied; (2) satisfied; (3) unclear; and (4) not satisfied. The scorecard includes examining representation, social justice orientation, and teacher materials.

The representation section includes a diversity of characters tally, a diversity of authors tally, and 13 statements that evaluate the diversity of characters and accuracy of portrayals. An example of one criterion from the accurate portrayal section states, “problems faced by people of color or females are not resolved through the benevolent intervention of a white person or a male” (Bryan-Gooden et al., 2019, p. 10).

The social justice orientation includes eight statements that evaluate decolonization/power and privilege, centering multiple perspectives and connecting learning to real life and action. An example of one criterion from the social justice orientation section states, “the curriculum communicates an asset-based perspective by representing people of diverse races,
classes, genders, abilities and sexual orientations through their strengths, talents, and knowledge rather than their perceived flaws or deficiencies” (Bryan-Gooden et al., 2019, p. 11).

The teachers’ materials section includes nine statements evaluating the cultural responsiveness of the teacher manuals and any teacher guidance within the individual units or lesson plans. An example of one criterion from the social justice orientation section states, “Guidance is provided on customizing and supplementing the curriculum to reflect the cultures, traditions, backgrounds, and interests of the student population.” (Bryan-Gooden et al., 2019, p. 12).

After the organization completes the scorecard, Bryan-Gooden and colleagues suggest two approaches to understanding the results. First, the organization should interpret the total score for each scorecard section (2019). After the organization totals each section, the scale provides guidance in rating the results from culturally destructive to culturally responsive. Second, the organization should interpret the distribution of scores within each section. For example, the evaluation team might be satisfied with one part of the section but unsatisfied with another. Examining each section in distinct parts will allow the evaluation team to notice strengths and weaknesses within the curriculum.

The Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard Toolkit provides resources and guidance for scorecard facilitators on the next steps after completing the Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard. The toolkit includes eight sections: (1) guiding questions for post-scoring debrief; (2) how are we doing it; (3) what it looks like; (4) guide for making your school more culturally responsive; (5) culturally diverse books for children; (6) resource list; (7) frequently asked questions for everyone to think about; and (8) guidelines for selecting culturally
responsive materials (Bryan-Gooden et al., 2019). Bryan-Goodman and colleagues designed this process to evaluate the cultural responsiveness of the English Language Arts curriculum and necessary guidance on the next steps after completing the evaluation.

The purpose of equity audits in K-12 education is to address disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes among different student groups. These audits provide a systematic analysis of school policies, practices, and resources to identify areas where bias, discrimination, or structural barriers may prevent certain students from achieving academic success. By examining factors such as school funding, teacher quality, disciplinary practices, and student engagement, equity audits can help schools to create more inclusive and equitable learning environments. The results of the audits are the basis for developing action plans and making necessary changes to reduce disparities in achievement and promote equal educational opportunities for all students. The use of equity audits in higher education institutes helps examine the experiences of students, faculty, and staff, intending to promote a more inclusive and equitable campus environment.

**Equity Curriculum Audits in Institutes of Higher Education**

Equity curriculum audits in higher education are crucial in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within academic institutions. These audits serve as a comprehensive examination of the curriculum to assess its alignment with the values and principles of equity and inclusion. The purpose of conducting equity curriculum audits is to identify areas of the curriculum that may perpetuate systemic barriers and biases and to ensure that the curriculum is representative of the diverse perspectives, experiences, and identities of all members of the academic community. By regularly conducting equity curriculum audits, higher education
institutions can foster an inclusive and equitable learning environment that supports all students' academic and personal growth.

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Rubric for Course Syllabi**

Fuentes and colleagues have developed a diversity, equity, and inclusion rubric by creating and examining the course syllabus (2021). The course syllabus provides the professor’s expectations and philosophy for the course, creating an agreement that the faculty makes with the students enrolled (Fuentes et al., 2021). Fuentes and colleagues designed this tool precisely to guide the development of a syllabus that embodies the elements of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

While undergraduate psychology courses have considered diversity issues, it has often been through a singular lens. In contrast, this tool considers how applying an intersectionality lens can assist professors in being responsive to the entire identity of their students. As with other equity models reviewed, the authors emphasize the importance of self-reflection and self-critique on the journey to cultural competence. Fuentes and colleagues provide seven considerations for promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion in the course syllabus: (1) engage in reflexivity; (2) adopt a diversity-centered approach; (3) highlight diversity in the course description and acknowledge intersectionality; (4) develop diversity-centered learning objectives; (5) include a diversity statement; (6) decolonize the syllabus; (7) foster a family-friendly syllabus; and (8) establish ground rules for communication. Fuentes and colleagues contribute to the literature on equity audits by proposing a framework to engage professors in considering how to apply DEI principles when designing their course syllabi and learning experiences. Their work contributes to the tools higher education can institutionalize to design
a more successful educational experience and sense of belonging for historically marginalized students.

**Course Development Plan**

Seiler and colleagues (2022) propose a Course Development Plan (C.D.P.) to advance the incorporation of antiracist principles into epidemiology coursework. The C.D.P. includes two components: (1) a guideline document that provides strategies on how to modify curricula and classroom teaching to incorporate antiracism and principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion (E.D.I.); and (2) a structured worksheet for instructors to share E.D.I. and antiracism practices they already incorporate and practices they plan to incorporate into their classes (Seiler et al., 2022). The instructors submit their worksheets before the beginning of the course semester. Then a peer faculty member and a student used a structured evaluation rubric to review the submission, provide a review to the curriculum committee, and provide the professor with written feedback. The goal of the C.D.P. process is rooted in the principles of equity and justice and provides a systematic process for identifying and applying antiracist principles in the college classroom. In addition, Seiler and colleagues identify future work highlighting other intersecting issues of xenophobia, classism, ableism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, and obesity stigma. Additionally, the evaluation process highlights the importance of creating accountability systems to mitigate the potential of the tool being improperly used and perpetuating harm.

**Fostering Equity, Diversity, and Inclusiveness Through Curricular Development**
Lane and Waldron (2021) introduce a rubric that aims to support nursing educators in evaluating the inclusion of diverse populations in the curricula. The rubric focuses on addressing the absence, under representation, and misrepresentation of historically marginalized groups through addressing the following criteria: the inclusion of diverse populations, appreciation of sociohistorical context, consideration of sociopolitical activism within nursing, and application of structural competency and institutional alignment. The aim of the rubric is to assist nursing educators in conducting assessments of their syllabi and identifying areas for improvement in creating a more inclusive curriculum accurately situating marginalized populations within the larger the sociopolitical, economic, historical, and institutional structures that influence the development of marginalized populations.

In conclusion, equity curriculum audits have emerged as a crucial tool in addressing systemic inequities in Institutes of Higher Education. By examining curricular content, pedagogy, and assessment practices, these audits help identify and dismantle barriers to equity and promote more inclusive and liberatory learning environments for all students. It is imperative to take proactive measures to ensure that the curricula in every department reflect the diverse experiences and perspectives of the enrolled students. Equity Curriculum Audits cultivate a more humanizing inclusive educational experience and prepare our students for an evolving world. Audits are an opportunity to make meaningful progress toward equity and social justice in higher education and to work tirelessly toward achieving these goals to provide equitable learning experiences for all.

A synthesis of equity and curriculum audit literature identified several distinct approaches to implementing an equity audit to improve equitable outcomes for students. An
An equity audit is a systematic way for a team of diverse stakeholders to collect data relating to procedures, practices, and policies to uncover the root causes of inequities in their schools and districts (Johnson, 2020; MAEC, 2021; Skrla et al., 2009). Based on this literature review, a comprehensive curriculum audit handbook was created for use by K-12 school districts to assist with implementing an equity audit specifically focused on curriculum through a continuous improvement model designed to create inclusive curriculum that affirms all students and values all of their cultural and linguistic knowledge. Appendix F provides the overall structure of the proposed curriculum equity audit process and provides an example of a completed module.
Table 3.15

Literature Review of Equity Audits and Design Elements to Consider

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Design Element to Consider</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bensimon &amp; The Center for Urban Education (CUE); Harris &amp; Bensimon</td>
<td>2004; 2007</td>
<td>The Equity Scorecard process frames student success in college as an institutional responsibility asserting that the racial equity gap can be closed if interventions focus on remediating institutional, cultural practices and structures, rather than blaming the academic deficiencies of historically marginalized students.</td>
<td>The concept of equity mindedness, which is the understanding that recognizing and addressing inequities is a shared responsibility, is an important element to consider when designing a curriculum equity audit process. The assertion is that equity minded individuals recognize patterns of educational outcomes and the influence of institutional expectations and actions on marginalized students rather than attempting to remediate individual student deficits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bleyaert</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>To develop and pilot an equity audit instrument focused on the implementation of new math requirements.</td>
<td>This study highlights the importance of equally emphasizing the creation of the audit tool and the audit process to mitigate the potential of the audit becoming a compliance measure instead of a tool for curricular and pedagogical transformation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryan-Goeden, Hester, Peoples</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>To help teachers, parents, students, and community members determine the extent to which their schools’ ELA curricula are culturally responsive.</td>
<td>This tool contains several elements that will be useful in the design and implementation of the curriculum equity audit process. The scorecard and criteria can be a model to consider during the development process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capper &amp; Young</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Developed as the cornerstone of equity</td>
<td>The process described can prove useful in designing a similar process that is solely focused on curriculum. The equity audit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDRA, Scott</td>
<td>2001, 2006,</td>
<td>Examine how well schools and districts are meeting the needs of all</td>
<td>This tool included a helpful equity ranking scale that can be useful when considering how to rate the criteria in the creation of the curriculum equity audit tool. The instrument's format also gives the auditor a clear purpose of each section, which will be another design element to consider.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>and districts are meeting the needs of all learners and which areas</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>need more attention.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Etengoff</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>To create a systematic process to integrate diversity, equity and</td>
<td>The seven steps outlined in this article represent a progression from basic principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion to more transformative teaching methods based on liberatory education principles. The article is accompanied by teaching resources that provide resources for each proposed step. This is a potential model for organizing resources for teachers that align to the audit tool.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>inclusion principles into research method courses.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frattura &amp;</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Eliminate inequities for all students by shifting from deficit</td>
<td>Chapter 15 of this book discusses the messiness of change toward social justice, outlining change for social justice requires second order change. Table 15.1 provides concrete steps on how to successfully navigate the change process which will be a useful resource when creating the audit process for my district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capper</td>
<td></td>
<td>systems and practices to asset-based systems and practices.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuentes, Zelaya,</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td>Provide a comprehensive guide for developing a syllabus that assists</td>
<td>The researchers assert that using the considerations will help educators increase their cultural awareness and understand how their own social and cultural background shapes their positionality in the classroom. Their philosophy aligns with the presented theory of change and will provide important insight into the creation of the curriculum equity audit process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp; Madsen</td>
<td></td>
<td>with the integration of equity, diversity, and inclusion</td>
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<td>Researcher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Examine underserved communities with an asset-based lens drawing on Freirean dialogue.</td>
<td>There are many implications for the creation of the curriculum equity audit process that can be gleaned from the community-based equity audit. The first phase of the audit involves disrupting deficit views and adopting asset-based views through studying <em>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</em>. Each phase of the audit is aligned to one or more of Freirean tenets to anchor the work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanover Nuland et al.</td>
<td>2020a, b</td>
<td>Examine inequitable outcomes to develop solutions for root causes.</td>
<td>Provides a three-year framework for conducting an equity audit. Of note is the process for monitoring systemic changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalifa</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Examine oppressive practices</td>
<td>In chapter 5, Figure 5.3 on page 163 provides a process for youth participatory action research that would be a great model to include in the curriculum equity audit process. It centers the voices of minoritized students in the curriculum audit process. This provides a different way to include students that differs from previous planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lane &amp; Waldron</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td>Provides a rubric to systematically evaluate syllabi within the nursing program of how course content fostered, diversity, equity, and a culture of inclusiveness.</td>
<td>This article adds a novel idea for the creation of the curriculum equity audit tool in considering using part of the evaluation to determine the alignment with the equity policies stated by the school district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAEC</td>
<td>2021, 2022</td>
<td>To reflect on whether current school policies, procedures, and practices are equitable.</td>
<td>The audit consists of three questionnaires for school leaders, staff, and educators to assess if their schools and classrooms are equitable across various criteria. This is not a research article but audit tools available to schools to examine practices, policies, and procedures. Guidance is provided in a separate document entitled <em>An Equity Audit: Is it in Your Future?</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
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<tr>
<td>McKenzie &amp; Skrla</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>To extend the use of the equity audits, which have been traditionally used at the district and school level, to the classroom level.</td>
<td>This resource provides a section on equity consciousness in relation to equitable and excellent teaching including a preassessment tool to gauge current level of equity consciousness. Section one describes teacher quality, equity consciousness, and high-quality teaching skills. Section two describes auditing for teaching and learning, discipline, parental involvement, and programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE)</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>To capture the level of institutional diversity at a set point of time.</td>
<td>This resource is useful in that it provides multiple protocol designs to implement the rubric in a local context. This honors the contextual nature of implementation and provides for maximum flexibility. As I consider scaling up my model for other school districts across the country, this is a method that I would like to consider adopting in my work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seiler, et al.</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>Tools to ensure all instructors are engaging in and advancing antiracist pedagogy</td>
<td>This article specifically refers to antiracist pedagogy which adds a new lens to the creation of my audit tool. Additionally, the article provides two useful resources including the course development plan and a guidance document on modifying classroom teaching and course materials to reflect EDI and anti-racism principles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skrla, McKenzie, &amp; Scheurich</td>
<td>2009, 2004</td>
<td>Examine systemic patterns of inequity</td>
<td>There are several areas included in the book that will be helpful in the development and refinement of my curriculum equity audit tool. Chapter 7 provides an example of a district operationalizing an equity audit. Chapter 9 provides strategies on increasing equity consciousness of teachers and Chapter 11 identifies equity traps and gives specific strategies to prevent getting stuck.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stahl &amp; Armstrong</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>To provide a description of the audit approach so that other college faculty can replicate the process</td>
<td>This audit approach provides insight into the importance of examining the curriculum vertically. Additionally, it discusses the importance of classroom observations as part of the audit process because the texts and tasks included in a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Design Element to Consider</td>
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<tr>
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<td>curriculum can be implemented in vastly diverse ways and provides additional data points to examine.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Conclusion

Using equity audits to improve and reduce disparities in education through identifying and disrupting inequities is a crucial aspect of promoting equitable outcomes for historically marginalized students in the educational system. Equity audits provide a multifaceted strategy to systematically examine policies and practices, identify areas of inequity, and implement strategies to address these injustices (Skrla et al., 2004). Equity-oriented leaders understand the urgency of the work and the significance of uncovering oppressive and discriminatory practices through the implementation an equity audit (Capper & Young; Khalifa, 2018). This continuous improvement process helps ensure that educational resources, opportunities, and outcomes are distributed equally among all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or other characteristics. By conducting comprehensive equity audits that prioritize the perspectives and experiences of historically marginalized students, schools and educational organizations can create a more inclusive and equitable learning environment, thereby reducing disparities and promoting educational equity for all students.

Equity audits provide a framework to systematically examine inequitable practices and policies that minoritize students creating disparate academic outcomes (Fabillar, 2018). Each of the described approaches focuses on uncovering educational inequities to achieve equity for all students. The literature on equity and curriculum audit reveals that various implementation approaches and strategies can be used to conduct an equity audit to promote justice for students. The equity audits reviewed have a broad focus on equity and the need revealed through the findings of the needs assessment was to leverage the equity audit process to audit the English Language Arts curriculum.
After examining the literature, it is proposed to create a comprehensive curriculum equity audit process by combining existing equity audit tools and research (see Table 1) and create a process specifically for K-12 education. Using an equity curriculum audit approach can provide a framework to examine the curriculum for inequities and provide actionable data to inform the creation of a more inclusive affirming curriculum for all students. The results from the curriculum equity audit will facilitate critical reflection on the collected data and consider specific actions to transform curricula that are dehumanizing or inequitable for minoritized students. Therefore, by evaluating the curriculum to ensure that it is inclusive and representative of all students, these audits can foster a sense of belonging for historically marginalized groups and provide a humanizing educational experience for all students. While using the results to revise the curriculum, it will be equally important to consider the professional development needed when enacting an anti-bias, antiracist, inclusive curriculum so that teachers are aware of their positionality in relation to the students they are teaching and how they are teaching texts. After creating the rubric, a curriculum equity audit team will gather feedback and determine the tool's utility to audit the curriculum for equity to inform any necessary revisions before full implementation.

In conclusion, the purpose of creating this Curriculum Audit Handbook is to provide an actionable multifaceted strategy to transform education for historically marginalized students. Our marginalized students deserve decisive action towards the persistent and widening disparities in academic outcomes and decreased sense of belonging. The time is now, and the urgency is real. Our historically marginalized students deserve nothing less than our undivided attention and steadfast commitment to addressing the legacy of injustice that has persisted for
far too long. Curricular equity audits have the power to address pedagogical malpractice and
drive progress towards more equitable education for all.
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Appendix A

Figure A1

MCAP Third Grade ELA Trend Data 2016-2019

Third Grade State Assessment in ELA

Figure A2

MCAP Fourth Grade ELA Trend Data 2016-2019
Appendix A (Continued)

Figure A3

**MCAP Fifth Grade ELA Trend Data 2016-2019**

![Bar Chart for MCAP Fifth Grade ELA Trend Data 2016-2019](chart1.png)

- All students
- Asian
- American Indian or Alaska Native Students
- Black or African American
- Hawaiian /Pacific Islander
- Hispanic/ Latino
- Two or More Ethnicities
- White

Figure A4

**MCAP Sixth Grade ELA Trend Data 2016-2019**

![Bar Chart for MCAP Sixth Grade ELA Trend Data 2016-2019](chart2.png)

- All students
- Asian
- American Indian or Alaska Native Students
- Black or African American
- Hawaiian /Pacific Islander
- Hispanic/ Latino
- Two or More Ethnicities
- White
Appendix A (Continued)

Figure A5

MCAP Seventh Grade ELA Trend Data 2016-2019

![Bar chart showing MCAP Seventh Grade ELA Trend Data 2016-2019](image)

Figure A6

MCAP Eight Grade ELA Trend Data 2016-2019

![Bar chart showing MCAP Eight Grade ELA Trend Data 2016-2019](image)
Figure A7

*MCAP Tenth Grade ELA Trend Data 2016-2019*

Figure A8

*Elementary MAP Reading Student Group Gaps*
Appendix A (Continued)

Figure A9

*Middle School MAP Reading Student Group Gaps*

![Graph showing student group gaps in Middle School Reading MAP](image)

**Figure A10**

*Dropout Trend Data*

![Graph showing dropout trend data](image)
Figure A11

Graduation Rate Trend Data for Four Year Cohort
Appendix B

Figure B1

*Belonging Domain Score 2019-2021*

![Bar chart showing belonging domain scores for elementary, middle, and high schools from 2019 to 2021.](chart1.png)

Figure B2

*Elementary School Response Frequencies Regarding Being Treated with Respect*

![Bar chart showing response frequencies for strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree categories from 2019 to 2021.](chart2.png)
Figure B3

*Middle School Response Frequencies Regarding Being Treated with Respect*

Figure B4

*High School Response Frequencies Regarding Being Treated with Respect*
Appendix B (Continued)

Figure B5

Elementary Students Response Frequencies Regarding Persevering with Difficult Schoolwork

Figure B6

Middle School Students Response Frequencies Regarding Persevering with Difficult Schoolwork
Appendix B (Continued)

Figure B7

*High School Students Response Frequencies Regarding Persevering with Difficult Schoolwork*

![Bar chart showing response frequencies regarding persevering with difficult schoolwork for high school students across three years.](chart1)

Figure B8

*Elementary Student Response Frequencies Regarding Feeling Safe at School*

![Bar chart showing response frequencies regarding feeling safe at school for elementary students across three years.](chart2)
Appendix B (Continued)

Figure B9

*Middle School Student Response Frequencies Regarding Feeling Safe at School*

![Bar chart showing response frequencies for middle school students across different years.](chart1)

Figure B10

*High School Student Response Frequencies Regarding Feeling Safe at School*

![Bar chart showing response frequencies for high school students across different years.](chart2)
Appendix B (Continued)

Figure B11

*Elementary Student Response Frequencies Regarding Being Themselves at School*

![Bar chart showing response frequencies for elementary students across years.]

