



Picking Up Where We Left Off

Lessons from Runup to Revise *Denver Plan 2020*

July 27, 2020

Purpose

1. Identify work elements in runup to revising *Denver Plan 2020*
2. Identify where work products from each element are found
3. Summarize key finding(s) from each of these work efforts
4. Define possible next steps

Context

The 2019-2020 school year was the capstone year for *Denver Plan 2020*. At the outset of the school year, DPS declared its intent to spend the latter part of the school year refreshing the Plan.

By mid-March, the COVID-19 outbreak was sweeping the nation. In response, DPS adjusted the calendar and extended Spring break. By June, 2020, plans to revise the *Denver Plan 2020* were on hold so DPS could focus squarely on supporting the shift to districtwide remote learning.

This inventories work done in the runup to revising *Denver Plan 2020*. It is designed to help DPS pick up the threads

Work elements in runup to revising DP 2020

1. Project management action plan (and punch list)
2. Sources of data (fan-shaped rainbow display)
3. Literature review
4. Environmental scan of DPS-related studies and reports
5. One-page summary of 15 DPS-related studies and reports
6. Findings from Interviews with 22 Thought Leaders
7. National search for equity definitions
8. Barriers to Educational Equity in Denver Public Schools
9. Equity cornerstone deck (for August 5 SLT meeting)
10. Website for online library of all project materials
11. Proposed goals/activities for restarted effort to revise DP 2020
12. Equity PlayBook and ScoreCard

Guiding Principles for 2020-21

We remain committed to our core values, and we have aspirations and commitments about good outcomes for next year, despite the challenges presented by COVID and an anticipated decrease in funding. The following principles guide our work in this time:

- **EQUITY.** In our design, planning, instruction, and resource allocation, we will prioritize our most vulnerable students so they can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. This includes our students who have historically been marginalized and underserved including students learning English, students with disabilities, students experiencing poverty, and students of color . It also includes students who are experiencing the impacts of COVID-19 most acutely.
- **PEOPLE FIRST.** Across our family of schools, we will support the social and emotional needs, health, safety and well-being of students, employees, and families, as we navigate how to learn and work together to ensure all students thrive.
- **COOPERATION.** We will build unity and create connections so that we emerge as a stronger Team DPS. We strive to establish a culture and system of cooperation (as opposed to competition) among our family of schools and Team DPS. Externally, cooperation includes working with our city and state counterparts, as well as community organizations, to add capacity in the implementation of our crisis priorities.
- **RESPONSIVENESS.** We will be realistic about what we can take on successfully and focused on achieving our goals. This means being responsive to data and adapting to address the lived experiences of our students and staff. We will also be realistic about, and accountable to, the uncomfortable realities this crisis exposes about our systems and structures.
- **STEWARDSHIP:** In conversation with our Budget Advisory Committee, we will be thoughtful and strategic about our use of taxpayer dollars, as a resource provider, employer, and education provider. We will be mindful of the ways our decisions affect the community during this unstable and uncertain time. We will be good stewards of district funding in both the short and long term, as we work under constantly evolving financial scenarios and outlooks based on the federal and state response.

The “Why”

“We are all in the equity business now. There is no option.

If we aren’t working to decrease gaps, we’re increasing them.”

EdSurge
May, 2020

EdSurge is an educational technology firm that collects, analyzes, and disseminates information used by venture capitalists, lawmakers, university faculty, and K12 educators. In May, 2018, the Brookings Institution identified EdSurge as one of the world’s 16 leading “innovation spotters” in the field of education. These are organizations that “search the globe to find, highlight, and sometimes support education innovation.” (R. Winthrop and A. Barton, “Education innovations are taking root around the world; what do they have in common?”, May 17, 2018, Brookings). Included in this group of 16 are OECD, Harvard, UNICEF, and the Global Innovation Fund.

Frame of reference

“Two young fish are swimming along when they meet an older fish swimming the other way. The older fish nods and says, ‘Morning, boys, how’s the water?’ The two fish swim on for a bit. Eventually, one looks at the other and asks, ‘What is water?’”

“Important realities are often hardest to see and talk about.”

David Foster Wallace
September 19, 2008
The Guardian

“Important realities”

Our aim is to identify strategies that advance equity in DPS.

Our focus is clear; lift overall performance and close subgroup gaps.

Equip students to successfully pursue the life they dream of having.

All kids thrive, esp students of color & those from low-income families

Even as we say that, we recognize there is a possibility.

