



Building for EQUITY

**A Guide for Inclusive
School Redesign**



Center for
Collaborative
Education

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Acknowledgments

Lead Author: Diana Lebeaux

Contributing Authors: Dawn Shearer-Coren, Laura Tota, Dan French, Karla Vigil, Ramona Treviño, Irene Logan, Dustin Liu

Other Contributors and Editors: Gary Chapin, Rita Harvey, Jessica Famularo, Emily Sienkiewicz, Oscar Santos, Peter Piazza, Carisa Corrow, Suzanne Edwards-Acton, Heather White, Ruth Ellis, Arthur Mitchell

Design: Libby Ventura (overall), Emily Sienkiewicz (for logos and infographics)

Copyediting: CambridgeEditors

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Introduction

Our Why

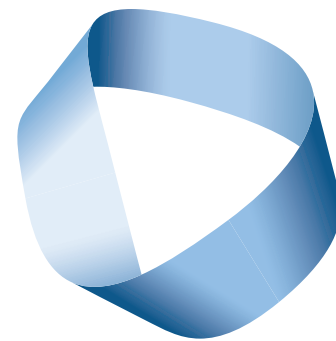
The time is ripe for a practical toolkit for equity-focused school redesign work. Culturally responsive teaching, social justice, and critical pedagogy have long remained niche topics that many educators, even those who hope for equitable outcomes, have seen as distinct from their daily work. But after years of “equity” being a buzzword—resulting in an avalanche of white papers and keynote speeches—educators and change leaders are slowly being moved to learn how to more deeply integrate equitable practices into their school designs. We at the [Center for Collaborative Education](#) (CCE) are passionate about making sure that this movement toward educational equity in practice does not lose momentum.

We define educational equity as the practice of ensuring that all schools provide a barrier-free environment, ensuring that every student, especially those who are underprivileged, has what is needed for immediate and future success. Although we redesign schools with all kinds of equity in mind (racial, ethnic, gender, class, (dis)ability status, etc.), ensuring that any barriers to success that exist for any group of students are removed, we at CCE particularly emphasize equity across racial and ethnic groups, given the longstanding existence and disproportionate impact of inequity across racial lines.

To be truly equitable, schools must have not only equity of opportunity but also equity of outcomes: the results must show, in other words, that the school is delivering on its

promise to bring an excellent education, fairly, to all its students. This requires that the school community shares the belief that all students deserve the opportunity and support needed to excel, and provides policies, structures, and supports to make students’ success a reality.

Equity-minded school reform is difficult and remains challenged by a paucity of practical resources and direct support. There are myriad school models purporting to solve opportunity and achievement gaps through an overall emphasis on novelty and innovation that nevertheless fail to move the needle significantly for their most vulnerable students.¹ Leaders who believe in equity are uncertain how to bring it to life, while teachers reel from innovation fatigue as they notice that their efforts result in only incremental progress toward better service for students. As a result, the same schools—most of which serve high percentages of low-income students, English learners, and students of color—seem always mired in intractable struggles. Education reform is all too often a great Möbius strip, leading any turnaround effort back to where it began.



¹ *Getting Smart* published an article exploring this so-called innovation inequity paradox and provided some practical guidance for schools hoping to innovate without deepening inequities. See Matt Hiefield and Tom Vander Ark, “The Innovation Inequity Paradox,” *Getting Smart*, September 4, 2018, <https://www.gettingsmart.com/2018/09/the-innovation-inequity-paradox/>.

School and system leaders often express to us that they worry about their communities' collective energy to sustain change, and that emphasizing equity as a goal can seem risky because the term is unclear and prone to being misunderstood. There can be a temptation to presume that by becoming student centered, schools will achieve equity as a byproduct. To counteract this, when we push schools to prioritize equity, we must ensure that both the language and the targets are clear. We cannot simply tout equity in theory—and for accountability purposes—while failing, despite our best intentions, to personalize the student experiences in culturally responsive ways that bring equitable outcomes.

The stubborn problems some of our schools face often seem to have little to do with the schools themselves. Research continually supports the conclusion that poverty is the single greatest barrier to academic success for students, suggesting that schooling will not lead to fair outcomes until we eliminate poverty in society at large.² But poverty cannot be the scapegoat when racism is also a factor; even when poverty is removed from the equation, students of color face unequal outcomes.³ School segregation, for example, reinforced the correlations among low academic achievement, poverty, and race⁴ that remain to this day. Meanwhile, inequitable accountability structures focused primarily on high-stakes testing have reified the racial achievement gap; and biased, classist, racist curricula too often derail engagement and accessibility for students of color and those experiencing financial hardship. And despite revolutionary changes in our world since the 1930s, our schools have, for the most part, stubbornly retained the structures that were designed in that decade to rank, sort, and even oppress our youth.

In a 2014 study of Black and Latino males in Boston Public Schools, CCE, in partnership with the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, identified four schools in which Black and Latino males performed incrementally better than their peers citywide. All four schools had the hallmarks of innovative success: differentiated instruction, educator collaboration through professional learning communities, and high expectations for all students. These structures *should* have resulted in strong results for males of color, as these aspects correlate

to higher achievement among students at large. Yet despite these strengths and overall positive results, Black and Latino males at these schools fared only slightly better than other Black and Latino males in Boston, some of the city's most underserved students. Why? Our researchers concluded in a follow-up 2015 study⁵ that an impediment to greater success for these students was a lack of cultural competency within the schools. All four schools lacked a schoolwide curriculum that recognized and valued diverse student cultures and instead embraced a “colorblind” approach to learning or relied on stereotypes, without a nuanced understanding of the

students served. In contrast, several schools that proactively embrace a culturally responsive approach have experienced success in better serving their students of color and have been successful overall with the students they serve.⁶

Perhaps, despite the enormous undertaking that is school improvement, we must be more—not less—ambitious. We can't settle for

school improvement by incremental growth that barely meets the threshold of statistical significance. We can't ignore a legacy of racism, oppression, and marginalization as we work—however earnestly. And we can't respond to the nuanced diversity of our students in our school designs with a simple stated emphasis on cultural relevance. To put it bluntly: we can't pigeonhole equity as we move to be transformative; we must, instead, work at the very nexus of equity and innovation.

This nexus occurs when equity is a fundamental factor in how we innovate. The process of innovating must ensure a strong, diverse representation, community-driven decisions, and equitable learning that includes an exploration of identity and bias. The new school designs must feature culturally responsive curricula, just policies, and broad community engagement. Moreover, the outcomes must be regularly

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2 For example, see “Poverty and the Achievement Gap,” a report by Renée Wilson-Simmons for the National Center for Children in Poverty, <http://www.ecs.org/clearing-house/01/19/90/11990.pdf>.

3 For evidence, see Raj Chetty, Nathaniel Hendren, Maggie R. Jones, and Sonya R. Porter, *Race and Economic Opportunity in the United States: An Intergenerational Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Opportunity Insights, 2018), http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/assets/documents/race_paper.pdf.

4 For further analysis, see academic studies such as Gary Orfield and Chungmei Lee's 2005 article for Harvard's Civil Rights Project, “Why Segregation Matters: Poverty and Educational Inequality,” available from ERIC at <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED489186.pdf>.

