SUPERINTENDENT COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

2022 – 2023 Final Report

Prepared for Dr. Art Jarvis and Dr. Kelly Aramaki

May 11, 2023

"The most meaningful and authentic community engagement takes place in our relationships as a way of being with each other, beyond actions and tasks."

Debbie Lacy, Founder, Eastside For All and SCAC Cochair, 2022–2023

PART I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nested in the center of one of the most vibrant business, philanthropic, and nonprofit hubs in the world, partnership opportunities abound for BSD. The district has a proud track record of investing in community engagement, to the benefit of students and staff. There are always opportunities to improve, however, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This report outlines key strategies to strengthen engagement and connection with the entire Bellevue community and especially with those who have been historically marginalized. We appreciate the opportunity to offer recommendations on how BSD can fully leverage its enormous community resources – public, private, non-profit, and governmental – on behalf of the student experience.

1. **CENTER ON EQUITY IN DECISION MAKING**
   Center decision making on equity. Consider how any given action may benefit or harm students and families with special attention paid to the needs of those farthest from educational justice.

2. **ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY ROADMAP FOR BIG DECISIONS**
   When it comes to big decisions that affect a lot of families, or that affect some families deeply, we recommend the district establish a roadmap that clearly defines how decisions will be made and who will inform them.

3. **LEAN INTO COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS**
   Create a cadre of Community Ambassadors who can bridge relationships between the district and community groups, especially those not being served well. Lean into these ambassadors to help facilitate meaningful two-way communication and engagement.

4. **BE CLEAR WHAT FEEDBACK IS SOUGHT**
   With any engagement process, make clear to people what type of feedback is being sought and what will be done with it. Help people understand - am I being informed of a decision? Involved in making a decision? Or something else?

5. **MAKE THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS MORE UNDERSTANDABLE**
   Make the criteria for partnership with BSD more transparent. Help community members understand the differences between formal and informal partnerships including when an MoU is required and how that process works.

6. **INVEST RESOURCES**
   Within the constraints of the budget, dedicate the staff necessary to managing and supporting community partnerships.

7. **COMMIT TO EVEN DEEPER STUDY IN 2023 - 2024**
   Extend the Council's focus on this work into a second year to support incoming Superintendent Kelly Aramaki in the creation of The Bellevue Standard of engagement.

PART II: CONTEXT AND HISTORY OF THE SCAC

The Bellevue School District Superintendent Community Advisory Council (SCAC) was formed in September 2020 to engage a diverse set of voices in district decision-making. The Advisory Committee provides input and makes recommendations to the Superintendent on issues determined by the Superintendent.

The intent behind the SCAC is to engage a broad cross-section of stakeholders to help the district think differently and design better solutions for all students. The SCAC, along with the district's other advisory committees, is considered an important vehicle to:

- Promote engagement of community stakeholders
- Strengthen feedback loops with families and students
- Expand access to parents and other community members through the networks of participants
- Test and socialize new ideas and approaches

Year 1: 2020 – 2021
The first phase of the Councils' work was conducted September 2020 – April 2021 and focused on budgeting. The Council presented recommendations on investment and spending priorities to the Superintendent on March 29, 2021 and shared them with the School Board on April 6, 2021. Implementation of the Councils' recommendations is underway. The full report can be found here and the Executive Summary here.

Year 2: 2021 - 2022
The second phase of the Councils' work was conducted September 2021 – April 2022 and focused on oversight of implementation of Phase 1 recommendations and an exploration of Global Competency as an overarching instructional framework. The final report can be found here.

Year 3: 2022 – 2023
This year's Council focused on examining successful and effective community engagement. One of the most important elements of a school district's success is its relationship with its community. Offered here are recommendations on how BSD can fully leverage its enormous community resources – public, private, non-profit, and governmental – on behalf of the student experience.

PART III: PARTICIPATION AND PROCESS

Council membership was determined by open application and members serve a one-year term. The Council met approximately once per month, in person, between October 2022 – April 2023. Meetings and meeting notes were made public via the Council webpage.