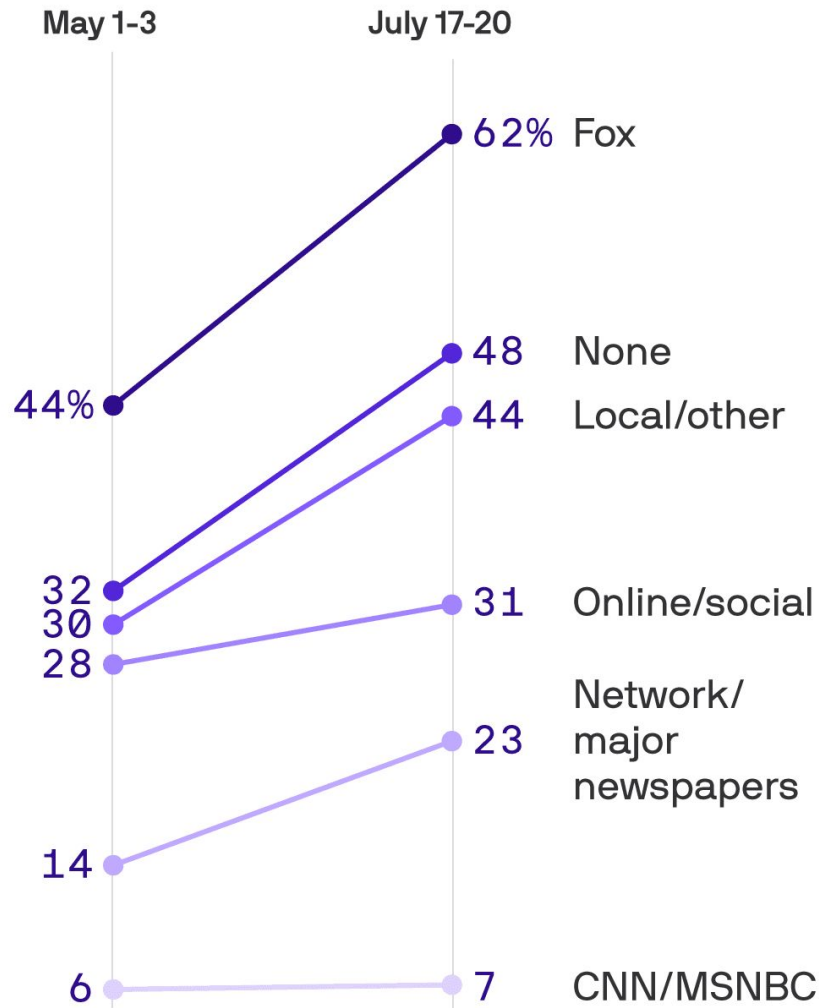
The solution may involve adjusting both strategy and culture.

Think, for instance, in terms of “ethos” from the RIDES work.

Water we swim in (a post-truth world)

Percent who believe
Americans dying
from COVID-19 is
fewer than reported

Survey of U.S. adults by primary news source



There are parallels between our discussion of an Equity Cornerstone and the way Americans respond to COVID-19.

This shows how culture can offset even soundly conceived protocols or strategies.

Source: Axios survey of 1,037 adults that concluded July 20, 2020
Margin of error is ± 3 points

Dr. Anthony Fauci's analysis of the escalating virus in the U.S. is telling. In his view, the problem is not protocols or strategy (face masks, social distancing, etc.). The problem is a culture that overlooks facts and doubts the authority of science. He says:

"I don't know how to explain it to you. You should care about other people."

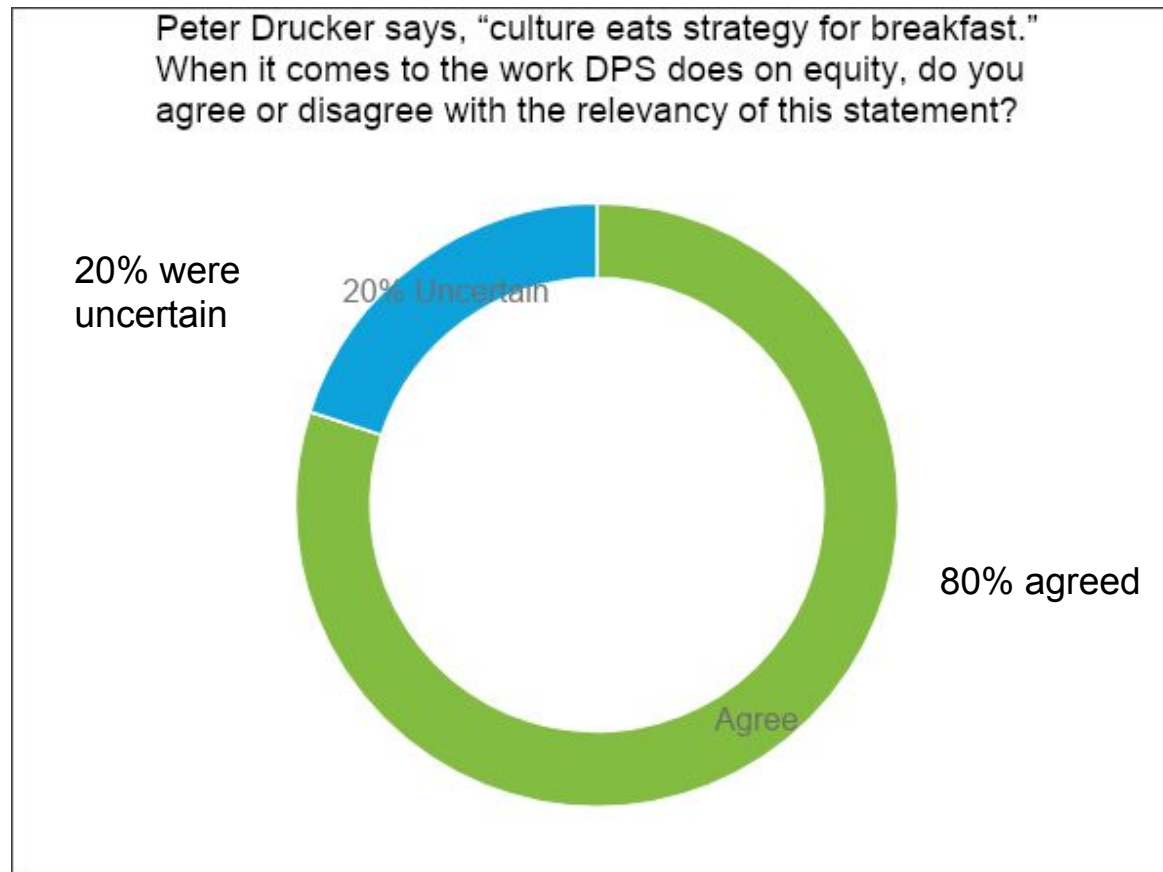
"Lockdown measures put in place around the world in response to the pandemic have saved millions of lives."

