

**PALO ALTO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
MINORITY ACHIEVEMENT AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
REPORT TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
May 26, 2015**

*"Sometimes you have to like speak a little louder so they can hear you, and it shouldn't be like that." - Latina sophomore, Gunn High School*

*"When I walk into class, I am one of the few black students and people immediately assumed that I am struggling or that I do not get it... I began to feel like I was less smart so I did not have to try." - African American student, Palo Alto High School*

*"If I had known then what I know now, I wouldn't have moved to Palo Alto; I would have moved somewhere else. It was unfair to them. It made them stronger, but it came at a cost". - African American parent*

*"Relationships are very important to us and we really want to have better connections and champions at school." - Latino parent*

*"The commitment and dedication of this committee was awe-inspiring, the vision that the committee was able to articulate through their discussions, hard work and research has the potential to not only impact the students and families that this committee was tasked to serve, but will also positively impact all students and families in the PAUSD". - Parent from El Carmelo Elementary and Community Observer at MATD meetings*

By many metrics, students in the Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD) are a phenomenal and thriving group of children. They volunteer their time through youth community organizations, are active in extracurricular activities and sports, and are high scorers on state and national standardized tests. Our students score, on average, in the fifth percentile of the country on national exams; 85% of the students in the district attend four-year universities. These numbers, however, belie another reality: the stark disparity in academic achievement between groups defined by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. At an aggregate level, White and Asian students score higher than Black, Latino, and Pacific Islander students, and students from well-resourced family backgrounds score higher than those from low-resourced backgrounds. For example, most recent SAT results show a gap of 200 points between students from

families with incomes greater than \$200K and less than \$100 K and combined (CR+M+W) SAT scores of under-represented minority students are about 300 points lower than those of their peers.

The achievement gap by socioeconomic status is largely an issue of access to academic and extracurricular resources; improving access to enrichment opportunities and supportive PAUSD staff should begin to reduce this gap. The disparity that exists by race and ethnicity appears to stem from another source- *this gap in achievement remains even among students of color from high-resourced, highly educated backgrounds*. This implies that forces other than access to educational and cultural capital are at play for students of color, and these factors are undermining their potential.

This appears to be a tale of two cities: a Palo Alto for a high-achieving majority of students, with access to enrichment opportunities and high expectations, and a Palo Alto in which access and expectations for students of color and students from low-resourced backgrounds are limited.

This report is the product of six months of careful examination of the root causes and consequences of these disparities; it details recommendations for attenuating this gap in access, opportunity, and achievement among our children. We believe strongly that implementing these recommendations will allow students from underrepresented groups to have the requisite interpersonal and institutional scaffolding to fully support their growth and development, and to mirror the experience of their peers.

### **Superintendent Initiative**

PAUSD has acknowledged that an achievement gap exists for students of color and for socio-economically disadvantaged youth. Evidence for the achievement gap is based primarily on standardized test results from the School Accountability Report Card (SARC) and from successful completion of A-G courses. The District embarked on a new effort to address the issue by creating a Minority Achievement and Talent Development Advisory Committee (“MATD Task Force”) led by Superintendent Glenn “Max” McGee and co-chaired by Judy Argumedo and Avani Patel. Facilitators Paul Cello and Cherine Badawi ran meetings and worked with the co-chairs and Process Design subcommittee member Jeffrey Gielow to develop agendas, plan the meetings, maintain civil discussion, and keep the process moving to achieve the goals.

The charge of the Task Force was to prepare a set of strategic, evidence-based recommendations that will enable the PAUSD community to ensure that underrepresented minority students and students from lower-resourced backgrounds have the necessary opportunities, conditions, and supports to succeed, and to realize and maximize their full intellectual, creative, and social potential.

Community interest in membership on the Task Force was strong and inspiring. Dr. McGee reviewed the many qualified candidates and chose a cross-section of interested and knowledgeable stakeholders. He then worked closely with his new committee members to identify critical obstacles and challenges, research successful practices in other districts, and develop a set of recommendations to eliminate the achievement gap in PAUSD.

### **Minority and Talent Development Task Force Members (MATD)**

Kathryn Bimpson - Principal, Hoover Elementary School  
Kimberly A. Bomar - Parent; Co-Chair Parent Advocates for Student Success (PASS)  
Sheena Chin - Chair, Library Advisory Commission, City of Palo Alto  
Gina Dalma - Director of Grantmaking, Silicon Valley Community Foundation  
Kim Diorio - Principal, Palo Alto High School  
Arcia Dorosti, District Teacher on Special Assignment  
Adriana Flores-Ragade - Parent Volunteer; Univision Communications, Inc.  
Jeff Gielow - School Counselor, Jordan Middle School; PAUSD Director, AVID  
Julie Griffin - Parent; Teacher Librarian, Juana Briones Elementary School  
April L. House - Parent  
Judy Jaramillo Argumedo - PAUSD Coordinator, Educational Services  
Sharon Johnson - Principal, Aspire East Palo Alto Charter School  
Kathy Joki - PAUSD Library System Administrator  
Pier Angeli La Place - Principal, Terman Middle School  
Anna Lu - Student, Palo Alto High School  
Dr. Max McGee - Superintendent, Palo Alto Unified School District  
Carmen Munoz - Parent Volunteer, Elementary School, Middle School, High School  
Avani Patel, Ed.D - Local Portfolio Director, Peery Foundation  
Maria Powell – Alumni Parent; Science Teacher, Gunn High School  
Ana Reyes - Education Specialist, Jordan Middle School  
Barbara Sih Klausner - Alumni Parent; Executive Director, DreamCatchers  
Barbara Stroud, Ph.D - Clinical Child Psychologist  
Teceta Tormala, Ph.D - Parent and Alumna; Professor, Palo Alto University  
Shannon Yang - Student, Gunn High School

Ze'ev Wurman - former Senior Policy Adviser, U.S. Department of Education

### **MATD Process**

Members of the MATD Task Force met 12 times from December 2014 to April 2015. These public meetings allowed any interested member of the community to have the opportunity to work with the committee and share their concerns and ideas. Ten to fifteen community members regularly attended the meetings and participated in a number of discussions, and a reporter was present at every meeting.

The initial phase focused on determining the circumstances and conditions impacting the academic achievement of underrepresented and low-resourced students in our community. Problem clusters were identified based on feedback and expertise from task force members, and subcommittees were formed around these problem clusters. The committee consciously focused on the inclusion of teacher, staff, parent, and most importantly, student voices in the research and deliberation. Starting from the initial stages of the process, committee members consistently noted that PAUSD did not have the necessary tools, systems, or district personnel to monitor student trends, grades, academic careers, and trajectories over time. An early recommendation to improve the data system emerged as an urgent district need, and is mentioned in this section to note the limited available data which the committee analyzed.

A series of focus groups was conducted with parents, students, and teachers (Appendix D). In addition, a district-wide survey was conducted, which received 814 responses from students, parents, faculty, staff, administrators, and community members. Individual interviews with school personnel, families, and staff occurred between February 15 and April 14.

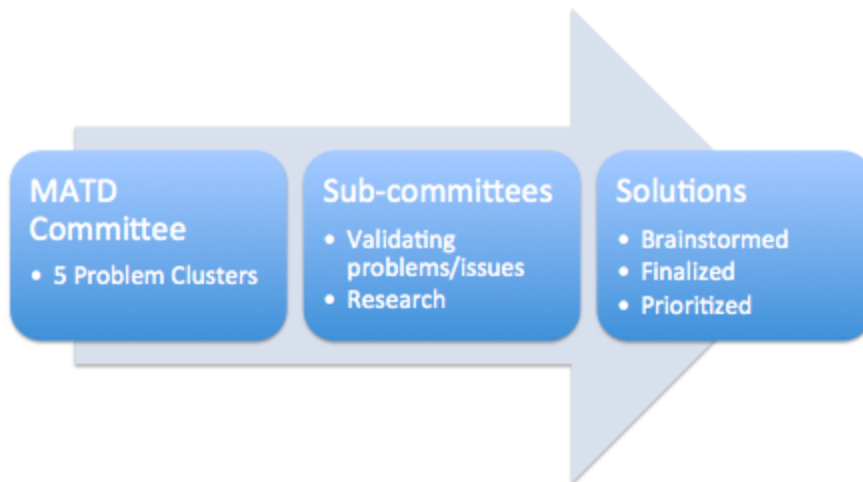
The Data Analysis subcommittee examined academic outcomes in PAUSD by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status. The subcommittee worked within the confines of a data system that was not structured to allow for expansive and detailed analysis of groups in aggregate or trajectories over time. Within these parameters, the members examined the standardized test scores, GPA, and A-G readiness of subsets of students, both low- and well-resourced, and culled data from past PAUSD reports. The research demonstrated lower levels of achievement in those outcomes by socioeconomic status and for Black and Latino students as compared to White and Asian students, and that the achievement gap by ethnicity occurred as robustly among students from highly educated, well-resourced backgrounds. The subcommittee found that level of

proficiency in standardized tests in elementary school predicted A-G readiness in high school -- just under 50% of those who were below basic proficiency met A-G requirements versus over 90% of those who were proficient or advanced. Finally, the research uncovered that deficits in English course requirements are far more prevalent among students not meeting A-G than are deficits in math course requirements.

