

# **School Board Special Work Session**

July 9, 2020



# Equity Audit Report Board Presentation

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# White Bear Lake Area Schools Equity Commitment

## Equity Commitment

To nurture the whole student, we disrupt systemic inequities by recognizing, honoring, and embracing all cultures with humility and respect.

## 4-Way Equity Decision Making Protocol

1. How does this help to provide opportunities to students who have been marginalized within the system in the past?
2. How does this help to ensure equitable access for all?
3. How does this help to eliminate barriers based on race/ethnicity, gender, disability, age, or other protected groups?
4. How does this ensure that the same rigorous standards for academic performance exist for all students?

# Tonight's Agenda

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- Brief Overview and Major Findings
- Equity Audit Report Focus Areas
- Data Review and Recommendations
- Commitment to Action - Equity Audit Response
- Discussion

# Brief Overview and Major Findings



*“Violence is Black children going to school for 12 years receiving 6 years worth of education.”*

Julian Bond

# Purpose of the Equity Audit

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1. To understand the factors that contribute to achievement inequities in White Bear Lake Area Schools and identify areas of significant performance differences
2. To assist the district in identifying professional development and educational interventions to reduce achievement gaps and enhance school success for all students.

# What Questions Does This Equity Audit Address?

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1. What does current district data reveal about achievement inequities in our district?
2. What factors do staff, students, and parents identify as contributing to achievement inequities?
3. What initiatives (district-level, school-level, classroom-level) can be implemented to building cultural competency and enhance students' schooling experience?

# Major Findings

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- **Achievement Disparities**

WBLAS children of color and children of low socioeconomic status achieve statistically below their White peers.

- **Discipline Disparities**

Students of color and low-income students are receiving disciplinary referrals at a disproportionate rate to their white peers.

- **Relationship/Communication Disparities**

Familie/students of color and low-income students/families do not feel connected, heard, or expected to achieve in our district.

# Equity Audit Methodology

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## Quantitative Data

- Surveys
  - Families
  - Students
  - Staff
  - Administrators

## Qualitative Data

- Focus Groups
  - Central MS
  - Sunrise Park MS
  - WBLAHS - North Campus
  - WBLAHS - South Campus
  - ALC
- Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR)

# Focus Areas



*“Students quickly receive the message that they can only be smart when they are not who they are. This, in many ways, is classroom colonialism; and it can only be addressed through a very different approach to teaching and learning.”*

Christopher Emdin

# Eight Focus Areas

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1. Accepting/ marginalizing students' identity and voice
2. Culturally relevant school leadership, teaching, and curriculum
3. Discriminatory behavior and practices
4. School culture and climate
5. School community relations
6. Thoughts on achievement gaps
7. Thoughts on discipline
8. Teacher rating and expectations

# Highest Equity Area Rankings

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1. Thoughts on Discipline Gap (TDG)
2. Thoughts on the Achievement Gap (TAG)
3. Accepting or Marginalizing Student Identity and Voice (AMSIV)
4. School Culture and Climate (SCC)
5. Expectations and Teacher Ratings (TRE)
6. Culturally Responsive School Leadership, Teaching, and Curriculum (CRSLTC)
7. School Community Relationship (SCR)
8. Discriminatory Behaviors and Practices (DBP)

# Data Review and Recommendations



*“A Hallmark for me of a culturally relevant teacher is someone who understands that we were operating in an fundamentally inequitable system. They take that as a given. And that the teacher’s role is not merely to help kids fit into a unfair system, but rather to give them the skills, the knowledge and the dispositions to change the inequity. The idea is not to get more people at the top of an unfair pyramid; the idea is to say the pyramid is the wrong structure. How can we really create a circle, if you will, that includes everybody? ”*

**Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings**

# Accepting or Marginalizing Student Identity and Voice

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- Minoritized students do not always feel their racial and ethnic identity of cultural heritage and language are represented within the schools.
- These students often feel marginalized within the district, where White culture is celebrated as the norm and reinforced with an overall color-blind approach by many teachers.

# Culturally Responsive School Leadership Teaching and Curriculum

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## Student Focus Groups

- Students perceive a lack of evidence of Culturally Relevant Schooling.
  - Strong disappointment with the lack of racial and ethnic diversity amongst their teaching staff
- Students expressed doubt in their teachers' abilities to handle issues of race and culture with seriousness and rigor.