"It is unfortunate that people in the U.S. have ignored the advice of the public health experts. This includes refusing to wear a face mask."

"One of the problems we face is this. People don't believe science and they don't believe authority. That's unfortunate because science involves fact and truth."

Source: *NY Times* OpEd, C. Warzel, (July 21, 2020) and A. Slisco (June 18, 2020, *Newsweek*)

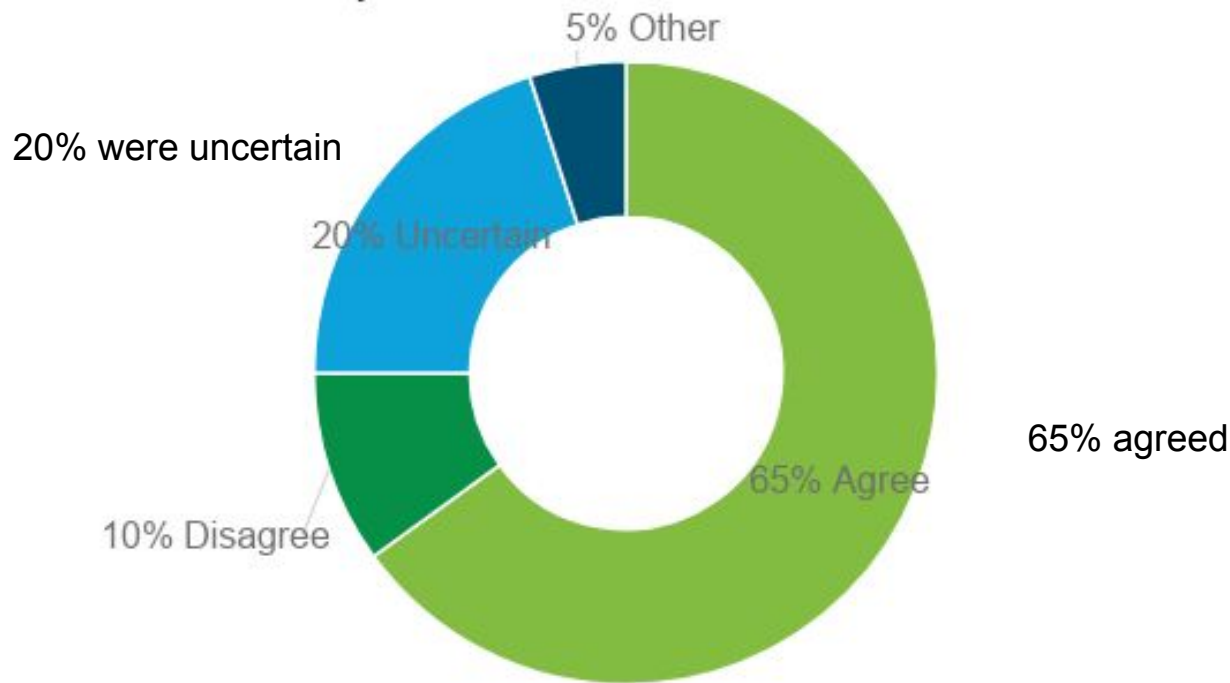
From Feb. to May, 2020, DPS was taking steps to revise the *Denver Plan 2020*. This included conducting interviews with 22 thought leaders. In response to one question, 80% agreed that a statement by Peter Drucker was relevant to the work on equity.



This drives home the point made by Dr. Anthony Fauci. Culture can offset the effectiveness of sound strategy. To achieve our desired aims, it is vital to think about whether/how aspects of culture either accelerate or impede sound strategy. Because DPS efforts to improve equity over the last decade have not appreciably closed gaps, thought should be given to the role of culture.

During the same interviews, 22 thought leaders were asked to reflect on the flexibility that schools and staff have in DPS. Altogether, 65% agreed with this characterization of the tension between autonomy and accountability.