The Best Practices subcommittee researched best practices in closing the achievement gap in two main ways. First, the subcommittee gathered a bank of peer reviewed articles around the issue. The subcommittee then divided up articles, read and summarized the articles they read. All of the summaries were then reviewed for trends and themes that related to the problem areas identified by the MATD Task Force. The subcommittee also set up site visits with local schools that have excellent reputations in addressing the achievement gap issues. Interview questions around each of the identified problem clusters were generated for administrators and teachers and they were asked during the site visits. The notes from the site visits were then shared and incorporated into the recommendations presented to the full MATD committee. The recommendations generated by the Best Practices subcommittee were a result of both research articles read as well as observations and notes from site visits to school outside of PAUSD.

The District Practices subcommittee identified a number of the key district programs and practices that support historically underrepresented minority students and students from disadvantaged circumstances. The subcommittee generated a list of questions that were then used as the basis for interviews at the District Office, at the elementary, middle and high schools, and with six community-based programs that support PAUSD students' academics. Data collected included: number of students served, student-to-staff ratios, programs and curricular materials employed, duration of program, funding sources, basis for choosing program/practice and nature of implementation, evidence of program results, obstacles to implementation. The overarching theme from these interviews is that the district lacks a systemic approach to selecting, monitoring, evaluating and collaborating around the programs and practices that it employs. The subcommittee's presentation to the MATD committee echoes many of the findings and recommendations in this final report.

## Process Leading to Recommendations



As illustrated in the graph above, the process included multiple phases in which Task Force members divided into subcommittees to focus on specific problem clusters. The subcommittees validated the issues identified within each cluster, and focused on researching potential solutions. Once solutions were determined, the Task Force prioritized them and outlined the final recommendations.

### Writing Process

The Writing Team met at the end of April and the beginning of May to work on collecting and assembling all recommendations from the MATD subcommittees. The recommendations were clustered by similar areas. Each recommendation is marked by the problem cluster subcommittee that put forward the recommendation, and includes both short-term and long-term recommendations. The Writing Team identified eight areas of need: district accountability, professional development, human resources, response to intervention implementation, lining with an emphasis on mathematics, early education, parent engagement, and community partnerships.

## **PROBLEM CLUSTERS**

The MATD Task Force identified the following five problems clusters (PC) related to issues impacting historically underrepresented students (HUR), which is the term we use throughout this report to refer to the collective group of underrepresented minority students (URS), English Language Learners (EL), and students from families of low socioeconomic status (SES) based on eligibility for Free and Reduced Meals:

1. Underlying and unconscious narrative of bias
2. Quality and nature of parent-student-school-community connections
3. Instructional standards and accountability
4. Identification and intervention structures, procedures, and policies
5. Inequitable access and mismatched needs of URS and SES students

These were identified by committee members based on past research, expertise, experience, and feedback from multiple stakeholders.

### **UNDERLYING AND UNCONSCIOUS NARRATIVE OF BIAS (PC1)**

An underlying and likely unconscious “deficit mindset” as opposed to an asset-based mindset results in a narrative of bias associated with the capability and potential of historically underrepresented (HUR) students, informs decision-making at all levels of the system and is leading to inequitable practices and processes. An example of the impact of this problem is that students of color, regardless of socioeconomic status, are disproportionately likely to be diverted into lower lanes, special education, and Alta Vista, when compared with White and Asian students with the same behaviors, performance, and capabilities. Students and teachers in focus groups and formal and informal discussions reported repeatedly that from elementary grades, assumptions had been made about where they lived, about their aptitude and potential, and about their needs. In many cases, the students of color recognized that teachers had a lower standard of excellence for them, and more readily provided praise and recognition for work that students knew was not as good as their peers.

### **QUALITY AND NATURE OF PARENT-STUDENT-SCHOOL-COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS (PC2)**

Underserved and underrepresented students and families lack needed supportive relationships with adults in the school community, and they- and often their teachers- report that they do not feel seen in, valued by, and connected to the school community. In addition, some families feel that PAUSD programs do not promote identity safety, individuality, and equitable access to academic opportunities and resources, and feel

that the connection between them and the school community is not founded on mutual respect. Finally, children who do not see adult models who look like them in the school community feel less connected to the school community and less inspired to achieve.

### **INSTRUCTIONAL STANDARDS AND ACCOUNTABILITY (PC3)**

There is a lack of consistent, systematic instruction, and a lack of accountability for instruction that leads to inconsistent and sometimes suboptimal teaching and intervention programs. The impact is that students may pass from one grade to the next, or one school to the next, without having mastered the essential learning standards along the way. Without building a solid foundation and acquiring the basic skills in early grades, students are not truly given access and opportunity to succeed and qualify for placement in more advanced classes in later grades.

### **IDENTIFICATION AND INTERVENTION STRUCTURES, PROCEDURES AND POLICIES (PC4)**

PAUSD does not have optimal early identification and monitoring structures, procedures, and policies. In addition, the district does not have consistent delivery of and accountability around appropriate and coordinated intervention services for students who are struggling to achieve. This problem exists from the elementary through the high school level. This issue is rooted in and exacerbated by a demonstrated socioeconomic disparity in academic preparation by entering kindergarten students.

### **INEQUITABLE ACCESS AND MISMATCHED NEEDS OF LOW-RESOURCED STUDENTS (PC5)**

There is a mismatch between what families from low-resourced backgrounds can provide for their students to thrive and what most families in PAUSD schools can provide, including access to expert tutoring, ACT, SAT, and AP prep classes, transportation, after- and summer-school programs, extracurricular athletics, arts and academic enrichment experiences, exposure to world travel and a range of professions, and an early knowledge about colleges. The impact is that less resourced families cannot provide their children with the advantages that more resourced families can, which can result in students falling behind and feeling marginalized. This problem is exacerbated over time.



## **Recommendations**

### **Short-Term Strategies**

#### ***I. District Accountability***

We believe that a systemic infrastructure that maintains a focus on steadily increasing equity of access to opportunities, experiences, partnerships, programs and services that in turn will measurably improve the academic achievement of HUR students and enable them to participate fully in PAUSD's robust curriculum, including advanced classes and enrichment experiences. To accomplish this, personnel should be hired and accountability procedures and policies put into place to monitor HUR student academic performance at site and district-levels as well as to address experiences of interpersonal bias or other matters that impact HUR students' social, emotional and mental well-being with respect and attentiveness.

1. Create and hire an Equity Administrator position at the district to implement MATD recommendations. To be effective, the administrator would need to have support in creating an administrative liaison at each site to ensure accountability. The following recommendations would fall under the job description of the Equity Administrator.

- A. Create a District Equity Plan that articulates the district's vision for equity and inclusion, with accountability measures. (PC 1)
- B. Establish a district Equity Team that is charged with implementing and furthering the Equity Plan, with representation from each school site. (PC1)
- C. Monitor compliance at each site, including formalized accountability requiring a Single Plan for Student Achievement goal of increased equity practices, annual goals for implementation of universal screenings, and the establishment of research-based interventions at the site and district level. (PC 1, PC 3)
- D. Create a bi-annual process to solicit input and feedback from HUR students and parents. (PC 1)
- E. Train equity-focused staff to address the disparities in PAUSD between HUR and non-HUR students in access to materials, enrichment opportunities, and ease of navigating the PAUSD system. (PC1, PC5)

2. Acquire the necessary tools and systems to effectively survey and monitor the experience of HUR students. The existing Director of Data, Research and Assessment would work in collaboration with the equity administrator on the following recommendations.

- A. Implement a user-friendly data system to allow parents and staff to track the progress of individual students, and the district to track the progress of students in disaggregated groups. (PC 5)
  - B. Commission a longitudinal study to analyze the impact of laning on HUR students and their peers. (PC 5)
- 3. Ensure that the school level administrators and the Uniform Complaint and Procedure Office works with the Equity Administrator so all students and families understand the process to report to experiences of bias and discrimination.
  - A. Create a consistent, transparent process for resolution of discrimination or equity-related concerns. (PC 1)
- 4. Continue the Minority Achievement and Talent Development Advisory Committee as a standing district committee to strengthen the Talent Development recommendations.
- 5. Create an enrollment plan for Voluntary Transfer Program students. They would be placed with targeted schools in each cluster; North, South and West. The targeted sites would receive extra funding for bus duty and professional development on how to create Identity Safe classrooms. This would help lower racial isolation of Voluntary Transfer Students.