Figure B12

*Middle School Student Response Frequencies Regarding Being Themselves at School*

![Bar chart showing response frequencies for middle school students across years.]

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Appendix B (Continued)

Figure B13

High School Student Response Frequencies Regarding Being Themselves at School

![High School Student Response Frequencies Chart]

Figure B14

Elementary Student Response Frequencies Regarding Students Being Accepting to Others

![Elementary Student Response Frequencies Chart]
Appendix B (Continued)

Figure B15

*Middle School Student Response Frequencies Regarding Students Being Accepting to Others*

![Bar chart showing response frequencies for middle school students across three years: 2019, 2020, and 2021. The chart displays the percentage of responses for strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree, with the x-axis representing response ratings and the y-axis representing frequency percentages.](image)

Figure B16

*High School Student Response Frequencies Regarding Students Being Accepting to Others*

![Bar chart showing response frequencies for high school students across three years: 2019, 2020, and 2021. The chart displays the percentage of responses for strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree, with the x-axis representing response ratings and the y-axis representing frequency percentages.](image)
Appendix B (Continued)

Figure B17

*Elementary Student Response Frequencies Regarding Students Working Out Disagreements*

![Bar chart showing response frequencies for elementary students across different years.](image1)

Figure B18

*Middle School Student Response Frequencies Regarding Students Working Out Disagreements*

![Bar chart showing response frequencies for middle school students across different years.](image2)
Appendix B (Continued)

Figure B19

High School Student Response Frequencies Regarding Students Working Out Disagreements

Figure B20

Elementary Student Response Frequencies Regarding Feeling Welcome
Appendix B (Continued)

Figure B21

*Middle School Student Response Frequencies Regarding Feeling Welcome*

![Middle School Student Response Frequencies Regarding Feeling Welcome](image)

Figure B22

*High School Student Response Frequencies Regarding Feeling Welcome*

![High School Student Response Frequencies Regarding Feeling Welcome](image)
Appendix B (Continued)

Figure B23

*Elementary Student Response Frequencies Regarding Feeling Angry*

![Bar chart showing frequency percentages for strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree for elementary students across years 2019, 2020, and 2021.]

Figure B24

*Middle School Student Response Frequencies Regarding Feeling Angry*

![Bar chart showing frequency percentages for strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree for middle school students across years 2019, 2020, and 2021.]

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Appendix B (Continued)

Figure B25

High School Student Response Frequencies Regarding Feeling Angry

![Bar chart showing response frequencies for feeling angry over three years: 2019, 2020, and 2021.]

Figure B26

Elementary Student Response Frequencies Regarding Student Cooperation

![Bar chart showing response frequencies for student cooperation over three years: 2019, 2020, and 2021.]

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Appendix B (Continued)

Figure B27

*Middle School Student Response Frequencies Regarding Student Cooperation*

![Middle School Student Response Frequencies Regarding Student Cooperation](image)

Figure B28

*High School Student Response Frequencies Regarding Student Cooperation*

![High School Student Response Frequencies Regarding Student Cooperation](image)
Appendix B (Continued)

Figure B29

*Elementary Student Response Frequencies Regarding Student Help*

![Elementary Student Response Frequencies Regarding Student Help](image)

Figure B30

*Middle School Student Response Frequencies Regarding Student Help*

![Middle School Student Response Frequencies Regarding Student Help](image)
Appendix B (Continued)

**Figure B31**

*High School Student Response Frequencies Regarding Student Help*

![High School Student Response Frequencies](image)

**Figure B32**

*Elementary Student Response Frequencies Regarding School Community*

![Elementary Student Response Frequencies](image)
Appendix B (Continued)

Figure B33

*Middle School Student Response Frequencies Regarding School Community*

![Middle School Student Response Frequencies](image)

Figure B34

*High School Student Response Frequencies Regarding School Community*

![High School Student Response Frequencies](image)
Appendix C

Figure C1

Percentage of Students Responding Yes to Witnessing Student Bullying

Figure C2

Percentage of Students Responding Yes to Being Bullied at School
Appendix C (Continued)

Figure C3

Parents/Caregivers, School-Based Staff and Administrators Perceptions of Bullying

Figure C4

Percentage of Students Answering Once a Month or Every day to Bullying – 2019
Appendix C (Continued)

**Figure C5**

*Percentage of Students Answering Once a Month or Every day to Bullying - 2020*

**Figure C6**

*Percentage of Students Answering Once a Month or Every day to Bullying - 2021*
Appendix D

Figure D1

*Elementary School Demographics*

![Elementary School Demographics](chart1.png)

Figure D2

*Middle School Demographics*

![Middle School Demographics](chart2.png)
Appendix D (Continued)

Figure D3

High School Demographics
## Appendix E

### Figure E

**Code Matrix Browser**

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### Table E

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<td>Disparate Academic</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>Academic achievement refers to the level of success a student has attained in their educational pursuits, typically measured by grades, test scores, and completion of educational programs or degrees.</td>
<td>“And like, what kinds of conversations are we having with our young people about their own social emotional wellness, their development of identity, we know that identity and sense of perception is an academician is hugely important to student achievement, particularly to students of color black students in particular.”</td>
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<td>“we look at the graduation rates, there are not Black and Brown students in those majors are getting those doctorate advanced degrees. And so, we need to do better to instill the excellence that is black students, that they have creativity, they have those skills, and they need to have those opportunities to excel in those areas. And I think that's something we need to see in elementary, middle and high school.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation</td>
<td></td>
<td>There are three requirements that students must meet in order to graduate with a Maryland High School Diploma: credit, service learning and assessment.</td>
<td>“what are we doing to mitigate that achievement gap, you know, as a white woman, leading a school that's predominantly made up of about 60% black students. It is, we have this year after year that this achievement gap where my black students are not achieving at the same rate as my white students. And, you know, we’re”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap</td>
<td></td>
<td>The achievement gap refers to unequal outcomes in education, such as unequal distribution of educational results and benefits.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>access refers to the measures taken by educational institutions and policies to ensure equal and fair opportunities for students to benefit fully from their education. Improving access often involves schools offering additional resources or eliminating any real or perceived barriers that could prevent certain students from participating in specific courses or academic programs.</td>
<td>“we really pushed on each other, we pushed on our teachers to provide more access to provide more opportunity for our students in fifth grade to be in the advanced math class. And at first, we only had seven students of color, maybe they were in in that class. We’re actually seven students total. So, we’re in the class, to be honest. And now it’s our largest class with 25 students in the class and majority are black or brown, and they are thriving. And it was just because we gave them this opportunity.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Representatio n</td>
<td>curriculum encompasses the expectations for what students should learn, including the standards they must meet, the lessons taught by teachers, the assignments given to students, the instructional materials used in a course, and the methods of evaluating student learning, such as tests and assessments</td>
<td>“And another huge topic for a lot of them was our history and what we learned in our schools. A big topic is I guess a lot of us this year have learned about what June 19 Juneteenth is. Honestly, I didn’t even know what that was until last year until I did my own research. I think someone brought it up to me. I’m like, Oh, what is that? And I learned about it. But definitely a change in our curriculum and the way we teach things.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demographics reflective of students</td>
<td>Teachers and administrators who are racially and culturally diverse</td>
<td>“the diversity with teachers is really important, especially for an African American student. And if we don't have people look like us, it might affect how you perform in putting in all of this work year after year, and we keep seeing the same result.”</td>
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| Identity           |                    | Identity refers to the characteristics, qualities, beliefs, and experiences that make a person who they are. It encompasses various aspects of a person's life, including their physical characteristics, personal values, cultural background, social relationships, and sense of self. | “schools, especially low-income school students.”
<p>|                    |                    | “So, for me, especially as a Muslim, female, and as a Muslim in a large County, identity is a very big thing.”                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Intersectionality  |                    | Intersectionality is a concept in social justice theory that recognizes the interconnected nature of social categories such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and other factors that intersect to shape a person's experiences and opportunities. | “understanding the disparities that exist across data set, understanding the intersectionality of identity”                                                                                               |
| Racial and Cultural Discrimination | Racism | Racism is a belief that some races are inherently superior to others, and a corresponding systematic oppression of people based on their race. Racism can manifest in a variety of forms, including prejudice, discrimination, and bias in social, political, and economic systems. Racism leads to unequal treatment and limited opportunities for certain racial groups. | “I know my school has an issue with it but allowing the racism and allowing the racism to become a part of our cultures in our schools and allowing it to spread throughout our schools because we've had some racism. And it has been difficult because the black community and people of color in our school have seen this go on for many years,” |
| Racial and Cultural Discrimination | Bias | Bias refers to a partiality or preference towards one particular perspective, outcome, or group of people, often leading to an unfair or unjust treatment of others. Bias can exist in many forms, such as conscious or unconscious attitudes and beliefs. | “because we have been brought up in this system of institutionalized racism, where we have bias and that we may not even realize that we are ending our unintended impacts, or might be causing some of these gaps” |</p>
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<th>Theme</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Racist</td>
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<td>beliefs, and can influence thoughts, decisions, and actions.</td>
<td>“Do and I just have conversations with both of those teachers? Like do you understand what you're saying? And what you're doing what's the historical context behind Little Black Sambo, and then calling a black student dirty? And so, I knew then that some things needed to happen”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Microaggressions</td>
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<td>A racist is a person who holds discriminatory beliefs about certain races and practices or supports the systematic oppression of people based on their race.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Microaggressions</td>
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<td>Microaggressions are subtle, often unconscious, expressions of bias or prejudice towards marginalized groups of people.</td>
<td>“tossed around as jokes, and microaggressions, which, as mentioned, are sometimes just flat-out aggression have been brushed off as normal”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorblind</td>
<td></td>
<td>Colorblind refers to the belief that race should not be a consideration in social interactions or decision-making, and that treating everyone as if they are equal regardless of their race is the best way to achieve racial equality.</td>
<td>“I don't see race nullifies the culture and experience as a black woman that you bring into, into the room. And so, what I've learned is when I do that, I take away the voice of people and their culture and their experience and ignore the fact that they have different lived experiences than I do. And because of that, I'm unable to see how I need to change how I provide instruction, how I provide guidance, how I provide leadership”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sense of Belonging</td>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>Belonging refers to the sense of being a part of a community or group and feeling accepted and valued as an individual within that community. It encompasses feelings of connection, safety, and acceptance, and is associated with positive outcomes such as</td>
<td>“When we look at the County stakeholder survey in the category of belonging, our black students as a school system have a larger disagreement that they, they are supported in our schools. And I think that speaks loud and clear.”</td>
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<td>Safety</td>
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<td>Increased self-esteem, social support, and well-being.</td>
<td>“but it always takes me back to when kids walk in a building or they do they feel safe? Do they have someone that they can go to when they have a problem?”</td>
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<td>A safe school environment is one where individuals feel physically secure, protected from harm and danger, and free from fear, intimidation, and discrimination. A sense of safety in schools also includes emotional and psychological safety, where individuals feel supported, respected, and valued, and where they can freely express themselves without fear of negative consequences.</td>
<td>“It’s not just the fact that we’re putting kids in a GT class, and we’re making them feel safe and comfortable”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusion refers to the creation of inclusive classrooms, schools, and educational systems where all students, regardless of their abilities, disabilities, race, ethnicity, gender, language, culture, or socio-economic background, are welcome and have equal access to educational opportunities and resources.</td>
<td>“ensuring that there is an inclusive learning opportunity for each and every student, because our district is so diverse” (Transcript Race Conversation, Para. 128)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td></td>
<td>Support refers to the various forms of assistance and resources provided to students, teachers, and schools to help them succeed academically and emotionally.</td>
<td>“lack thereof, of the structural supports that are in place to meet the pluralistic needs of our young folks.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culturally Responsive Teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td>Culture refers to the shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that characterize a group or society. Culture includes things such as language, religion, social norms, traditions, beliefs, values, customs, and material objects.</td>
<td>“truly, really knowing I’m really knowing about their culture, and not judging based on my lived experience, or my culture, or my teachers, experiences and having them not judged. And using that information when we are doing the teaching and learning.”</td>
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<td>Affirming Students Cultural</td>
<td>Affirming students’ cultural backgrounds is validating the unique cultural identities and experiences of students and creating a learning environment where students feel valued, and their cultural backgrounds are respected and appreciated.</td>
<td>“individual teachers need to have that work to affirm students culture, not just black students, but Latin x students”</td>
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<td>Backgrounds</td>
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<td>Relationships</td>
<td>A positive teacher-student relationship can involve the teacher recognizing and valuing each student's unique strengths and challenges, providing constructive feedback, and fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment.</td>
<td>“forming relationships with kids and I'll often you know, have lunch with kids and they're coming in my office, and you know, seeing a book with the title Black Girls Rock, and they're just like I said, they're so thrilled”</td>
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<td>District Policies, Practices,</td>
<td>Professional development refers to the process of acquiring new skills, knowledge, and experience to enhance one's career and professional abilities. This can include formal training programs, conferences, workshops, on-the-job experience, self-directed learning, and other opportunities to gain knowledge and experience relevant to one's professional field.</td>
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<td>and Procedures</td>
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<td>Hiring Practices</td>
<td>Hiring practices are the methods and processes used by an organization to identify, attract, select, and onboard new employees. This can include job postings, resume screening, interviewing, reference checks, background checks, assessment tests, and other methods to evaluate job candidates and make hiring decisions</td>
<td>“Because I saw things happening with hiring for teachers, and how teachers are interviewed and how teachers are placed on a rating scale. And so, it looked different based on teachers, black teachers, versus how white teachers were treated, and rated by certain panels. And so, I just have to be honest, and speak my truth what I observed”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disciplinary</td>
<td>Practices</td>
<td>Disciplinary practices in education refer to the methods used by educational institutions to address and correct unacceptable student behavior. This can include consequences such as detention, suspension, expulsion, or other actions taken to address violations of school rules and regulations.</td>
<td>“disproportionate rates of expulsion and wonderings about the deep roots of impacts related to those phenomenon?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Teacher evaluation is the process of assessing the effectiveness and quality of a teacher's performance in the classroom. This can include formal observations of the teacher's teaching methods, review of student progress and achievement data, feedback from students and parents, and other methods of evaluating a teacher's contributions to student learning.</td>
<td>“So, I think that's one thing that another thing also is that 97% of teachers across Maryland, are rated highly effective or effective, but we have these large achievement gaps. And so, I think, you know, as a teacher, I plan to hold principals, assistant principals, coordinators, everyone accountable, because what we're not serving our Black and Brown students” (Transcript Race Conversation, Para. 168)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td></td>
<td>Accountability refers to the obligation of an individual or organization to be answerable for their actions, decisions, and responsibilities.</td>
<td>“But now also, we also have to hold our white teachers accountable for being able to address the needs of our students. If we have a county, that's two thirds students of color, I mean, then something really has to change with how we're addressing their needs, what's going on the classrooms, and how structures are in place, because those also really have to change in order for our kids to see and feel safe as well.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equity Consciousness</td>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>An equity-conscious individual recognizes and acknowledges the systemic barriers and biases that affect historically marginalized groups and is committed to taking action to address these inequalities. It is an ongoing process of self-reflection, learning, and taking action to promote fairness, equity, and justice.</td>
<td>“experiences lately, where I had to take a step back and really examine myself. And that's tough to do when you're examining yourself with racism”</td>
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Appendix F

Recommendation for Dissertation Dossier

After examining the literature, it is proposed to create a comprehensive curriculum equity audit process by using a combination of existing equity audit tools and research (see Table 3.15) and processes specifically for K-12 education. Using an equity audit approach can provide a structure to examine the curriculum to inform the creation of a more inclusive affirming curriculum for all students. A curriculum audit provides a structure to critically examine the totality of the curriculum to determine who has been centered, who has been marginalized, and who has been left out entirely.

The results from the curriculum equity audit will facilitate critical reflection on the data that is collected and consider specific actions to transform curricula that is dehumanizing or inequitable for minoritized students. While using the results to revise the curriculum, it will be equally important to consider the professional development needed when enacting an anti-bias, anti-racist, inclusive curriculum so that teachers are aware of their positionality in relation to the students they are teaching and how they are teaching texts to students. After the rubric is created, the tool will be applied by a curriculum equity audit review team to gather feedback and determine the utility of the tool to audit the curriculum for equity to inform any necessary revisions before full implementation.
Dedication

To the historically marginalized students who have been underserved for far too long: this dissertation is dedicated to creating schools that will serve you, your children, and your grandchildren for generations to come. In particular, I dedicate this to the students who transparently and courageously shared their educational experiences during the district conversation on race and racism. The commitment to you is bold and unrelenting; the work will not stop until the systems of oppression that have hindered you have been dismantled, and new liberatory spaces have been created to allow your brilliance to shine.

This work is dedicated to recognizing the importance of valuing all student's identities and creating humanizing spaces for learning. The work is unfinished until all schools are places where students can bring their whole selves and where their cultures, languages, and experiences are respected and celebrated. In addition, strong relationships with students and their families will be cultivated because they are experts in their own lives, and their insights and contributions are invaluable to achieving this work.

This work will be challenging, but creating humanizing, equitable, and inclusive classrooms and schools where every student is seen, heard, and valued is imperative. Therefore, the vision is to build a future where schools provide every student with the opportunity to thrive and succeed academically, socially, and personally, regardless of their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, gender identity, ability status, linguistic background, zip code, or life circumstances.
Introduction

It is imperative that we commit to equity work in education, as systemic inequities have resulted in unacceptable disparities in student outcomes. However, it is essential to recognize that curriculum and instruction cannot be considered in isolation, as they exist within a larger ecosystem. Educational institutions can conduct equity audits in several critical domains, including programmatic access and opportunities, teaching quality, academic performance, discipline, policy reviews, and curriculum and instruction. This handbook’s exclusive focus is to guide schools, districts, and educational institutions in leading an equity audit focusing on equitable curriculum and instruction. Addressing inequitable student outcomes is complex and multifaceted, requiring an unwavering commitment to equity. Therefore, this manual is not intended to be prescriptive or exhaustive but rather a catalyst for engaging in the necessary work to change inequitable outcomes for students from historically marginalized communities.