School principals are independent operators, focused on innovation, school as unit of change, and “just make it happen for kids.” Tension exists between autonomy and accountability



When two thirds of the thought leaders who were interviewed are inclined to agree with this characterization, it suggests that a District culture that emphasizes autonomy has been at cross-purposes with equity-related strategies that have been pursued in the past. To achieve our equity aims, either the strategies or the culture (or both) may need adjustment..

While we care most about results, insights are key to system improvement.

There are 3 kinds of “wins”

Insight Wins --> Process Wins --> Result Wins

While there are 3 kinds of wins, people typically care most about results in terms of student performance but also improvement in staff performance and adult engagement. To achieve results our focus has to be on other things.

Charlie Baum
Founder
StartingPoint

When organizations engage in deep reflection they can uncover key insights. This is the first kind of “win.”

A second “win” comes when organizations tune processes to these insights.

Improvement in results is what follows. It represents the third kind of “win”.

For insight we can turn to series of 15 studies, reports, and data collections that focus on DPS.



Studies, Reports, and Data Collections that Inform Efforts of Denver Public Schools to Revise *Denver Plan 2020* (July 21, 2020)

Research Perspective

ERS (2017) points to 4-part theory of action

- Upward-trending district-run schools must drive future plans. Strive to attract, develop, and retain high-performing educators.
- Rely on public-private partnership to fuel transformation.
- Shift central office (compliance officer → thought partner).
- Improve structures & processes important to school success.
- Key was a theory of action [that included]:
 - Blend school flexibility with a strong accountability system.
 - Support should focus on building strong teachers & leaders.
 - Make continuous improvement of practice a central focus.
 - Ensure equitable access, funding & opportunity for students.

Jefferson report (2019) lists 6 focus areas

- No single, coherent equity definition found in DPS documents
- DPS needs robust, effective plan to accomplish equity mission
- Areas of focus possibly include:
 - Senior leadership team capacity: put equity in job description
 - Principal supervisors' capacity: put equity in job description
 - Continuous evaluation and improvement
 - Onboarding
 - Strategic planning
 - Equity Impact Assessment

Bailey report (2018) targeted intervention

- The qualitative report makes a persuasive case that without a focus on targeted initiatives for African American students, equity remains elusive. The most frequent themes emerging from the study were: (a) lack of qualified, culturally-competent teachers, (b) disproportionality in district response to discipline matters, (c) low expectations, (d) lack of culturally-relevant curriculum, and (e) lack of access to enrichment programs and experiences.

CREDO (2019) lists successes/chronic gap

- From 2014-2017 DPS outperforms statewide average gains. Accomplishments include:
 - DPS overall reading & math gains outpaced state average.
 - The same is true for students who are Black, Hispanic, from low-income families, ESL, & those in special education
- One chronic area of need still exists in DPS:
 - Wide gaps persist between subgroups (white vs students of color, and students in poverty vs those who are not)

RAND (2019) finds principal prep effective

- Principal prep is a feasible, effective, & affordable way to lift performance of schools & students. Effective leadership is associated with better outcomes for students & schools.
- Concludes study of DPS & 5 other districts by noting:
 - Schools with new principals outperformed comparison schools by 6 percentile points in reading (3 in math).
 - New principals were 8 percentage pts more likely to remain at their school 3 years than counterparts.
 - Achievement effects were positive (statistically significant for schools in lowest quartile of achievement distribution)

Black Excellence Resolution (2019)

- BOE OKs 3-part resolution to: (1) prioritize Black student success; (2) train all staff in CRE and implicit bias; (3) develop equity definition and complete an equity audit of central office

Public Perspective

Thought Leader Interviews (2020) cites findings

- Asked why DPS overall performance has improved in 20 years but subgroup gaps persist, 10 hypotheses surfaced.
- This is a scaling challenge. "We should do more of the same, just do it better than in the past." Stay the course.
- Vision & focus are the challenge. "We need coherent equity-focused vision. Too many priorities make focus hard."
- This is mostly about misalignment. "We need to do a better job of keeping the main thing the main thing."
- Fresh thinking needed. System we have is designed to get us results we have. Past success makes it hard to change.
- Schools have so much flexibility there is little comparability site-to-site, so it is difficult to learn from one another.
- Too few black/brown/low-income kids have access to rigorous expectations, curriculum, instruction, experiences.
- Among staff (administrators), there is uneven, inadequate, ineffective use of culturally responsive educational practices.
- An "all in" commitment to equity is lacking. An online module here or there is "drive-by equity." It is not enough.
- Shifting to equity-focused educational practice requires adaptive change; this calls on staff to acquire new knowledge and skill.
- DPS successfully uses targeted universalism with English learners but not yet with African American and black students
- Seven recommendations were identified:
 - Orient the policy environment toward equity (define equity, base school quality on equity, adopt targeted universalism)
 - Create a unified system of accountability and support focused on collaboration (aimed at learning to get better at getting better)
 - Modify leadership development so all principals and their supervisors are culturally competent and culturally responsive.
 - Alter school budget process so equity is an organizing principle (enabling individual schools to make a case for added funding)
 - Develop a strategy to make a vision of enhanced equity compatible with desire to raise capital and operational funds.
 - Adapt the instructional model so it better supports and advances equity on a virtual learning platform.
 - Adjust management practice using a decision-making framework to clarify decisions of BOE vs. central vs. sites.