2022 – 2023 Co-Chairs
Patrick Bannon, Bellevue Downtown Association
Debbie Lacy, Eastside For All

Suhani Agarwal, Interlake parent
Robin Anand, Interlake High School student
Arsh Bansal, International School Student
Juliet Buder, Bellevue Schools Foundation
Roz Burton-Torres, BHS parent
Jolenta Coleman Bush, Microsoft
Adam Dibba, Africans on the East Side
Sudeshna Dixit, EastHub
Cathy Elder, BSD principal
Jesse Franklin, Rainier Athletes
Abigail Horsfall, BSD educator
Li-Tan Hsu, BSD PTSA Council
Glenn Jackson, Bellevue College
Shomari Jones, BSD administrator
Byron Lillie, BSD Principal
Monik Martinez, 4Tomorrow
Tim Motts, Boys & Girls Club of Bellevue
Heija Nunn, Windermere
Jacque Olliges, Amazon
Arin Oh, Bellevue High School student
Xuejian Pan, Medina Elementary parent
Heather Sanchez, BSD administrator
Jennifer Seery, BSD educator
Hafsah Usman, Big Picture student

To begin, we reviewed different community engagement models, including Joyce Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement (School-Family-Community Partnership Model; see Appendix B) and the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation (see Appendix C). We also sought to identify school districts who are exemplars in community engagement in the hopes of finding models worth emulating (see Appendix D).

Over the course of our work, we defined a BSD stakeholder and developed a vision statement for district community engagement:

> *BSD Stakeholder*: **A person, group, or organization who is impacted by a course of action taken by BSD.** Stakeholders can be internal, i.e., students, families, and those who work within the school system and experience or direct what goes on there, or external, i.e., those outside the day-to-day work of the schools who have a strong interest in student outcomes but who do not directly determine what goes into producing those outcomes.
>
> *BSD Vision for Community Engagement*: **We envision a community where everyone is cared for and feels a sense of belonging.** We aim to build transparent, trusting relationships with people and organizations. We invite members of the community to join together, share knowledge, and strengthen our connections so all students are served equitably.

PART IV: INTENDED OUTCOME

At the outset, we defined our objectives:

- To promote a shift in our collective understanding of community needs and strengths
- To introduce new methods and voices into the conversation around community engagement
- To encourage a view of co-creation that can be integrated as a way of being for BSD

PART V: THE VISION & VALUES THAT GROUND US

Our recommendations are grounded in intersecting values and centered on belonging:



This word cloud was derived from our first three meetings (October, November, December 2022) where, in small groups and as a full Council, we named "what community engagement meant to us" and identified the values that we each hold around community engagement.

PART VI: RECOMMENDATIONS

Our intent is to be both aspirational and practical. We have tried to offer an overarching vision rooted in values, followed by concrete strategies that can be implemented.

We strongly encourage the district to dedicate a second year (2023 – 2024) to this topic. This can include expanding the number of voices helping shape this work moving forward. Members of the SCAC offer their support in helping advance this critical conversation.

1. CATEGORY #1: ONGOING RELATIONAL WORK WITH COMMUNITY

Relationships are the centerpiece of meaningful community engagement. We recommend the following steps to strengthen relationships with the individuals and organizations in and around BSD:

A. Create a roster of 30-50 **Community Ambassadors** who can bridge relationships between the district and community groups, especially those not being served well. Lean into these ambassadors to help facilitate meaningful two-way communication and engagement.

B. Be clear internally and with stakeholders at the outset of any engagement process about **what type of feedback or input is being requested**, i.e., where are we on the Spectrum of Public Engagement (refer to Appendix C). Consider an approach that holds the greater the impact, the further right we go on the spectrum.

C. Make every effort to **engage people where they are** – consider language accessibility, time constraints, child care, communications mediums, and trusted messengers. Explore a variety of methods of communication beyond email, website, and social media, including but not limited to those itemized below. Caveats are a) the message and content inform what channel(s) to use and b) with any medium, there must be trust in the medium and critical mass using the medium. We encourage the inclusion of technology teams in dissing how best to achieve two-way engagement!

- Text
- Webinars
- Podcasts
- Canva voice over slides
- Channel 21
- Bellevue High School radio
- Platforms such as Contentful, Team Snap, WeChat, What's App
- Old fashioned, analog techniques such as leader boards outside schools, monitors in school lobbies, bulletin boards, flyers, and yard signs

2. CATEGORY #2: ENGAGEMENT WITH DISTRICT PARTNERS WHO PROVIDE A SERVICE

Engagement at the school and district level also has several technical components. We recommend the following steps related to the more procedural side of community engagement:

A. Make the **criteria for partnership** with BSD more transparent. Help community members understand the differences between formal and informal partnerships, including when a written agreement (Memorandum of Understanding/MOU) is required, what that process entails, and which organizations have MOUs with the district.