5 R. Tung, V. D. Carlo, M. Colón, J. L. Del Razo, J. B. Diamond, A. Frazier Raynor, D. Graves, P. J. Kuttner, H. Miranda, and A. St. Rose, *Promising Practices and Unfinished Business: Fostering Equity and Excellence for Black and Latino Males* (Providence, RI; Boston, MA: Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University; Center for Collaborative Education, 2015).

6 For example, the Mastery Collaborative schools in NYC explicitly embrace culturally responsive teaching and diversity within their mastery-based (innovative) school model, according to Amadou Diallo; see “Access Does Not Equal Equity,” Hechinger Report, March 1, 2019, <https://hechingerreport.org/access-does-not-equal-equity/>. Similarly, research by S. B. García and P. L. Guerra shows the impacts educators' cultural proficiency has on student outcomes; see “Deconstructing Deficit Thinking: Working with Educators to Create More Equitable Learning Environments,” *Education and Urban Society*, 36, no. 2 (2004), 150–68.



monitored to ensure that the schools do not stagnate in closing gaps in opportunity and achievement.

Since our 2015 study, we at CCE have worked at this nexus in all our work supporting school design and redesign, and we have begun the process to become more firmly committed to racial equity as an antiracist organization. We have since accumulated a robust toolkit to support our coaches as they collaborate with schools and districts. Yet we have come to realize that even our own practice has lacked a formal framework that would inform our respective coaching, bind all our work together, and help us establish proof points so that we can help scale the most promising innovative and culturally responsive school design elements. As a result, we were inspired to convert our tools, practices, and processes into a sequence of steps that can be used by practitioners and change agents alike. *Building for Equity* was born, serving as a practical resource for school change, even as it strives to avoid quick fixes and easy answers.

Our Framework

Our *Building for Equity* framework is first and foremost centered on ensuring equitable student outcomes, the result of aligned and equity-focused people, policies, processes, and practices. To achieve our ultimate goal of true and sustainable equity within the fraught context of K–12 US education, we have learned that we must **dismantle power structures** that currently produce inequity and rob agency from under-resourced students and families; **include all voices** in visioning, planning, and implementation; and **learn for transformation** both internally and externally.

In order to achieve these outcomes, we have learned that three Critical Drivers must simultaneously be present:

- **Culturally Responsive Design Principles** ensure that schools are built to meet the mental, social-emotional, and engagement needs of all students; in particular, that the school is inclusive and supportive of students of color, low-income students, English Learners, and students with learning differences. There is no single set of design elements that indicate a culturally responsive school, but CCE’s principles can serve as a touchstone for design teams.
- **Intersection of Self and Systems** entails the personal learning that individual educators must do to examine their own identities, biases, beliefs, and privileges in the wider context of their local, national, and global institutions: in short, their positionality. Only by a careful and supported exploration of themselves within their school community contexts and beyond can educators be prepared to collaborate fully with their school community to build culturally responsive schools.

Where would this toolkit be most useful? We need look no further than our neighborhood school. “Equity” and “social justice” are easy to pigeonhole as concerns for urban schools serving predominantly low-income children of color, and indeed, some communities of color and schools that serve them have been making important headway in this field for a long time. However, it is just as crucial to ensure that more privileged students and those in predominantly white districts have schools built for equity that actively seek to dismantle oppressive systems. After all, these systems are harmful, if differently so, for white and well-resourced families as well as for their peers.

In short, equity does not act on school innovation as oil to water. Rather, the two are like baking soda and vinegar: when combined, they have the power to erupt into a real transformation, bringing positive change for all our students, especially those who need it the most.

- **Community-Driven Process** acknowledges that the journey is often as important as the destination, not least in school redesign work. For a school to become authentically responsive, the process by which it is created must include and give voice to the constituents who will be most affected: the students, their families, and the wider community. Our **Equitable Redesign Cycle**, which constitutes the majority of this guide, is built as a community-driven process.



The Equitable Redesign Cycle

Our redesign cycle is propelled by the Critical Drivers above and builds on the bedrock of [CCE's Data-Based Inquiry Cycle](#), which is informed by both research and practice, as well as many years of work supporting design teams in leading the process of whole-school (re)design. While CCE's Data-Based Inquiry Cycle emphasizes equity throughout, the Equitable Redesign Cycle was designed from the beginning to embed equity at every phase and step, in action-oriented and practicable ways.

The Equitable Redesign Cycle consists of four phases. Although the phases and steps are numbered, they are rarely approached in simple chronological order. Often multiple steps occur simultaneously. Sometimes steps must be retraced in order for the overall project to be successful. However, the phases and steps, as described, are in an order that can serve as a logical reference for teams engaging in school redesign from start to finish.

The four phases of the Equitable Redesign Cycle are

- Establishing Our Team
- Rediscovering Our Community
- Envisioning the Change
- Implementing for Equity

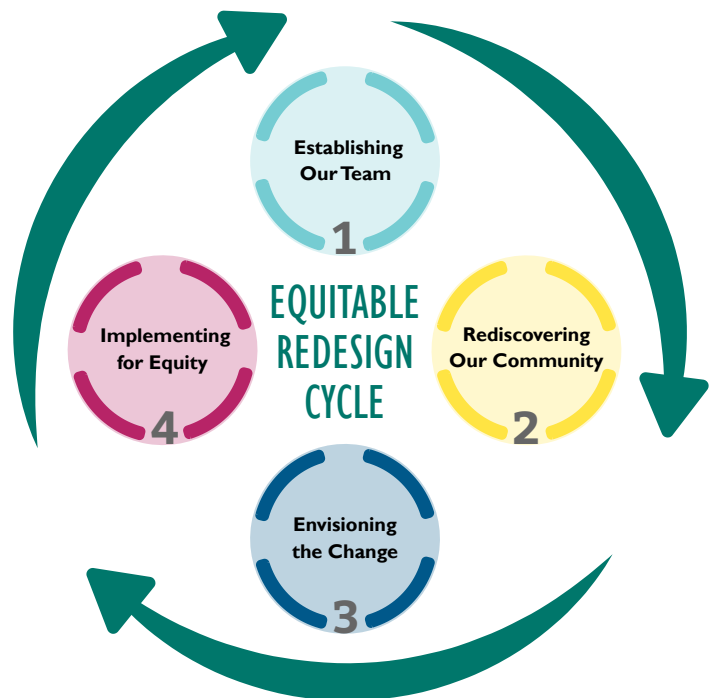
Each phase includes several discrete steps, which can occur in any order appropriate to the setting, or even simultaneously.

One of the great opportunities built into a cycle is the ability to begin again—not in a disjointed way, but in an intentional and iterative way. Upon completion of an initial cycle, our framework urges users to consider four possibilities after a period of analysis and reflection, none of which involve resting on our laurels. The cycle is continuous: after all, in the world of education, there is no end—only new ways to grow.

Where to Start?

Understanding the principles of the *Building for Equity* framework will strongly impact the success of any school improvement endeavor. Therefore, we recommend that all individuals or design teams begin by reading the chapter focused on the Critical Drivers as a prerequisite for any subsequent use of the guide or its tools.