The handbook offers a written guide and optional videos to assist presenters in conveying the content and learning exercises featured in the modules to achieve the intended outcomes. The facilitator guide provides talking points to aid presenters in comprehending the rationale behind the slide sequence and content. It is suggested that presenters avoid reciting the script or slide verbatim and instead tailor the content to suit their style and intended audience. In addition to the guide, suggested times and instructions are included to aid in a well-organized presentation. The many methods and activities presented within the handbook are different options for engaging educators in dialogue around the complexity of equity work. We anticipate that presenters will be thoughtful in choosing or modifying content and activities to fit their specific circumstances, audience, format, and available time. It is strongly recommended that presenters review the entire manual before leading the modules.
### Learning Outcomes for All Modules

#### Define the Vision and Identify the Scope of the Curriculum Audit
- Review or Create Your Vision for Equity
- Review or Define Your Core Values
- Define Your Goals & Objectives
- Consider the Needs of Your Students and Community
- Identify Grade Levels and/or Content Areas
- Consider State, District, or Institution Priorities

#### Identify Stakeholders
- Conduct a Stakeholder Analysis.
- Use Multiple Engagement Methods.
- Foster a Culture of Inclusivity

#### Select a Curriculum Audit Rubric
- Create community agreements
- Articulate the importance of conducting an audit to ensure an equitable curriculum.
- Identify and review different curriculum audit rubric options.
- Select the most appropriate rubric that aligns with your vision.

#### Design & Implement Professional Learning to Conduct the Audit
- Select a skilled facilitator
- Develop a professional learning plan based on the curriculum audit rubric selected
- Implement the professional learning
- Evaluate the professional learning
- Provide any additional training or resources necessary to conduct the curriculum audit based on participant feedback

#### Evaluate the Results
- Use data to inform evaluation
- Solicit feedback
- Adjust the action plan as needed
- Communicate results and celebrate successes
- Identify the next cycle of continuous improvement through a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) process

#### Create an Action Plan
- Set measurable goals (SMART)
- Develop a timeline and allocate resources
- Assign responsibilities

#### Data Analysis
- Aggregate the data to identify the current state.
- Complete Gap Analysis
- Prioritize findings with stakeholders

#### Conduct the Curriculum Audit
- Gather curriculum, texts, and resources
- Use the curriculum audit rubric
- Provide regular check-ins to calibrate data gathering and ensure reliability and validity of results
- Provide any necessary resources to complete the audit successfully

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### Module 1: Define the Vision and Identify the Scope of the Curriculum Audit
- Review or Create Your Vision for Equity
- Review or Define Your Core Values
- Define Your Goals & Objectives
- Consider the Needs of Your Students and Community
- Identify Grade Levels and/or Content Areas
- Consider State, District, or Institution Priorities

### Module 2: Identify Stakeholders
- Conduct a Stakeholder Analysis.
- Use Multiple Engagement Methods.
- Foster a Culture of Inclusivity

### Module 3: Select a Curriculum Audit Rubric
- Create community agreements to use during the Curriculum Audit process.
- Articulate the importance of conducting an audit to ensure an equitable curriculum.
- Identify and review different Curriculum Audit Rubric options.
- Select the most appropriate rubric for their school or district that aligns with their vision for equity.
Module 4: Design & Implement Professional Learning to Conduct the Audit

- Select a skilled facilitator.
- Develop a professional learning plan based on the curriculum audit rubric selected.
- Implement professional learning.
- Evaluate professional learning.
- Provide any additional training or resources necessary to conduct the curriculum audit based on participant feedback.

Module 5: Conduct the Curriculum Audit

- Gather curriculum, texts, and resources
- Use the curriculum audit rubric
- Provide regular check-ins to calibrate data gathering and ensure the reliability and validity of results
- Provide any necessary resources to complete the audit successfully

Module 6: Data Analysis through an Equity Lens

- Aggregate the data to identify the current state.
- Complete Gap Analysis
- Prioritize findings with stakeholders.

Module 7: Create an Action Plan

- Set measurable goals (SMART)
- Develop a timeline and allocate resources.
- Assign responsibilities.

Module 8: Evaluate the Results

- Use data to inform the evaluation.
- Solicit feedback.
- Adjust the action plan as needed.
- Communicate results and celebrate successes.
- Identify the next continuous improvement cycle through a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) process.
Facilitating educational equity is a complex and multidimensional process requiring various skills, competencies, and knowledge. Leading for equity requires a deep and ongoing commitment to understanding and dismantling systems of oppression, centering the voices and experiences of marginalized communities, and continuously challenging one's biases and privileges. In addition, facilitators must be able to explore and challenge inequity, analyze and interpret data through an equity lens, engage and collaborate with stakeholders, and understand culturally responsive curricula and pedagogical approaches.

Facilitators must understand the components of socially just learning environments and how to disrupt inequitable policies and practices causing disparate educational outcomes. Additionally, facilitators must effectively advocate for marginalized students, creating and implementing a vision for equity and mobilizing others to act toward achieving that vision. Ultimately, facilitating educational equity requires a commitment to continuous learning and growth and a willingness to reflect and self-evaluate. By building these skills and competencies, facilitators can create brave spaces for dialogue and promote meaningful discussion around equity topics, including systemic oppression and privilege, bias, microaggressions, and racism, allowing the community to create a more equitable and inclusive society.

The following resources are a suggested starting point to develop the prerequisite skills to lead the work in a way that will improve educational outcomes for historically marginalized students. These resources are not presented as a prescriptive or exhaustive list but should be viewed as a place to begin. This guide will continue to be updated, and we encourage feedback to additional resources through the form located on the manual’s first page and linked here.
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<th>Resource(s)</th>
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<td>Being an Ally</td>
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<td>• Be a Better Ally (hbr.org)</td>
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<td>• Checklist-for-white-allies.pdf</td>
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<td>Educational System</td>
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<td>Equity</td>
<td>• Nearpod – An Introduction to Equity Work</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Avoiding-Racial-Equity-Detours-Gorski.pdf (edchange.org)</td>
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<td>• Equity versus Equality</td>
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<td>History of Racism</td>
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<td>• Listen to ‘1619,’ a Podcast From The New York Times</td>
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<td>Identity</td>
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<td>Microaggressions</td>
<td>• What exactly is a microaggression? - Vox</td>
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<td>• Racial microaggressions: examples and phrases for productive dialogue</td>
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<td>• Microaggressions</td>
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<td>• Intersectionality, Positionality, and Privilege</td>
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<td>Race &amp; Racism</td>
<td>• Talking About Race</td>
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<td>• Four Levels of Racism</td>
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<td>Reparations</td>
<td>• Why We Need Reparations</td>
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<td>• The Tulsa Massacre: Is Racial Justice Possible?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Representation</td>
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<td>Slavery</td>
<td>• Bringing Slavery’s Legacy to Light, One Story at a Time</td>
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<td>• Legacy of Slavery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Knowledge</td>
<td>• Maslow’s hierarchy connected to Blackfoot beliefs – A Digital Native American (wordpress.com)</td>
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<td>White Fragility</td>
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<td>• Defining Whiteness: Perspectives on Privilege by Anna Lindner</td>
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<td>• Unpacking Whiteness</td>
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Professional Learning Standards

The Standards for Professional Learning developed by Learning Forward represent a comprehensive approach to designing and delivering effective professional learning that supports high-quality teaching and learning for all students. The framework comprises eleven standards organized into three categories. These standards provide a framework for creating a rigorous, transformational, and supportive professional learning system. Through this framework, educators can identify the essential content and professional learning processes that improve student outcomes while establishing the necessary conditions for success, such as supportive cultures and structures. By aligning their professional learning opportunities to these standards, educators and leaders can enhance teaching practice, deepen their impact on student learning, and ultimately contribute to a culture of continuous improvement in their schools and districts.

More information about the standards can be located at https://learningforward.org/
The site also provides Action Guides have been designed to assist educators in various positions to comprehend and execute their obligations in enacting the Standards for Professional Learning within their context. These guides provide a summary of responsibilities and include a tool that can aid educators in identifying initial actions that can be taken to implement the standards.
**Adult Learning Principles**

In today's ever-evolving educational landscape, the need for ongoing professional learning and development has become increasingly critical for teachers and administrators. As a result, designing and facilitating practical professional learning experiences has become essential to ensuring that teachers have the skills and competencies to work with an increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse student population. Understanding the principles of adult learning theory is essential when designing and delivering professional learning experiences. In addition, adult learners have unique characteristics and preferences that differ from students, requiring different strategies and approaches to maximize their learning and engagement.

By incorporating adult learning theory into professional learning experiences, facilitators can create engaging and relevant learning experiences tailored to the needs and preferences of adult learners. Therefore, applying the principles of adult learning theory can be effective and impactful for teachers and administrators in promoting the retention of the learning outcomes and application of knowledge in their context.

1. **Active learning:** Adults learn best when actively engaged in the learning process; therefore, the participants should have opportunities to participate in discussions, problem-solving activities, and hands-on experiences. Simulations, case studies, and role-playing exercises can enhance active learning and engagement.

2. **Relevant and timely learning:** Adults are more motivated to learn when the content directly relates to their work or personal goals. The specific needs and interests of the learners should inform the design of the professional learning session. Additionally, the
session should be delivered in a timely manner to ensure that the knowledge can be applied immediately.

3. **Collaborative learning:** Collaborative learning involves working together with others to solve problems, share ideas, and learn from each other. Adults benefit from working in groups or pairs and having opportunities to reflect on their learning.

4. **Feedback and evaluation:** Adults benefit from receiving feedback on their performance and evaluating their learning progress. Self-assessment tools, peer evaluations, and formal assessments can help learners monitor their progress and identify areas where they need further development.

5. **Continuous learning:** Adult learners need ongoing opportunities to learn and grow. Follow-up sessions, coaching, mentoring, and ongoing support can reinforce learning and ensure long-term sustainability.
Facilitating the Modules

Role of the Facilitator

As a facilitator, your role in leading the module is to guide participants through the module learning to work towards achieving the institution/district/school’s vision for equity. To achieve this, the following specific and actionable steps can be taken:

1. *Introduce the module:* Start by introducing the purpose and objectives of the module.
2. *Create a safe and inclusive environment:* Create a safe and inclusive environment that encourages participants to share their perspectives and ideas without fear of judgment or bias. Encourage active participation from all members.
4. *Facilitate whole group discussion:* Encourage group discussion and reflection.
5. *Facilitate small group discussion:* Guide participants on selecting the most appropriate rubric for their school or district. Encourage participants to consider factors such as their school’s cultural demographics, student needs, and current curriculum goals.
6. *Encourage participation:* Encourage participation by asking open-ended questions, providing opportunities for participants to share their perspectives and ideas, and addressing any concerns or questions.
7. *Wrap-up and evaluation:* Review the key takeaways from the module and provide an opportunity for participants to ask questions or share their final thoughts. Ask the participants to complete an evaluation form to gather feedback on the module and any improvements that can be made for future sessions.

By taking these specific and actionable steps, you can effectively guide participants through conducting a successful curriculum audit in your institution, school, or district.
The following icons will be used to signal consistent elements that will be used throughout the modules:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Icon</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>🌐</td>
<td>Objectives/Goals of Module</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>📚</td>
<td>Materials and Resources Checklist</td>
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<td>👩‍💻</td>
<td>Suggested Times</td>
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<td>☑️</td>
<td>Brainstorm</td>
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<td>Video Clip</td>
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<td>📝</td>
<td>Whole Group Presentation/Activity</td>
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<td>🗣️</td>
<td>Small Group Discussion/Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>😊</td>
<td>Closure/Evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>🔍</td>
<td>Resources and Research</td>
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</table>
Module 0: Overview of Equity Audits

Module Overview:

This is an optional module for schools and districts that need to begin with an overview of equity audits before beginning the audit process in their context. This module is designed to provide educators a framework for conducting equity audits to ensure diversity, equity, inclusion, and access. The module has three objectives: understanding equity audit approaches, conducting an equity audit using varied data sets, and identifying the purpose and scope of the audit. Educators will learn about the purpose of equity audits and the indicators for assessing equitable access, inclusion, learning opportunities, and resources. They will also learn to gather and analyze various data sets, such as student demographics, academic performance, attendance rates, disciplinary actions, and school culture. Finally, educators will understand how to identify the goals and objectives of the audit to ensure they are aligned with the organization's overall mission and vision. By following these objectives, educators can identify areas of improvement and develop strategies to address equity gaps in schools and districts.

Module Learning Outcomes:

This module will guide participants through the following outcomes:

- Articulate the purpose of an equity audit
- Identify various reasons for districts to conduct an equity audit
- Consider how to determine the scope of the audit
- Discuss alignment of the district’s equity goals with the goals of an equity audit.
Module 1: Define or Identify the Vision for Equity/Scope of Audit

Module Overview:

This module aims to guide schools and districts in creating a clear and comprehensive vision for equity and identifying the scope of their curriculum audit. Six objectives focus on the most critical components of the process, including reviewing or creating a vision for equity, defining core values, setting SMART goals and objectives, considering the needs of students and community, identifying grade levels and/or content areas, and considering state, district, or institution priorities. This module provides a roadmap for educators to ensure that the audit is guided by a clear and comprehensive vision for equity, aligns with core values, considers the needs of students and community, and aligns with state, district, or institution priorities.

Module Learning Outcomes:

This module will guide participants through the following outcomes:

- Review or create your vision for equity
- Review or define your core values
- Define your goals & objectives
- Consider the needs of your students and community
- Identify grade levels and/or content areas
- Consider state, district, or institution priorities
Module 2: Identify Stakeholders

Module Overview:

Module two is designed to help educators identify and engage stakeholders in the curriculum audit process. The module includes objectives that focus on promoting stakeholder engagement and inclusivity. The first objective encourages educators to conduct a stakeholder analysis to identify and analyze the key stakeholders who should be involved in the curriculum audit process. The second objective involves multiple engagement methods to involve stakeholders, such as surveys, focus groups, town hall meetings, and online forums. Finally, the third objective focuses on fostering a culture of inclusivity, promoting equity and diversity, addressing potential biases or barriers, and ensuring that all stakeholders can access information and opportunities to participate. By conducting professional learning around these objectives, educators can ensure that all relevant perspectives are considered, and stakeholders are invested in the audit process.

Module Learning Outcomes:

This module will guide participants through the following outcomes:

- Conduct a Stakeholder Analysis.
- Use Multiple Engagement Methods.
- Foster a Culture of Inclusivity
Module 3: Select a Curriculum Audit Rubric

Module Overview:

This module will guide the facilitation of selecting a Curriculum Audit Rubric with a group of stakeholders in order to assess their school/district/institution curricula through an equity lens. Participants learn about the importance of conducting a curriculum audit, completing a review of different rubric options, and selecting the most appropriate rubric for their school or district that aligns with their vision for equity.

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<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<tr>
<td>Suggested Time: 7 hours</td>
<td>Times can be adjusted to meet your specific group needs</td>
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Facilitator Preparation:

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<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify your audience.</td>
<td>• Identify your target audience, including their needs, preferences, and learning styles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine the session length.</td>
<td>• Determine the length of the module and plan the agenda accordingly. Session times are provided but can be adjusted according to your specific context and needs.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Review the module content. | • Review the module content to ensure you deeply understand the objectives, purpose, and steps involved in the rubric selection process.  
  • The objectives are provided for the module for the intended design of this module. However, if you decide to use your own objectives, establish clear objectives for the module that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART).  
  • Meet with co-facilitator, if applicable, to make plans for effective module delivery |
| Engagement Strategies | • If conducting this module virtually, plan for engagement strategies specifically designed for an online environment, such as interactive polls, breakout rooms, or chat discussions.  
  • Communicate the expectations for participation, communication, and engagement during the online session, including any protocols for using the chat feature or raising a virtual hand.  
  • See Appendix 1 for additional engagement strategies. |
| Select appropriate material and activities. | • Select appropriate materials such as Curriculum Audit Rubrics, handouts, and other resources needed for the module.  
  • Select the data using the guidance in Appendix 4: Gathering and Organizing Relevant Data – make sure to replace slides 10-18 with the data for your school/district/organization. |
• Adapt the module activities to match your facilitation style and the session participants.

| Create a safe and inclusive environment. | • Create a safe, inclusive environment that encourages participation and promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion.  
|  | • Set up the room. Ensure that the space is appropriately set up with adequate seating, lighting, and audiovisual equipment to be comfortable, accessible, and conducive to learning.  
|  | • Ensure all materials are accessible for all participants, including those with disabilities.  
|  | • Ensure that community agreements are enforced during the session so that everyone feels safe and has a conducive learning environment.  

| Create copies of handouts and gather resources. | • Ensure that you have copied all necessary materials needed for the session and have a plan for distribution to maximize efficiency.  
|  | • If conducting the session virtually, ensure that all necessary materials, such as the Curriculum Audit Rubrics, handouts, and resources, are easily accessible and are ready to be shared electronically.  

| Plan for feedback and evaluation. | • Plan for feedback and evaluation by utilizing or revising the provided feedback form to gather participant feedback.  

| Identify potential challenges. | • Anticipate potential challenges, such as technical difficulties, time constraints, or difficult participants, and plan accordingly.  
|  | • Provide directions on how participants can receive technical support if they encounter technical difficulties during the session.  

| Conduct a dry run. | • Conduct a dry run of the module to ensure all materials, equipment, and facilitation strategies function appropriately.  

**Materials Needed**

- Curriculum audit rubric options
- Laptop/projector
- Chart paper/Markers
- Handouts
- Slide Deck
- Session Evaluation

**Module Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of the module, participants will have:
• Created community agreements to use during the Curriculum Audit process.
• Articulated the importance of conducting an audit to ensure an equitable curriculum.
• Identified and reviewed different Curriculum Audit Rubric options.
• Selected the most appropriate rubric for their school or district that aligns with their vision for equity.

Module Success Criteria:

Participants will be able to:

• articulate the importance of conducting a curriculum equity audit and explain the rationale behind their rubric selection.