Community Input Into equity definition (2020)

TBD (Findings being assembled and authenticated)

Community Input Into DPS grad profile (2020)

TBD (Findings being assembled and authenticated)

Practitioner Perspective

Landscape Analysis (2019) uncovers 5 ideas

- Challenges include too many initiatives, board approach to governance vs managerial attitude, and new directives.
- To revise *Denver Plan 2020*, aim is more-collaborative approach; co-create with community & BOE more involved
- What financial picture would be helpful?
- How do we use knowledge of our past to inform future; how do we use history to know what to replicate/avoid?
- Next step with respect to evidence is do a root cause analysis.

Data Workbook (2020) provides 3 viewpoints

- Review: Overview of Denver Public Schools
 - A facts-and-figures overview of DPS
- Retrospective: Progress Toward Goals in the *Denver Plan 2020*
 - Part A: Goal-by-goal analysis supported with key data points
 - Part B: Conditions of teaching/leadership/culture aiding DPS
- Prospective: What a Next *Denver Plan* may look like

Policy Perspective

TNTP Opportunity Myth (2018) names 4 levers

- Rigorous curriculum, instruction, expectations, and experiences

Adults create the biggest barriers to student success in school:

- Whether students get to work on grade-appropriate assignments
- Whether they have teachers who ask about challenging problems
- Whether adults ask them about college plans/goals or assume because they're Latinx, Black, or poor that college is unrealistic.

Three-quarter of a school year is wasted in classes that are boring, too easy, or irrelevant to students' life goals. Achievement gaps shrink when we make different choices about how resources are allocated. Here "resources" means rigorous curriculum, rigorous instruction, rigorous expectations, and rigorous experiences.

Every student & family is a partner and should have the opportunity to shape the experiences a student has in school. Adults believe their espoused commitments but in practice maintain status quo.

- Adults think "we're not the problem", when in fact they are.

A+ Colorado (2019) critiques pace of change

Critical of the slow pace of improvement under *Denver Plan 2020*. Uses current pace of improvement under *Denver Plan 2020* to generate estimates of time it would take to close gaps.

Nat'l Academy of Sci (2019) lists inequity roots

Presents framework for measuring & monitoring equity throughout nation's P12 system. Lays out indicators & measures for framework that "provides the system architecture to help policymakers address questions of equity in public education." Identifies the means for appraising equity and mechanisms for "improving outcomes." Includes indicators that measure disparity in both student academic outcomes as well as the access students have to vital resources and opportunities. The framework is attentive to how "societal conditions such as income inequality and residential segregation intersect with the educational processes in ways that have profound implications for efforts to reduce group disparities in educational progress, achievement, and attainment." Makes the case that in P12 system, inequity arises due to presence of one (or more) of three types of conditions:

- Excessive disparity between groups with respect to outcome (e.g. graduation), access to resource (e.g. Advanced Placement course), or progress toward goal (e.g. credit accumulation for graduation).
- Unacceptably poor fit between resources and student needs (focus is not just on if resources are targeted and provided to support terminal HS outcome; it is also on adequacy of P9 runway to HS).
- Inadequate efforts to mitigate the effects of structural disadvantage – for instance, segregation – on a variety of vulnerable student groups (e.g., economically-disadvantaged students, English learners, African American or black students, Latinx, etc.

African American Equity Task Force (2017)

- Guidelines and Five Recommendations (2019 and 2020)
 - Structure: All schools and departments develop an equity goal
 - Culturally Responsive Education (CRE): Advance CRE
 - Access: rigorous curriculum, instruction, expectation, & experience
 - Community/Family Engagement: Create centers & advisory centers
 - HR: Attract, develop, & retain Black & African American educators

AIM: Propose a framework for a revised *Denver Plan* (incl. equity definition, grad profile, goals, measures, strategies, and theory of action) that situates equity at the heart of efforts to equip every student to thrive, prosper, and pursue their dreams.

A certain few of these are a “call to action”.

Two in particular have the public support of the DPS Board of Education. One is the Black Excellence Resolution (BER) and the other is the African-American Equity Task Force Guidelines and Recommendations (AAETF).

Their recommendations fall into four categories:

- Needed gains for Black and African-American students
- Improvement in educator mindsets and skill-sets
- Advances in performance at the school-level
- Changes in policies governing the system

Included in recommendations, are these.

Each school completes a student data audit (to identify needs/strengths)

Central office completes an equity audit (to pinpoint needs/assets)

Each school, division, and central office department has an equity goal

Goals aim to enhance Black & African-American success in these ways:

- Access to rigorous curriculum, instruction, expectations, experiences
- Provision of prof'l development in Culturally Responsive practices
- Efforts to overcome racial disparities in student performance

For insight, we can also review themes that emerged from equity-related interviews that were conducted with 22 thought leaders in Denver.