## ***II. Professional Development***

We believe in the continual development of PAUSD staff- administrators, certificated, and classified staff- to better understand the ways in which unconscious and unintended bias affects everyone, and can have inadvertent impacts on attitudes and behavior.

- 1. PAUSD will provide ongoing administrator, certificated, and classified training to support the Equity Plan. Staff would cycle through training every 4-6 years. The district would also provide training opportunities to administrators on how to address issues or complaints. This would be a requirement for continued employment for all staff. Within this context, the district would gather information to provide California Teacher Association-approved unconscious bias training for all staff at no cost (other than for substitute teachers) to PAUSD. (PC 1 , PC 5)
- 2. Include the voices of HUR parents and students in teacher trainings and professional development. (PC 5)

### ***III. Human Resources***

We believe that all students are best served by a staff that reflects the demographics of the PAUSD student body and the equity-minded ideology of the district.

1. PAUSD will begin a process to promote the active recruitment and retention of a diverse and high caliber staff at all levels.
  - A. Increase of recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion of qualified culturally responsive staff (teachers, specialists, site and district administrators, and others) from HUR backgrounds.
  - B. The district leadership will review hiring practices and build a protocol for potential staff that measures applicants' views about equity and prior experiences with a diverse student body . The leadership will also review all current recruitment and hiring practices for indications of unintentional or intentional bias or exclusionary practices. (PC 1, PC 2, PC 5)
  - C. Community partners that represent diverse groups will serve on screening and or/hiring committees. (PC 1)

### ***IV. Response to Intervention (Rtl)***

Research and practice support the fact that early assessment and intervention can mitigate underperformance in elementary school years and improve the trajectory of student success in more challenging classes later in school. This can be accomplished through close adherence to the existing Response to Intervention model, and with the supplement of academic screening in grades K-5.

1. The data presented to the Task Force illustrated an opportunity to prevent the underachievement of underrepresented students through early intervention. An important recommendation was to implement with greater fidelity a Response to Intervention model. The model would consist of the following recommendations to be district wide, at all levels.
  - A. Establish Intervention Specialist support at all schools (pilot prior to full implementation for all schools). (PC 4)
  - B. Institute universal literacy screening at elementary grades K through 2, universal academic screening in mathematics for grades K-2, and targeted diagnostic screening in reading and mathematics in grades 3-5 as necessary. (PC 3, PC 4)
  - C. Create mandated trainings on data-directed instruction and research-based interventions. (PC 3)

- D. Following an independent audit of the district's intervention programs, adopt specific research-based interventions mandated by district and monitored by administration. (PC3) In the interim assure students in grades K-3 have access to expert tutoring on school sites.
- E. Formalize Tier I and Tier II interventions, and replicate the most effective. Evaluate current AVID program to determine effectiveness and possible expansion to all schools. (PC 3, PC 4)
- F. Enhance and increase summer school to mitigate learning loss and allow for increased enrichment opportunities. (PC 5)
- G. Provide enhanced after school opportunities for HUR students with enrichment embedded in programs, and with collaboration of community partners. (PC 1, PC 4, and PC 5))

### ***V. Laning***

We believe that the knowledge relevant to the choices for and impact of laning in mathematics and English courses should be universally understood by all students and families preparing to attend secondary schools in PAUSD.

1. Laning in PAUSD- specifically in mathematics- has created a significant divide among students. For most underrepresented students, seventh-grade mathematics lane placement, which is determined by sixth-grade teachers on a district nine-point rubric and in-house placement test, restricts the opportunity to take higher level classes or even A/B Calculus in high school. In other words, students are disproportionately underrepresented in the more challenging high classes because of seventh grade lane placement. This seems to occur for two reasons. First, teachers report HUR students do not have the foundational concepts or skills to succeed in middle school pre-algebra courses or to master eighth grade algebra. Consequently, students need significant additional instructional time, which generally does not exist during the busy school day. A second reason is that students whose parents know the complex and subjective measures of placement are better prepared to enter lanes that become college pathways for them, while those whose parents do not know are not entering in or succeeding in these pathways at a proportional rate. To create equitable outcomes for underrepresented students, the district will guarantee transparent and objective written policies and practices- with measures and criteria that are standardized across sites- for student placement in laned content classes. The District will set clear goals to articulate, translate, and disseminate student-impacting policies, procedures, and practices to all families. This includes the criteria for, and impact of, placement into specific math and English courses. (PC 1, PC 5)

- A. Ensure transparent, translated, consistent, and clear written waiver protocols that are widely, frequently and effectively communicated to all staff and parents so that HUR parents in particular fully understand their options. Provide parent education and clear information about placement options, the criteria used for placement into mathematics and English courses, and the long-term implications of enrollment in specific courses. (PC 1, PC 5)
- B. Actively identify and regularly monitor “cusp” students and provide academic support, expert tutoring, and guidance counseling to “up-lane” for opportunity and success. (PC 1)
- C. Establish interventions and opportunities in mathematics for HUR students at the middle school level that will enable them to be prepared to succeed in “A track” mathematics in high school. (PC 4)

### ***VI. Early Education***

We believe that a strong foundation in early education (pre-K and K) will allow all students to be well-prepared to thrive socio-emotionally and academically in elementary school and beyond.

1. Early education rose as a theme throughout the MATD process. Currently PAUSD does not offer full day kindergarten, but does have extended day for all students two days a week. To be able to strengthen skills and learning opportunities for underrepresented students, full day or extended day kindergarten is strongly recommended for students who are socially and emotionally developmentally ready to learn but do not have the foundational skills and/or vocabulary or language development. (PC 3, PC 4, PC 5).

### ***VII. Parent Engagement***

We believe that the active recruitment of all students in enrichment programs, and inclusion of all families into various systems in place at the site and district level, will allow families an equal opportunity to feel connected to, boosted by, and valued by the district.

1. Create Parent Advocate/Liaison position at the district level to supervise and monitor parent advocate and liaisons at the site level. The parent liaison at the site level will serve each school by increasing outreach to HUR families and creating opportunities for involvement. Collaborate with community-based parent groups that currently serve HUR families to improve parent engagement with the district.

- A. Provide a bridge for HUR parents to the PTA and promote the formation of PTA affinity groups. (PC 5, PC 2)

- B. Encourage schools or school-based parent groups to articulate and share resources with HUR parents. (PC 2)
- C. Implement parent empowerment trainings, with an asset-based approach to parents as partners, so that parents can better understand and navigate the PAUSD system. A bilateral and reciprocal approach will allow for meaningful input from families. (PC 5)
- D. Ensure that enrichment programs outreach actively to -HUR families and that information about enrichment programs and scholarship opportunities are available to HUR families. (PC 5)

2. Provide all school forms, flyers, and signs in the languages most common in the district. (PC 2)

### ***VIII. Partnerships***

We believe that partnerships with community organizations can serve to augment the development of all children in the PAUSD system.

1. Partnerships with community-based programs have been instrumental in creating opportunities for HUR students, expanding and nurturing those relationships is essential for the MATD recommendations to be successful. Community partners including EPATT, DreamCatchers, Foundation for a College Education, College Track, RISE and Palantir and many others spark innovation and exciting opportunities for students through tutoring, extracurricular activities, mentoring, and summer programs. (PC 4)

### **Data/Rationale**

#### ***Recommendation I (District Accountability)***

Research conducted on best-practices in school districts pointed to the need for a person at the district level in charge of equity and access programs, which led to a recommendation to hire a PAUSD Equity Director. As a local example, San Francisco Unified School District has a fully staffed office of Equity and Charter Schools with the purpose of “addressing equity issues throughout the district with the goal of becoming a school district free of institutional bias” (SFUSD webpage). In other districts, like Davenport SD in Iowa, the Director of Equity and Student support focused more on the implementation of policies, procedures, compliance, dissemination of information and monitoring. The MATD committee determined that having a high-level Equity Officer focusing on fully developing and implementing an equity plan, which integrates MATD’s recommendations, would help close the achievement and access gap at PAUSD.