Key Concepts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anti-bias</th>
<th>Anti-racist</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Educational Equity</td>
<td>Equity</td>
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<td>Equity Audit</td>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Inclusion</td>
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<td>Marginalized Communities</td>
<td>Multicultural</td>
<td>Social Justice</td>
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Participant Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested Time</th>
<th>Content</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30’</td>
<td>Welcome/ Introduction/ Objectives / Overview of Curriculum Audit Process</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Purpose</em>: Set purpose for learning</td>
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<td><em>Outcome</em>: Identify the content that will be explored during module 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>30’</td>
<td>Develop Community Agreements</td>
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<td><em>Purpose</em>: Establish a shared understanding of how participants will communicate and work together throughout the Curriculum Audit process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Outcome</em>: Created community agreements to use during the Curriculum Audit process</td>
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349
| 15’ | **Discuss Educational Equity**  
**Courageous Conversation Protocol**  
*Purpose:* To facilitate open and honest dialogue about issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion  
*Outcome:* To create a safe and supportive space for individuals to share their perspectives and experiences and to listen and learn from the perspectives and experiences of others. |
|---|---|
| 20’ | **Current Data Review**  
**Discuss Local Context and Needs**  
**Reflection**  
*Purpose:* To understand the current state of our context.  
*Outcome:* To reflect on our current state in relation to our vision for educational equity |
| 15’ | **Break** |
| 30’ | **Identity Wheel**  
*Purpose:* To explore and reflect on the complexity of the participants' identities and how they intersect to influence their thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors.  
*Outcome:* To help participants understand the role of identity in shaping individual experiences and societal structures |
| 20’ | **Why Conduct an Equity Audit of the Curriculum?**  
*Purpose:* To explore and reflect on the complexity of the participants' identities and how they intersect to influence their thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors.  
*Outcome:* To help participants understand the role of identity in shaping individual experiences and societal structures |
| 20’ | **Key Terms for Audit**  
*Purpose:* To ensure that stakeholders involved in the curriculum equity audit process have a shared understanding of key terms and concepts related to equity.  
*Outcome:* To promote clarity, consistency, and coherence in the audit process and support effective communication and collaboration among stakeholders. |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>60’</th>
<th>Lunch</th>
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| 70’ | **Approaches to Auditing the Curriculum for Equity**  
**Review and Compare Equity Rubrics**  
*Purpose:* Participants will review multiple rubrics to compare the different approaches and perspectives that each one offers.  
*Outcome:* To identify the critical criteria and indicators most important to your community providing a basis for making informed decisions about which rubric to select. |
| 15’ | Break |
| 75’ | **Select Rubric Based on Vision, Mission, Data, and Context Needs**  
*Purpose:* To select a rubric aligned to the vision for equity and the needs of the local context.  
*Outcome:* Participants will identify a tool for assessing the extent to which the curriculum is promoting equitable outcomes for all students. |
| 10’ | **Critical Reflection**  
*Purpose:* Participants will critically reflect on their learning.  
*Outcome:* Participants will identify biases and assumptions, develop new insights and perspectives, and promote personal and professional growth. |
| 10’ | **Next Steps/ Evaluation** |
Module 3 Handouts

• Appendix 3 (optional)
• Appendix 4
• Appendix 5
• Appendix 6
• Appendix 7
• Appendix 8
• Appendix 9

Module 3 Resources

• Appendix 10: Module 3 Training Plan
• Appendix 11: PowerPoint Presentation
• Appendix 12: Turning Module 3 into an Asynchronous Module
• Glossary
Module Overview:

Module 4 is designed to help educators develop and implement professional learning to support a successful curriculum audit. The module includes the following objectives: select a skilled facilitator, develop a professional learning plan, implement the plan, evaluate its effectiveness, and provide additional training and resources based on participant feedback. Educators will learn to select an appropriate facilitator with relevant knowledge and experience, develop a comprehensive professional learning plan aligned with the curriculum audit rubric, and deliver it through engaging and interactive methods. The module also focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of the professional learning plan to identify areas for improvement and provide additional training and resources based on participant feedback. By the end of the module, educators can build the necessary knowledge and skills to conduct a successful curriculum audit and improve their curriculum to align with their vision for equity to better meet the needs of their students.

Module Learning Outcomes:

This module will guide participants through the following outcomes:

- Select a skilled facilitator.
- Develop a professional learning plan based on the curriculum audit rubric selected.
- Implement professional learning.
- Evaluate professional learning.
- Provide any additional training or resources necessary to conduct the curriculum audit based on participant feedback.
Module 5: Conducting the Audit

Module Overview:

The design of module 5 is to prepare educators for conducting a comprehensive and equitable curriculum audit. The module focuses on the following objectives: gathering all relevant curriculum materials, using the curriculum audit rubric to assess the curriculum, providing regular check-ins to ensure data reliability, and providing any necessary resources to complete the audit successfully. The first objective involves collecting all curriculum documents, texts, and resources to offer a complete and accurate picture of the current state of the curriculum. The second objective is to use the selected curriculum audit rubric to systematically evaluate the curriculum and identify areas for improvement. The third objective emphasizes the importance of regular check-ins to ensure interrater reliability across all evaluators. The final goal ensures that all educators have the necessary resources, training, and support to complete the audit successfully. This module provides educators a roadmap for conducting a comprehensive curriculum equity audit. By the end of the module, educators will understand how to gather reliable data, identify areas for improvement, and make data-driven decisions to improve student learning.

Module Learning Outcomes:

This module will guide participants through the following outcomes:

- Gather curriculum, texts, and resources
- Use the curriculum audit rubric
- Provide regular check-ins to calibrate data gathering and ensure the reliability and validity of results
- Provide any necessary resources to complete the audit successfully
Module 6: Data Analysis through an Equity Lens

Module Overview:

Module five aims to help educators analyze data with an equity lens to identify and address disparities and inequities in student outcomes. The module includes three objectives: aggregating data to determine the current state, completing a gap analysis, and prioritizing findings with stakeholders. To achieve the first objective, educators must collect and analyze data from multiple sources to understand how different student groups perform and identify disparities. For the second objective, educators must use an equity lens to identify discrepancies and inequities and explore the root causes of these disparities. Finally, for the third objective, educators must prioritize the gap analysis findings with relevant stakeholders based on the potential impact and feasibility of addressing the identified gaps. This module provides educators a framework to prioritize addressing equity gaps and work towards equitable student outcomes.

Module Learning Outcomes:

This module will guide participants through the following outcomes:

- Aggregate the data to identify the current state.
- Complete Gap Analysis
- Prioritize findings with stakeholders.
Module 7: Create an Action Plan

Module Overview:

Module seven provides educators a framework for developing a comprehensive action plan to achieve their goals. The module includes three objectives: setting SMART goals, creating a timeline, allocating resources, and assigning responsibilities. The first objective emphasizes setting specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound goals aligned with the organization's mission and vision. The second objective focuses on developing a realistic timeline and allocating necessary resources while identifying potential barriers to achieving the goals. Finally, the third objective is assigning responsibilities to individuals or teams for implementing the action plan components, ensuring all stakeholders understand their roles and have the necessary support to achieve the shared vision. Following this framework, educators can create a compelling and practical action plan to achieve their goals and promote effective implementation.

Module Learning Outcomes:

This module will guide participants through the following outcomes:

- Set measurable goals (SMART)
- Develop a timeline and allocate resources.
- Assign responsibilities.
Module 8: Evaluate the Results

Module Overview:

Module 8 provides educators with a framework to evaluate the effectiveness of their action plans in achieving their goals. The module includes the following objectives: using data to inform the evaluation, soliciting feedback, adjusting the action plan as needed, communicating results and celebrating successes, and identifying the next continuous improvement cycle through a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) process. First, educators must use data to determine the effectiveness of their action plan and obtain feedback from stakeholders to identify strengths and weaknesses. Adjustments to the action plan should be made to ensure the goals are met. Communication of results and successes is essential to maintaining stakeholder support. Finally, educators can use the PDSA process to identify areas for continuous improvement and develop a new action plan for the next cycle. This module provides educators a framework for promoting continuous improvement in achieving equitable student outcomes.

Module Learning Outcomes:

This module will guide participants through the following outcomes:

- Use data to inform the evaluation.
- Solicit feedback.
- Adjust the action plan as needed.
- Communicate results and celebrate successes.
- Identify the next continuous improvement cycle through a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) process.
Module 3 Resources

Websites

**Equity Audits**
- Equity Audit Considerations | MAEC, Inc.
- State of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Public Schools
- Conducting an Equity Audit
- Equity Audits: A Powerful Tool to Transform Teaching and Learning
- Using Equity Audits to Assess and Address Opportunity Gaps Across Education

**Identity/ Intersectionality**
- Can We Choose Our Own Identity?
- Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference
- The Many Dimensions of Hispanic Racial Identity
- The Multiracial Identity Gap
- Positionality and intersectionality
- Intersectionality, Positionality, and Privilege

**Resources to Define Educational Equity**
- Educational Equity Defined
- Educational Equity
- Educational Equity Defined
- Understanding Educational Equity
- An Evolving Definition of Educational Equity
- Equity in Education
- What is Equity
- Fundamentals of Educational Equity

**Books**


*Confronting Equity Issues on Campus: Implementing the Equity Scorecard in Theory and Practice* is a comprehensive guide for higher education institutions to assess and improve campus equity. The book introduces the Equity Scorecard, a tool developed by the author to help institutions identify and address disparities in student outcomes. It provides practical strategies and case studies for implementing the Equity Scorecard and creating a culture of equity on campus.

*Using Equity Audits to Create Equitable and Excellent Schools* by Skrla and colleagues is a practical guide for educators and policymakers implementing equity audits in schools. The authors argue that equity audits can help schools identify and address systemic inequalities and improve student educational outcomes. The book provides step-by-step guidance for conducting equity audits and includes case studies and examples of successful equity audit practices.


Tatum (2010) discusses the complexity of identity and how it is shaped by multiple factors, including race, gender, class, and culture. Tatum argues that individuals have multiple identities that intersect and influence each other, and that understanding this complexity is essential for promoting social justice and equity. She highlights the ways in which social systems and structures can create barriers to identity development and how these barriers can contribute to social inequality.

**Articles**


This research study aimed to investigate Scott's (2001) proposition that schools cannot attain systematic equity if any system component remains inequitable. Accordingly, the researchers implemented a two-pronged investigation of 24 schools to examine instructional leadership strategies for promoting excellence in small and large achievement gap schools. The initial phase involved conducting an equity audit, while the second phase encompassed conducting interviews and on-site observations.


In this article, Groenke explores the use of equity audits in practitioner inquiry to rethink and address issues of inequity in public schools. The author argues that equity audits can be a valuable tool for teachers and administrators to critically examine their practices and identify areas where they can improve to promote equity.
Levinson et al. (2012) assert that despite the widespread agreement on the importance of educational equity, the concept needs further clarity. Currently, there are at least five distinct meanings of equity in use, including equal distribution of outcomes across populations, equal outcomes for every child, equal allocation of resources across students, schools, districts, states, or nations, similar experiences for each child, and equal levels of growth for each child. This article illuminates the complexity of equity in education and provides a valuable resource for those seeking to promote educational equity.


Skrla and colleagues argue that equity audits are valuable for school leaders to develop equitable and excellent schools. Equity audits involve a systematic and comprehensive review of school policies, practices, and outcomes to identify areas of inequity and develop strategies for improvement. The authors provide a framework for conducting equity audits and discuss how they can be used to promote educational equity and excellence.
Glossary

Glossary of Terms for an Equity Audit of the Curriculum

Rationale: In talking about issues of race, identity, and intersectionality, a shared vocabulary is essential to avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Words often have different meanings to different people based on their experiences. The purpose of this glossary, which is a work in progress, is to help avoid such misunderstandings. Not everyone will agree on the definition of every word, but everyone should understand how words are used within the modules in this handbook.

Ability: The quality of having the means or skill to do something. Ability is not permanent, can fluctuate throughout one's life, and is another aspect of diversity in our communities. Disabilities do not necessarily limit people unless society imposes assumptions that do not account for the variation in people's abilities (LGBTQIA+ Resource Center, 2020).

Ableism: The pervasive system of discrimination and exclusion that oppresses people with a disability, including differences in mental, cognitive, emotional, and/or physical abilities, through attitudes, actions, or institutional policies (LGBTQIA+ Resource Center, 2020).

Antibias: Anti-bias refers to principles and practices to challenge and eliminate societal biases and prejudices. It involves recognizing and addressing how various forms of discrimination and inequality manifest in our institutions, policies, and practices. Anti-bias promotes fairness, equality, and inclusivity and eliminates discrimination against people based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or any other characteristic.

Antiracist: To be antiracist means to oppose racism in all forms and to actively support policies, actions, and attitudes that promote racial equity and justice. Antiracism involves recognizing and challenging systems, structures, and beliefs perpetuating racial inequality and advocating for meaningful change. (Racial Healing Handbook).

Antiracist Curriculum: An antiracist curriculum is an educational approach that seeks to actively combat racism and promote social justice by centering on the experiences and perspectives of marginalized groups and challenging systemic inequalities in society. An antiracist curriculum aims to empower students to recognize and understand different forms of discrimination and bias and actively work to dismantle them. Therefore, the curriculum includes acknowledging and examining the historical and ongoing impacts of racism and promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion through inclusive teaching practices and diverse representation in curriculum materials. An antiracist curriculum also encourages critical thinking and dialogue, supporting students in developing the skills and tools necessary to engage in antiracist activism in their communities (Cheng & Soudack, 1994; Lynch et al., 2017).
Antiracist Education: Antiracist education is an approach to teaching and learning that actively challenges and dismantles racism and other forms of systemic oppression. It is an educational philosophy that recognizes the role of education in perpetuating or combating systemic inequalities and aims to create a more equitable and just society. Antiracist education includes acknowledging and examining the historical and ongoing impacts of racism, promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion through inclusive teaching practices and diverse representation in curriculum materials, and empowering students to recognize and understand different forms of discrimination and bias. It also involves actively teaching and modeling antiracist behaviors and promoting the skills and tools necessary for students to become change agents and actively work toward dismantling systemic racism in their communities (Sotto-Santiago et al., 2022).

Asian/Pacific Islander: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam. Pacific Islander includes someone from Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

Bias: Bias refers to a tendency or inclination towards or against a particular person, group, or thing, often resulting in unfair treatment or judgment. Bias can arise from personal experiences, beliefs, cultural norms, or societal structures and manifest in various forms, such as prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination. Bias can have negative consequences, leading to unequal opportunities and outcomes for individuals or groups and hindering progress toward a fair and just society (Race Forward, 2015).

Bisexual: Commonly referred to as bi or bi+. According to bi+ educator and advocate Robyn Ochs, the term refers to a person who acknowledges in themselves the potential to be attracted—romantically, emotionally, and/or sexually—to people of more than one gender, not necessarily at the same time, in the same way, or to the same degree. The "bi" in bisexual can refer to attraction to genders similar to and different from one's own. People identifying as bisexual need not have had similar sexual or romantic experiences—or equal levels of attraction—with people across genders, nor any experience; attraction and self-identification determine orientation (PFLAG, 2020).

Black/African Descent: A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

Cisgender: a gender identity, or performance in a gender role, that society deems to match the person's assigned sex at birth. The prefix cis- means "on this side of" or "not across." A term used to highlight the privilege of people who are not transgender (LGBTQIA+ Resource Center, 2020).

Cosmetic Bias: The term cosmetic bias suggests that a text is bias-free, but beyond the attractive covers, photos, or posters, bias persists. This "illusion of equity" is a marketing strategy to give a favorable impression to potential purchasers who only flip the pages of books. For example, a science textbook that features a glossy pullout of female scientists but includes only a small narrative of the scientific contributions of women or a music book with an
eye-catching, multiethnic cover that projects a world of diverse songs and symphonies belies the traditional white male composers lurking behind the cover (Sadker, n.d.).

**Critical Reflection:** Critical reflection is analyzing and questioning our assumptions, beliefs, and actions to develop a deeper understanding of ourselves, our experiences, and the world around us. It involves examining our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors thoughtfully and deliberately and considering alternative perspectives and viewpoints. Critical reflection can help us identify biases and assumptions that may limit our understanding or prevent our growth. Additionally, it facilitates the development of new insights and perspectives that can lead to transformational learning. The four C's of critical reflection are continuous, connected, challenging, and contextual (Eyler et al., 1996)

**Culturally Responsive Education:** The combination of teaching, pedagogy, curriculum, theories, attitudes, practices, and instructional materials that center students' culture, identities, and contexts throughout educational systems.

**Culture:** A learned set of values, beliefs, customs, norms, and perceptions shared by a group that provides a general design for living and patterns for interpreting life. "Culture is those deep, common, unstated, learned experiences which members of a given culture share, which they communicate without knowing, and which form the backdrop against which all other events are judged." (E. Hall.)

**Curriculum:** The written curriculum refers to the official documents, standards, and guidelines that outline a particular educational program's intended learning goals and objectives. It includes the topics, themes, concepts, and skills students must learn. The written curriculum is a blueprint or roadmap for educators to plan and design lessons and assessments. The taught curriculum refers to the instructional strategies, activities, and materials teachers use to teach the written curriculum. It includes the teacher's style, methods, and techniques for delivering the content to the students. The taught curriculum is influenced by the teacher's knowledge, skills, and experience, as well as by the needs and interests of the students. The assessed curriculum refers to the methods and tools used to evaluate student learning and achievement based on the written and taught curriculum. It includes tests, quizzes, exams, projects, essays, and other forms of assessment that measure students' understanding and mastery of the curriculum. In addition, the assessed curriculum provides feedback to the teacher and students on their progress and helps identify areas needing further improvement or development.

**Disability:** Disabilities is an umbrella term covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. Thus, disability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between the features of a person's body and the features of the society in which they live. (World Health Organization, 2020)
**Diversity:** Differences that exist among people, including factors such as age, social class, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental health, race, sexual orientation, religion, physical stature, educational background, professional role, personality traits, and other human distinctions.

**Educational Equity:** When educational policies, practices, interactions, and resources are representative of, constructed by, and responsive to all people such that everyone has access to, can participate in, and make progress in high-quality learning experiences that empower them toward self-determination and reduces disparities in outcomes regardless of individual characteristics and cultural identities (Great Lakes Equity Center, 2011).

**Ethnicity:** Ethnicity refers to a shared cultural heritage, ancestry, or identity that defines a group of people. It often involves a combination of factors, such as language, religion, traditions, customs, and beliefs, as well as a common history or geographic origin. (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007).

**Equity:** Equity refers to fairness, justice, and impartiality, where individuals have access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive, regardless of their social identities, backgrounds, or circumstances. Equity recognizes that only some have the same starting point or access to the same opportunities. Therefore, some individuals or groups may require additional support to overcome systemic barriers and achieve their full potential.

**Equity Audit:** An equity audit aims to identify systemic or institutional barriers to equity, diversity, and inclusion and provide recommendations for addressing them.

**Gay:** A sexual and affectional orientation toward people of the same gender (LGBTQJA+ Resource Center, 2020).

**Gender Expression:** Gender expression refers to the way that an individual presents their gender to others, such as through their appearance, behavior, and social interactions. It can include the way that a person dresses, styles their hair, uses language, or engages in activities that are traditionally associated with a particular gender.

**Gender Identity:** Gender identity refers to a person's internal sense of their own gender, whether male, female, a combination of both, or neither. It is an individual's deeply felt and inherent sense of being a man, a woman, or another gender that may differ from their assigned sex at birth.

**Gender Neutral:** Not gendered. It can refer to language (including pronouns and salutations/titles—see Gender-neutral salutations or titles), spaces (like bathrooms), or identities (being genderqueer, for example) (PFLAG, 2020).

**Heteronormativity:** Attitudes and behaviors that incorrectly assume gender is binary, ignoring genders besides women and men, and that people should and will align with conventional
expectations of society for gender identity, gender expression, and sexual and romantic attraction. For example, someone assigned female at birth is expected to 1) have a body that is considered "female" by the dominant culture, 2) identify as a girl or woman, 3) act feminine and fulfill the roles associated with girls and/or women, and 4) be romantically and sexually attracted to men (LGBTQIA+ Resource Center, 2020).

**Hispanic/Latino/Spanish:** A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

Identity: Identity can be defined as the characteristics, traits, qualities, beliefs, values, experiences, and social categories that make an individual unique and distinct from others. It can encompass many different dimensions, such as gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, occupation, and personal interests.