As a lead-in to that, consider four datapoints that emerged from the thought leaders interviews. These datapoints are verbatim statements from these thought leader interviews.

Datapoint #1: Ownership

“Culture and equity are the foundation for all work that happens in a district. For us to be successful takes getting the ownership dynamic worked out. As a cornerstone, equity is supposed to be the foundation for the entire district. But instead, people usually describe it as owned by one individual within the E&E Team.

What does it take to get there? To learn and grow takes openness to the journey of self-discovery. This is what it would look like if DPS was as successful as we can imagine. There would be a level of passion and commitment to student success that is infectious and owned by everyone.”

Central Office
Department Leader
Equity and Engagement

Datapoint #2: Who goes first

“Let the data tell the story. Data don't lie. The rest is noise. Up until recently, DPS didn't seriously engage on equity. This is hard work. Get away from tiptoeing around it. Our conversations about race and disparities need to be much more deliberate . . . even if that makes people uncomfortable. We have to **normalize conversations about racial equity and operationalize social justice in all our practices.** There are places that have done it.. Take the Seattle Public Schools. The lesson there is they tried to move so far so fast that they out-paced their leadership team. And it all collapsed around them because senior leaders weren't ready. So, be sure to **get your senior people engaged and prepared first.** Go from there.”

Datapoint #3: What is essential is never optional

“We need to start saying what people can't opt out of. We need to start saying, ‘if you do this, you belong in DPS; otherwise you don't.’ When most of the students in our District are Black or Brown, how can it be that administrators get to opt out of professional development focused on culturally responsive education?”

Central Office
Department Leader
Academics Team

Datapoint #4: More than a set of modules

“For years, DPS engaged in what I call ‘drive-by equity.’ Take a module here or there, and we’re done with that. Not so. Real change requires cultural leadership that is fearless, leadership that sees racial disparities and inequities in schooling as the civil rights issue of our time. What do you stop doing and what do you start doing? Stop letting individual regions or schools or people opt in or out. Some of what is needed is imperative, so mandate that. No exceptions. To make this an earnest effort, you can’t have ‘drive-by equity’. Don’t kid yourself. Own your truth. You can’t achieve equity by taking a module here or there or online. This is a ‘hands-on journey’. It’s going to take a while.”

How do we think about themes from the interviews?

In his book titled *Poor Support*, Harvard professor David Ellwood describes how his work on the origins of poverty altered how the U.S. addresses the problem. Ellwood believed **to a hammer, all the world is a nail**. For that reason, he said a single approach to poverty policy won't do. To be effective, **policy must address each of these segments of poor in America –the working poor, the unemployed single female heads of households, the disabled, the elderly, alcoholics, substance abusers, Vietnam vets, the mentally ill, and others**.

Ellwood's work on poverty parallels the work equity in DPS. Returning to interviews with 22 thought leaders, when asked about the root cause of the District difficulty making headway on closing gaps, 10 different "theories of the case" emerged. **Asked to speculate why DPS has successfully lifted overall achievement in the last decade but has made only modest inroads closing gaps, those interviewed offered different explanations. Ten possibilities follow.**

Thought leader interviews: Theories of the case

- 1. Scaling:** This theory of the case says that this is a scaling challenge. We think we are on the right path and we simply need to do more of the same, just do it better than we have in the past.
- 2. Focus:** This is chiefly a matter of splintered focus. There are too many priorities, and DPS lacks a common definition for equity. Central office educators make matters too complex, and, as a result, it is hard to have a tight focus. A byproduct of this is suboptimization (this happens when staff focus on one component of a system and make changes to that one component but overlook how it affects other components).
- 3. Misalignment:** This is primarily a misalignment issue. Equity is better served if we align to factors that really make a difference in the classroom. The challenge is to keep the main thing the main thing.

Thought leader interviews: Theories cont'd

4. Fresh Thinking: The system we have is perfectly designed to get us the results we have. Thinking that got us here will not get us to the next level. Earnest efforts have not yielded the results we seek. So, fresh approaches are needed. The success the District has had over the last 20 years makes it difficult to leave behind approaches that have delivered in the past.

5. Site Autonomy Impairs Comparability (Hard to Learn from Each Other)
With so much variability site-to-site, it is difficult for schools to learn from each other. DPS characterizes itself as a learning organization that is committed to equity, yet schools have so much flexibility they lack the data needed to engage in the deep learning required to overcome inequity and its causes. Unfettered site-level autonomy means there is a proliferation of programs and few common approaches or yardsticks across all schools. This impedes the ability of the entire system to engage in continuous improvement.

Thought leader interview: Theories cont'd

6. Access to Rigor: Too few Black, Brown, and low-income students have access to rigorous expectations, rigorous curriculum, rigorous instruction, and rigorous experiences. Students of color face a steep climb and often cannot easily access a runway to college.