However, we do acknowledge that there are multiple entry points to school change work, and individual classroom teachers or nonprofit partners, for example, might prefer to jump right into particular phases, steps, or individual tools that support their work. We invite this kind of direct interaction with the help of the “Before You Begin” section at the beginning of the Community-Driven Redesign Process chapter.



1. The Intersection of Self and Systems

The first Critical Driver that supports *Building for Equity* is the Intersection of Self and Systems. This may also be described as an individual’s “positionality.”⁷ In this driver, we learn who we are within larger systems, including systems of privilege and oppression, which in turn helps us to be prepared to build equitable schools and to disrupt the factors that led to broken schools in the first place.

We strongly urge groups to resist the temptation to bypass self-discovery in order to focus immediately and exclusively on tangible steps. Certainly, the people who initiate a redesign process are among the most motivated to begin *right away*. Typically, two or three educators or administrators coming together kindle the start of a school design or redesign process. Maybe the collaboration is triggered by problems—so-called achievement gaps, for example, or a worrisome school climate—or maybe by a sense of idealism, the desire to make positive change for the benefit of students. The first step seems obvious: to form a team and launch the process. In this excitement, and the impatience that external pressures may inspire, self-discovery is easy to overlook. However, other innovations for equity will likely founder if the team bypasses critical mindset, identity, and systems learning.

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The design team, whether nascent or long established, will have the heavy responsibility of a school redesign with equitable outcomes as its central focus. This necessitates that each team member has a deep awareness of their individual identity and the ways identity impacts teaching and learning, relationships in general, and ultimately the design project. While establishing trust is an important part of any team process, self-discovery is about understanding the impacts of our own beliefs and values. The practice of broadening and deepening our understanding of our individual selves within systems increases our awareness of the impact of implicit biases and our ability to resist the potential of an unjust assignment of dominance and subordination being replicated in a new school design or redesign.

Some members of the design team may be absolute beginners in this work, while others may be more experienced and further along in the process of discovering self as related to systems. Often, this work is a balance between taking a unified approach and ensuring that individuals have the space to grow. Phase 1, Step 2 of our redesign process focuses on this exact balance, which may be helpful to groups developing a learning plan. This chapter, however, contains resources appropriate for those earlier in the learning process.

The resources and guidance provided here offer an entry point for exploring aspects of identity and their potential impacts on group dynamics and educational systems. This chapter can be a primer for new design teams as well as inspiration for individual professional learning plans that we explore more fully in Phase 1. However, readings and resources are no substitute for a deep, facilitated process of understanding the impact of who we are has on the systems in which we exist; this work is best done with an experienced facilitator supporting the participants through professional development modules, experiences, and tough conversations. If this facilitated work occurs in tandem with the Equitable Redesign Cycle, then the two processes mutually enrich each other in myriad tangible ways. The guidance below can provide an important foundation for either or both of these processes.



⁷ We define “positionality” as one’s position in a group, within a wider sociopolitical context, as determined by identities such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability, and other innate or perceived attributes.

Framing Work toward a Deeper Understanding of Self

Understanding the implications of how one's personal and group identities determine one's positionality as an individual ultimately informs our awareness of how positionality impacts teaching and leadership practice, and more importantly our development in becoming equity-minded educators. Just as we develop habits of behavior through those who raise us, our values and beliefs are informed by them, as well as by our wider society, and we all develop biases. Biases or associations are the brain's way of ultimately allowing us to protect ourselves, and as a result *we do not know what we do not know*. Until we embark on this work, we remain limited in our ability to create equity-centered classrooms and schools.

Personal identity work begins with deepening our understanding of how identity is defined in our world and how it informs our interactions with others and theirs with us. Our society puts a value on all the dimensions that define us, whether gender, religion, race, marital status or any other aspect of our identities. Identities fall into either **dominant** or **subordinate** categories across these dimensions, and we are socialized to associate being “normal” with dominance. Doing personal identity work gives us a lens into how we are positioned in the various parts of our lives and society. In turn, it opens our eyes to how *others* experience, and are positioned within, the world. From the exercise of *personal identity work*, members of the design team can take away understanding of how their beliefs and values are shaped; a heightened awareness of unexplored biases and blind spots they each possess; and a deeper appreciation of their positionality as educators and community members. For educators in particular, we see the ultimate goal of this step as preparing them to lead their students in challenging dominant perspectives and developing a critical consciousness.

Exploring dominant and subordinate designations may begin with topics that the group is more comfortable exploring.

These topics will be culturally dependent.⁸ Some groups have a relatively easy time exploring being male in contrast to female, for example. Other potential contrasts to explore may include

- Formal and informal education experiences (e.g., college educated in contrast to those who did not attend an institute for higher education)
- English proficiency (fluent in contrast to learning)
- Christian and non-Christian religious affiliation
- Sexuality (heterosexual in contrast with other sexual preferences)
- Gender identity (cisgender⁹ in contrast with other gender identities)
- Race and ethnicity

While all aspects of our identities deserve analysis, race is a topic groups often avoid—and it becomes more difficult to explore the longer it goes *unexplored*. As a result, racial identity requires an explicit focus. In our racialized society, all of us must face the reality and impacts of our own and others' racial identity. And understanding the self is only the first step: with racial and other designations come privilege or a lack of privilege, related to dominant and subordinate designations.

Any “self-work” must begin with a period of self-reflection and deepening personal understanding. It is also valuable to do this work with others who are on the path of deepening their understanding of personal identity, which is ideal in the context of a design team. Such collaboration, however, must be coupled with the expectation that all sharing is voluntary. Moreover, the group must continue to engage in trust building, along with the early generative work of school design, in tandem with the “self-work” that informs it. While it is paramount that this work be voluntary, it's equally true that these kinds of reflections are imperative to the transformation needed to become a true equity leader—in schools or otherwise.¹⁰

In the following paragraphs, we outline some entry points—tools and exercises individuals can use independently as well as within the design team context. Some of these are primarily appropriate for educators (and may even be appropriate for those not currently part of the design team), while others are applicable to any design team member, regardless of role.

The ultimate goal of this step is to lead students in challenging dominant perspectives and developing a critical consciousness.

⁸ This guide is created for an American context; dominant and subordinate identities may be very different in other cultural contexts. For example, in different countries, different religions would be “dominant” or normalized.

⁹ Cisgender persons are those whose gender identity matches that assigned at birth.

¹⁰ In fact, if a person opts out of “self-work” around the intersection of self and systems, they may not be sufficiently capable of contributing to an equity-focused school redesign project.



Approaches to Identity Exploration

Developing an understanding of the aspects of identity, and how identity relates to the value society places on one's role and personal characteristics, is a powerful way of understanding our positionality in the world. How we are positioned determines our level of power, privilege, and even our perceived credibility.

In the Intersection of Self and Systems Reflection Guide provided in this toolkit, we describe one suggested process of individual reflection to support the navigation of some of the readings recommended in this chapter of the guide. While some exercises and resources are described in more detail below, this guide can serve as a handy starting place, particularly useful for those individuals just beginning their journey to understand positionality; that is, the intersection of self and (social) systems.