Implicit Bias: The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. The biases, which encompass favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual’s awareness or intentional control (Blair, 2002; Rudman, 2004, as cited in Staats, Capatosto, Wright, & Contractor, 2015).

Inclusion: Inclusion refers to creating an environment where all individuals feel valued, respected, and supported, regardless of their social identities, backgrounds, or circumstances. It involves actively creating a sense of belonging and community for all individuals and ensuring everyone has equal access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making processes.

Intersectionality: A term coined by law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in the 1980s to describe how multiple systems of oppression interact in the lives of those with multiple marginalized identities. Intersectionality examines the relationships between multiple marginalized identities and allows us to analyze social problems more thoroughly, shape more effective interventions, and promote more inclusive advocacy among communities (LGBTQIA+ Resource Center, 2020).

Latinx: pronounced "La-TEEN-ex," is a non-gender-specific referring to people of Latin American descent. Unlike Latino/a and Latin@, the term Latinx does not assume a gender binary and includes non-binary folks (LGBTQIA+ Resource Center, 2020).

Lesbian: Refers to a woman who is emotionally, romantically, and/or physically attracted to other women. People who are lesbians need not have had any sexual experience; it is the attraction that helps determine orientation (PFLAG, 2020).

LGBTQIA+: An acronym that collectively refers to individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer. It is sometimes stated as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) or GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender). The addition of the Q for Queer is a more recently preferred version of the acronym as cultural opinions of the term focus increasingly on its positive, reclaimed definition, which recognizes more fluid identities, and as a move towards greater inclusivity for gender-expansive people (see Queer below). The Q can also stand for
questioning, referring to those still exploring their sexuality and/or gender. The "+" represents those who are part of the community but for whom LGBTQ does not accurately capture or reflect their identity (PFLAG, 2020).

**Marginalized Communities:** Marginalized communities refer to groups of people systematically excluded, disadvantaged, or oppressed in society due to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, disability, or other factors. These communities often experience social, economic, and political barriers that prevent them from fully participating in society and accessing resources and opportunities that are available to others.

**Microaggressions:** Subtle behaviors, intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or harmful messages of commonly oppressed identities. These actions cause harm by invalidating the target person's identity and may reinforce stereotypes. Examples of microaggressions include a person who is not white being told they speak "good English" or someone saying something is "gay" to mean they think something is terrible.

**Middle Eastern:** A person having origins in the Middle East, including anyone of Western Asian and North African origin. Some examples include persons with roots in Egypt, Iran, Israel, Kuwait, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Turkey.

**Multicultural:** Multicultural refers to the existence or promotion of multiple cultures or cultural groups within a society or community. It recognizes the diversity of cultural backgrounds and experiences among individuals and communities and emphasizes respecting and valuing these differences. A multicultural society or community recognizes and celebrates diversity and seeks to create an environment where people from different backgrounds can coexist and thrive.

**Multiracial:** A person who identifies as a combination of two or more races.

**National Origin:** National origin refers to a person's country of birth, ancestry, or citizenship. It is a term used to describe a person's ethnic or cultural background, and it is often used to identify people from a specific region or country. It is important to recognize that national origin is distinct from race or ethnicity, although there may be overlap between these concepts. Race refers to physical characteristics, while ethnicity refers to cultural heritage and practices. National origin can be seen as a combination of both race and ethnicity, as it encompasses both ancestral and cultural ties to a specific country or region.

**Native American:** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America). This category includes people who indicate their race as American Indian or who identify as Navajo, Blackfeet, Inupiat, Yup'ik, or Central American Indian groups or South American Indian groups

**Positionality:** The multiple, unique experiences that situate each of us; namely that gender, [gender expression], race, class, [ability, religion, national origin, language], and other aspects
of our identities are markers of relational positions rather than essential qualities (Takacs, 2003; Maher, 2993; Alcoff, 1988).

**Power:** The legitimate control of, or access to, those institutions [resources and opportunities] sanctioned by the state [authorities] (Major, 2002).

**Privilege:** Any advantage that is unearned, exclusive, and socially conferred (Johnson, 2006).

**Queer:** A term some people use to describe themselves and/or their community. Queer has been reclaimed from its earlier harmful use. The term is valued by some for its defiance, by some because it can be inclusive of the entire community, and by others who find it to be an appropriate term to describe their more fluid identities. Traditionally a negative or pejorative term for people who are gay, Queer is still sometimes disliked within the LGBTQ+ community. Due to its varying meanings, this word should only be used when self-identifying or quoting someone who self-identifies as queer i.e. "My cousin identifies as queer" (PFLAG, 2020).

**Questioning:** The process of exploring one's own gender identity, gender expression, and/or sexual orientation. Some people may also use this term to name their identity within the LGBTQIA community (LGBTQIA+ Resource Center, 2020).

**Race:** Race is a social construct, not originating from biological or genetic differences, that categorizes people into groups based on physical and biological traits, such as skin color, hair texture, facial features, ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, and ethnic classification (American Association of Physical Anthropologists, 1996).

**Racially Ambiguous:** A person whose racial identity or background is unclear from his/her physical appearance.

**Racism:** The systematic subordination of people from marginalized racial groups based on their physical appearance, ethnic or ancestral history, or cultural affiliation. Racism is considered a deeply pervasive, systemic issue perpetuated by members of the privileged racial group holding dominant social power over others. Discrimination, prejudice, or xenophobia may be more accurate terms for describing individual acts of oppression. While these individual acts likely stem from systemic racism, at the individual level, the power dynamics that enable racism are not at play in the same way (LGBTQIA+ Resource Center, 2020).

**Religion:** Religion or spirituality refers to a personal or institutionalized system of beliefs, practices, and values related to the existence of a higher power, supernatural or transcendent entity, or ultimate purpose or meaning in life. It can involve specific religious traditions or practices, or it can be a more personal or individualized belief system usually defining a moral code which should be followed (LGBTQIA+ Resource Center, 2020).

**Representation:** Providing and having the adequate presence of all when decision and choice making as to examine the patterns of underlying beliefs, practices, policies, structures, and
norms that may marginalize specific groups and limit opportunity (Mulligan & Kozleski, 2009; Chen et al., 2014).

**Sexual Orientation:** Sexual orientation refers to an individual's enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to others. It is typically categorized as heterosexual (attraction to the opposite gender), homosexual (attraction to the same gender), or bisexual (attraction to both genders), but it can also include other orientations, such as asexual (lack of sexual attraction) or pansexual (attraction to people regardless of gender).

**Social Justice:** Social justice refers to creating a fair and equal society where every individual has equal access to resources, opportunities, and fundamental human rights. Social justice seeks to address and rectify social inequalities and injustices resulting from systemic discrimination, oppression, and marginalization based on human rights and equality principles. (Adams, Bell, & Griffin.)

**Socioeconomic Class:** Social group membership is based on a combination of factors, including income, education level, occupation, and social statuses in the community, such as contacts within the community, group associations, and the community's perception of the family or individual (LGBTQIA+ Resource Center, 2020).

**Stereotype:** A generalization applied to every person in a cultural group; a fixed conception of a group without allowing for individuality. When we believe our stereotypes, we tend to ignore characteristics that don't conform to our stereotype, rationalize what we see to fit our stereotype, see those who do not conform as "exceptions," and find ways to create the expected characteristics (LGBTQIA+ Resource Center, 2020).

**Structural Racism:** A history and current reality of institutional racism across all institutions, combining to create a system that negatively impacts communities of color (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2016).

**Transgender:** An adjective used most often as an umbrella term and frequently abbreviated to "trans." Identifying as transgender or trans means that one's internal knowledge of gender is different from conventional or cultural expectations based on the sex that person was assigned at birth. While transgender may refer to a woman who was assigned male at birth or a man who was assigned female at birth, transgender is an umbrella term that can also describe someone who identifies as a gender other than woman or man, such as non-binary, genderqueer, genderfluid, no gender or multiple genders, or some other gender identity (LGBTQIA+ Resource Center, 2020).

**White:** A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe.
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Engagement Strategies

1. **Affinity Mapping**: Affinity mapping encourages participants to group similar ideas together and identify patterns or themes. It is a collaborative process that helps participants synthesize and organize their ideas into meaningful categories.

*To use affinity mapping in professional learning:*

1. Ask participants to write down their ideas on sticky notes or index cards.
2. Encourage participants to think creatively and write down all of their ideas, even if they seem unrelated or unconventional.
3. Ask participants to group their ideas into categories that they think are related.
4. Have participants share their categories and ideas with the group and ask the group to identify any patterns or themes.
5. Use the patterns and themes identified by the group to guide further discussion or activities.

*Using affinity mapping as an engagement strategy has several benefits:*

1. Encourages collaboration: Affinity mapping is a collaborative process that encourages participants to work together to identify patterns and themes.
2. Provides a visual representation: Affinity mapping provides a visual representation of the ideas and categories, which can help participants better understand and synthesize the information.
3. Promotes creativity: Affinity mapping encourages participants to think creatively and outside the box.
4. Enhances problem-solving: Affinity mapping can enhance problem-solving by helping participants identify patterns and themes that can guide further discussion or activities.

*Some potential drawbacks to using affinity mapping:*

1. Can be time-consuming: Affinity mapping can be a time-consuming process, especially with large groups or complex topics.
2. Requires participation: Affinity mapping requires participation from all participants, which may be challenging if some participants are more reserved or passive.

2. **Case Studies**: A case study is a real-life scenario or situation that learners can analyze and discuss to gain insight into different perspectives, approaches, and solutions.

*Here is how to set up for utilizing a case study:*

1. Choose a relevant case study that relates to the topic or issue being discussed.
2. Provide learners with the case study and any relevant background information.
3. Ask learners to analyze the case study and discuss the key issues, challenges, and possible solutions.
4. Encourage learners to share their thoughts, ask questions, and challenge each other's assumptions.

*The benefits of using case studies include the following:*
1. Real-life relevance: Case studies are based on real-life scenarios and situations, which makes them more relevant and relatable to learners.
2. Active participation: Case studies encourage learners to actively participate in the learning process, as they must analyze, evaluate, and discuss the case.
3. Problem-solving skills: Case studies help learners develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as they are required to identify and evaluate different solutions to the problem presented in the case.
4. Improved retention: The interactive and engaging nature of case studies can help learners retain information and apply it in real-world situations.

Some potential drawbacks to using case studies as an engagement strategy:
1. Time-consuming: Case studies can be time-consuming to prepare and analyze.
2. Limited scope: Case studies are based on a specific scenario or situation, which may not apply to all.

One resource to consider:
Gorski, P. C., & Pothini, S. G. (2018). *Case studies on diversity and social justice education 2nd Edition*. Routledge. - The case studies present everyday examples of the ways in which racism, sexism, homophobia and heterosexism, class inequities, language bias, religious-based oppression, and other equity and diversity concerns affect students, teachers, families, and other members of our school communities. All cases conclude with a series of questions to guide discussion and a section of facilitator notes, called Points for Consideration. Even if you don’t use the scenarios, it provides a structure to consider how to implement case studies in your PD sessions.

3. **Consensogram:** The Consensogram is a simple and effective engagement strategy that allows participants to visualize their opinions and attitudes toward a particular topic or issue. It can be used to promote discussion and encourage active participation.

*Here is a process to implement the Consensogram process within your professional learning:*

1. Choose a topic or issue essential to the session's learning to discuss with the group.
2. Create a chart with a horizontal axis representing a scale of 0 to 10 (or any other scale you prefer) and a vertical axis listing different options or viewpoints related to the topic.
3. Provide participants with stickers or markers that they can use to mark their position on the chart for each option or viewpoint.
4. Once participants have marked their position on the chart, facilitate a discussion about the results. The discussion can include asking participants to explain their choices, discussing areas of agreement and disagreement, and exploring why certain viewpoints are more popular.

*Using the Consensogram as an engagement strategy in adult professional learning has several benefits:*
1. Encourages active participation: The Consensogram encourages participants to engage with the topic and share their opinions, which can lead to more active participation and engagement.

2. Promotes discussion: The Consensogram is an excellent tool for promoting discussion and debate among participants, highlighting areas of agreement and disagreement.

3. Encourages reflection: This strategy provides a structure for participants to reflect on their opinions and attitudes towards a particular topic, which can lead to deeper understanding and insight.

There are also some potential drawbacks to using the Consensogram:

1. Lack of anonymity: Participants may feel uncomfortable sharing their opinions if they are not anonymous, which could lead to less accurate results.

2. Limited scope: The Consensogram may not be appropriate for all topics or issues, as it only allows participants to express their opinions on limited options or viewpoints.

4. Flipped Learning: Using a flipped learning approach as an engagement strategy for adult professional learning is a relatively new and innovative way to engage participants in their learning process. It involves providing participants access to learning materials before the actual learning session occurs.

To set up a flipped learning component of your professional learning session, follow these steps:

1. Before the learning session, participants can access learning materials such as video lectures, podcasts, articles, or interactive activities.

2. Encourage participants to review the materials at their own pace before the learning session.

3. Use the face-to-face learning session to facilitate group discussions, activities, and collaborative problem-solving activities.

4. Use the time saved during the session to engage participants in more meaningful and collaborative discussions and activities.

Using a flipped learning approach as an engagement strategy for adult professional learning has several benefits:

1. Promotes active learning: Flipped learning encourages participants to take an active role in their learning process by allowing them to review and engage with materials on their own time.

2. Enhances learning outcomes: Participants have more time to process information and engage in problem-solving activities during the actual learning session, which can enhance their learning outcomes.

3. Encourages collaboration: The collaborative problem-solving activities during the actual learning session can encourage participants to work together and learn from each other.

Some potential drawbacks to using a flipped learning approach:
1. **Requires preparation**: Flipped learning requires preparation and planning to ensure the materials provided are relevant and move the participants towards achieving the learning outcomes.

2. **Relies on participant motivation**: Participants must be motivated and have time to review the materials before the actual learning session, which can be challenging. Make sure to have a plan in place for participants who were unable to do so.

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5. **Gallery Walk**: The gallery walk is a versatile engagement strategy involving participants moving around the room to explore and interact with information and resources displayed on posters or other types of visual aids.

   *To include a gallery walk in your professional learning:*

   1. Divide the group into smaller teams or pairs and assign them to different stations around the room.
   2. Display posters or other visual aids related to the topic or issue being discussed at each station.
   3. Provide participants with a set amount of time to explore and interact with the information and resources at each station.
   4. Encourage participants to share their insights, ask questions, and engage in discussion with each other.
   5. After a set amount of time, have the groups or pairs rotate to the next station.

   *Using a gallery walk during professional learning has several benefits:*

   1. Encourages active learning: The gallery walk encourages participants to actively engage with the information and resources provided, which can enhance their learning experience.
   2. Fosters collaboration: The gallery walk promotes collaboration among participants as they explore and discuss the information and resources at each station.
   3. Provides variety: The gallery walk offers a change of pace from traditional lecture-style presentations and provides participants with a more interactive and engaging learning experience with an opportunity to construct knowledge and connect ideas.

   *Some potential drawbacks to using the gallery walk:*

   1. Requires preparation: The gallery walk requires preparation and planning to ensure the information and resources provided are relevant and practical.
   2. May be time-consuming: The gallery walk can be time-consuming if there are many stations or a large group of participants.

6. **Interactive presentations**: Instead of traditional lecture-style presentations, make the professional learning session interactive by including quizzes, polls, and interactive activities. Various interactive tools can help keep participants engaged and interested in the material. Here are a few free ones to consider:
Google Forms: This free tool from Google allows the creation of custom surveys, quizzes, and polls. It is easy to use and provides a range of options for customization.

Kahoot!: Kahoot! is a popular game-based learning platform to create quizzes, polls, and surveys in minutes. It is free to use and is excellent for engaging learners of all ages.

Quizlet: Quizlet is a popular platform for creating and sharing flashcards, but it also has a quiz feature for creating quizzes and polls. It is free to use and has a large user community.

Mentimeter: Mentimeter is a platform for creating interactive presentations, quizzes, and polls. It is cloud-based, has a range of customizable templates, and is free for up to two questions per presentation.

Poll Everywhere: Poll Everywhere is a free platform for creating interactive polls, quizzes, and surveys. It is excellent for live events and works with smartphones, tablets, and laptops.

Socrative: Socrative is a free quiz and polling tool to create interactive quizzes and polls for participants. It has a range of features, including real-time feedback, customizable quizzes, and integration with Google Classroom.

7. **Role-playing and simulations:** Role-playing involves assigning roles to participants and having them act out scenarios related to the topic or issue being discussed.

   To implement role-playing in your professional development, prepare using the following steps:
   1. Choose a scenario or situation relevant to the topic or issue being discussed.
   2. Assign roles to participants and provide them with a brief description of their character and the scenario.
   3. Ask participants to act out the scenario, focusing on how their character would react and what they would say.
   4. Facilitate a debrief discussion with the group to explore the scenario in more detail, including asking participants to reflect on their experience and share what they learned. Consider using a What? So What? Now What process to bridge the current learning to future experience.

Using role-playing as an engagement strategy for adult professional learning has several benefits:

   1. Promotes active learning: Role-playing encourages participants to actively engage with the topic and apply their knowledge and skills to real-world situations.
   2. Fosters empathy and understanding: Role-playing allows participants to see things from different perspectives and understand the viewpoints of others.
   3. Enhances communication skills: Role-playing provides opportunities for participants to practice communication skills such as active listening, asking questions, and providing feedback.

   There are also some potential drawbacks to using role-playing to consider before using this engagement strategy:
1. Requires preparation: Role-playing scenarios require preparation and planning to ensure they are relevant and practical.
2. Can be uncomfortable: Role-playing can be uncomfortable for some participants, particularly if they are not used to acting out scenarios or playing a role.

8. **Whip Around**: In this strategy, the facilitator sets a specific topic or question and then goes around the room, inviting each participant to share their brief response to the question in rapid succession. Participants are encouraged to keep their responses brief and concise, and everyone in the group gets an opportunity to share their thoughts or ideas. The Whip Around technique is particularly useful in large group settings, where it can be challenging to get everyone's input in a short amount of time. Additionally, it can help participants to see a range of perspectives and ideas, fostering deeper learning and critical thinking.

   *Here is how it works:*
   1. Choose a topic or issue related to the learning objectives.
   2. Ask participants to stand or sit in a circle.
   3. Explain the process: participants will have a brief amount of time (e.g., 10 seconds) to share their thoughts, ideas, or reflections on the topic or issue. When their turn is over, they will pass to the next person in the circle.
   4. Start the process by asking the first person to share and continue around the circle until everyone has the opportunity to contribute.
   5. Facilitate a group discussion based on the ideas shared during the whip around.

   *Using a whip around process as an engagement strategy has several benefits:*
   1. Encourages participation: The rapid-fire format of the whip around encourages participation from all participants.
   2. Provides quick feedback: The whip around provides a quick way to collect participant feedback and ideas.
   3. Encourages active listening: The rapid pace of the whip around requires participants to listen to each other actively.
   4. Generates ideas: The whip around can generate a range of ideas and perspectives from the group.