7. Inconsistent/Ineffective Use of Culturally Responsive Educational Practices

Culturally responsive educational practices are inadequately understood and ineffectively practiced (and supervised) by licensed educators, especially principals and those who supervise principals. Black and Brown students constitute the majority of those enrolled in DPS schools yet culturally responsive education is provided on an opt-in basis to licensed educators. To overcome oppression and white supremacy what is needed is not just culturally responsive educators but culturally competent staff and culturally sustainable practices. All licensed staff need that.

8. The Tyranny of Half-Measures

Fenwick English coined the phrase to describe how reform flounders when “all in” commitment is lacking. Achieving equity gains is contingent on all staff authentically joining the effort to acquire needed knowledge, skills, mindset. 25

Thought leader interviews: Theories cont'd

9. Adaptive Change versus Technical Change

The learning that is required to achieve more-equitable outcomes is adaptive. Adaptive challenges cannot be solved with existing knowledge and skill. By contrast, technical challenges can be solved with existing knowledge and skill. When the challenge involves adaptive change, there is no quick fix

10. Targeted Universalism

The central challenge is the unfulfilled promise of an approach (targeted universalism) that is a leading candidate to be the organizing principle for the district-wide equity framework for DPS. Targeted universalism has proved to be effective in DPS with English learners, but it has not yet been used as effectively with African American and Black students. This refers to the idea that while certain outcomes apply to all students ("all shall graduate from HS on time), the approaches differ for different populations.

Problem we are trying to solve

Earnest and ambitious efforts by smart and talented educators in DPS in the last decade have lifted overall performance but only modestly closed achievement gaps that separate racial subgroups. Because this is not a problem that can be overcome with existing knowledge and skill, it is an adaptive challenge, not a technical one. There is no quick fix; it requires a commitment from the entire workforce to long-term learning (both mindsets and skill-sets). The fundamental problem DPS faces is “learning how to get better at getting better”, in terms of advancing equity.

Note: The reference to “get better at getting better” is drawn from Linda Darling Hammond and the *Learning Policy Institute* at Stanford. In this context, “getting better” means eliminating subgroup performance gaps.

Consequences of the problem (the “why”)

While equity is a cornerstone, there is a mismatch between what we say and do in DPS. We say we want to level the field and maximize talent. Yet, the harsh truth is (results from the last decade show) that existing policies and practices are reinforcing the historical advantage of students from certain racial groups and are perpetuating the disadvantage of students from other racial groups.

Priority statement: Broadly phrased

Given the DPS commitment to break historical patterns of systemic inequity and educational racism that have resulted in too few Black, brown, and low-income students from succeeding at high levels, DPS will . . .

Modify existing policies and practices -- as well as culture and strategy -- to guarantee every student (and especially those of color or accent and those from low-income families) is prepared with the tools to make a home, a life, and a future.

Priority Statement: Explanation

Every educator will contribute measurably and meaningfully toward:

1. Preparing all students (especially African American and Black students) to pursue their dreams and exit school ready to lead the lives they dream of having; and
2. Contributing to upwardly-trending overall district academic performance and the elimination of racial disparities in student growth, achievement, and college access.

Priority Statement: Elaboration

Tune the DPS system of accountability and support to overcome implicit bias, disrupt oppression, dismantle white supremacy, and install more-inclusive and more-equitable systems, structures, policies, and processes. The aim is twofold: (1) promote and sustain an asset-based culture, and (2) prepare a staff that values difference, ensures access for students historically underserved, and delivers the personalized support all young people need in order to thrive in school and pursue their chosen path in life.

The Foundation for This Work

Richard Elmore's reciprocal accountability model

What does it mean to “tune the system of accountability and support?” (as in the elaboration of the Priority Statement)

The *Council of Chief State School Officers* relies on Elmore's model of reciprocal accountability.

“Before I expect one more ounce of increased performance from you, I have a reciprocal responsibility to help you develop the capacity to produce the desired performance. Accountability systems generally provide inadequate opportunities and incentives for the learning needed to meet high expectations.”

Source: *Learning Centered Framework for Ed Reform: What It Means for Policy*, TC Press, 2010, p 67

If our aim is a just system of schooling, and our equity-related efforts seek to level the playing field, then how do we make sense of inequalities that exist?

John Rawls offers 3 principles that characterize a just system

1. Liberty

Each person has equal claim to basic rights; no 2nd class citizen

1. Fair Equality of Opportunity

Every opportunity should be available to every person.

1. Difference Principle

All should benefit but the least advantaged should benefit most.

Because no one is entitled to a particular starting place in life, these are designed to compensate for naturally-occurring inequalities. They seek to ensure a fair deal for the least advantaged. Principle 3 permits inequalities but only if they benefit those traditionally least well-off. The 3 principles are in priority order. The 1st is more important than 2nd and the 2nd is more important than the 3rd.

First of Six Assumptions

1. Unfettered autonomy that exists means schools and individuals have been able to opt out of equity-related initiatives.

Explanation: What is in short supply in DPS is the realization that expectations alone are not enough to motivate this system to change. For a decade, the district has intentionally been oriented around the concept of “school is the unit of change”. Consequently, principals are largely independent operators, and DPS is more a district of schools than a school district. What has been missing is any accountability (by an individual or a school or a department or a division) for failing to do what is needed to make equity more than a rhetorical exercise, a kind of check-box activity.