B. Within the parameters of budget capacity, **dedicate the staff necessary** to manage and support partnerships.

C. Foster a spirit of reciprocity within partnerships. Consider resurrecting the **Annual Partner Day** where district partners gather with one another and the administration to share their work and impact, followed by a discussion of what more can be done together to serve students.

3. CATEGORY #3: ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITY AROUND BIG DECISIONS

We appreciated Superintendent-Select Aramaki's remarks at our February 8, 2023 meeting and his interest in establishing *The Bellevue Standard* for engaging with community around big decisions. We suggest this be the focus of a second year of study as the work of community, staff, and leadership. We recommend the following steps to begin:

A. Prepare a set of **case studies** of past engagement efforts as a tool for learning. Name past efforts (equity policy, SRO/CEO, school consolidation, reimagining middle school, Superintendent search, etc.) and analyze some of them retroactively to identify strengths and flaws. (To the extent possible, this type of analysis should become a recurring activity to support continuous improvement.)

B. Establish criteria for what constitutes a "**big decision**." This should be a collaborative effort with stakeholders.

C. Develop and codify the **roadmap** that becomes *The Bellevue Standard*. This starts with guiding principles, names strategies, tactics, and owners, and serves as a standard template that can be customized as needed.

Elements of BSD's Critical Criteria were considered throughout the process of developing these recommendations. See Appendix E for the Critical Criteria Planning Template.

PART VII: SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

We know that "ideas are easy; implementation is hard." We want to underscore the degree to which members of the SCAC team are available to support Dr. Aramaki in successfully implementing these recommendations.

To take this from concept to reality, we recommend the following implementation best practices:

- Name an executive sponsor
- Prepare and disseminate a written project plan outlining tasks, owners, and milestones
- Identify a clear top priority and ensure everyone agrees/understands that top priority
- Be deliberate about naming what work will stop or pause to make room for work staff is newly accountable for
- Establish a predictable pattern of progress review meetings to maintain alignment and drive accountability
- Institute mechanisms to provide feedback on how effective these strategies are.

PART VIII: NEXT STEPS

Should Superintendent-Select Aramaki endorse and adopt these recommendations, next steps are for him to:

1. Share this report with internal BSD audiences, including the School Board
2. Establish an implementation team and project plan
3. Determine the focus of the Council's 2023 – 2024 work

PART IX: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To John Harrison and Melissa deVita, for their tireless stewardship of the BSD mission and for their willingness to cocreate community engagement best practices with openness and humility.

To Monica Niemela for her always-cheerful demeanor and help ensuring every logistical detail of our meetings was taken care of.