## **Recommendation II (Professional Development)**

Throughout the conversations with students and parents they often mentioned that others, especially teachers, had lower expectations for students of color or adhered to stereotypes that prevented them from changing the narrative for these students. These narratives included using justifications why the students performed poorly or why they could not possibly succeed given all the challenges they and their families faced. Coincidentally, in a recent Stanford University report, “Two Strikes: Race and the Disciplining of Students” published in the Psychological Science Journal, Stanford Psychology Professor Jennifer Eberhardt and Psychology Graduate student Jason Okonufua found that “race not only can influence how perceivers interpret a specific behavior, but also can enhance perceivers’ detection of behavioral patterns across time”. Although the Stanford study focused on discipline cases, one of the recommendations from MATD Task Force makes a case to increase professional development to fight stereotypes or unconscious bias and provide staff and faculty with tools, language, and suggested behavior that will allow them to use an asset-based approach when working with HUR and low-resourced students and their families. This type of approach was also cited by Abbate-Vaughn, Frechon, and Wright (2015) as a way of developing “counter narratives” to combat the stereotypes for these students and families.

## **Recommendation III (Human Resources)**

It is imperative to have a culturally competent staff, but it is even more pressing in our district to have educators and staff who reflect experiences similar to those of students of color. During a conversation with a high school student, she said that “diversity is only valued during holidays” and in her whole educational journey in our schools, she “does not remember ever having a black male teacher”. The lack of role models for these students is evident when you look at the data below, which show that in the whole PAUSD district there were only 12 Black and 39 Latino teachers employed. The age-old argument of not being able to find qualified applicants needs to be thrown out the window. In fact, when it comes to potential Latino applicants, the number of Hispanic college graduates has increased thus increasing the availability of potential applicants. The numbers below point to the need to prioritize and revamp the strategies for recruiting and hiring a more diverse workforce.

## Comparisons of Student and Teacher Ethnicities PAUSD

Ethnicity	Student population	Percentage of student population	Teacher population	Percentage of teacher population
Total Student Population	12466	n/a	724	n/a
White	5469	43%	583	80%
Asian	4221	33%	81	11%
Pacific Islander	85	Less than 1%	1	Less than 1%
Latino	1395	12%	39	5%
African American	285	2.5%	12	1.6%
Two or more races/other	1011	8%	8	Less than 1%

\*based on 12/13 dataquest reports

### Recommendation IV (Response to Intervention)

Fuchs & Fuchs (2006) define RTI as a system that “integrates increasingly intensive instruction and, at each layer, employs assessment to identify students who are inadequately responsive” (p.621). PAUSD has been using RTI as a framework for school sites and the district to continuously evaluate students in need of support and determine ways to support them. Since students learn differently, RTI allows for academic intervention designed to help students who are struggling academically which in many cases in our district these tend to be HUR students.

This recommendation evolved from the interviews and school site visits conducted by the Best Practices subcommittee in which school leaders were asked about programs and intervention systems that could positively impact the achievement gap. RTI staffing is limited and at this point only focusing on elementary school, so the MATD Task Force recommends an expansion of RTI in earlier grades (as early as Young 5s), middle and high school. MATD also calls for an alignment of RTI with the Common Core State Standards to potentially utilize some of the interim assessments to plan interventions.



### **Recommendation V (Laning)**

Palo Alto is part of the world-renowned Silicon Valley. Some of the most successful technology and innovative companies have humble beginnings in garages in our city. Interestingly, some key skills that the founders had in common were strong backgrounds in math and science. Therefore, it is ironic that in the hub of technology where 21st century skills are often overly-emphasized, the findings from a report commissioned by the Noyce Foundation (Waterman, 2010) still rings true in our schools.

The Noyce Foundation's report found that ethnic minorities were being held back or misplaced in math classes thus preventing them from completing advanced math courses and developing the necessary skills to pursue careers in STEM. Findings from the *Pathways Report: Dead ends and wrong turns on the path through algebra* along with concerns about mismatch in mathematics led to the introduction SB 359 better known as the California Mathematics Placement Act of 2015 in February. The bill tries to mitigate for mismatched placement and the tenets of this bill could support the mismatch currently happening in PAUSD schools (Appendix E). Parents and MATD committee members were concerned about the lack of transparency and information in what is known in Palo Alto as "laning". The fact that most upper level lanes lack HUR student representation along with testimonials from parents whose children have been "laned down" led to the development of this recommendation.

### **Recommendation VI (Early Education)**

MATD believes that early intervention and early education are key to closing the achievement gap. In a 2013 policy report commissioned by the National Institute for Early Education Research, Barnett (2013) found that "pre-K does produce substantial long-term gains, particularly when programs are properly designed"(p.2). In the PAUSD, most students have had a pre-K experience, however those that have not, tend to come from HUR and lower-resourced households. To mitigate this disadvantage, the district offers Springboard to Kindergarten which is one semester of transitional kinder offered to children who lack a pre-K experience. Not all students enroll in Springboard and this leads to the enrollment in Kinder of low resourced students who are already behind academically and socially by the time they enter kindergarten.

This predicament along with the fact that PAUSD is a high-achieving district will more than likely continue to leave HUR students behind unless interventions are put in place in earlier grades. According to research by the National Education Association (2006), full day kindergarten can help close the achievement gap because:

- “Longitudinal data demonstrate that children in full-day classes show greater reading and mathematics achievement gains than those in half-day classes”. (p.4)
- “Full-day kindergarten can produce long-term educational gains, especially for low-income and minority students.” (p.4)
- “A full day of learning offers several social, emotional and intellectual benefits to kindergarteners. They have more time to focus on activities, to reflect on activities and to transition between activities.” (p.5)

Given the benefits that full-day kinder could have for HUR students, MATD recommends a full-day kinder for HUR students – and others which diagnostic observations and assessments reveal need additional supports -- with an emphasis on academic enrichment activities and curriculum during the extended time.

### **Recommendation VII (Parent Engagement)**

Studies have shown that parental engagement tends to have a positive impact on the academic performance of students (NEA, 2011). PAUSD has an engaged community of parents and partners who work with teachers, administrators and staff to improve our schools. This was clearly evident by the recent passage of Proposition A in which voters overwhelmingly supported a tax initiative to continue to provide resources to our schools. However, interviews and conversations with parents and teachers brought to light some barriers that prevent parents of HUR students from getting involved. Interestingly, some of the reasons identified by the MATD Task Force were the same as those cited in an NEA (2011) report and include “time constraints, child care needs, transportation problems, language differences, lack of knowledge and understanding of how U.S. schools work, and varying cultural beliefs about the role of families in the schooling of children” (p. 6-3).

These parents have the same aspirations for their children as those from high SES families but additional support from the district could have a significant impact on their engagement and connectedness. A recommendation to create a Parent Engagement office similar to Los Angeles Unified’s Parent Engagement and Student Services office emerged during the deliberations. Some of the committee members shared their challenges in navigating PAUSD and most hold advanced degrees. The community-based programs identified by the District Practices subcommittee all provide additional access to HUR/low-SES families, and currently work with the limited district staff responsible for parent engagement. MATD suggests having parent engagement liaisons and staff who are culturally sensitive, bilingual and qualified to implement programs to increase the engagement of parents from HUR communities.

### **Recommendation VIII (Partnerships)**

Community partnerships are also cited as a strategy to close the achievement gap (NEA 2011). There are a number of community-based after-school and summer academic programs (referred to collectively in the literature as “out-of-school time” or OST programs) that together serve over 200 students and have plans to increase their support of students in our district. Researchers emphasize “the importance for OST programs to connect with school and classroom activities to achieve a shared mission of improving academic performance” (Beckett et al). In our own backyard DreamCatchers and EPATT have a record of success in working with PAUSD students to improve achievement in mathematics and other areas, and College Track and Foundation for College Education have helped several HUR students become “college ready” and successfully prepare for and navigate the college application and admissions process. Recently, Palantir has become a valued partner in providing computer coding classes and mentors to HUR students in their home office. In addition to improving academic performance, every one of these OST organizations has contributed mightily to building students’ self-confidence, resilience, and social, emotional, and mental health and well-being.

In the middle of Silicon Valley, MATD members were surprised to hear from students about their lack of access to computers and printers at home. Two middle school students shared their frustration with getting refurbished laptops that are often slow or stop working randomly. In this conversation from HUR students from Jordan Middle School, one of them raised an issue about having to spend their recess or lunch hour waiting for computers and printers in the school lab while their more resourced peers spent time using the computers to play Minecraft. With more homework and online research being assigned by teachers, HUR students are at a disadvantage when it comes to technology access. The time they spend waiting for a computer could be spent getting extra help from teachers, studying with their peers or simply socializing with their peers during their lunch break.

This is why strategic partnerships with businesses in the area could help close the digital divide for PAUSD students. Community partners could potentially supplement enrichment opportunities that many of these students do not have access to like after school tutoring, internships, and extracurricular or summer activities. By strategically and confidentially sharing their needs with our partners, we can mitigate for their lack of resources, exposure or opportunities.