   *There are also some potential drawbacks to using a whip around process:*
   1. Limited time for sharing: The time limit may only allow participants to express their ideas partially.
   2. It can be an overwhelming amount of verbal information to process at one time.
Appendix 2: Stakeholder Analysis Guide Questions

The following questions can help ensure you have a powerful mix of stakeholders to help leverage change (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015).

1. Who is most adversely affected by the issue being addressed? Who faces racial barriers or bias, or exclusion from power, related to this issue?

2. How are people of different racial groups differently situated or affected by this issue?

3. Ideally, what would the racial composition of the leadership look like?

4. In what ways are stakeholders most affected by the issue already involved in addressing it? How can these efforts be supported and expanded?

5. What are ways stakeholders adversely affected by the issue can be further engaged?

6. How can diverse communities and leaders be engaged from the outset, so they have a real opportunity to shape the solutions and strategies?

7. How can community engagement be inclusive, representative and authentic?

8. How will stakeholders exercise real leadership and power?

9. Who can be allies and supporters and how can they be engaged?

10. Who needs to be recruited or invited to join the effort to address this issue? Who will approach them? How? When? What will they be asked to do to get involved?
Appendix 3: Defining Educational Equity Together

Objective: To collaboratively develop a shared definition of educational equity that incorporates all stakeholders' perspectives.

Approximate Time: 40-60 minutes

Materials:
- Flipchart paper and markers
- Sticky notes or index cards
- Pens/pencils

Instructions:
1. Begin by introducing the purpose of the activity and the importance of developing a shared understanding of educational equity that incorporates the perspectives of all stakeholders.
2. Distribute sticky notes or index cards to all participants and ask them to write down their definitions of educational equity.
3. After everyone has completed their definitions, collect the sticky notes and place them on a flipchart paper.
4. Group similar definitions together and label each group with a heading. For example, if several participants wrote about equal opportunities for all students, group them together under the heading "Equal Opportunities."
5. Ask participants to form small groups of 3-4 people and assign each group to one of the groupings.
6. In their groups, ask participants to review the definitions under their assigned heading and identify common themes or differences.
7. Next, ask each group to define educational equity by incorporating the perspectives and themes from their assigned grouping.
8. After each group has developed their definition, ask them to write it on a new sticky note or index card and place it on the flipchart paper.
9. As a group, review the new definitions and identify any similarities or differences. Discuss the reasons behind any discrepancies and identify any areas of consensus.
10. Using the input and insights from the group discussion, work together to create a final definition of educational equity that incorporates the diverse perspectives and experiences of all stakeholders involved.
11. Record the final definition on a separate flipchart paper or poster and display it prominently in the room.
12. Conclude the activity by thanking everyone for their participation and highlighting the importance of having a shared definition of educational equity that reflects all stakeholders' diverse perspectives and experiences.
Appendix 4: Gathering and Organizing Relevant Data

In preparation for Module 3, facilitators must gather and organize relevant data to provide a global picture of the district, school, or institution that will provide helpful information when selecting the best rubric for the curriculum equity audit. Here are some possible sources of data to consider. Be thoughtful and intentional when selecting the data to include in the discussion.

**District/State Data Sources:**

- District/State Enrollment Data
- District/State Budget Data
- District/State Achievement Data
- District/State Dropout Rates
- District/State Graduation Rates
- District/State Standardized Test Scores
- District/State Attendance Rates
- District/State Staffing Data
- District/State Curriculum Standards
- District/State Policies and Regulations

**Local Demographic Data:**

- Student Demographics (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, income level, English Language Learners)
- Family Demographics (e.g., household income, education level)
- Community Demographics (e.g., population size, economic indicators, employment statistics)

**School Process Data:**

- School Budget Data
- School Staffing Data
- School Discipline Data
- School Attendance Rates
- School Safety Data
- School Curriculum Standards
- School Policies and Regulations
• Student Services (e.g., special education, counseling)

Perception Data:

• Parent, student, and teacher surveys
• Focus group data
• Stakeholder feedback and input
• School Climate surveys
Appendix 5: Identity: Who Am I?

Identity – Who am I?

Who Am I? __________________, _____________________, __________________

Identity: Identity can be defined as the characteristics, traits, qualities, beliefs, values, experiences, and social categories that make an individual unique and distinct from others. It can encompass many different dimensions, such as gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, occupation, and personal interests.

- Which identities do you think about most often? When are you the most aware of these identities?
- Which identities do you think about or feel least often? Why do you think you aren’t aware of them?
- Which identities have the strongest impact on how you perceive or define yourself?
- Which identities have the strongest impact on how you think other people perceive or label you?
- How do your identities influence your sense of belonging at work/home/school/community?

When thinking about the identities that you identified as most salient, how have those aspects of your identity been represented in the curriculum throughout your educational career?

At what points did you see your identity reflected (ES, MS, HS, and/or in what classes)?

Did you feel like it was an accurate and positive representation of your identity?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Age is a measure of the amount of time that has elapsed since a person's birth, usually expressed in years it can also refer to a particular stage of life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>Appearance refers to the outward or visible aspects of a person or thing. It includes physical characteristics such as height, weight, skin color, hair color and texture, facial features, body shape, and clothing style. Appearance can also refer to the way a person presents themselves through grooming, makeup, and fashion choices. It is often used to make judgments about a person's attractiveness, social status, and personality,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Ethnicity refers to a shared cultural heritage, ancestry, or identity that defines a group of people. It often involves a combination of factors, such as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Definition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language and Communication Skills</td>
<td>Language ability refers to a person’s capacity to use language to communicate with others. It includes skills such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing in one or more languages. Language ability can be assessed in terms of proficiency, which refers to a person’s level of skill and fluency in using a particular language. Communication ability refers to a person's capacity to effectively express themselves and exchange information with others through various forms of communication, such as speaking, listening, writing, and nonverbal communication. Communication ability can be influenced by factors such as language skills, cognitive abilities, emotional intelligence, social skills, and cultural awareness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Income refers to the money or earnings that an individual or entity receives over a specified period of time, typically expressed on an annual basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Education level refers to the level of formal education a person has completed. This is typically measured in terms of the highest degree or diploma that a person has earned. Education levels can range from a high school diploma or equivalent to a doctoral degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>A group whose members identify with each other on the basis of common nationality or shared cultural traditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>A family is a group of people who are related to each other by blood, marriage, or adoption and who live together as a household unit. The members of a family typically share a common residence, resources, and emotional bond.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>The socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and characteristics that a given society categorizes as ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’; not defined by one’s biological sex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Identity</td>
<td>Gender identity refers to a person's internal sense of their own gender, whether male, female, a combination of both, or neither. It is an individual's deeply felt and inherent sense of being a man, a woman, or another gender that may differ from their assigned sex at birth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Expression</td>
<td>Gender expression refers to the way that an individual presents their gender to others, such as through their appearance, behavior, and social interactions. It can include the way that a person dresses, styles their hair, uses language, or engages in activities that are traditionally associated with a particular gender.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental and Physical Ability</td>
<td>Mental ability refers to a person's cognitive or intellectual capacity, including their capacity for learning, problem-solving, decision-making, and reasoning. It encompasses a broad range of skills and abilities, including memory, attention, language, and perception. Physical ability refers to a person’s capacity to perform physical tasks and activities, such as strength,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

392
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identity</strong></td>
<td>endurance, agility, flexibility, and coordination. Physical ability can also be impacted by injuries or disabilities, which can limit a person's ability to perform certain physical tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Origin</strong></td>
<td>National origin refers to a person's country of birth, ancestry, or citizenship. It is a term used to describe a person's ethnic or cultural background, and it is often used to identify people from a specific region or country. It is important to recognize that national origin is distinct from race or ethnicity, although there may be overlap between these concepts. Race refers to physical characteristics, while ethnicity refers to cultural heritage and practices. National origin can be seen as a combination of both race and ethnicity, as it encompasses both ancestral and cultural ties to a specific country or region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Role</strong></td>
<td>Organizational role refers to the specific position or job that an individual holds within an organization or company. Organizational roles are typically defined by a combination of job duties, responsibilities, and expectations, and they are often structured hierarchically within an organization. Different organizational roles may have different levels of authority, decision-making power, and accountability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Beliefs</strong></td>
<td>Political beliefs refer to a set of values, principles, and ideas that shape an individual's views and opinions about politics and government. Political beliefs are often based on a person's ideological orientation, which can range from conservative to liberal or somewhere in between. Political beliefs can encompass a wide range of issues, including economic policies, social justice, civil liberties, foreign affairs, and more. Individuals may hold political beliefs that align with a particular political party, such as Democrats or Republicans, or they may identify as independent or belong to a third-party organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td>Race is a social construct that categorizes people into groups based on physical and biological traits, such as skin color, hair texture, facial features, ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, and ethnic classification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religion/ spirituality</strong></td>
<td>Religion or spirituality refers to a personal or institutionalized system of beliefs, practices, and values related to the existence of a higher power, supernatural or transcendent entity, or ultimate purpose or meaning in life. It can involve specific religious traditions or practices, or it can be a more personal or individualized belief system usually defining a moral code which should be followed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexual orientation</strong></td>
<td>Sexual orientation refers to an individual's enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to others. It is typically categorized as heterosexual (attraction to the opposite gender), homosexual (attraction to the same gender), or bisexual (attraction to both genders), but it can also include other orientations, such as asexual (lack of sexual attraction) or pansexual (attraction to people regardless of gender).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Experience</td>
<td>Work experience refers to the skills, knowledge, and expertise that an individual has gained through their employment history. It encompasses the tasks, responsibilities, and accomplishments that an individual has acquired while working in a particular job or field.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 6: Curriculum Audit Tools

Curriculum Audit Tools

Introduction

Curriculum plays a critical role in promoting equity and social justice in education. By incorporating diverse perspectives and experiences into the curriculum, educators can create a learning environment that reflects the diversity of the student population and promotes understanding and empathy. Many historically marginalized students experience academic and social disparities in schools; therefore, educators are turning to different curricular approaches to address this issue to improve outcomes and create a sense of belonging for all students. These curricular approaches include anti-bias, anti-racist, culturally responsive/sustaining, diversity equity inclusion, multicultural, and social justice education.

Each of these approaches has its unique perspective and goals. For example, anti-bias education challenges stereotypes and prejudices, while anti-racist education focuses on dismantling systemic racism. Culturally responsive/sustaining education centers on students' cultural backgrounds and experiences, and diversity equity inclusion education aims to promote inclusion and equity for all students. Finally, multicultural education emphasizes recognizing and valuing diversity, while social justice education addresses social and economic inequalities.

Selecting a curriculum equity tool that meets your school/district/institution's vision of equity and reflects the specific needs of your district is crucial for promoting equity and social justice in education. A curriculum equity tool serves as a roadmap for incorporating equitable practices into the curriculum and guiding instructional decision-making. Therefore, selecting a tool that aligns with the district's goals and values and reflects the unique needs of the district's students and community is essential. By carefully selecting a curriculum equity tool that meets the district's specific contextual needs and priorities, educators can promote academic success and a sense of belonging for all students particularly those who have been historically marginalized.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anti-bias</th>
<th>Anti-racist</th>
<th>Culturally Responsive/ Sustaining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity, Equity, Inclusion</td>
<td>Multicultural</td>
<td>Social Justice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Anti-bias curriculum

Key Terms: Identity, Diversity, Justice, Activism

Definition: A culturally responsive/sustaining curriculum is an educational approach that recognizes and values students' diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences and seeks to build on these strengths to create a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. It centers on the belief that students' cultural identities and experiences should be integrated into the curriculum rather than excluded or ignored. Culturally responsive/sustaining curriculum approaches include incorporating diverse perspectives and materials into lessons, acknowledging and addressing issues of power and privilege, and fostering positive relationships between students and teachers. The goal is to promote culturally relevant teaching practices that affirm and celebrate students' identities and encourage greater engagement and academic success.

Goals:

- Foster each child’s self-awareness, confidence, family pride, and positive social identities.
- Encourage each child’s comfort and joy with human diversity, accurate language for human differences, and deep caring human connections.
- Help each child recognize unfairness, understand its causes and effects, and take action against it.
- Support each child’s development of critical thinking skills, empathy, social responsibility, and leadership for justice and equity.

K-12 Tools:

- Screening for Biased Content in Instructional Materials
- Bias Evaluation Instrument – Nova Scotia
- Assessing Bias in Standards and Curricular Materials

IHE Tools:

- The Upstate Bias Checklist: A Checklist for Assessing Bias in Health Professions
Anti-Racist Curriculum

Key Terms: Anti-Racism, Critical Race Theory, Intersectionality, Social Justice

Definition: An antiracist curriculum is an educational approach that actively seeks to identify and dismantle systemic racism and discrimination in all areas of society, including the curriculum itself. It aims to promote a deeper understanding of the history and ongoing impacts of racism and to empower students to challenge and take action against racism and racial inequities in their communities. Antiracist curricula typically include a range of topics and perspectives, such as the contributions of people of color to various fields, the impact of white supremacy on social structures and institutions, and strategies for building more equitable and inclusive communities. In addition, an antiracist curriculum aims to foster critical thinking, empathy, and a sense of responsibility among students and to prepare them to become active agents of social change.

Goals:

- Educate oneself and acknowledge racial trauma that affects students and communities of color.
- Interrogate positionality and (un)conscious biases that influence teaching and learning.
- Address curricular gaps with intentional course/syllabus design that incorporates diverse perspectives, histories, and experiences of marginalized groups.
- Foster a humanizing class community for all students by creating a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environment.
- Engage the wider school/campus community and commit to action beyond the classroom by supporting antiracist initiatives, policies, and movements.

K-12 Tools:

- Screening for Biased Content in Instructional Materials

IHE Tools:

- Anti-Racism Guide Audit Rubric - Library
- Advancing Inclusion and Anti-Racism in the College Classroom
- Syllabus Review Guide from a Racial/Ethnic Equity Lens
Culturally Responsive Curriculum

Key Terms: Culture, Cultural responsiveness/sustainability, Critical Consciousness, Asset-Based

Definition: A culturally responsive/sustaining curriculum is an educational approach that acknowledges and incorporates students' cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives in the learning process. It recognizes the diversity of students and aims to empower them by validating their cultural identities and providing opportunities for them to learn about and engage with multiple cultures. A culturally responsive/sustaining curriculum fosters equity and inclusivity in education and supports all students' academic, social, and emotional development. This approach promotes a more just and equitable society by preparing students to be critical thinkers, problem-solvers, and active citizens in a multicultural world.

Goals:
- Students achieve intellectual growth and academic success.
- Students feel affirmed and sustained in their culture and heritage languages, and they develop fluency in the cultures and languages of others.
- Students develop the knowledge and skills to recognize, critique and address societal inequalities.

K-12 Tools:
- Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecards (both ELA and STEAM)

IHE Tools:
- The Upstate Bias Checklist: A Checklist for Assessing Bias in Health Professions
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Curriculum

Key Terms: Diversity, Intersectionality, Inclusion, Equity

Definition: A diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) curriculum is an educational approach that aims to create a learning environment that values and respects the diversity of individuals and groups from all backgrounds. It provides students with equitable learning opportunities and eliminates systemic barriers hindering academic achievement and success by integrating diverse perspectives, cultures, and identities in all aspects of the curriculum, including content, teaching methods, and assessments. It promotes critical thinking, empathy, and understanding diversity, equity, and inclusion issues. The curriculum design aims to foster a sense of belonging and community among students, promote cultural competency and responsiveness, and prepare students to thrive in a diverse and multicultural world.

Goals:

- Students gain a deep understanding and appreciation of diversity, and they learn to value the differences among people.
- Students become more aware of their biases and prejudices and learn strategies for addressing and reducing discrimination.
- Students develop cultural competence and the ability to interact effectively with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

K-12 Tools:

- Equity Audit Rubric
- The Equity Rubric (Rubric Domain VII)
- Criteria for an Equitable School (Standards and Curriculum Development)

IHE Tools:

- Inclusion By Design: Survey Your Syllabus and Course Design
- PULSE Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Rubric
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Course Design Rubric
Multicultural Curriculum

Key Terms: Diversity, Identity, Cultural Competence, Inclusion

Definition: A multicultural curriculum is an educational approach that recognizes and values the diversity of cultures, languages, and backgrounds. It aims to integrate various cultural perspectives and knowledge into the curriculum, including those of historically marginalized communities. A multicultural curriculum typically includes content and teaching methods that reflect the experiences, histories, and contributions of people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It also aims to develop students' cultural competency, respect for diversity, and understanding global issues. A multicultural curriculum promotes equity, inclusion, and social justice in education and prepares students to thrive in a diverse and interconnected world.

Goals:

- Students develop an appreciation and understanding of diverse cultures, including their history, customs, values, and contributions to society.
- Students recognize and celebrate their cultural heritage, and they learn to value and respect the cultures of others.
- Students gain the knowledge and skills necessary to communicate effectively with people from diverse cultural backgrounds and learn to navigate cultural differences.
- Students develop a sense of empathy and respect for people from diverse cultural backgrounds and are empowered to work towards a more inclusive and culturally responsive society.

K-12 Tools:

- Vetting of Multiculturalism and Culturally Responsiveness in Instructional Materials
- Evaluating Multicultural Multimedia Materials

IHE Tools:

- The Upstate Bias Checklist: A Checklist for Assessing Bias in Health Professions
Social Justice Curriculum

Key Terms: Equity, Power, Intersectionality, Activism

Definition: A social justice curriculum is an educational approach that is centered on the principles of equity, inclusion, and social justice. It is designed to help students understand and critically analyze the social, economic, and political structures that contribute to social inequality and injustice. A social justice curriculum engages students in critical thinking, dialogue, and action to address systemic oppression, discrimination, and marginalization issues. It typically includes human rights, diversity and inclusion, global perspectives, and activism. A social justice curriculum aims to empower students to become informed, responsible, and active citizens who work towards creating a more just and equitable society.

Goals:

- Students develop a critical understanding of social injustices, including systemic oppression, discrimination, and inequalities.
- Students become aware of their biases and privilege and learn strategies for recognizing and addressing social injustices.
- Students gain the knowledge and skills necessary to analyze and critique systems of power and oppression and advocate for social justice.
- Students are empowered to work towards a more just and equitable society and to take action toward social change in their communities and world.

K-12 Tools:

- Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecards (both ELA and STEAM)
  *Includes a section specifically on Social Justice Orientation*

IHE Tools:

- The Social Justice Syllabus Design Tool
## Appendix 7: Jigsaw Rubric Selection Tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric Type</th>
<th>Alignment to Key Criteria</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anti-bias</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-racist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Culturally Responsive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubric Type</td>
<td>Alignment to Key Criteria</td>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td>Limitations</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity, Equity, &amp; Inclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multicultural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Justice</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 8: Gallery Walk

1. Prepare the materials: Prepare a set of visual aids (e.g., posters, pictures, charts, graphs, or other displays) that capture the content or theme of the gallery walk. You should also prepare a set of instructions for participants that explain the purpose of the gallery walk and how to participate.

2. Set up the space: Choose a large, open area where the visual aids/charts can be displayed. Set up tables, easels, or other displays where the visual aids can be placed or use sticky chart paper that can hang on the room's walls. Be sure to leave enough space between displays to allow participants to move freely.