[“A Working Conceptualization of Historically Excluded and Historically Included Groups”](#)¹¹ can be valuable early exercise in exploring power and privilege. This table introduces examples of dominant and subordinate identity aspects that exist within various individual and group identities. It is powerful to consider our positionality, particularly if we haven't thought deeply about it previously. The comparisons in this table allow individuals to gain a sense of how they are and have been positioned in our society. These reflection questions deepen one's understanding of these concepts.

For many groups working toward equity in education, race becomes a central concept of identity exploration, related to the fundamental role that structural racism and white supremacy play in upholding inequitable educational systems. While it is often difficult for group members, particularly for people who identify as white, to have conversations related to race, it is necessary when doing personal identity work to be open to and willing to examine this part of our identity. We live in a racialized society, and we cannot fully understand the positionality of our own identity if we don't understand our racial identity. How we understand the significance of racial differences, and the interactions across these differences, informs our ability to develop a critical consciousness and awareness of dominant structures that shape our roles and institutions. As a result, continued exploration into identity necessitates a particularly deep dive into issues of race.

The topic of race is best broached with the aid of time-tested and reliable resources. The classic Beverly Tatum book *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria*¹² is an excellent resource for educators working to deepen their understanding of the impact our personal identities have in our schools and classrooms, with a specific emphasis on race. Chapter 2 of the book, for example, provides insight into how dominant and subordinate identities develop and how we are conditioned to operate within these contexts until our awareness is raised; and the whole book offers a valuable deep dive into racial dynamics within schools. One successful approach to using this book or other complex texts in the

We live in a racialized society, and we cannot fully understand the positionality of our own identity if we don't understand our racial identity.

context of school design is to initiate a reading and discussion group for the book, including text-based discussions about select portions.

In order to fully understand our own development within the social construct of race, it is important to understand racial identity development models. For design teams wanting to explore different models together as a gateway to

deeper learning for individuals, we recommend [“Summary of Stages of Racial Identity Development,”](#)¹³ which covers a variety of frameworks. Janet Helms's model, included in the document, was developed specifically for people who identify as white; James Cross's model outlines the development of people of color. Individuals on the design team can work to deepen their self-awareness of their own identity development by reflecting on their own place within the appropriate framework at various stages in life, and meeting with one or two others on the design team from the same affinity group.¹⁴ Members can then reflect with the same colleague(s) on periods when they were in different parts of the model, and ideas they have for their own self-growth based on this reflection and awareness.

11 This table was developed by Valerie Batts of Visions, Inc., and appears in her presentation “Awareness of Self as a Cultural Being,” delivered at the Foundations of Infant Mental Health Training Program, Central California Children's Institute, Fresno State, March 7, 2013, <https://www.fresnostate.edu/chhs/ccci/documents/Dr.Valerie.Batts.03.07.13.powerpoint.presentation.pdf>.

12 Beverly Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria and Other Conversations about Race* (New York: Basic Books, 1997, updated 2017).

13 Racial Equity Tools, “Summary of Stages of Racial Identity Development,” https://www.raciaequitytools.org/resourcefiles/Compilation_of_Racial_Identity_Models_7_15_11.pdf. Racial Equity Tools (raciaequitytools.org) is a compendium of many great resources, frameworks, and tools around the topic of racial equity, including education-related work but also work in many other fields.

14 In this context, affinity groups refer to subgroups of individuals with the same identity—in this case, by specific racial/ethnic identity, or simply as white persons or people of color.



Self and Systems

Another component of identity work is beginning to understand the dynamics of privilege and power and our place in these dynamics: in other words, our positionality. Our positionality determines the amount and depth of privilege we hold. For example, individuals who are formally educated possess a level of credibility and credentials that allow them access to higher paying jobs and higher expectations from others. Peggy McIntosh's 1988 article "[White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#)"¹⁵ remains a go-to resource for bringing light to the privileges white families experience both in and out of the school setting. Gary Howard's book *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know* is another text that helps the reader to understand the three areas of personal identity exploration described in this chapter: dominant and subordinate identity, racial identity development, and privilege.¹⁶

At the end of this guide (in the Supportive Reading and Resources section) is an **Intersection of Self and Systems Personal Learning Guide**, which includes suggested reflection questions for some of the common readings featured in this section. This resource can be a valuable starting place for individuals seeking to deepen their understanding within this Critical Driver.

When we develop an understanding of our own—and therefore others'—identity, positionality, and privilege level, we have a fuller appreciation of how implicit biases operate in our everyday lives. A foundational resource for understanding implicit biases can be participation in, and open discussion about, the Implicit association test at [Project Implicit](#). Video resources that can support design team members in analyzing and reflecting on their understanding of bias and how biases impact the way we interact with our students, their families, and our colleagues include [UCLA DEI Implicit Bias video lessons](#) and a TED talk entitled "How to Overcome Our Biases? Walk Boldly toward Them," by Vernā Meyers.

To be effective and culturally responsive, an educator—or design team member—must explore their personal identity, better understand others' identities, and gain an appreciation of how our educational systems reinforce dominant perspectives. It takes courage to delve into these topics. Raising our personal awareness of identity and positionality can be a lonely journey. Creating opportunities for ourselves to share new ideas and learnings with individuals who are on the same journey can both lessen the challenges of this work and, more importantly, propel us forward in our growth and development. This is where the team becomes an asset. Phase 1 of the redesign process provides additional structures to

support collaboration, especially around topics like race and identity, where individuals may be in very different places on the continuum of learning and which require a high level of trust to explore.

The value of the undertaking, however, is profound. Norming these difficult conversations will allow us to create and recreate schools that are culturally competent and equitable. When we raise topics of social justice and critical consciousness, we must be able to talk about all aspects of identity, and to understand the perspectives from which others experience the world. The understanding and empathy acquired by "self and systems work" is an important lever in achieving successful outcomes.

Supportive Structures

For schools and districts moving toward a deeper understanding of the intersection of self and systems, some of the following structures and approaches will support this critical but challenging work:

- **Leadership engagement.** While classroom teachers must be engaged in this learning, efforts at change founder without deep commitment and congruent learning from school- and district-level leaders.
- **Professional development and facilitation.** External professional development and facilitation can be an important asset to self and systems learning. Often, groups benefit from the support of two facilitators, one white and one a person of color, to help all participants navigate conversations about race.
- **Affinity groups.** When covering issues such as race/ethnicity, gender, and other sensitive topics, groups often can benefit from providing spaces in which those who identify as the dominant group can engage in separate conversations and work from those in "subordinate" groups.
- **Studying whiteness.** Especially in predominantly white schools and districts, deepening an understanding of "whiteness" is an important endeavor to pursue alongside improving the understanding of other races, ethnicities, and cultures. Some of the resources mentioned in this section can support this work.

15 Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" (Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College Center, 1998), <https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/mcintosh.pdf>.