### **Survey Analysis**

In addition to one-to-one interviews and focus groups, a survey was shared from March 5 to March 20, 2015 to capture additional feedback from the community. 868 people completed the survey with the following breakdown in respondents:

N = 868	
Student	393
Teacher	223
Parent	178
Staff/ Administrator	42
Staff/ Classified	24
Community Member	8

The survey aimed to gather additional information about community sentiments, access to services, and expectations in light of perceived differences in treatment of minority students and the general student population. Findings from the survey point to the fact that issues of equity and access are perceived differently by administrators, teachers and parents from underrepresented groups. The survey showed instances in which differences in perception between administrators, teachers, and parents from underrepresented groups may result in challenges to the identification and framing of problems. When asked if there is acceptable accountability for the academic success of students of color, teachers (50%) are more likely than parents from underrepresented groups (30%) to feel that there is acceptable accountability. This difference in perception between teachers and minority parents was similar to what parents of HUR students shared during focus groups.

As for students, there were some differences regarding how students perceived teachers caring about student success. Within the student population, White and Asian students were more likely (63%) than students of color (26%) to feel that teachers sincerely care about the success of children of color. This points to a feeling of alienation and a perceived lack of strong relationships described by HUR students in the focus groups.

Respondents were asked about access to caring adults at school, academic interventions, summer school support, and textbooks and instructional materials. In those areas there was a gap between parents from underrepresented groups- who saw significant obstacles- and district teachers. In several cases district leaders held viewpoints that were more closely aligned with those of the parents, while in others they were alike the teachers.

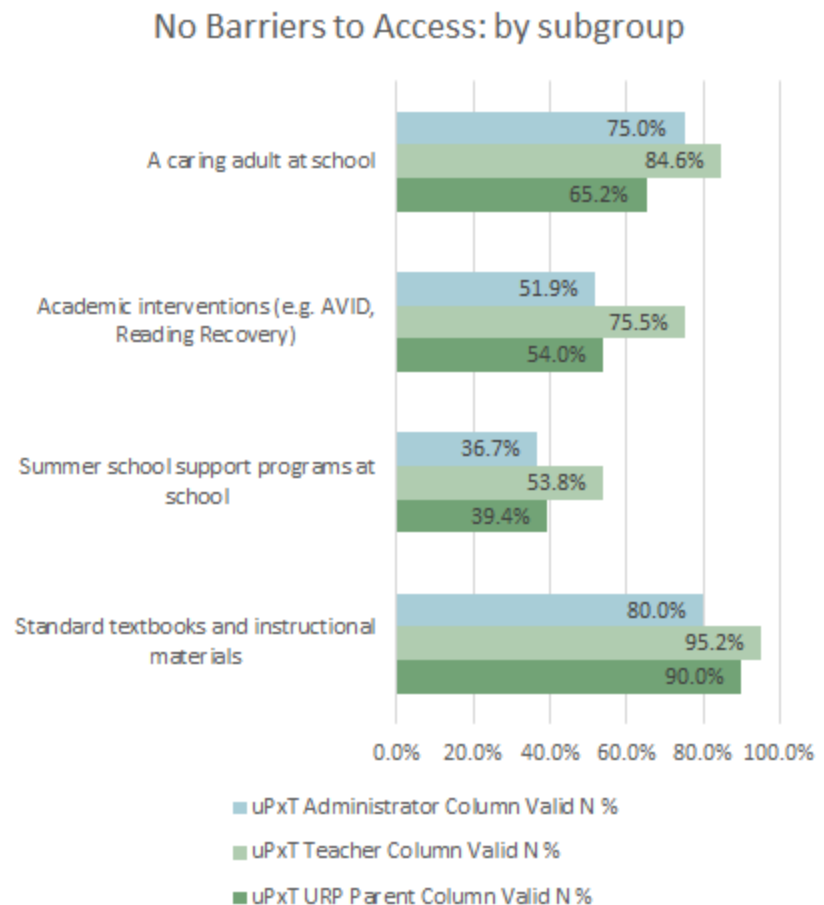
### **Measures of Success Short-Term Strategies**

#### *District Accountability*

1. Equity Plan approved by board with budget for implementation appropriated (Appendix A)
2. Increase in percentage of HUR students at or above state benchmarks in reading and math in elementary.
3. Increase in percentage of HUR students at or above benchmarks and/or taking advanced level courses.
4. Increase in graduation rate for HUR students
5. Increased participation in mainstream clubs, student government
6. Reduction in HUR students below proficient in statewide assessments
7. Reduction in HUR referrals to Alta Vista
8. California Healthy Kids Survey reflects growth for HUR students in connectedness.

#### *Professional Development*

1. First year 25% of PAUSD Staff trained with the PAUSD Equity team. 90% trained in four years. (classified, certificated, administrators)



### *Human Resources*

1. Diverse teaching and administrative staff at all schools that accurately reflect the diversity of school sites.
2. Human Resource Recruitment and Retention plan presented to PAUSD Board of Education.

### *Response to Intervention*

1. All sites have RtI plan that is included in the Single Plan for Student Achievement
2. Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III supports are identified at each site
3. Elementary Universal screenings are implemented in ELA and Math, with benchmarks created. Students not meeting early benchmarks are given support and data shows that HUR students are not disproportionate in achievement.

### *Laning*

1. Proportional placement of HUR students in Math lane A and advanced and honors classes in other subjects.
2. Grades, test scores and other quantitative metrics are not distinguishably different from those of other students.

### *Early Education*

1. Full day kindergarten is afforded to HUR students with significant progress on universal screenings
2. Actively recruit students from HUR backgrounds to PAUSD-provided pre-K programs and services. (PC 5)

### *Parent Engagement*

1. Parent Advocate/Liaison has staff at all sites that meet monthly to plan outreach, classes and create connections with families.
2. Collaboration with Parent Liaison and Elementary RtI TOSAs

### *Partnerships*

1. All community partners have Memo of Understanding with PAUSD. Quarterly meetings with Equity Coordinator are in progress to address areas of innovation, growth and commitments

### **Key Findings from Research**

The MATD task force subcommittees shared key findings from research that validate some of the lived experiences our students shared with the focus group subcommittee. The survey given to staff, students and parents paralleled these findings and guided our recommendations.

According to McKinsey & Company (2009), Black and Latino youth in the United States perform below the international average. Furthermore, they perform almost at the same rate as Black and Latino youth in countries with transitioning economies. This pattern is consistent in PAUSD, one of the best school districts in the state. However, when Black and Latino youth are given equitable opportunities and access, they are able to succeed in academics at high rates comparable to their White counterparts (Steele, 2010).

Some of the committee's recommendations allude to the notion of the need for culturally relevant pedagogy by creating professional development opportunities in which school staff learn to develop a lens of equity and cultural understanding. Receiving this training will hopefully allow for more open classrooms in which students are engaging in more dialogue and that their life experiences are valued.

In Claude Steele's work, he defines the underperformance of many non-majority group members (low SES, students of color, women in the STEM field, etc.) on a perceived "stereotype threat" (Steele & Aronson, 1995). That in fact, in many settings underrepresented populations actually underperform as a result of the stereotype attached to their identity, and therefore underperform, linking this phenomena to largely a societal issue.

The debate of laning and/or tracking has been a contentious one over the years in the field of education and educational research. More recently, there has been a local report on the misplacement of 9th grade students in math classes in Bay Area classrooms (link to full report [here](#)). This shows the staggering reality in what is happening in public schools up and down the peninsula - even students of color who earn the academic merit to be placed in higher laned courses are forced to repeat algebra. The report calls out all the legal obligations districts violate when this happens, including violation of the Equal Protection Clause and the California Education Code. The report suggests, as do our recommendations, for districts to create a transparent, well-communicated process for course placement.

As the authors of the monograph, "The Achievement Trap," note:

*“There are far fewer lower-income students achieving at the highest levels than there should be, they disproportionately fall out of the high-achieving group during elementary and high school, they rarely rise into the ranks of high achievers during those periods, and, perhaps most disturbingly, far too few ever graduate from college or go on to graduate school ... Unless something is done, many more of America’s brightest lower-income students will meet this same educational fate, robbing them of opportunity and our nation of a valuable resource.”*

Some key findings from this report include:

- In elementary and high school, lower-income students neither maintain their status as high achievers nor rise into the ranks of high achievers as frequently as higher-income students.
- Among those not in the top academic quartile in first grade, children from families in the upper income half are more than twice as likely as those from lower-income families to rise into the top academic quartile by fifth grade. The same is true between eighth and twelfth grades.

High-achieving, lower-income students are:

- Less likely to graduate from college than their higher-income peers
- Less likely to attend the most selective colleges
- More likely to attend the least selective colleges
- Less likely to graduate when they attend the least selective
- Much less likely to receive a graduate degree than high-achieving students from the top income half.

