



CENTER FOR EDUCATION EQUITY (CEE)

Focus Group Report: Capital School District

May 2018

Project Goal

This study provides insight from various stakeholder groups regarding their perceptions of equity, trust, communication, and relationships between the school district and the community. CEE facilitators conducted focus groups April 10-12, 2018. CSD will use the findings presented here with the following intent: 1) to build trust between stakeholder groups and 2) to engage stakeholders in working with the district to resolve issues.

Focus Group Sample

Focus Group	Number	% Female	% White	% Black	% Latino	% Asian	% Other
District and School Administrators	7	71.4	85.7	14.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Educators and Staff	12	58.3	50.0	33.3	0.0	0.0	16.7
Parents and Families	7	57.1	42.9	57.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Community Members	4	75.0	25.0	75.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
High School Students	9	44.4	33.3	55.6	0.0	0.0	11.1

Findings

There were three overarching themes that emerged as a result of the focus groups. There were also some additional themes that emerged across focus groups.

1. Equity is about fairness, access, and cultural awareness
2. Underlying equity issues need to be addressed

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- a. Problematic assumptions and biases
- b. “Life sentence” student labels
- c. Lack of diverse staff
- 3. Trust breaks down when communication and relationships break down
 - a. Communication
 - i. In-breeding communication methods
 - ii. Lack of reciprocity
 - iii. Lack of access to technology
 - iv. Parent-advocate as squeaky wheel
 - v. Complex technologies, inconsistent information
 - b. Relationship-building
 - i. A few bad teachers
 - ii. Not enough time or space
 - iii. Lack of support
- 4. Additional themes:
 - a. Structural barriers to equity
 - i. Transition from elementary to middle school
 - ii. EL and special education identification
 - iii. September 30th count
 - iv. Testing and standards
 - v. Accountability between district and community
 - b. Resources necessary
 - i. Mental health and counseling resources
 - ii. Year-round calendar
 - iii. Community and business partnerships
 - iv. Mid-level courses

Recommendations

General

- 1. Create explicit goals and a shared language specifically related to equity to construct a common vision or framework to align district and school activities, including instruction and communication.

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2. Provide more ongoing equity and anti-bias training for administrators and educators that helps develop strategies to implement in daily work.
3. Restructure school days or schedules to provide more reflection time for administrators and educators.
4. Create a pool of resources and support systems for educators to help teachers constructively respond to issues on a case-by-case basis.

Communication

1. Analyze current communication methods and assess whether those methods fit the needs of the community; Technologies should be selected based on the designed and selected method, not vice versa.
2. Initiate communication with families and communities in their homes or where they gather, for example religious or community organizations.
3. Ensure that materials and information for families and communities are translated in a language they can understand and facilitate communication by helping families and communities (both English-speaking and non-English-speaking) understand the significance of information, meetings, and events within the cultural context of Capital School District's school system.
4. Encourage all forms of parent participation and express appreciation for all levels of participation through simple gestures, such as saying "thank you" or writing notes.

Relationship-building

1. Create time and space for more personal and professional interactions.
2. Provide training or professional development sessions specifically related to building relationships through daily work.
3. Create a non-judgmental climate by focusing on progress towards standards rather than meeting standards and alleviate stress by hiring more support staff in order to distribute the workload and provide more time for supportive interactions.

Discussion Questions

1. What surprises you about these findings?
2. Given the findings, how do you want to move this work?
3. What else would you like to know?

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