Second of Six Assumptions

2. Equity audits and school data audits show leaders the strengths and areas of need within their school/dept/division

Explanation: Work that is underway will shine a light on the equity-related assets and shortcomings of schools (student data audits) as well as divisions and departments (central office equity audits being designed through the work with RIDES)

Third of Six Assumptions

3. Equity goals that leaders draft build on lessons from interviews with thought leaders (access to rigor matters)

Explanation: When formulating an equity-related goal, leaders create goals that describe what will be done (by the school or department or division they lead) to ensure African American and Black students have access to rigorous curriculum, rigorous instruction, rigorous expectations, and rigorous experiences.

Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth of Six Assumptions

4. Accountability follows if leaders make public an equity goal for their respective school, department, or division.
5. The desired culture change become possible when the Superintendent requires leaders to sign on and authentically engage.
6. When shifting from the planning stage to the execution stage, remember that needs drive plans and plans drive resources

Theory of Action



If we want to walk our talk and live by our District beliefs and values ...



And we believe that means acting in a way that reflects the claim that “equity is our core identity” ...



And we believe improvement takes aligning resources & priorities, beliefs & actions, central & site...



And we believe alignment is necessary but insufficient to produce desired improvement...



And we believe coherence is needed (“teacher talk” & “principal talk” focus on key DPS priorities)...

Theory of Action

Then each division, department, and school will commit to equity in the form of a goal.

And each division, department, and school will measure and report on progress toward their goal...

And District performance will improve overall and subgroup performance gaps will close.

Turning to strategies, a metaphor comes to mind.

You can lead a horse to water, but can't make him drink.

But you can salt the oats.

Strategy possibilities

Four options

(based on the reciprocal accountability model of Richard Elmore used by Council of Chief State School Officers)



Definitions:

- o Expectations: The anticipation or belief that something will/should happen in the future
- o Capacities: The ability, fitness, or competency to perform
- o Opportunities: The chance or prospect (as in favorable conditions or circumstances)
- o Incentives: That which motivates or encourages someone to do something

Strategy examples

Note: Examples are provided for each of these four families of strategies. In the area of opportunities and incentives, examples are not necessarily related to equity.

Expectations:

- Each school and dept will complete an equity audit.
- Each school and dept will have an equity goal
- When it comes to equity-related prof'l development, all staff participate (no "opt out")

Capacities:

- All licensed staff will complete the Equity Experience
- All licensed staff will be proficient in use of culturally responsive educational practices
- Staff demonstrate proficiency in cultural competence and culturally sustainable practices

Opportunities:

- Schools may elect to apply to a private foundation for grant funding to support STEM
- Secondary schools may opt into participating in the AVID program
- Schools may elect to join an innovation network

Incentives:

- Schools scoring green or blue on the SPF enjoy reduced central office oversight
- Students who are proficient in English and one more language earn a Biliteracy Seal
- Students earning an IB diploma receive 2 years of credit at State-funded universities

Other strategy “entry points”

Disproportionality: Eliminate race as a predictor with respect to composition of...

- Talented and gifted
- Special education
- Incidence of expulsion or other exclusionary practices
- Students with disabilities who receive Special Education services
- Uptake in pre-collegiate coursework (Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate)

Professional Development and Learning

- All complete the Equity Experience
- Certification in the use of culturally responsive education practices
- Certification in use of culturally competent and culturally sustainable practices

Support for Whole Child Re-Engagement

- Support for the Whole Child
- Physical and Mental Health Needs of Student
- Universal Social-Emotional Learning
- Support for Ensuring Student and School Safety
- Support for Staff Well-Being

E&E Content here (Aug 22 boe)

Content to support strategy conversation

- 1) The **STRATEGIES** (~2-4) that will support achieving the Equity Cornerstone
- 2) Strategy grounding information about the strategies including:
 - a) **CURRENT STATE:** Why is this strategy needed?
 - b) **VISION:** What do we think we can achieve during 2020-21? What will success look like? What is the change from current state?
 - c) **STRATEGY DESCRIPTION:** What will we do to accomplish our vision? Why are these the right actions to focus on?
 - d) **EXPECTATIONS FOR WHAT IS TIGHT:** What will we hold tight? Where will schools have flexibility?
- 3) A **THEORY OF ACTION** that addresses how the strategies will achieve Equity Cornerstone

Note: How this information is shared is flexible. **As much as possible, please pull from existing material that has been created already rather than creating new content** to reduce the time burden on your team for preparation. For reference, the Academics team shared their [existing grounding slides](#) for JLW as grounding for Crisis Priority #3 / Instructional Excellence.

Structural Racism Reflection Questions

Do the strategies sufficiently address structural racism considerations?

- How will our actions be directly in response to reduces/ends racism for Black students?
- How are our strategies centered on our students, teachers and staff, and are they culturally responsive?
- How are we aware of and continually reflecting on the impact of our own backgrounds, beliefs, biases, and mindsets in relationship to our users throughout the design process?
- Have we dug deeper into the data to understand current disparities and the impact of our current strategies?