When educators, policy, and structure are developed and equipped to deliver empowering education (Shor, 1992) by exhibiting authentic care (Valenzuela, 1999), allowing ample space for student dialogue (Darder, 1997; Delpit, 1995), and delivering a critical pedagogy (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire 2000), Black and Latino youth can utilize their education to make transformative change in their life and community.



## **Long-Term Goals**

The MATD Task Force worked on creating long-term goals for future committees that can be expanded and revised.

### ***District Accountability***

- Create greater opportunities for positive interactions between teachers and URS students. (PC 1)
- Update the PARCS (Palo Alto Reality Check) Survey to include questions on equity, diversity and inclusion. (PC 1)
- Enhance the district's websites and published materials to be more inclusive, representative and informative about the diversity in our schools, and provide information in several languages. (PC 1)
- Increase the number of school counselors in elementary and secondary school, to provide students with supportive adults who establish early identification and intervention procedure, and maintain positive, responsive communication with families. (PC 5)

### ***Professional Development***

- Promote culturally responsive curriculum/materials and teaching practices, such as understanding and neutralizing stereotype threat and ethnic studies. (PC 1)
- Pilot HUR-relevant curriculum and classes (e.g., ethnic studies) at all secondary sites to empower and build confidence amongst HUR students and increase respect and understanding among all students. (PC 5)
- Develop leadership opportunities for HUR groups of students (PC 5)

### ***Human Resources***

- Assure that each school has faculty members from diverse racial-ethnic backgrounds and continuously evaluate HR processes to ensure it is free from unintended and unconscious bias.
- Increase staffing for academic in-school and after school support by hiring and recruiting culturally sensitive staff. (PC 5)

### ***Response to Intervention (RtI)***

- Adoption of Tier 1 curricula across district in English Language Arts and Writing. (PC 3)

- Accountability structures for implementation district mandated Tier 1 curricula with fidelity. (PC 3)
- Strong Secondary Tier 1 instruction. (PC 3)
- Summer school (ensuring that all necessary courses are offered and all students can access programs). (PC 3)
- Strengthen formal structures for faculty collaboration, across grade levels, sites, and district. (PC 3)
- Norming of administration and scoring of all existing benchmark assessments. (PC 3)
- Establish clear benchmarks for success of all students to be college-, career-, and life-ready. Use data system to monitor students that fall off track, and establish a plan in partnership with families and staff to provide focused intervention. (PC 5)
- Establish curriculum in elementary grades to develop an equity and social justice mindset for all students. (PC 5)
- Create a library of fiction and nonfiction literature and online resources for teachers to implement cultural competency measures in classrooms. (PC 1)

### ***Parent Engagement***

- Create a fully staffed Parent Engagement Office, with a focus on HUR parents. (PC 5)
- Create a parent empowerment program to help parents navigate school system (PC 2)

### ***Partnerships***

- Develop stronger partnerships with local community organizations that promote equity and provide academic support for HUR students. (PC 1)
- Leverage partnerships with corporate/private sector, to provide resources such as mentoring, tutoring, donations, trainings, and access to technology. (PC 5)

### **Measures of Success Long Term Strategies**

1. Diverse teaching staff at all schools
2. Objective measures used for all course placements
3. Strategic plan goals reflect equity as a priority
4. Goals for sites cascading from district equity plan

### **Next Steps**

All members of the Advisory Committee share a sense of urgency to initiate some recommendations during the 2015-16 school year. While it is essential for a formal Equity Plan to be designed, developed and adopted under the leadership of an individual who is responsible for and accountable for assuring that recommendations are implemented with fidelity and outcomes are measured and reported annually, students and parents cannot wait another year for tangible actions. Consequently, the Committee encourages that the Board of Education approve funding for implementation of the following recommendations for the next academic year:

1. Identify and administer a PK-2 diagnostic literacy and mathematics assessment and provide Tier I interventions and ongoing monitoring and intervention as necessary and assure that administrators and faculty have ready access to this data, review it regularly and use it meaningfully.
2. Commission an independent audit of current intervention programs to identify the most cost-effective.
3. Employ an Equity Coordinator to lead the development of the Equity Plan and serve as an ombudsperson for managing issues related to the education and well-being of HUR students and families
4. Launch California Teacher staff development sessions on unconscious bias, with equity trainings for all staff every four to six years.
5. Based on the results of the diagnostic assessment for kindergarten students, provide an additional two days a week of extended or full-day kindergarten.
6. Ensure that extensive summer enrichment and OST after-school programming is available for HUR students.
7. Employ mathematics intervention support personnel for middle schools.
8. Identify and/or hire a Parent Outreach/Support staff.
9. Assure new hirings for teachers and administrators are representative of our district's diverse populations.
10. Create a system for obtaining, analyzing and reporting data necessary to monitor progress and report on results.

11. Strengthen existing community partnerships and foster new ones to encourage innovative supports and enrichment for underrepresented students.
12. Create clear, objective, and well-communicated information about laning decisions and waivers in mathematics in middle school and high school.

### **Conclusion**

Members of the Minority Achievement and Talent Development Advisory Committee brought both presence and purpose to their work. The majority of members attended every single one of the 2.5 hour biweekly meetings and all put additional significant time into subcommittee work between meetings. Their efforts represented both a belief and a hope that their work will make a difference and change the current practices that have led to historically inequitable outcomes for students from underrepresented and under-resourced families. Many of the members shared common experiences but all gained a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the enormous potential of historically underrepresented students. Committee members realize that their efforts, however, will only have the desired impact if all PAUSD employees and affiliated stakeholders share a collective responsibility to close the opportunity gap, strive to improve achievement, and create a welcoming, safe, healthy and appropriately challenging academic environment that promotes excellence and incorporates high expectations and high standards. Committee members also know that success will require a sustained support at all levels of the system - in homes and classrooms as well as offices and the Board room – and that in addition to promising practices, underrepresented students and families will be well-served by policies and a big vision with strategic goals and measurable outcomes. To be sure, other schools and districts have tackled the achievement gap. Some have been successful, but too often the best intentions have not led to tangible change. Palo Alto, however, is not just another community. We are blessed with an array of human and financial resources with broad and deep experience in designing and delivering high impact programs and services that have improved the quality of life. We are confident that this innovative spirit, drive, resilience, and commitment to solving tough problems that is the DNA of our community will result in an improved educational system that will assure every student has the opportunity and access to programs, practices and personnel that will empower every child to attain his or her highest intellectual, creative and social potential.

## **Appendices**

### Appendix A **MATD *Tentative* Budget Estimates**

<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Cost</u>
I. Equity Administrator	\$130,000
I. Recommendations A-F	Embedded in equity administrator position
I. Data Research System and Analyst	\$100,000
I. Transparent process- Coordinator for UCP, 504, Title IX, etc.	\$130,000
II. Equity Training	Approximately \$300/teacher (for substitutes)
II. CTA Training	None
II. Including voices of URM families	Embedded in Equity trainings
III. Hiring and Recruitment	\$50,000
IV. Response to Intervention	Embedded in Chief Academic Officers
IV. Summer Enrichment	\$300,000 + (free summer school must be made available to ALL PAUSD students, not just HUR students)
V. Commissioned studies of interventions and laning	\$50,000
V. Student monitoring (personnel)	\$100,000 (1 for district) to \$300,000 (1 per cluster) to much more if needed
V. Mathematics Interventions at Middle School	\$200,000 (1.5 FTE plus expert tutors)
VI. Early Education	No cost

VII. Parent Liaisons at sites	\$50,000 - \$150,00 depending on stipend
VIII. Partnerships	\$40,000

Appendix B  
MATD Subcommittee Roster

**Best Practices:**

Sharon Johnson  
Shannon Yang,  
Katy Bimpson  
Pier Angeli La Place

**Data Analysis:**

Ze'ev Wurman,  
April House  
Teceta Tormala  
Judy Jaramillo Argumedo

**Qualitative Data Collection:**

Adriana Flores-Ragade  
Carmen Muñoz  
Kim Bomar  
Maria Powell  
Glenn "Max" McGee

**Community and District Resources:**

Barbara Sih Klausner  
Ana Reyes  
Anna Lu  
Julie Griffin  
Kim Diorio  
Shannon Yang  
Sheena Chin

**Process Design Team:**

Jeff Gielow  
Avani Patel

Appendix C  
MATD Solution Affinity Roster

**NARRATIVE OF BIAS-1**

Kim Bomar  
Pier Angeli La Place  
Kim Diorio  
Judy Argumedo  
Avani Patel

**QUALITY AND NATURE OF PARENT-STUDENT-SCHOOL-COMMUNITY  
CONNECTIONS-2**

Barbara Stroud  
Sheena Chin  
Maria Powell  
Gina Dalma  
Shannon Yang  
April House

**INSTRUCTIONAL STANDARDS AND ACCOUNTABILITY-3**

Katy Bimpson  
Carmen Munoz  
Sharon Johnson  
Ana Reyes

**IDENTIFICATION AND INTERVENTION STRUCTURES, PROCEDURES AND  
POLICIES-4**

Arcia Dorosti  
Glenn “Max” McGee  
Julie Griffin  
Kathy Joki  
Ze’ev Wurman  
Barbara Sih Klausner

**INEQUITABLE ACCESS AND MISMATCHED NEEDS OF SES/URM STUDENTS-5**

Jeff Gielow  
Adriana Ragade-Flores  
Teceta Tormala  
Gina Dalma

## Appendix D

Results of the Focus Groups was shared through a Problem Tree Cluster.