16 Gary Howard, *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know* (New York: Teacher's College Press, 2015).



Additional Recommended Reading

- *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria and Other Conversations about Race*, by Beverly Daniel Tatum (Basic Books, 2017)
- *Walking the Equity Talk: A Guide for Culturally Courageous Conversations in School Communities*, by John Robert Browne (Corwin, 2012)
- *Everyday Antiracism: Getting Real about Race in School*, edited by Mica Pollock (New Press, 2008)
- *The Guide for White Women Who Teach Black Boys*, by Eddie Moore Jr., Ali Michael, and Marguerite W. Penick-Parks (Corwin, 2018)
- *The Latinization of Schools*, by Jason Irizarry (Routledge, 2016)
- *White Fragility*, by Robin DiAngelo (Beacon, 2018)
- *The New Jim Crow*, by Michelle Alexander (New Press, 2012)
- *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*, by Ibram X. Kendi, published by Nation Books (Nation Books, 2016)
- *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood . . . And the Rest of Y'all Too*, by Chris Emdin (Beacon, 2017)



2. Culturally Responsive Design Principles

Our Culturally Responsive Design Principles provide the blueprint for a school that is both student centered and equity focused. These principles consider the impact various structural, environmental, instructional, and relational factors have on students and the wider school community. While each design team that engages with *Building for Equity*

will have different inquiry questions and ultimate goals, these principles provide a touchstone for teams as they seek to define what a culturally responsive school design looks like within their own community and undergo a redesign process to bring these principles into everyday practice.



Culturally Proficient Teachers and Leaders

School and district leaders as well as classroom educators have the shared responsibility to move toward ever-greater cultural proficiency. This includes learning about their own identities as they intersect with existing systems of privilege and oppression—in short, their positionality. It also includes a data-informed approach to decision-making about school policies and practices.

Leadership is critical. Culturally responsive teachers are supported by a strong, collaboratively developed mission and vision for the school and a distributed approach to leadership, one that leverages structures such as professional

learning communities and varied advisory and governance structures to support continuous growth for all educators, for the benefit of all students, especially those who have traditionally been marginalized within our schools. Successful leadership groups explore disaggregated data to regularly evaluate the school's pursuit of equitable outcomes; they also sharpen their asset-based approach to meeting all students' cognitive, academic, and social-emotional needs and potential. All these goals are accomplished through aligned professional development that balances collaboration with personalization.

Inclusive School Culture

An environment that is culturally and emotionally sustaining for all students, as well as the wider community, ensures a bedrock foundation for learning. Sustaining school cultures feature a balance of high expectations, a welcoming atmosphere, warm student-teacher relationships, and a growth mindset. These are fostered not merely by reactive actions and individual initiatives but also by sustained commitment to proactive culture-building. Social-emotional learning and restorative discipline approaches help ensure that all students are able to engage fully in the school community and in the complete range of learning experiences it offers.

While proactive culture-building is essential, culturally responsive schools are prepared with consistent responses to challenges that arise. School discipline within a culturally responsive school emphasizes both emotional and physical safety

for all students. To avoid inequities in discipline practices, the school regularly reviews discipline data disaggregated by factors such as special education status, gender, and race/ethnicity. When inequities emerge, the school works to uncover and address the root causes. Restorative discipline approaches focused on restoring relationships and repairing harm are supported by clear and fair consequences that avoid exclusionary discipline practices such as suspension and expulsion.

Inclusive School Culture also ensures that there is full integration (rather than segregation) of all subgroups in all programs within the school, such as honors courses and special education, among others. Inclusion is universal: all students are welcomed, and all barriers are removed to ensure that all students can access the benefits provided by full membership in the school community.



Student-Centered Academic Learning

The principle of Student-Centered Academic Learning in culturally responsive schools focuses on instruction and assessment practices facilitated by teachers and tailored to meet individual student needs. These include authentic learning opportunities that break the wall between classroom and community; the fostering of student agency through student voice, choice, and ownership over their learning; flexible learning structures that can adapt to meet various students' interests and needs; and the adoption of [quality performance-based assessment systems](#).

Most centrally, this principle emphasizes that all students are exposed to “mirrors and windows”—that is, both to curriculum, resources, and experiences that are culturally relevant

and supportive of a student's strengths and identity as well as to curriculum, resources, and experiences that are challenging, outside of a student's own sphere of prior exposure. By providing maximum opportunities for student agency and designing for students “at the margins” rather than for the illusory “average student,” educators can ensure that all students are able to access content that meets their interests and needs. Meanwhile, educators acting as learning facilitators (rather than sages) can help ensure that students are gaining important cognitive and social-emotional skills *through academic instruction and assessment*, which in turn helps these students progress toward competencies aligned with college and career readiness.

Supportive Resources

Supportive Resources are the curricula, materials, support staff, planning time, co-curricular activities, and even wrap-around services that support the various needs students bring into school. Schools without these resources are typically unable to make progress toward the other principles, since these are fundamental to teachers, students, and the school environment.

Schools with Supportive Resources are not simply well-resourced. The resources must be curated and managed in a way that supports a culturally responsive environment. For example, curricula and materials must be rigorous and rich while also depicting diverse cultures, identities, and perspectives. And not only must educators be afforded the time to plan and to engage in data-based inquiry but also supported in their efforts to do so with a sharpened equity lens.

Engaged Community

The walls of culturally responsive schools are permeable. Rather than insulating students from the larger community, these schools leverage this community as an asset. This involves three main considerations: parent and family engagement, community partnerships, and student civic engagement. Parent and family engagement requires both the removal of barriers to deep participation in the life of the school *and* the establishment of structures that enable parents

and family members to have authentic roles in the school. Community partnerships take advantage of the expertise of agencies, businesses, and organizations while also providing opportunities for students to benefit from learning opportunities outside the walls of the classroom. Finally, the principle of Engaged Community looks at equity-minded approaches to giving students the chance to avail themselves of these community connections and build leadership skills.

Using These Principles

These Culturally Responsive Design Principles serve as a blueprint for design teams in their work to improve their schools as well as a touchstone during the entire Equitable Redesign Cycle. Design teams may consider these principles during visioning (Phase 1), use them to identify assets and areas of growth during Phase 2 (Rediscovering Our Community), leverage them to inspire innovations (Phase 3), or revisit them during early implementation (Phase 4).

specific indicators of each principle, which can help schools bring into reality design considerations that previously resided only in theory. After all, culturally responsive schools exist not only on the pages of a strategic plan but also—when we build for equity—in the quotidian life of the school. Only when theory becomes reality can we hope to see the kinds of sustainable, equitable student outcomes that inspired us to begin *Building for Equity*.

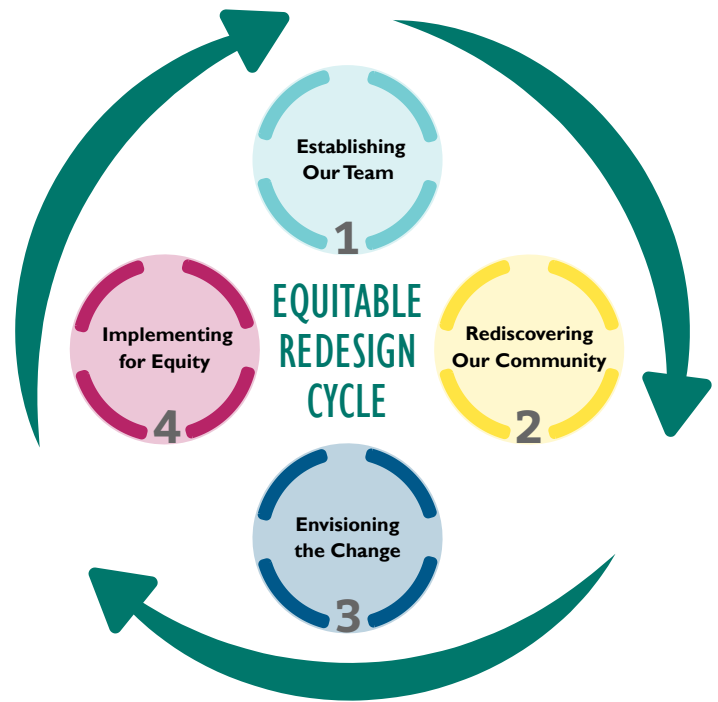
The [Building for Equity School Self-Assessment Tool](#), found in the Supportive Reading and Resources section at the end of this guide provides tangible guidance for the



3. Community-Driven Redesign Process

A Community-Driven Redesign Process requires a thoughtful and authentic inclusion of student voices, parent and family voices, and the voices of the wider community. And inclusion alone is not enough: a deep and sustained engagement is the only way to achieve the ambitious transformation that equity requires.