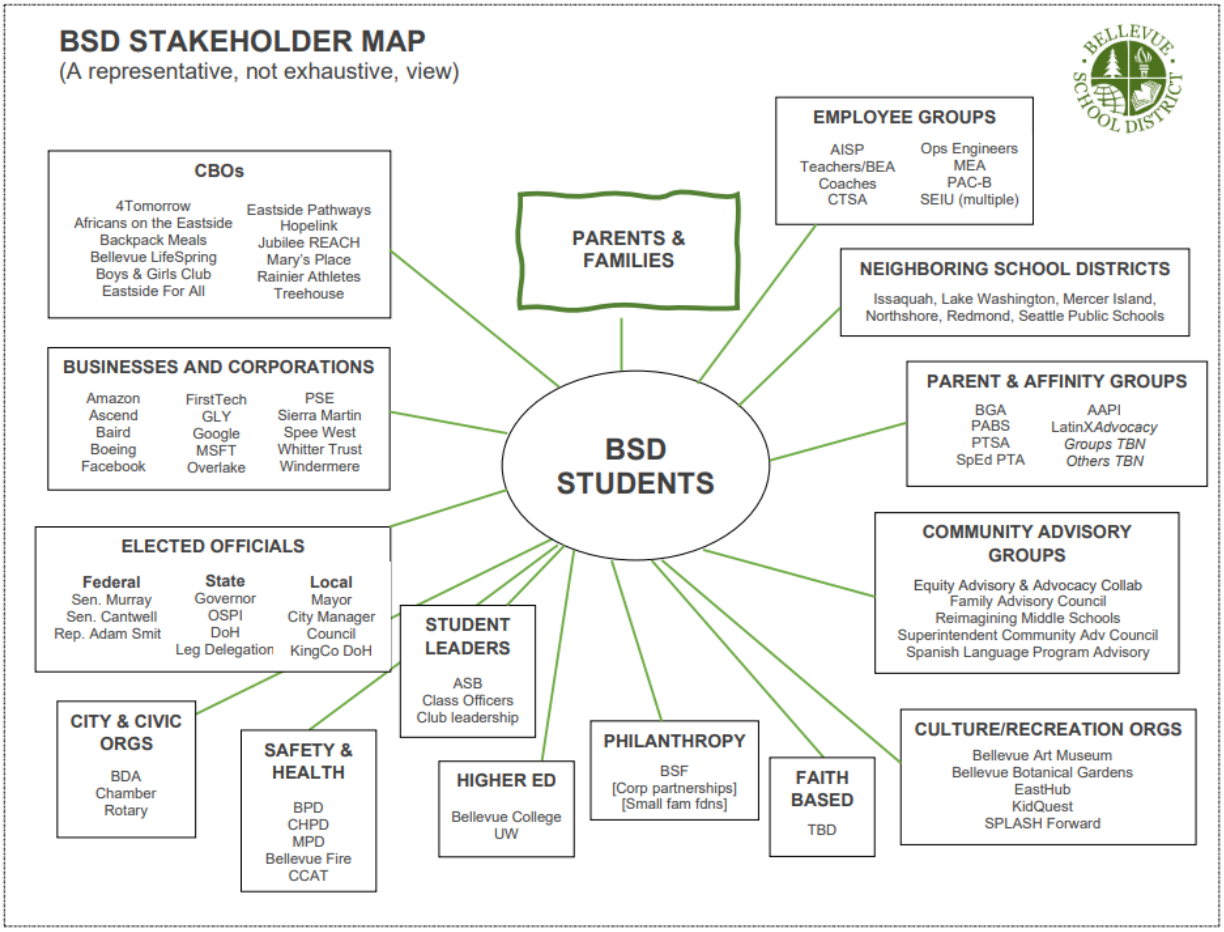
To Heather Sanchez and Shomari Jones for their skilled facilitation and for always being ready to and jump in as needed.

To the staff at Highland Middle School for always welcoming us warmly to the school library for all our meetings.