# Focus Group Findings from HS Faculty Sessions and Parent Meetings

February 17, 2015

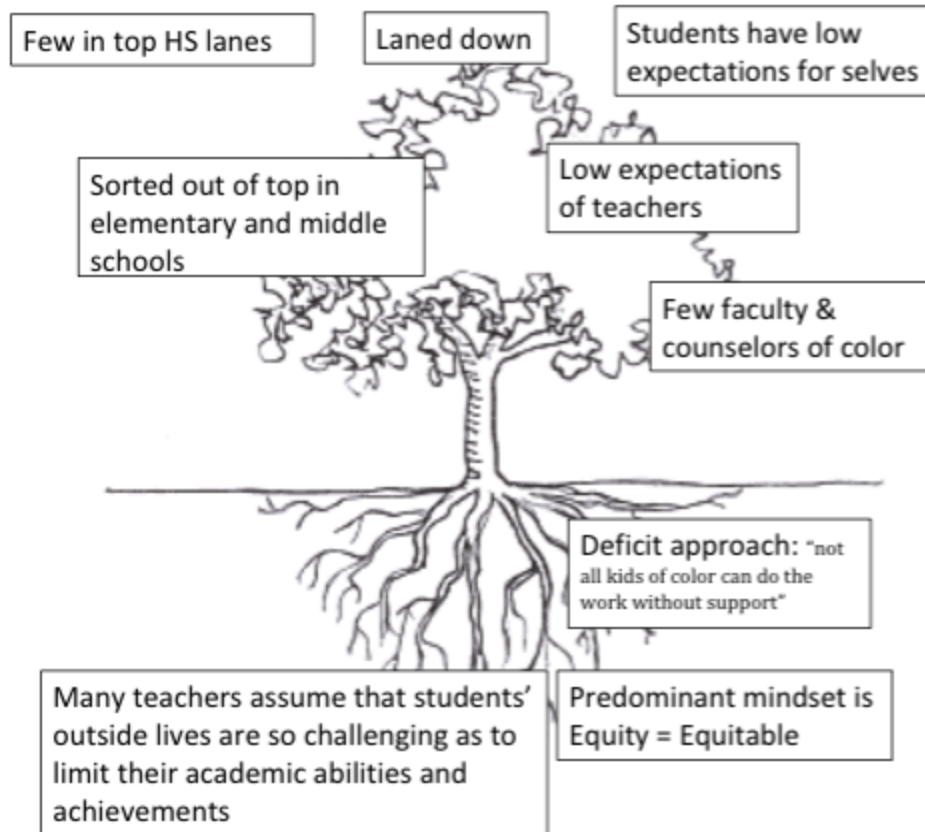


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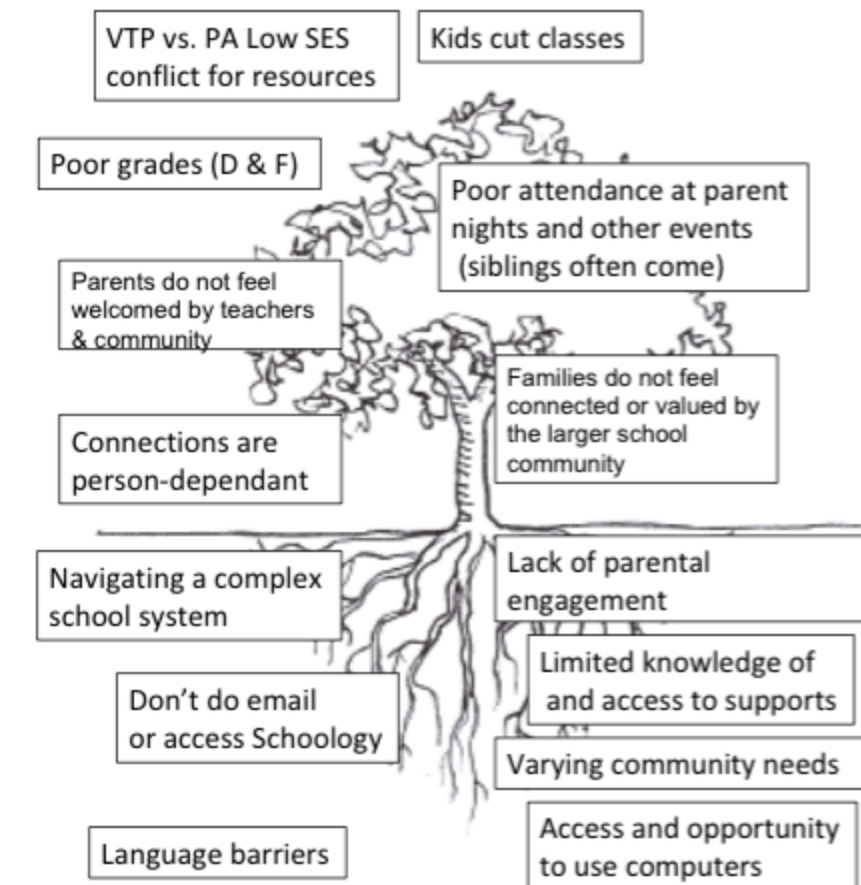
## Problem Tree

- Branches and leaves = observable consequences
- Trunk = problem cluster
- Roots = root causes