3. Introduce the gallery walk: Gather participants and explain the purpose of the gallery walk. Explain that they will be moving around the space to view and discuss the visual aids and will be asked to share their thoughts and reactions.

4. Start the gallery walk: Instruct participants to begin by moving around the space to view the displays. Encourage participants to take their time and to look closely at each exhibit.

5. Encourage discussion: As participants move around the space, encourage them to discuss what they see with each other. Encourage participants to ask questions, share their observations, and offer their perspectives.

6. Assign roles: You may want to assign specific roles to participants to encourage them to engage with the visual aids more deeply. For example, you might ask one participant to be an observer, another to be a recorder, and another to be a reporter.

7. Regroup and debrief: After participants have had a chance to view and discuss each display, gather them for a debriefing session. Ask participants to share their observations, questions, and reactions. Encourage participants to discuss any patterns or themes that emerged during the gallery walk.

8. Conclude the gallery walk: Thank participants for their participation and wrap up the gallery walk. Be sure to collect any materials and tidy up the space. Consider sharing insights or themes that emerged during the debriefing session with the larger group or community.
Appendix 9: Critical Reflection: Mirror, Microscope, Binoculars

Level 1: The Mirror: Reflection of the self, the self becomes clearer

This level of reflection helps you to understand yourself and your personal values. It helps you begin to see how this experience helped you learn more about particular aspects of yourself.

**Level 1 Reflection questions:**

- Who am I? What are my values?
- What have I learned about myself through this experience?
- How has this experience affected my understanding of the group I’m working with? of the community? of my own role in this community?
- How has this experience challenged my preexisting assumptions or biases?
- How will this experience change the way I act or think in the future?
- How has this experience challenged stereotypes or prejudices I have/had?
- How has this experience challenged me, my ideals, philosophies, or my concept of life or the way I live?

| My thoughts: |

Level 2: The Microscope: Make the small experience large

This level of reflection helps you understand the impact of the learning and discussion we had today, and it allows you to reflect on specific activities that occurred, your role in them, and their broader impact.

**Level 2 reflection questions:**

- What happened today?
- What would I change about this situation if I was in charge, and why?
- What have I learned about the students, this institution, or the community?

| My Thoughts: |
- What have I learned about the people I work with?
- Was there a moment when I sensed a feeling of failure, success, indecision, doubt, humor, frustration, happiness, sadness?
- Do I feel my actions had any impact? On whom?
- Does this experience compliment or contrast with what I already knew?

### Level 3: The Binoculars: The distant becomes closer

This level of reflection helps you identify larger issues that surround the curriculum equity audit in your institution. It can expand your understanding, vision, of causes effects and impacts and can help you imagine how we can create educational equity for all of our students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 3 reflection questions:</th>
<th>My Thoughts:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What did I learn from this experience as a whole?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can I apply this knowledge to other parts of my life?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did things turn out the way I anticipated?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did this experience relate to what I already knew?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are my views on the community now? How have they changed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is the equity curriculum audit and my institution impacted by what is going on in the larger political/social sphere?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will this experience alter my future behaviors/attitudes/and beliefs?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slide</td>
<td>Talking Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slide 1</td>
<td>Have it displayed when participants are arriving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slide 2: 5 minutes</td>
<td>Welcome everyone to the session and introduce yourself. Provide some background information on who you are and any relevant experiences and your commitment to this work. Next, share the purpose of the session and the importance of the curriculum equity audit process. Finally, highlight the significance of this session and how it aligns with the broader goals and vision of the school/district/institution.&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;Encourage participants to introduce themselves and include their role and connection to the district/school/institution, so the group can consider their perspectives. This will also help to establish a sense of community and collaboration among team members. Remind the team of the importance of the curriculum equity audit process and its potential impact on students and their learning. Encourage them to approach the process with an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slide</td>
<td>Talking Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Slide 3 - 5 minutes | open mind, a willingness to learn, and a commitment to making positive changes. Conclude the welcome by expressing gratitude for the team's involvement and commitment to the curriculum equity audit process. Encourage everyone to actively engage in the session and work together to create positive change for students, particularly those who have historically been marginalized. **Objective 1: Created community agreements to use during the Curriculum Audit process.**  
- Establishing community agreements ensures a conducive environment for us to work toward our shared vision and goals.  
- Community agreements can create a safe and inclusive space for everyone to share their thoughts and opinions.  
- These agreements will help us establish the expectations for engaging with each other during the curriculum audit process. **Objective 2: Articulated the importance of conducting an audit to ensure an equitable curriculum.**  
- It's important to acknowledge that our curriculum impacts students' learning, development, and sense of belonging; therefore, ensuring that it's equitable and inclusive is essential.  
- By conducting a curriculum audit, we can identify areas where our curriculum may need to improve |
regarding equity and inclusion and take action to address the gap between our current state and our desired state.

- The process of conducting a curriculum audit helps to hold us accountable for ensuring that our curriculum provides all students with the opportunity to thrive and succeed academically, socially, and personally, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender identity, ability status, socioeconomic status, linguistic background, geography, or life circumstances.

**Objective 3: Identified and reviewed different Curriculum Audit Rubric options.**

- Several different curriculum audit rubrics are available, each with its strengths and weaknesses.
- We will review each rubric carefully and consider which will work best for your school or district to achieve your vision of equity.
- We will look at several different tools today and discuss the pros and cons of each one.

**Objective 4: Selected the most appropriate rubric for their school or district that aligns with their vision for equity.**

- Once we have reviewed the different rubrics, selecting the one that aligns with our vision for equity is essential.
Today we will discuss the Comprehensive Curriculum Equity Audit Process. This process is crucial in achieving our vision for equity. We have brought together a diverse team to ensure every step is taken with a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**Step 1: Identify/Define Vision for Equity**

The first step we took internally was to define our vision for equity because we must clearly understand what equity means and what it looks like in practice. This step is essential because it guides the entire process, and all subsequent actions will be geared toward achieving our ideal state.

**Step 2: Identify/Engage Stakeholders**

The next step was to identify and engage the necessary stakeholders to partner with us in achieving our vision. This included the identification and involvement of all members of our community who will be impacted by this process. Engaging stakeholders with different perspectives, identities, and skills ensures all voices are heard and considered. That is why you are here today - you were selected to be part of this process because your perspective is essential.
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<td><strong>Step 3: Select/Create an Audit Rubric</strong>&lt;br&gt;The third step is to select or create a curriculum equity audit rubric. This tool will be used to collect data and assess our organization's current state, ensuring equitable curriculum and instruction for all students. We must thoughtfully select the rubric most aligned with our vision for equity and relevant to our specific contextual needs.</td>
<td>and to make the process transparent.</td>
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<td><strong>Step 4: Professional Development</strong>&lt;br&gt;The fourth step is conducting professional development. We must equip ourselves with the skills and knowledge necessary to audit the curriculum through an equity lens. During the training, we will use a calibration protocol to align our scoring practices and ensure a shared understanding of the terms used in the rubric descriptors. This will include training on essential equity concepts such as culture, race, cultural competence, power, privilege, intersectionality, oppression, funds of knowledge identity, bias, and equitable data analysis. The exact training topics will be determined once a rubric is selected by this team.</td>
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<td><strong>Step 5: Conduct the Audit</strong>&lt;br&gt;The fifth step is to conduct the audit. We will use the identified curriculum rubric to gather data on teacher materials, lesson plans, and texts to determine where inequities exist. We will also look for evidence of systemic bias and structural barriers.</td>
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<td><strong>Step 6: Analyze the Data with an Equity Lens</strong>&lt;br&gt;The sixth step is to analyze the data with an equity lens. This step is critical in identifying areas that need</td>
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improvement and determining the root causes of inequities. We will use an equity lens to identify patterns of injustice and prioritize areas for action.

Step 7: Create an Action Plan
The seventh step is to create an action plan. Based on the data and analysis, we will develop a plan that outlines specific actions to address the inequities identified in the audit. We will prioritize the most urgent and impactful activities and set measurable goals for progress.

Step 8: Evaluate and Decide on the Next Steps
The final step is to evaluate and decide on the next steps. We will regularly assess progress toward our goals and adjust our strategies. We will also determine the next steps for ongoing equity work.

In conclusion, every step of the Comprehensive Equity Audit Rubric Process is crucial in achieving our vision for equity. We have created a diverse team to ensure that all perspectives, identities, and skills are represented. By working through each step, we can identify and address inequities within our curriculum to create a more equitable and inclusive environment.

This is the step that we are focusing on today and we are so glad that you are part of this journey with us to improve equitable outcomes for our students.
Instead of having a list of "ground rules," we will create community agreements together. This is an opportunity for us to commit to one another and help establish a supportive and safe space where everyone's voice is heard. Our community agreement will guide us as we navigate through discussions, ensure that we respect each other's opinions and needs, and help us stay focused on the goals we set for our time together. So, let's work collaboratively to create our unique community agreements!

To create our community agreements, we will work towards a consensus on what every person in our group needs from each other and commits to each other to feel safe, supported, open, productive, and trusting. Our community agreement will serve as a tool to help us do our best work, achieve our shared vision, and ultimately benefit our students and families. By engaging in this process, we're taking a proactive approach to ensuring that everyone's needs are met and that we can work together effectively as a team. So, let's focus on what we need from each other to create a positive and productive environment where we can all thrive.

1. Ask team members to individually think and brainstorm a list of guidelines or expectations they believe are essential for the team to follow while working together. Encourage them to consider communication, decision-making, accountability, and respect.
2. Once everyone has completed their list, ask them to share their ideas with their table group. Have them group similar ideas together. Next, whip around to

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<td>Slide 6 – 30 minutes</td>
<td>Instead of having a list of &quot;ground rules,&quot; we will create community agreements together. This is an opportunity for us to commit to one another and help establish a supportive and safe space where everyone's voice is heard. Our community agreement will guide us as we navigate through discussions, ensure that we respect each other's opinions and needs, and help us stay focused on the goals we set for our time together. So, let's work collaboratively to create our unique community agreements! To create our community agreements, we will work towards a consensus on what every person in our group needs from each other and commits to each other to feel safe, supported, open, productive, and trusting. Our community agreement will serve as a tool to help us do our best work, achieve our shared vision, and ultimately benefit our students and families. By engaging in this process, we're taking a proactive approach to ensuring that everyone's needs are met and that we can work together effectively as a team. So, let's focus on what we need from each other to create a positive and productive environment where we can all thrive.</td>
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<td>each table group and write each suggestion on a whiteboard or flip chart.</td>
<td>Your district/school/institution might already have one they use or there are several possible definitions listed in the resource section.</td>
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<td>3. As a group, review each suggestion and discuss its importance, potential impact, and potential challenges or limitations. Encourage team members to ask questions and share their perspectives.</td>
<td>Here are some resources if you have not developed a school/district/institution shared definition of educational equity:</td>
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<td>4. Once the group has gone through each suggestion, group similar ideas together and look for themes. This will help streamline the list and identify key community agreements the team can focus on.</td>
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<td>5. Once the group has identified the critical community agreements, work together to craft clear and concise statements outlining each agreement. Encourage the group to use positive and action-oriented language that reflects the team's values and goals.</td>
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Establishing a shared vocabulary that enables the presentation and analysis of data, describes outcomes and conditions, and identifies the underlying causes of disparities plays a vital role. A collective language creates a narrative that facilitates the communication of the commitment to educational equity, both within and outside the organization for coordinated efforts to achieve equitable outcomes.

Educational equity- every student has access to the opportunities, resources and educational rigor they need throughout their educational career to maximize academic success and social emotional well-being and to view each student’s individual characteristics as valuable. The characteristics of each individual student include but are not limited to ability (cognitive, social emotional and physical), ethnicity, family structure, gender identity and expression,
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|       | language, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomics. | Here is a Protocol from the National School Reform Faculty that can help your team move towards the creation of a shared definition of equity: Equity Stances.  
Or you can use *Optional Handout 1* to create a shared definition for equity. Keep in mind that you will need to add this time into the total time allocated for this workshop. |
| Slide 8 – 5 minutes | In addition to the community agreements, we have developed, we will also use the Courageous Conversations About Race Protocol during our time together. The Courageous Conversations About Race protocol is an essential tool for engaging in equity work because it provides a framework for engaging in complex and often uncomfortable conversations about race and racism. These conversations can be challenging because they require participants to confront their biases and privilege and engage with others with different perspectives and experiences.  
- The protocol is designed to create a safe and supportive space for all participants to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences without fear of judgment or retribution. It encourages active listening, honest dialogue, and |
mutual respect, essential to any productive conversation about race and equity.

- Using this protocol can also help ensure that conversations stay focused on race and racism rather than becoming derailed by personal attacks or defensive behavior. In addition, it provides a clear structure for the discussion, which helps minimize misunderstandings and ensure that everyone can participate.
- Ultimately, engaging in equity work requires a willingness to engage in difficult conversations about race and racism. The Courageous Conversations About Race protocol provides a valuable tool for doing so in a way that promotes understanding, empathy, and meaningful change.

Have participants read through the four agreements and then have them silently reflect on which agreement they think will be most difficult for them to uphold. Have them think about how they will work towards committing to these agreements.

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<td>Slide 9</td>
<td>In addition to the four agreements, we will also use the Courageous Conversation Compass. This tool helps us to understand how we respond to discomfort when discussing issues of race and intersectionality. When uncomfortable, we tend to pull away from our center in a particular direction, towards a specific quadrant. Understanding the quadrants will allow you to understand where others may be coming from, and knowing which quadrant you are in can help you have more productive conversations. The axis from which we enter a conversation depends on our experiences, values, beliefs, and opinions.</td>
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The ultimate goal of this tool is to help us identify where we are and move closer to the center to foster more productive discussions. The four points are Emotional (heart), Intellectual (mind), Moral (soul), and Relational (hands/feet). Let's take a closer look at each of these points.

- The Emotional (heart) quadrant is characterized by responding to information through feelings. When racial issues strike us physically and cause an internal sensation such as anger, sadness, joy, or embarrassment, we are responding from our heart.
- The Intellectual (mind) quadrant is characterized by responding to a racial issue or information by searching for more information or data. Our intellectual response is often verbal and based on our best thinking.
- The Moral (soul) quadrant is characterized by responding from a deep-seated belief related to racial information or event. Justifications of one's moral views may be seated in the "gut" and may not be verbally articulated.
- Finally, the Relational (hands/feet) quadrant is characterized by connecting and responding to racial information through actions and behaviors.

Understanding which quadrant we are in can help us to have more productive conversations. By recognizing our responses to discomfort, we can learn to communicate more effectively with others. Ultimately, the goal is to move closer to the center and to have a more balanced response when having cross-racial dialogue. Let's now take some time to...
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<td>Slides 10-18 15 minutes</td>
<td>Slides 10-18 are a place holder. What is our data telling us?</td>
<td>You need to decide what story you are going to tell through your data, vision, mission, and policies. The slides contained in the module are just a sample for you to think through your data story.</td>
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| Slide 19 5 min. | Compass check in. After viewing our district data, vision, mission where are you on the compass right now? Take a few minutes to reflect and then we will have time for a table discussion.  
- Emotionally  
- Intellectually  
- Morally  
- Relationally |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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<td>Consider their social identities and how they show up in their work.</td>
<td>Group, you may want to consider doing additional trust-building activities before starting.</td>
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<td>• Encourage participants to be open and honest with each other. Let them know this is a safe and supportive space and that everyone's experiences and perspectives are valued.</td>
<td>• Be prepared to follow up with participants who share particularly challenging experiences. Thank them for sharing and offer any support or resources that may be helpful.</td>
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<td>• Model vulnerability by sharing an example or two from your own identity wheel. This can help to set the tone for the activity and encourage others to do the same.</td>
<td>• Keep an eye on participants' reactions to others' examples. Be ready to intervene if necessary to ensure that everyone is respectful and supportive of one another.</td>
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<td>• Ask them to brainstorm, their top 3-5 identities using the categories on the identity wheel.</td>
<td>• Use your role as a facilitator to establish and maintain an atmosphere that supports and encourages</td>
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<td>• Remind participants that they can share as much or as little as they feel comfortable doing. Some participants may be more vulnerable than others, which is okay.</td>
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| Slide 22 - 10 minutes | • Display the questions and read the questions to the group. Model vulnerability by answering one of the questions on the slide, This can help to set the tone for the activity and encourage others to do the same.  
  • Tell participants that they will have time to think independently and then time to share only what they are comfortable sharing with their table group. Ask if there are any questions.  
  • After about 4-5 minutes, tell participants that they can discuss at their tables. | vulnerability and respect among participants. |
| Slide 23 - 15 minutes | • Display the questions and read the questions to the group. Model vulnerability by answering one of the questions on the slide, This can help to set the tone for the activity and encourage others to do the same. Tell participants that they will have time to think independently and then time to share only what they are comfortable sharing with their table group. Ask if there are any questions.  
  • How have those aspects of your identity been represented in the curriculum throughout your educational career?  
  • Have you seen your identity reflected in the curriculum? If so, at what points? (ES, MS, HS, and/or in what classes?)  
  • Did you feel like it was an accurate and positive representation of your identity? If not, why?  
  • How did seeing your identity represented (or not) impact your educational experience? | • It is ok if the group does not want to share out when you get to the whole discussion portion. The next slide discusses why it is necessary to conduct an equity audit of the curriculum. If participants surface the lack of representation in the curriculum use that as the natural bridge to slide 14. |
• Did you feel like you could fully participate in class discussions and activities, or did you feel like some parts of your identity were excluded or marginalized?
• How could the curriculum be improved to better represent the diversity of identities in our community?
• What steps can we take to make sure that all students feel seen and heard in the classroom?

After about 3-4 minutes, tell participants that they can discuss at their tables.

Bring the group back together and see if anyone wants to share out something they heard in their discussion about representation in the curriculum.

Conducting an equity audit of our curriculum is essential to creating more equitable and inclusive schools and classrooms. It is important to acknowledge that the traditional literacy canon that is part of the ELA curriculum has been Euro-centric, male-dominated, and Western. This Eurocentric view has resulted in the exclusion of stories from Black, Indigenous, and people of color from the global narrative.

These social and cultural forces prioritizing certain lives over others involve systems of patriarchy, capitalism, and other manifestations of oppressive power.

This exclusion results from a society where some voices and viewpoints are considered more valuable while others are deemed irrelevant. This imbalance leads to unequal realities in people's lives and entrenched political, economic, and social processes that favor some but creates tremendous oppression and struggles for survival for the voices that have been othered.

Why take the time to audit the curriculum? Start by introducing the positive impact that ethnic studies programs...
An expanding body of scholarship indicates that ethnic studies programs have positively impacted the academic performance of students from historically underrepresented groups.
- Increased attendance, GPA, total credits earned
- Improved academic achievement as measured by standardized tests
- Increased high school graduation

Data on student achievement indicates that students in classes with culturally responsive pedagogy had significantly higher achievement scores in reading and mathematics than students in low implementation of culturally responsive instruction (Correll, 2016). Some of the literature directly connected CRE to positive gains in test scores. CRT research indicates that teachers can increase academic engagement and achievement of diverse cultural and linguistic student groups by modifying their instruction so that it draws upon their cultural strengths (Banks, 2008). Teaching methods that connect with students’ real lives and interests and promote understanding of other cultures are associated with better academic outcomes (Byrd, 2016). Creating an equitable society and learning environments requires radical inclusion, enabling us to become more proximate to the experiences of others.