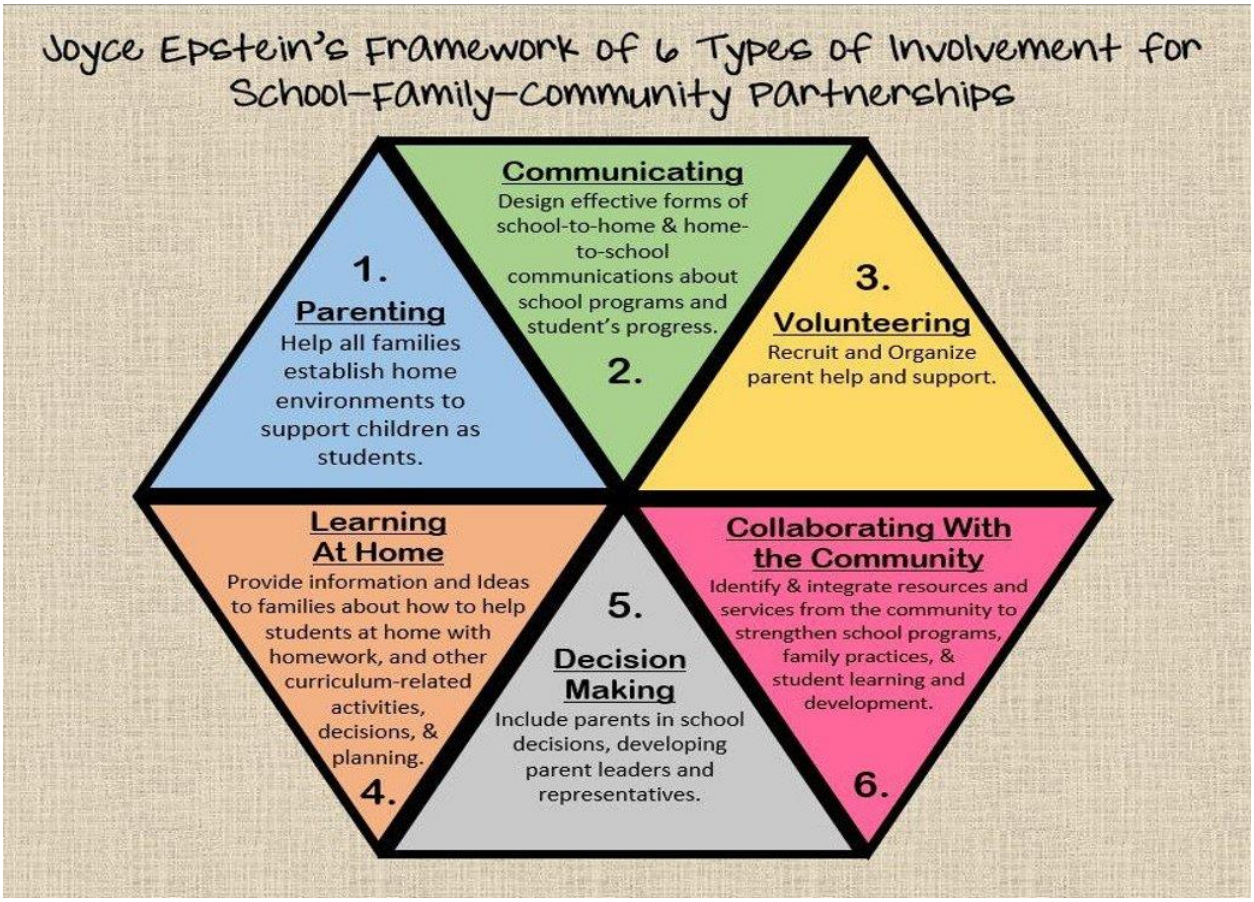
PART X: APPENDICES

A. BSD Stakeholder Map
B. School-Family-Community Partnership Model
C. IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation
D. Community Engagement District Exemplars – Research Overview
E. Critical Criteria Planning Template

APPENDIX A: BSD STAKEHOLDER MAP



APPENDIX B: SCHOOL-FAMILY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP MODEL



APPENDIX C: IAP2 SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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APPENDIX D: DISTRICT EXEMPLARS – RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Superintendent's Advisory Council
2022 – 2023

Research into Best Practices in School District Community Engagement

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BACKGROUND

The Bellevue School District Superintendent Community Advisory Council (SCAC) was formed in September 2020 to engage a diverse set of voices in key district decisions. The Advisory Committee provides input and makes recommendations to the Superintendent on issues determined by the Superintendent. The 2022 – 2023 Council will advise BSD on successful and effective community engagement. One of the most important elements of a school district's relationship with its community is how it engages its stakeholders. This year's Council will focus on how BSD can fully leverage its enormous community resources – public, private, non-profit, and governmental – on behalf of the student experience. As a North Star to this work, BSD has defined its vision as:

Our Vision for Community Engagement:

Our vision is for BSD to serve and support student by standing as a valued, trusted anchor within the Bellevue community. Through our words and deeds, we strive to:

Build strong, trusting, and lasting relationships with people and organizations across our community;

Make it easy for members of the community to share knowledge and contribute to improved decision making;

Promote a spirit of social connectedness and inclusion.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

In support of this work, research was conducted to identify school districts considered to be exemplars in community engagement and to name best practices in community engagement broadly. In doing so, we hoped to find models worth emulating.

FINDINGS

The results of this research were limited. There is a surfeit of recommendations, toolkits, and opinions. Unfortunately, there is less definitive research and few if any obvious candidates for district exemplars.

Generally speaking, common themes for best practice in community engagement include:

- Understanding the community and the communities within to better tailor engagement in a culturally appropriate and impactful way.

APPENDIX D: DISTRICT EXEMPLARS – RESEARCH OVERVIEW (continued)

- Tailoring engagement plans to not just seat under-represented voices at the table, but to amplify those voices.
- Engagement is, at its essence, about relationship building – creating equitable relationships based on trust is core to leveraging all the assets a community has to offer.
- Single modality engagement, e.g., surveys, will provide some information, but won't result in a shared vision or the partnership required to get there.