This Critical Driver is concerned not only with *if* the community is involved but also *how*. Sharing power—especially among educators, families, organizations, and students—is far from easy, particularly for those used to retaining the power inherent in social privilege. Equitable school change requires a nimble understanding of—and a willingness to dismantle—long-established power dynamics, at every phase and step. Many design teams benefited from a skilled external facilitator to help them through this difficult work. However, the resources we provide and approaches we describe throughout this guide can become the cornerstone of a school’s change process, with a facilitator or without.



Each and every phase of the Equitable Redesign Cycle is built to support a process shared with the community. Each phase is described in an individual section below and includes the following components:

- Stories from the field
- Practical guidance through the important steps within each phase
- Resources and tools
- Essential questions to guide the work
- Key Considerations for Equity

Prior to actually beginning the Equitable Redesign Cycle, however, the individual or team initiating the process can benefit from a closer look at important considerations around engaging students and their families in school redesign work. These may be found in the Supportive Readings and Resources section at the end of this guide.

The next several chapters are intended to guide school teams through the process of equity-minded school (re)design, beginning with the development of a strong and well-crafted inquiry question and then moving through the four phases of the Equitable Redesign Cycle. The phases of this cycle comprise the Community-Driven Process Critical Driver, as they combine to ensure an inclusive and equity-minded process.

Before You Begin: Developing an Inquiry Question

During the development of this guide and toolkit, the stakeholders who were providing early feedback and beta-testing our materials repeatedly asked the CCE team, Is this about whole school design (and redesign)? Or is it to support smaller innovations within existing schools?

The answer, of course, is *both*. If we believe that every kind of school innovation must be approached with an equity lens¹⁷ in order to achieve equitable outcomes, as the *Building for Equity* framework posits, then every kind of innovation requires tools to support that work. Moreover, all sustainable change involves a cyclical approach that integrates data-based inquiry within multiple iterations, an approach that is embedded in the Equitable Redesign Cycle. Therefore, while users may interact in a variety of ways with the guidebook and accompanying tools, we designed them in a way that can be used from start to finish by those engaging in school change of any scope, provided that equity is a central focus.

An important first step, the development of one or more right-sized inquiry questions, can ensure that the equitable innovation is well-focused and approached with a process adjusted to the correct amplitude. Inquiry questions inspire all the subsequent activities of the Equitable Redesign Cycle; they guide the development of a team (Phase 1) as well as the depth and breadth of the data audit (Phase 2). This team uses the data to inform the plans and approaches developed and implemented for the remainder of the cycle.

All strong inquiry questions have the following characteristics:

- **Open to Research.** The team's question must open the team up to some level of research or learning that produces data to inform later work.
- **Unresolved and Debatable.** Although some of those developing or engaging with an inquiry question may have hypotheses and hunches, there should not be a clear answer to the question, or the data-based inquiry process of Phase 2 will be inauthentic or pedantic, which dramatically reduces buy-in.
- **Divergent.** Yes/No questions, or those with a single answer, are limiting to the group and do not allow for natural nuances and ambiguities inherent in any equity-focused work within complex systems, nor do they foster engagement.
- **Reasonably Ambitious.** The question should be answerable within a reasonable period (which varies by setting) by those working with and within schools. However, it should also be ambitious enough to ensure that it prompts a wide enough inquiry to inspire impactful change.
- **Equity-minded.** While some schools have more apparent diversity than others or achieve largely equitable outcomes, there are few that can achieve equity without incorporating it intentionally into innovations—which begins by ensuring that equity is explicitly included in the inquiry question(s).

Regardless of the scope of the inquiry, the questions must include the above characteristics to be useful in guiding data-based inquiry work, particularly with the use of this guide and toolkit.



¹⁷ That is, innovations must be consciously attuned to the opportunities for improving equity and aware of potential pitfalls.

Smaller-Scale, Focused Inquiry

Any inquiry that this book guides should be deep, but if inquiry is focused at a smaller amplitude, then the volume of the change is more limited. Narrowing the question to address only certain departments, programs, or subjects can create boundaries for the inquiry. Possible small-scale inquiry questions that provide clarity and focus for a smaller redesign team or one with more limited resources may include

- *How can our school ensure more equitable enrollment and achievement within our AP courses? Are our AP courses aligned with our school's overall mission and vision?*
- *How can our guidance department better meet the needs of our community?*
- *Why are [subpopulation] students experiencing a gap in science achievement in 4th and 5th grades? What barriers currently exist for this population? How are teachers contributing to, or mitigating, this circumstance?*
- *How can we better meet the needs of our early grades English learners?*

Sometimes narrowly focused inquiry questions can have important and much wider implications. For example, the question about AP courses might inspire some critical inquiry into the school's overall course-leveling system or a legacy of citywide racial discrimination. However, the initial question can still guide the first cycle, if a more comprehensive inquiry process proves too logistically challenging to undertake, leaving the broader question for a second or third iteration.

Whole-School (or District-Level) Redesign

Both big and small questions may reveal deep-seated inequities and suggest big-picture changes. However, if whole-school redesign is intended from the beginning, the inquiry question can be framed in a way that avoids incrementalism and explores—and dismantles—some of the true root causes of existing school inequities.

Possible larger-scale inquiry questions include

- *What populations of students face the most significant equity gaps in our school/district? What are the causes and potential solutions to address these persistent equity gaps?*
- *What underlying issues within our school need to be addressed so that we can ensure that our work to improve overall student achievement is accomplished in a way that ensures equity?*
- *What opportunities and barriers exist to a transition to a more culturally responsive school environment? Are*

there existing solutions to leverage or classrooms that can serve as exemplars for the wider community? What is the readiness level of our staff to make this transition?