## Survey Data

- **This is the lowest rated Equity Area, needing serious attention.**
- Students, staff, and administrators all lack confidence that the district is either competent or making gains in this area.
- Finally, much deeper connections are needed with homes and communities of color.

**Overall, there is a lack of evidence of Culturally Relevant Schooling in White Bear Lake.**

# Discriminatory Behaviors and Practices

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- Discriminatory behaviors were identified as exhibited by the students and teachers/ administrators.
  - Students noted several times the tension between white students and students of color
  - More than once respondents stated white students attempting to initiate conflict with students of color, in addition to microaggressions, shaming, and encroachment into physical space.

# School Culture and Climate

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## Student Focus Groups

- Responses were very split and even more so along racial line.
- Many of the students indicated that they had good experiences attending WBLAS, but are concerned with the following:
  - Racism
  - Racialized and ELL bullying
  - Disappointment with the lack of racial diversity staffing.

## Survey Data

- Indication that this is one of the EA areas needing attention.
- Minoritized students and parents feel.
  - Race plays a significant role in how they are treated.
  - Data interprets they feel the school/ district climate as being hostile.

# School Community Relationship

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## Focus Groups

- Students indicated that their cultural knowledge goes unrecognized by educators in our district.
- Minoritized students cited an adversarial relationship between the school (teachers/staff/administrators) and parents.

## Survey Data

- Overall, all (families, staff, students) believe the school-community relations are not as good in comparison to other Equity Areas.
- Parents did not feel invited in their student(s) buildings or did not feel that the staff/administrators were approachable.

# Thoughts on Achievement Gap

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- Data reveals stakeholder perceptions on why the achievement gap is present in WBLAS.
  - White students, teachers, and other staff seem to blame minoritized students for the Achievement Gap.
  - Others listed SES as a reason
  - Whites students feel minoritized students don't care about grades.

# Thoughts on Discipline Gap

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## Focus Groups

- White students, teachers, and other staff seem to blame minoritized students for being overrepresented in discipline.
- Students of color are often over surveillanced and reported feeling subjected to racialized bullying.

## Survey Data

- **District employees feel this is something they are responsible for and that they can address.**
- While some educators likely blame students and communities for the discipline gap, this score demonstrates a willingness (i.e., capacity) to take responsibility and address the discipline gap.

# Expectations and Teacher Ratings

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## Focus Groups

- Participants perceive different expectations for students based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and academic status.

## Survey Data

- Minoritized students and parents believe that teachers do not have high expectations for minoritized students.
- The data indicates that this is true!
- Teachers and administrators do not recommend minoritized students for advanced classes, engage them in class in positive ways, or have high expectations for their behavior and learning.

# Recommendations

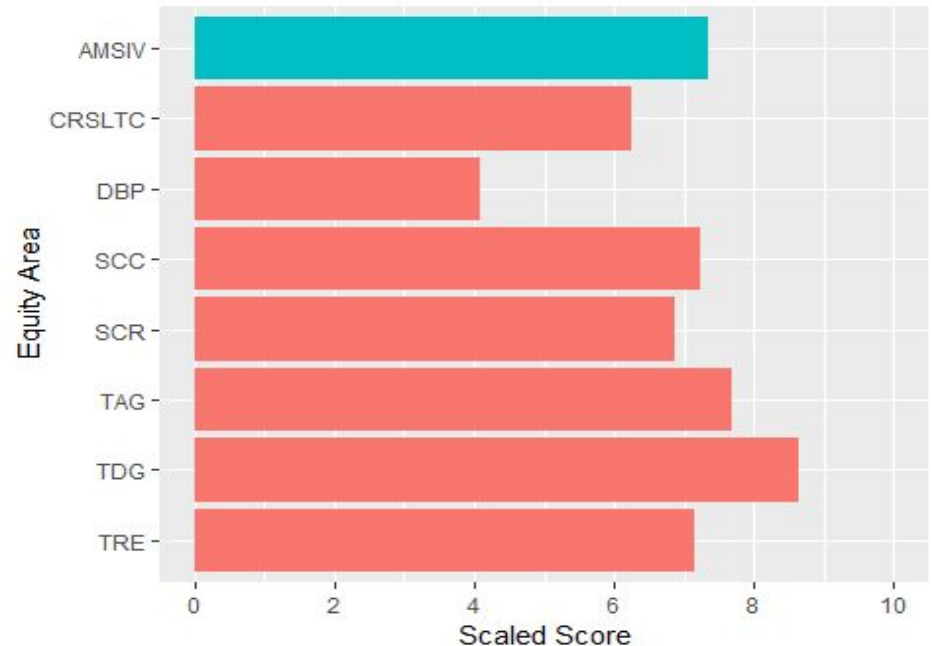
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- The Equity Audit Report has highlighted the following areas as priority:
  - Accepting or Marginalizing Student Identity and Voice
  - Culturally Responsive School Leadership and Curriculum
  - School Community Relationship
  - School Culture and Climate
  - Expectations and Teacher Ratings