Within this rather sparse landscape, some of the best work has been done by Hanover Research. Their recent publication, "Best Practices for Community Engagement" offers analysis and recommendations on "Understanding Diverse Communities" and "Best Practices for Engaging Diverse Communities." Key findings include:

- Traditional approaches to family engagement rely on upper-middle class values and behaviors, and districts must consider various challenges faced by parents when engaging diverse communities.
- District leaders must conduct extensive research to understand the beliefs and worldviews of the community, as well as nuanced differences in power structures within each community.
- Equitable community engagement involves sharing power with stakeholders and community members in decision-making processes.
- Partnerships with community leaders can help districts sustain meaningful relationships with the communities they serve.
- Educators utilize multiple, two-way communication methods to reach all members of their community.

Working models of "exemplary" community engagement in school districts are hard to come by and mostly self-identified. This is further limited by the impact of COVID-19 on school districts' ability to engage their communities. A great deal of the literature supports the importance of strong family connections during COVID, mostly through virtual meetings, digital surveys, and social media. Evidence has shown this approach worked better for middle- and upper-class families with access and experience using technology than for student and family populations overall.

OTHER RESOURCES

Several organizations and companies provide "toolkits" for engagement, including:

- Great Schools Partnership: Equitable Community Engagement
- ParentCamp: Transformation Family – School – Community Engagement
- Positive Action: 6 Powerful Strategies to Promote School and Community Relations
- United Way: Positive Family Engagement
- All4Ed: Engagement Through Communities of Practice

Organizations engaged in social change are also focused on improving community engagement. Their learnings include:

- The Center for Civic Engagement and Learning at Case Western Reserve University: Best Practices for Responsible Community Engagement
- Mobilize: Best Practices for Community Engagement
- Community Planning Toolkit
- Groundwork USA: Best Practices for Meaningful Community Engagement

OPPORTUNITY

While the dearth of research and role models poses a challenge, it represents an opportunity for BSD to itself become an exemplar and to map a path forward for others to follow. Ironically, SCAC members now have networking opportunities with colleagues to informally uncover successful methodologies used by others, an engagement opportunity unto itself. Ultimately, BSD has the potential to set a standard for how to fully engage with the rich and diverse community ecosystem in which it is centered.

APPENDIX E: CRITICAL CRITERIA PLANNING TEMPLATE

Critical Criteria Review – Exhibit A

Procedure 0130P - Equity and Accountability

Critical Criteria Review					
Name (of program/initiative/policy):			**What is the original intent or purpose of this program/initiative/policy?**		
POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND RISKS How does this program / initiative / policy **benefit** and **harm** each group below? • Consider student well-being and equitable learning opportunities and experiences. • Consider the history and current realities of those students farthest from educational justice. Consider students of color, multilingual learners, students with disabilities, students in advanced learning, students receiving free/reduced lunch, students identifying as LGBTQ+, etc.. • Consider how this supports, elevates, and centers the needs of students farthest from educational justice and avoids unintended consequences. • Consider how this promotes opportunities and access for those who have been historically excluded. How does this benefit all students equitably? • Consider both intentional and unintentional impacts.			**STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT** How will you **engage** each stakeholder group in planning, designing, implementing, and supporting the program / policy / initiative? What engagement, understanding, involvement, communication, and training / professional development are needed for this program to be successful and fully accessible? Remember to plan with stakeholder groups who will be impacted.	**RISK MITIGATION** How will you **mitigate** potential impacts/risks? Mitigation strategies are the things you do to minimize the risk from happening and if it does, to lessen the impact. Be sure to mitigate not only the things that interfere with the purpose, but also address unintended consequences that may occur.	**PROGRESS MONITORING** **How will you know** you've addressed the potential impacts/risks and minimized or avoided potential negative impacts? • Identify measurable outcomes that will be monitored. • Include timeline for progress monitoring. • Consider how to integrate with annual goals progress monitoring.
	Benefit	**Harm**			
Students					
Families					
Educators and Staff					
Other Stakeholders					
System					
REFLECTION Based on what was learned from completing this Critical Criterial Review, what revisions or changes have been made? How were implementation and monitoring plans adjusted to ensure key relevant issues will not be missed?					

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