- *How can we ensure that our school better meets the needs of our students experiencing economic hardships?*
- *What are the causes of, and potential solutions for, our disparate and overall low graduation rates?*
- *How does the equal distribution of resources within our school/district create and nurture inequality?*

New School Design

If the school is in the process of being newly designed, most of the guidance for whole-school redesign within this guide is appropriate, with the caveat that inquiry within Phase 2 should focus on the community in which the new school would be located rather than, of course, an existing school, and inquiry questions should focus on existing inequities within that larger community and on the opportunities that exist during a new school design to bake in equitable innovation from the beginning. As with whole-school redesign, these questions should be wide in scope. Some appropriate potential inquiry questions for a new school design include

- *What populations of students face the most significant equity gaps in our community? What are the causes and potential solutions to address these persistent equity gaps?*
- *How could we design a school that reflects, honors, and sustains the significant linguistic and cultural diversity within our neighborhood?*
- *What structures of traditional schools act as barriers to success for students of color? What alternative structures could we develop to provide opportunities for equity? How can we ensure that these structures are developed to align with the values of our community?*
- *What does an equity-minded STEM school look like? How can a school with this focus meet the needs of our district?*

Start by Thinking Big

While a design team with limited time and resources may be tempted to create a highly focused question, this may not be the best choice at the start of the process. Few teams have ever complained about knowing *too* much about their schools and communities, as long as the inquiry process results in action within a reasonable time frame using available resources. Knowledge, after all, is power: power for change.



Phase 1: Establishing Our Team



Early in the summer of 2016, six groups of educators and other stakeholders sat around tables in a high school cafeteria in downtown Boston. The unifying goal for the otherwise varied group of school teams was to redesign their schools to “personalize learning” as a means of better supporting the students most in need of school change, and they still had five more institute days ahead to help jumpstart this work.

However, not only would the learning and planning activities ahead reshape the groups’ visions for their schools, but the groups *themselves* would change significantly over the first few meetings as they realized who was still missing from their design teams. At first, one design team aiming to open a secondary school in Boston was made up almost entirely of Boston Public Schools teachers. But as time went by, the group evolved: a nonprofit partner and parent joined, as did a school administrator, a technology consultant, and a marketing and communications expert. Another design team realized how critical it was to diversify their group and include parents and other partners in the mix. The design teams—and the CCE team as well—learned a valuable lesson: building the team the right way from the earliest point is a crucial step to ensuring a smooth process.

Building the team the right way from the earliest point is a crucial step to ensuring a smooth process.

What to Expect from This Phase

In Phase 1 of the Equitable Redesign Cycle, we begin to set the stage for what could become a multiyear endeavor. The steps of this phase will establish practices that last for the entire design project, and as a result they work best when they precede any planning itself, even if they ultimately require some adjustment throughout the process. In particular, a very early step must always be the establishment of a strong, inclusive team that represents the full diversity of the school community. This team will direct the shape of the entire project, so the earlier and more authentically involved these team members are, even if small changes occur over time, the more likely they will bear a shared responsibility for the school’s success and become true ambassadors for the work.

Widening the pool of contributors doesn’t always lighten the load—it necessitates a greater emphasis on process and

often complicates decision-making—but it ensures a more authentic process with more durable plans that are poised to be truly transformative.

Essential Questions for This Phase

- *Whose voices and perspectives are important to include on our design team as we begin to consider designing, or redesigning, a school in our community?*
- *How does my own identity and my role within the systems of our society affect the way I approach the work, and what impact will my identity have on both the persons with whom I collaborate and the school community we are establishing?*
- *How can we launch an approach to professional learning that builds on our individual assets, needs, and interests while also serving the goals of the project and the collective needs of our group?*
- *How are we partnering with students, families, and the wider community to engage them in the work of redesigning their school? Are we ensuring that we have a diverse and representative array of voices authentically included in our school redesign?*

Steps within This Phase

- Step 1: Build an Inclusive Team**
- Step 2: Engage the Community**
- Step 3: Establish a Learning Plan**

Step 1: Build an Inclusive Team

Before tackling the inquiry question, the design team must grow to include a more diverse and representative set of voices, even as it works to remain nimble and effective. A true culture of collaboration with equity of voice is challenging but essential to the long-term success of any school transformation. This requires not only a recruitment plan that ensures a diverse and representative group of stakeholders who will not only steer the project but also secure the trust, relational capabilities, and structures to support equitable inclusion. In short, as within a school, both culture and structures require thoughtful planning that will evolve throughout this first phase.

Operating with equity requires representation from the students and families you serve involved in the redesign process. Assuring this robust representation may necessitate targeted outreach and even leadership development. There will be ideal candidates for the design team who will not stand out



initially but will be just behind a door that is waiting to be opened. Proactive outreach to stakeholders from marginalized communities, such as parents and students of color, for example, can counterbalance the tendency of application processes to favor white, well-off students and families.

This early involvement of diverse stakeholders brings many benefits, but it also necessitates some important attention to engaging each individual and providing on-ramps to ensure that all members of the group, even those traditionally left out of school decision-making, are empowered to engage fully. Once the design team begins to coalesce around the project (which, at this point, has been articulated as one or more inquiry questions and likely a general interest in improving equitable outcomes), the group typically benefits from a full-day retreat or a series of meetings that help establish structures that support positive, inclusive collaboration including

- Teambuilding activities and norm-setting
- Working styles inventory and analysis (we have used and adapted versions of Compass Points protocols, among others)
- Shared reading and text-based discussions, as appropriate to establish a “learning culture” for the team
- Roles development (e.g., facilitation, agenda development, and communications)
- Logistics around scheduling, locations, and accessibility considerations for the main design team and any potential subcommittees

Most essentially, the group must reach agreement on key messages around the inquiry questions and the group’s

purpose, enabling group members to be ambassadors for the work to the wider school community.