# Accepting or Marginalizing Identity and Student Voice

## Recommendations include:

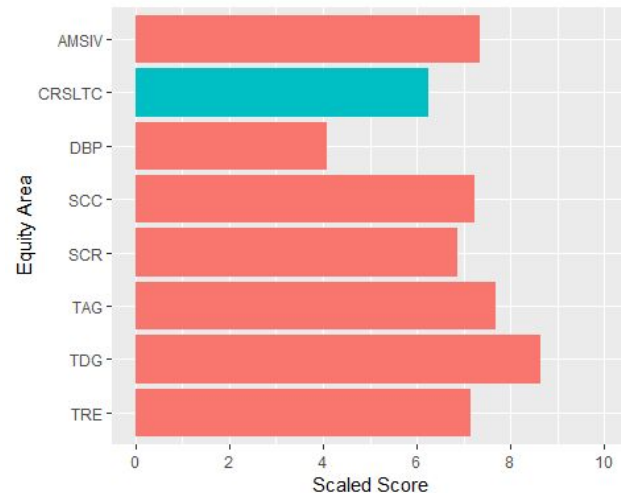
- Affinity spaces for minoritized students;
- Reforming curriculum to include minoritized students' realities and versions of the world
- Regular leadership-led focus group interviews with students.
- Rapid response to minoritized student complaints.



# Culturally Responsive School Leadership, Teaching and Curriculum

## Recommendations include:

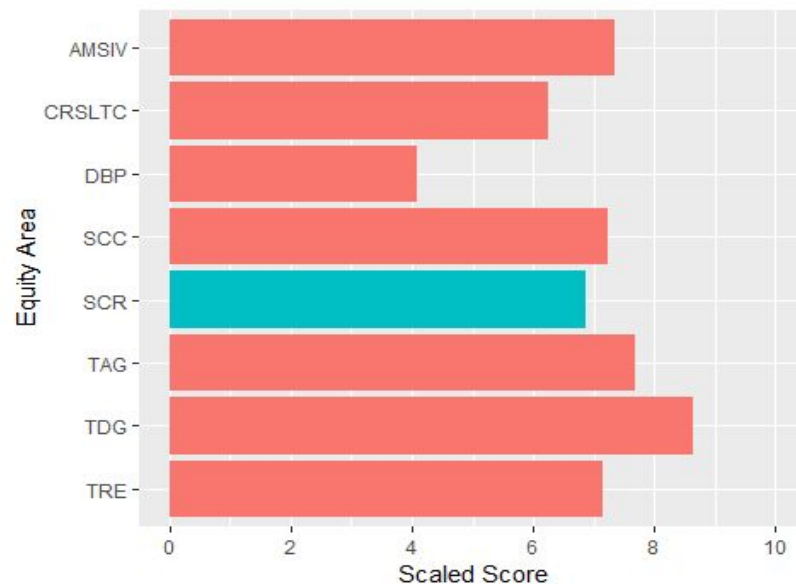
- Administrators and Teachers must become more culturally responsive educators.
- Increased hiring of minoritized staff, teachers, and administrators.
- Administrator's need to begin leading professional development around culturally responsive schools.



# School Community and Relationship

## Recommendations include:

- Consider incentivizing teachers and administrators to attend community-based meetings and then advocating for the goals of the local community.
- Invest into ways that will allow more overlap between school and (surrounding) community.
- Attend community-based meetings and lending support, advocating for causes important to communities such as job training or food security
- Offering the school as a space for community events and meetings, and even educators serving in local mentors in the community.
- Districts should actively seek funding to support community-engagement activities.