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| Slide 26 – 3 minutes | Why an Equity Audit of the Curriculum has on student GPA, attendance, and credits earned. Provide some context on this research, including any studies or reports that support this claim. Discuss findings from ethnic studies courses:  
Dee and Penner - Ethnic Studies  
Increased attendance for 9th graders by 21%  
Increased 9th grade GPA by 1.4 grade points  
Increased credits earned by 23 credits |  

Data on student achievement indicates that students in classes with culturally responsive pedagogy had significantly higher achievement scores in reading and mathematics than students in low implementation of culturally responsive instruction (Correll, 2016). Some of the literature directly connected CRE to positive gains in test scores. CRT research indicates that teachers can increase academic engagement and achievement of diverse cultural and linguistic student groups by modifying their instruction so that it draws upon their cultural strengths (Banks, 2008). Teaching methods that connect with students’ real lives and interests and promote understanding of other cultures are associated with better academic outcomes (Byrd, 2016). Creating an equitable society and learning environments requires radical inclusion, enabling us to become more proximate to the experiences of others.  

Why an Equity Audit - English Language Arts is the one course that students are required to take every year from kindergarten until high school graduation. Students in elementary school spend as many as 21,600 minutes interacting with the ELA curriculum each year. Given the significant amount of school time that students spend learning from this curriculum, it is imperative that we audit our
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<td>curriculum to reveal the gap between our current and desired state. Our curriculum should include culturally relevant, realistic, authentic, and accurate literature to create culturally affirming schools and classrooms that uplift the identity of all students. All students should have the opportunity to be humanized and know that their lives deserve to be taught, discussed, celebrated, and enjoyed. Through the audit, we can identify where to improve our curriculum to provide students with a more inclusive and representative education. By taking action on the audit findings, we will ensure that our students see themselves reflected in the curriculum, feel valued, create a sense of belonging, and are motivated to learn. We want to create an environment where every student feels safe and supported and can learn about the world and their place in it.</td>
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<td>Slide 27 – 3 minutes</td>
<td>Using an Equity lens- any program, practice, decision, or action, the impact on all students is addressed, with strategic focus on marginalized student groups. The theory of change that describes equity curriculum audits in K-12 education is that by conducting a systematic review of curriculum materials, instructional practices, and assessments, educators can identify and address areas of bias, inequity, and cultural insensitivity in their teaching materials and methods. This, in turn, can lead to improved educational outcomes for all students, particularly those from historically marginalized or underrepresented groups. The basic premise of this theory of change is that education is a key factor in promoting social justice and equity, and that curriculum audits provide a valuable tool for ensuring that all students have access to high-quality</td>
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educational opportunities that are culturally responsive, inclusive, and reflective of their diverse backgrounds and experiences. By identifying and addressing biases and gaps in the curriculum, educators can create a more inclusive and equitable learning environment, which can help to eliminate disparities in achievement and promote academic success for all students.

**Courageous Conversation Compass**

After discussing why we should audit the curriculum, identify where you are on the Compass. Take a few minutes to individually reflect and then share out with your table group.

Start by reminding participants of the district's mission, vision, and core values, as well as its definition of educational equity. Emphasize the importance of aligning the curriculum audit rubric with these principles and beliefs. Ask participants to reflect on the key words or phrases that they identified in the district's mission, vision, and core values, as well as the definition of educational equity. Encourage them to discuss how these principles and beliefs should be reflected in the selection of a curriculum audit rubric. Guide participants in identifying the key criteria that should be included in the selection of a curriculum audit rubric. Ask them to consider questions such as:

- What are the key principles and beliefs that the district holds regarding equity in education?
- What are the district's goals for promoting educational equity through its curriculum?
- What are the specific areas or topics that the district wants to focus on in the curriculum audit?
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<td>• What are the key indicators of success for the district's equity goals?</td>
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<td>Encourage participants to prioritize the criteria that they have identified, focusing on those that are most closely aligned with the district's values and beliefs. Ask them to discuss how these criteria can be used to guide the selection of a curriculum audit rubric. Emphasize the importance of selecting a rubric that aligns with the district's goals and values, and that will help to promote educational equity in the curriculum. Explain that we will use the lists that they created as a table group when we come back from lunch to begin reviewing potential rubrics to audit the curriculum.</td>
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<td>Slide 30 – 60 minutes</td>
<td>Lunch Break</td>
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<td>Slide 31 – 10 minutes</td>
<td>Approaches to Auditing the Curriculum</td>
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<td>Slide 32 – 30 minutes</td>
<td>Curriculum Rubric Jigsaw: 1. Introduce the purpose of the jigsaw activity: to examine each of the six rubrics (antibias, antiracist, culturally responsive, diversity equity inclusion,</td>
<td>• If you have six tables, you could just assign each table one approach to</td>
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1. Multicultural and social justice (multicultural, and social justice) and select one to use for auditing the curriculum.

2. Divide participants into six groups, each assigned to examine one of the rubrics. Provide each group with a copy of the rubric to explore.

3. Participants should read and discuss the rubric within their group, identifying the fundamental principles and criteria included in each one. Encourage participants to take notes and ask questions for clarification.

4. After 20-30 minutes of group discussion, ask each group to report the fundamental principles and criteria in their assigned rubric to the larger group through a brief presentation, gallery walk, or a group discussion format.

- If you decide to have participants create a visual display for a gallery walk, there are directions in Appendix 5.

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<td>33 – 30 minutes</td>
<td>Gallery Walk or Other Share out Format</td>
<td>Appendix 5</td>
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<td>34 – 15 minutes</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<td>35 – 75’</td>
<td>After returning from break, gather them for a debriefing session. Ask participants to share their thoughts.</td>
<td>If you get to an impasse where there...</td>
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<td>observations, questions, and reactions to the posters at their table groups. Encourage participants to discuss any patterns or themes that emerged across the posters. For example, they may note that specific rubrics emphasize aspects of cultural competency, such as understanding the history and experiences of marginalized groups. After table groups have had time to discuss, bring the group back together and have a whole group discussion about how the rubrics align with the district's mission, vision, core values, and definition of educational equity. Encourage participants to consider how the rubrics might be used to guide a curriculum audit aligned to the vision for educational equity and the vision and mission of the district/school/institution. Give each person three stickers. Tell the participants that we want to get a sense of the energy for each of the rubrics that were examined. Let participants know that they can use their stickers on three charts or double up their votes on 1 or 2 charts. Give everyone 5 minutes to place their stickers. Once the stickers have been placed, look and see if there are any charts that have no stickers. If there are, then those rubrics are eliminated automatically. Next look to see if there are any charts that have very few stickers. Discuss those with the group to see if you can get agreement to eliminate. See what is left and either have a further discussion or do a second energy vote with the remaining posters. Continue this process until you have selected a rubric to move forward with for the curriculum audit.</td>
<td>is not one rubric that everyone can commit to, you might have to suggest creating your own rubric with elements from the rubrics that you have narrowed down to. This will require the team to reconvene on a different date and follow the process outlined in Module 3.5</td>
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<td>Continue to focus on the following question to select the best audit tool:</td>
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<td>• What criteria are most important to our organization's vision, mission, and core values?</td>
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<td>• What criteria align most closely with the needs and challenges of our local context?</td>
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<td>• What criteria are most likely to lead to significant and sustainable change?</td>
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<td>• What criteria may be most challenging to implement, and how can we address potential barriers or resistance?</td>
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**Slide 36 – 10 minutes**

1. **The Mirror:** Have team members take a few minutes to individually reflect on selecting a curriculum equity audit rubric. Ask them to consider how their perspectives, biases, and experiences may have influenced the decision-making process. Encourage them to write down their reflections in a journal or notebook.

2. **Microscope:** In small groups of 3-4, have team members use a microscope to zoom in on specific aspects of the rubric selection process. Ask each group to focus on a different aspect, such as the criteria used to evaluate the rubrics, the sources of information used to inform the decision, or the stakeholders involved in the process. Each group should share their observations with the larger group.

3. **Binoculars:** In pairs, have team members use binoculars to look at the big picture of the rubric selection process. Ask each pair to consider how the rubric will impact the school or district as a whole and how it aligns with the larger goals and vision of the
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|       | organization. Each pair should share their observations with the larger group.  
4. Group Discussion: After completing the individual and small group reflection activities, bring the whole team together for a group discussion. Ask team members to share their reflections and observations with the group and facilitate a conversation about how the different perspectives and insights can inform future decision-making processes. Encourage team members to listen actively and respectfully to each other and to build on each other's ideas.  
5. Action Planning: Finally, ask the team to identify concrete action steps that they can take to ensure that the selected rubric is implemented equitably and effectively. Encourage them to consider how they can involve all stakeholders in the implementation process and how they can monitor and evaluate the impact of the rubric on student learning and outcomes | Next Steps – Let participants know what the next steps are in the curriculum audit process and give them an approximate timeline for when they will be meeting again,  
• You can use this Google electronic form to collect feedback to disaggregate results or you can make a paper copy Prior to the meeting, decide on when you will meet again to provide professional development for the selected curriculum rubric. If you don’t |
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<td>have a specific date, provide participants with an approximate timeline. Make sure to follow up after the meeting with an email.</td>
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Appendix 11: Module 3 Slides

Selecting a Curriculum Audit Rubric
FOCUSING ON EQUITY
Welcome and Introductions
By the end of this session, we will have discussed and reflected on:

- Community Agreements
- Curriculum Equity Audit Process
- Reviewed & Selected a Rubric
- Timeline & Next Steps
Define the Vision and Identify the Scope of the Curriculum Audit
- Review or Create Your Vision for Equity
- Review or Define Your Core Values
- Define Your Goals & Objectives
- Consider the Needs of Your Students and Community
- Identify Grade Levels and/or Content Areas
- Consider State, District, or Institution Priorities

Identify Stakeholders
- Conduct a Stakeholder Analysis
- Use Multiple Engagement Methods
- Foster a Culture of Inclusivity

Select a Curriculum Audit Rubric
- Research & evaluate available rubrics
- Solicit Stakeholder input and feedback

Design & Implement Professional Learning to Conduct the Audit
- Select a skilled facilitator
- Develop a professional learning plan based on the curriculum audit rubric selected
- Implement the professional learning
- Evaluate the professional learning
- Provide any additional training or resources necessary to conduct the curriculum audit based on participant feedback

Equitable Outcomes

Evaluate the Results
- Use data to inform evaluation
- Solicit feedback
- Adjust the action plan as needed
- Communicate results and celebrate successes
- PDSA – identify the next cycle of continuous improvement

Create an Action Plan
- Set measurable goals (SMART)
- Develop a timeline and allocate resources
- Assign responsibilities

Data Analysis
- Aggregate the data to identify the current state
- Complete Gap Analysis
- Prioritize findings with stakeholders

Conduct the Curriculum Audit
- Gather curriculum, texts, and resources
- Use the curriculum audit rubric
- Provide regular check-ins to calibrate data gathering and ensure reliability and validity of results
- Provide any necessary resources to complete the audit successfully
Define the Vision and Identify the Scope of the Curriculum Audit

- Review or Create Your Vision for Equity
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Data Analysis
- Aggregate the data to identify the current state.
- Complete Gap Analysis
- Prioritize findings with stakeholders

Equitable Outcomes
What do you need from every person in this group in order to feel safe, supported, open, productive and trusting... SO THAT we can serve our students well, do our best work, and achieve our common vision for an equitable inclusive curriculum?
Educational equity involves eradicating predictable outcomes of success or failure based on sociocultural factors such as race, gender, or socioeconomics. Equity requires interrupting and dismantling oppressive practices, structures, and policies that impede access and success. Educational equity demands that students have the necessary resources to reach their maximum academic and social potential and thrive.
The Four Agreements of Courageous Conversations

1. Stay engaged
   Staying engaged means “remaining morally, emotionally, intellectually, and socially involved in the dialogue”.

2. Experience discomfort
   This norm acknowledges that discomfort is inevitable, especially in dialogue about race, and that participants make a commitment to bring issues into the open.

3. Speak your truth
   This means being open about thoughts and feelings and not just saying what you think others want to hear.

4. Expect & accept nonclosure
   This agreement asks participants to “hang out in uncertainty” and not rush to quick solutions, especially in relation to racial understanding, which requires ongoing dialogue.
Courageous Conversation Compass

Who is BCPS?

Students from 114 countries speak 104 languages
7.1% English language learner enrollment
48.7% eligible for free/reduced price meals
13% receiving special education services
65% students of color
Who Are Our Teachers?
BCPS ES Demographics

BCPS ES Teacher Demographics
- White: 88%
- Asian: 1%
- Black/African American: 9%
- Hispanic/Latino: 1%
- Multiracial: 1%
BCPS ES Teacher vs. Student Demographics

BCPS ES Teacher Demographics

BCPS Student Demographics
A. The Board of Education of Baltimore County (Board) believes that every student in the school system should receive an education that maximizes his/her potential to become a globally competitive graduate. The Board is committed to the success of every student in every school.

B. Raising achievement for all students and closing achievement gaps among all students are top priorities of the Board.

C. Disparities on the basis of race, special education status, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity (including gender expression), English language learner (ELL) status or socio-economic status are unacceptable and are directly at odds with the belief that all students can achieve. While complex societal and historical factors contribute to the inequities our students face, rather than perpetuating disparities, the school system must address and overcome inequity by providing all students with the opportunity to succeed.
ELA Vision and Mission

**ELA Vision:** The BCPS Office of English Language Arts is committed to producing globally competitive graduates who are critical and creative thinkers, accomplished readers and writers, and skillful communicators.

**ELA Mission:** Our mission is to empower school communities by providing high-quality professional learning and culturally responsive anti-racist curricula to facilitate high expectations and equitable access so that all student groups have the opportunity to reach their maximum potential for personal, social, and academic achievement.
Maryland Grade 10 ELA Assessment
Maryland
Grade 10
ELA
Assessment
### Met-CCR by Race: BCPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>AM</th>
<th>AS</th>
<th>BL</th>
<th>HI</th>
<th>MU</th>
<th>PI</th>
<th>WH</th>
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<td>37.5</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>22.3</td>
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<td>38.5</td>
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<td>25.0</td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>36.8</td>
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<td>53.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Met-CCR ELA</td>
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<td>45.8</td>
<td>81.0</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>70.8</td>
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</table>
Figure 2.1 The Courageous Conversation Compass

Courageous Conversation Compass
Break
Identity Wheel

Use the provided handout and finish the following sentence starter with your top 3 - 5 identity markers.

I am....
Identity Wheel

Reflect and Share only what you feel like sharing at your table group. Here are some questions for you to reflect on:

- Which identities do you think about most often? When are you the most aware of these identities?
- Which identities do you think about or feel least often? Why do you think you aren’t aware of them?
- Which identities have the strongest impact on how you perceive or define yourself?
- Which identities have the strongest impact on how you think other people perceive or label you?
- How do your identities influence your sense of belonging at work/home/school/community?
Identity & Curriculum

- When thinking about the identities that you identified as most salient, how have those aspects of your identity been represented in the curriculum throughout your educational career?
- At what points did you see your identity reflected (ES, MS, HS, and/or in what classes?)
- Did you feel like it was an accurate and positive representation of your identity?
Why an Equity Audit of the Curriculum?

The traditional literary canon that is part of the ELA curriculum has been extremely Euro-centric, heteronormative, male-dominated, and Western (Banks, 2016; Black, 2018; Cherry-McDaniel & Young, 2012; Marshall, 2017; Washington, 2018).

Academic content standards and curricular materials often frame the histories and experiences of White Americans as a monolithic and universal experience (GLEC, 2016).

The perspectives, histories, and contributions of non-White, non-male, non-cisgender or people with disabilities are minimalized, misrepresented, or often omitted altogether (GLEC, 2016).
Why an Equity Audit of the Curriculum

An expanding body of scholarship indicates that ethnic studies programs have positively impacted the academic performance of students from historically underrepresented groups.

- Increased attendance, GPA, total credits earned, high school graduation
- Improved academic achievement as measured by state standardized tests
- Increased high school graduation

Research indicates that students in classes with culturally responsive pedagogy had:

- Higher achievement scores in reading and math
- Increased academic engagement
- Increased academic outcomes
Audit the Curriculum with an Equity Lens
Courageous Conversation Compass

Figure 2.1  The Courageous Conversation Compass
Key Criteria

Based on the review of the district's mission, vision, core values, and definition of educational equity, identify the key criteria that should be included in the selection of a curriculum audit rubric. These criteria should reflect the district's values and beliefs and should align with the principles of educational equity.
Lunch
Approaches to Auditing the Curriculum for Equity

- Anti-bias
- Anti-racist
- Culturally Responsive/Sustaining
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
- Multicultural
- Social Justice
Jigsaw

1. We will break into six groups and each group will examine one curriculum audit approach.

2. Consider the following questions as you are reviewing your assigned approach:
   - What criteria are most important to our organization’s vision, mission, and core values?
   - What criteria align most closely with the needs and challenges of our local context?
   - What criteria are most likely to lead to significant and sustainable change?
   - What criteria may be most challenging to implement, and how can we address potential barriers or resistance?

3. Be prepared to share out with the entire group.
Gallery Walk

Display your poster with your strengths and limitations. Take your capture sheet and take notes as you visit the posters of the other five approaches. As you are visiting each poster, think about how the approach aligns to the key criteria that the group identified.
Break
Select Audit Tool

- What criteria are most important to our organization's vision, mission, and core values?
- What criteria align most closely with the needs and challenges of our local context?
- What criteria are most likely to lead to significant and sustainable change?
- What criteria may be most challenging to implement, and how can we address potential barriers or resistance?
Reflection

What knowledge, skills, and competencies do you believe will be essential for conducting a curriculum audit based on the selected rubric?
Evaluation

Rate the professional learning session by providing honest feedback about what worked and what did not work during the session today. Please be specific with feedback so that we can act on feedback to create an even better experience the next time we are together.
Next Steps
Appendix 12: Asynchronous Model for Module 3

Course Summary

The process of conducting a curriculum audit helps us ensure that our curriculum provides all students with the opportunity to thrive and succeed academically, socially, and personally, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender identity, ability status, socioeconomic status, linguistic background, geography, or life circumstances. In this course, we examine different curriculum audit rubrics and select the one that aligns with our vision for equity.

Agenda

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Agenda Items</th>
<th>Outcome(s)</th>
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<td>Showing Up and Belonging</td>
<td>Community Agreements</td>
<td>Use Community Agreements during the Curriculum Audit process.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Identify Wheel</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Identity and Curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Driving Equity</td>
<td>Words Matter: What is Equity?</td>
<td>Explain the purpose and process of conducting a curriculum equity audit.</td>
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<td>Equity and HQIM</td>
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<td>(CCAP) Comprehensive Curriculum Audit Process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data Story</td>
<td>Courageous Conversations</td>
<td>Use data, scenarios, and personal experiences to engage in courageous</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What does the data say?</td>
<td>conversations about equity.</td>
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<td>Stakeholders</td>
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<td>Where am I?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goldilocks</td>
<td>Equity Audit: What and Why?</td>
<td>Use a rubric to conduct a curriculum equity audit.</td>
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<td>Approaches to the Equity Audit</td>
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