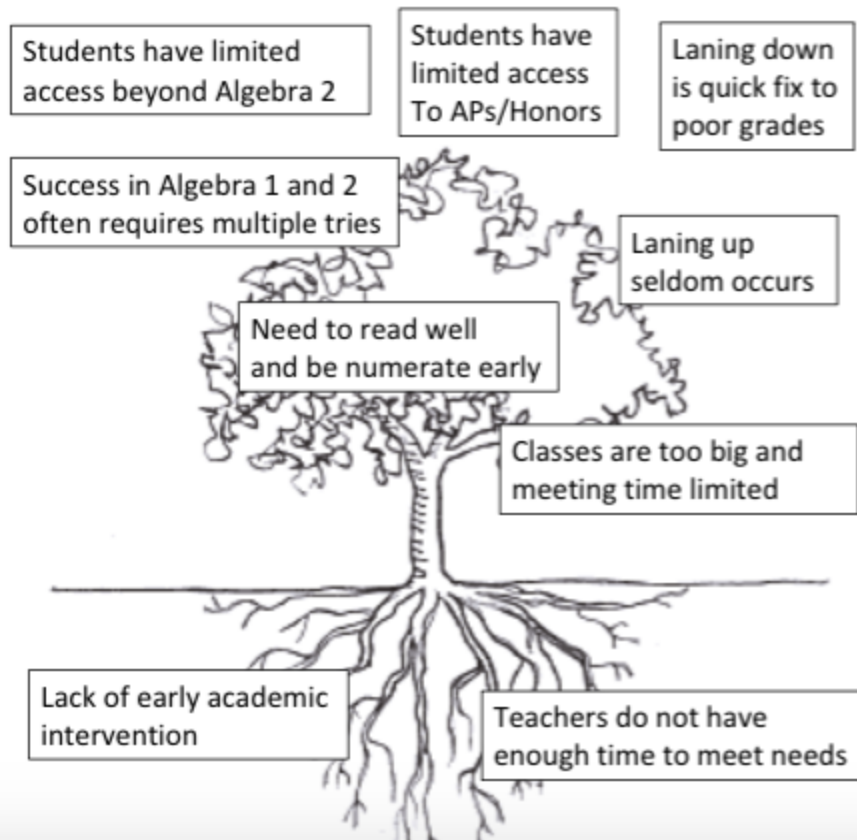
# Cluster One: Narrative of Bias



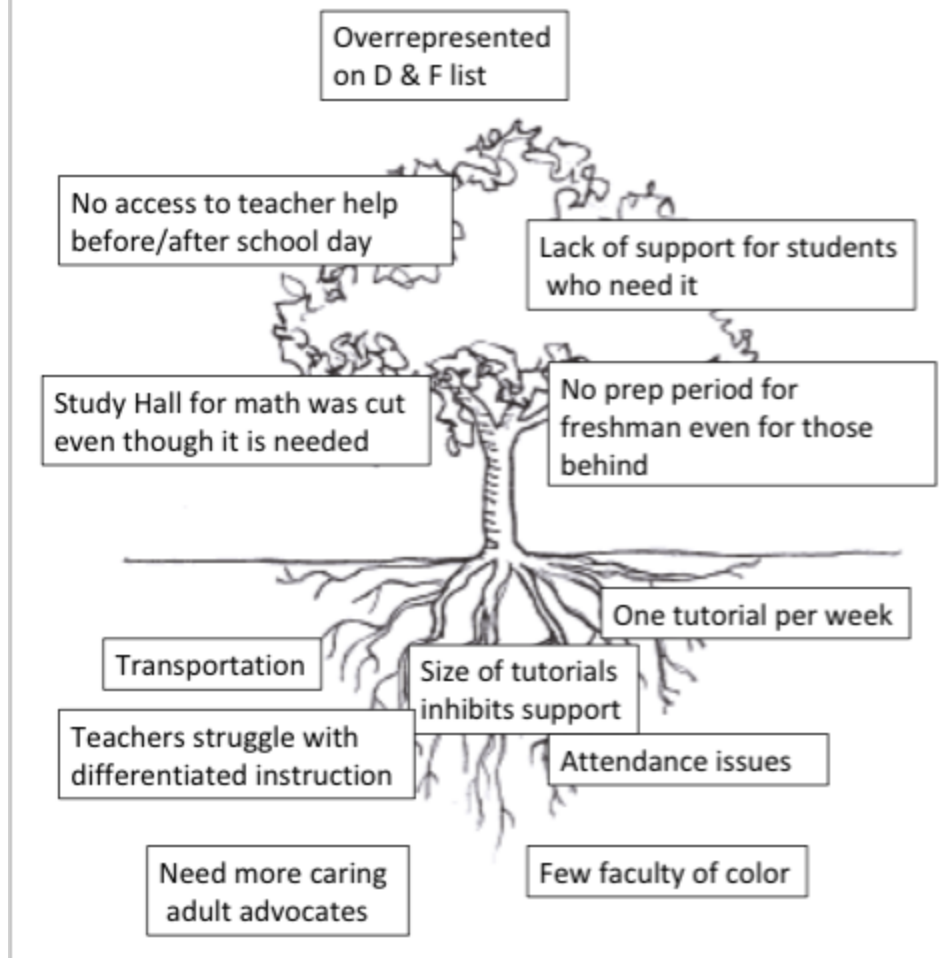
# Cluster Two: Quality of Parent-Student- School- Community Connections



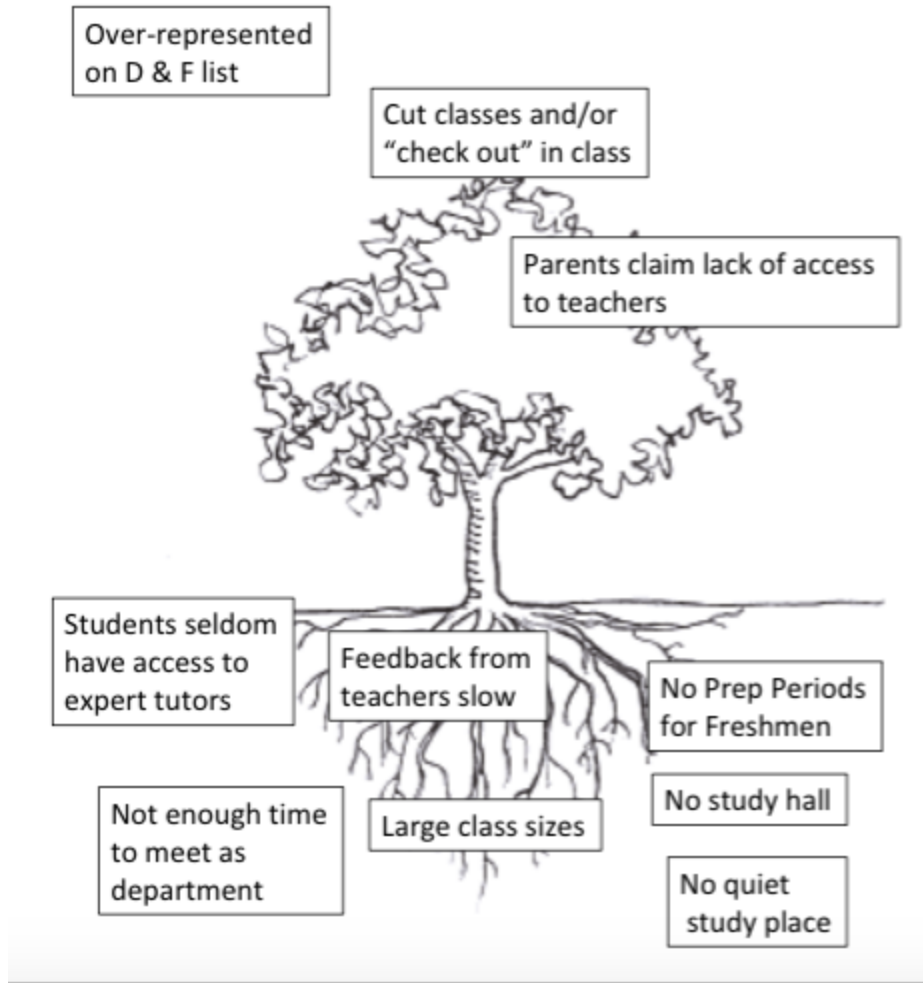
## Cluster Three: Instructional Standards and Accountability



## Cluster Four: Intervention Structures, Procedures, and Policies



## Cluster Five: Inequitable Access and Mismatched Needs



## Appendix E

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

### SECTION 1.

The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Pupil achievement in mathematics is important to prepare pupils for college and their future careers, especially those careers in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

(b) A pupil's 9th grade math course placement is a crucial crossroads for his or her future educational success. Misplacement in the sequence of mathematics courses creates a number of barriers and results in pupils being less competitive for college admissions, including admissions at the California State University and University of California.

(c) The most egregious examples of mathematics misplacement occur with successful pupils and, disproportionately, with successful pupils of color. These successful pupils are achieving a grade of "B" or better, or are testing at proficient or even advanced proficiency on state assessments. Nevertheless, they are held back to repeat 8th grade mathematics coursework rather than advancing to the next course in the recommended mathematics course sequence.

(d) Mathematics misplacement has far-reaching impacts on a pupil's confidence, general knowledge of mathematical concepts, and high school experience, and may also impact the college career opportunities available to the pupil.

(e) New research shows that it is less common for pupils of color, even high-achieving pupils of color, to reach calculus by grade 12 compared to their white and Asian peers.

(f) All pupils, regardless of race or ethnic background, deserve an equal chance to advance in mathematics.

(g) With the shift towards implementation of the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics, it is particularly important for all pupils to have access to high-quality mathematics programs that meet the goals and expectations of these standards.

(h) It is crucial for teachers and guidance personnel to advise pupils and parents on the importance of accurate mathematics course placement and its impact on future college eligibility so pupils may take each course in the mathematics course sequence.

(i) California faces a looming shortage of college-educated workers in an increasingly competitive global economy.

(j) A policy for correct mathematics placement must be addressed in order to ensure a fair process and chance of success for all pupils.

## **SEC. 2.**

Section 51224.7 is added to the Education Code, to read:

### **51224.7.**

(a) This act shall be known, and may be cited, as the California Mathematics Placement Act of 2015.

(b) Each *governing board of a* local educational agency serving pupils in grade 8 or 9, or both, shall *develop, adopt in a regularly scheduled public meeting*, and implement a fair, objective, and transparent statewide mathematics placement policy that does all of the following:

(1) Systematically takes current academic objective measures into consideration, such as statewide assessments, pupil grades, and diagnostic placement tests.

(2) Includes multiple progress checkpoints throughout the academic year to permit reevaluation of individual pupil progress, including at least one checkpoint within the first three months of the academic year.

(3) Requires examination of pupil placement data, at least annually, to ensure that there is no disproportionate impact in the course placement of pupils by race, *gender*, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background. The local educational agency shall report the aggregate results of this examination to the governing board of the local educational agency and prominently post the examination results on its Internet Web site. This report may be included as part of the local educational agency's accountability report of its local control and accountability plan.

(4) Offers clear and immediate recourse for each pupil and his or her parent or legal guardian who questions the pupil's placement.

(c) Each local educational agency shall ensure that its mathematics placement policy is available to each pupil and his or her parent or legal guardian and is posted prominently on its Internet Web site.

(d) For purposes of this section, "local educational agency" means county office of education, school district, state special school, or direct-funded charter school as described in Section 47651.

## **SEC. 3.**

If the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall



be made pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code.

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