# School Culture and Climate

## Recommendations include:

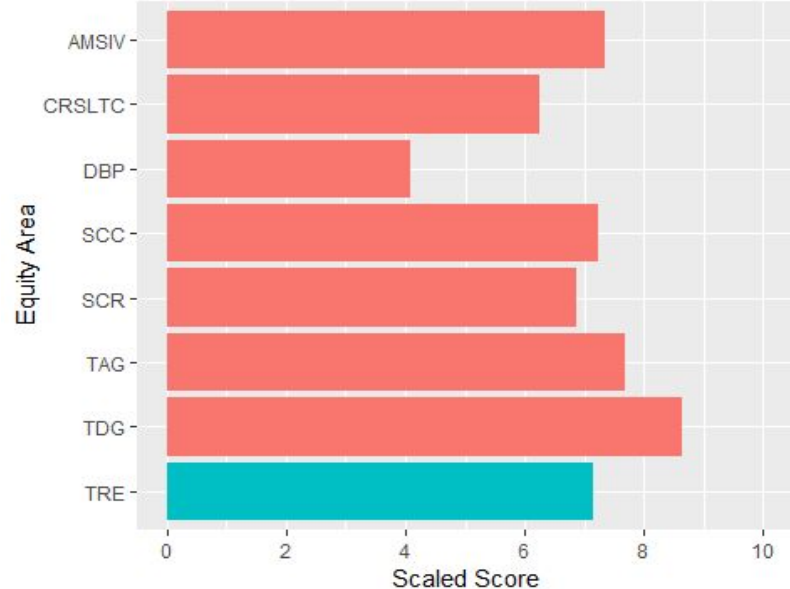
- **Based on the data collected in this Equity Area, SCC needs to be a major focus area.**
- Restorative Justice and Positive Behavior Supports are good options; but if chosen, they must be implemented with nuance and specificity.
- We recommend reaching out to local Indigenous Native American groups and other community-based groups within the Black, immigrant, and Latinx communities in the area.



# Expectations and Teacher Ratings

## Recommendations include:

- Provide professional development around teacher expectations of student achievement.
- Create an extra layer of review for special education referrals, disciplinary referrals, and any other program in which minoritized students are disproportionately represented.



# Commitment to Action - Equity Audit Response



# Our Equity journey:

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- District Strategic Plan
- Equity Commitment/Equity Decision Making Protocol
- Director of Equity and Engagement
- District Equity and Achievement Team
- American Indian Parent Committee
- Equitable Family Engagement Framework and Tool

# Accepting or Marginalizing Student Identity and Voice

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- Racial, cultural, ethnic student groups
- Strengthen and systematize YPAR opportunities
- Affinity groups
- Curriculum reform to include students
- District Leadership led student focus groups to ensure continuous feedback loops
- Examination and enhancement of reporting procedures for racialized bullying in schools.

# Culturally Responsive School Leadership and Curriculum

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- Examine and enhance curriculum:
  - US History
  - K-12 Science
- Innocent Classroom
- Culturally Responsive School Leadership Institute
- Anti-racist Professional Development
- Equity Alliance Minnesota Professional Development

# School Community Relationship

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- Family Engagement Framework
  - Parent Academies
  - School Action Plan Goals
- Community Izi's
- Continued partnership with *Many Faces*
- Involvement in Racial Justice community initiatives
  - Working with area Human Rights Commission
  - Equity Alliance Minnesota

# School Culture & Climate

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- Restorative Practices
- Intercultural Development Inventory
- Examine policies that contribute to inequities:
  - Equity and Inclusion
  - Hate Speech
  - Student Discipline
- Examine practices that contribute to inequities:
  - Grading
  - Dress Code
  - Student Discipline
  - Enhance staff hiring protocol

# Expectations and Teacher Ratings

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- Ethnic Studies professional development
- Establish a framework and identify roles and responsibilities of building/site level Equity Teams
- Further implementation of professional development around critical self-reflection for all district staff
  - Delegate a percentage of all regular meeting time to enhance cultural responsiveness and equity.
  - Anti-Racist PD for all district staff
- Innocent Classroom
- Continued relationship with Culturally Responsive School Leadership

# Where do we Go From Here?

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## Student/Staff/Teacher/ School Board Development:

- 3-5 year Equity/ Race Equity action plan development
- Completion of the US History Course redesign
- Increased Professional Development opportunities
  - Partnering with Human Resources
  - Professional development with Equity Alliance
  - Innocent Classroom
  - School Board quarterly racial equity development and updates

## Family Engagement Initiatives:

- PIQA
- School Action Plan Goals

## Community Connection:

- Collaborating with local organization (Many Faces)
- Serving on board that address racial justice

# Discussion





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