Step 2: Engage the Community

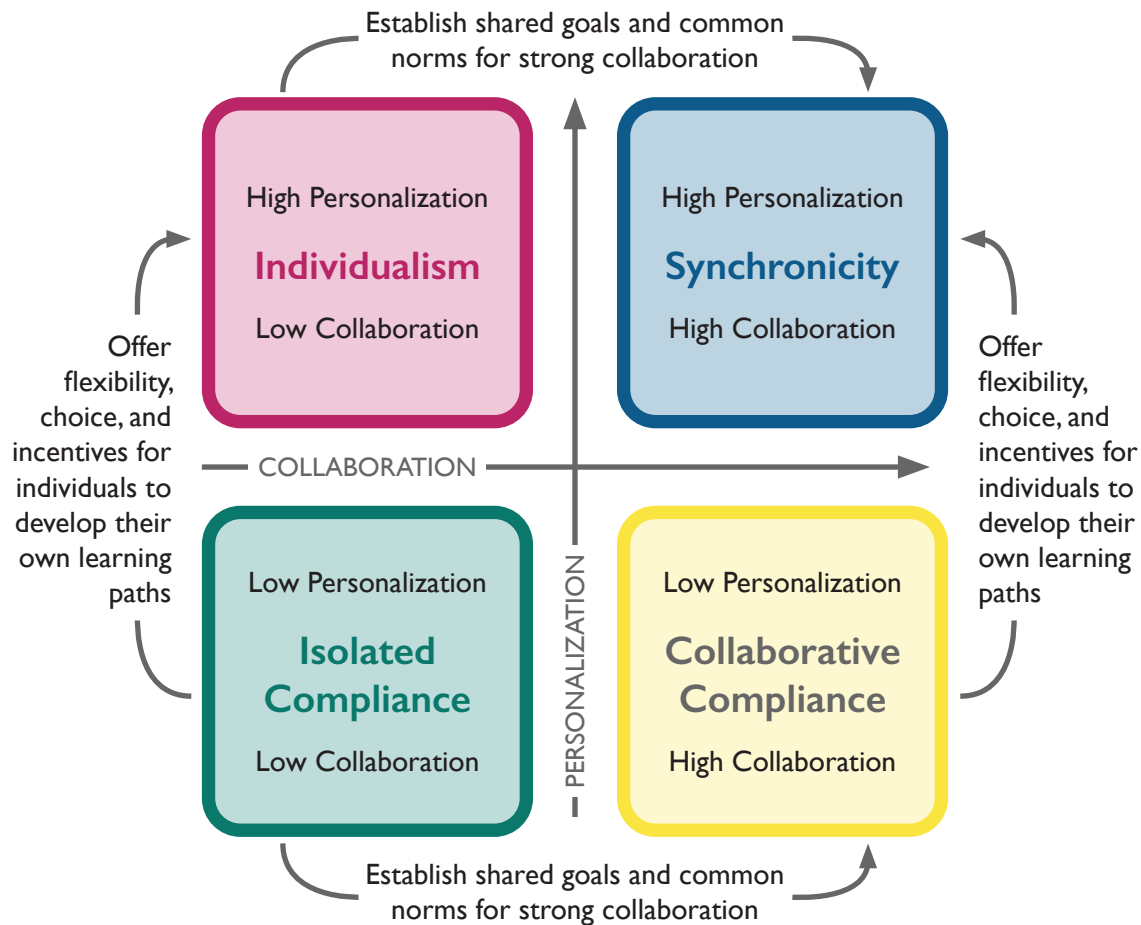
Community engagement is a constant aspect of community-driven redesign, but as the design team forms, it must take the first step to begin this engagement. The group must work from the earliest point to gather input from a wide array of stakeholders around the inquiry question(s), potentially even vetting the question(s) before a wider audience. This step should ideally happen before the school year begins—either in the spring of the previous year or in the summer—so the design team and learning community are ready to launch fully with the beginning of the school year. At this point, those already part of the design team should consider many of the points described previously about student and family engagement in order to carve out a plan for ongoing engagement, particularly as the team begins to envision Phase 2.

Another important consideration is how the members of the team formed in Step 1, with their diverse stories and experiences, can become ambassadors for equity-minded inquiry and redesign within the wider school community. Groups often benefit at this point from coalescing around a succinct “elevator pitch” that describes the group’s goals and inquiry plan—in short, what it intends to do throughout the rest of Phases 1 and 2—and its inspiration for beginning the endeavor. This touchstone can ensure that every “ambassador” on the design team can work organically to inspire “co-conspirators” among their peers, foment a sense of urgency about existing inequities, and foster trust for the project as a whole.

Key Attributes for Design Teams

Skill Sets / Assets	Roles	Identity / Background	Additional Possibilities
Creative thinking	Teacher / staff, including special educators, ELL teachers, guidance, etc.	Race, ethnicity, language, etc., reflective of the community	Union representative
Organized planning	School administrator	Gender diversity	School board member
Relational skills	Parent / family member	Geographic diversity	Key consultant
Facilitating	Student	Age diversity	Bilingual skills
Leadership potential	Organizational partner		Representative from previously established organizational partnership
Community organizing	District representative		Municipal or state representative





Step 3: Establish a Collaborative Learning Plan

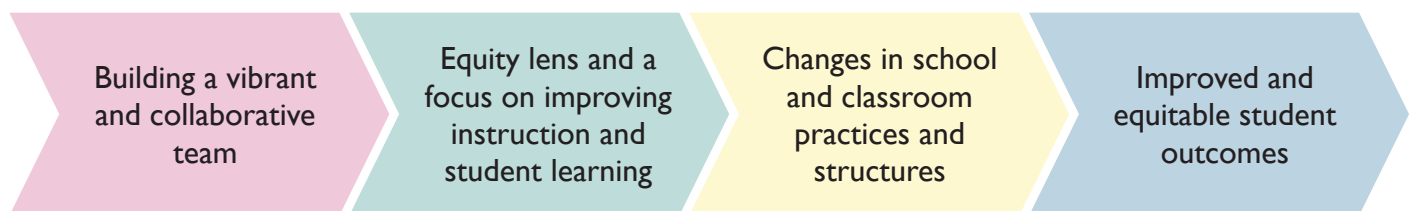
Once a design team has begun to build a groundswell for its inquiry and planning work, the group must determine how best to learn, both individually and collaboratively. By simultaneously providing opportunities for individuals to engage in self-work (particularly around the Intersection of Self and Systems) and establishing strong collaborative practices, a design team will be able to strike a balance between unity and nimbleness. This balance also ensures an equitable (which is not to say necessarily equal) workload that includes both *personal* work to support capacity and collective work toward the school's goals. Self and systems work in particular benefits from this kind of balance between individual and shared learning. In an exploration of racial identity, for example, some balance between identity exploration as *individuals*, among racial affinity groups, and in whole-group discussions around implications for the work are highly beneficial. One possible mechanism for balancing individual and shared

learning would be a group learning plan complemented by individual plans tailored to each member's goals and needs.

In addition to self and systems work, the design team will likely want to engage in learning experiences that will provide perspective during the analysis of Phase 2 and fuel for design work during Phase 3. Learning experiences that the team may consider folding into the group's plan include

- Site visits (to peer or exemplar schools) related to the area(s) of inquiry
- Reading and film viewing related to the area(s) of inquiry
- Professional development

The aim is for the group to achieve synchronicity within a culture of both personalized and collaborative learning, a necessary move to initiate change and, eventually, to see improved and equitable student outcomes.



Resources and Tools

Building an Inclusive Team. This tool supports design teams in their efforts to widen the “team” engaged in school improvement and redesign work, providing guidance about which important stakeholder groups to include and identifying important considerations for authentic engagement. Ultimately, this tool considers how everyone engaged in school transformation can serve as an ambassador to others in the wider school community, sharing stories to help build buy-in and to bring more allies to the table, useful at every stage of the process.

Individual and Group Learning Plan. This interactive form aids design teams in establishing common goals and shared activities that can subsequently inform individuals’ more personalized learning. One benefit of this tool is the ensured attention to all three Critical Drivers to support learning around the inquiry questions, as a bridge between Phase 1 and Phase 2. Typically, a design team will complete this tool collaboratively during Phase 1, Step 3, and revisit it periodically.

Key Considerations for Equity

- **Diverse and representative memberships.** Design teams, advisory groups, and other governing bodies in school often struggle to ensure equitable representation, especially from groups traditionally marginalized within the school community. The guidance within Step 1 may prove useful to design teams seeking to ensure a diverse group composition.
- **Student voice.** Design teams cannot afford to leave out the voice of those most affected by any school change—students. Often, including students requires on-ramps, but these on-ramps are assets that may well serve to support the full inclusion of many members of the design team.
- **Respect work in progress.** While equity-focused work is new in some spaces and especially to majority-white districts and leadership teams, there are often specific communities and partner organizations that have been engaged in equity-minded advocacy for some time, filling in gaps left by the institution. Successful design teams seek to connect with, learn from, and shine a light on existing bright spots and local wisdom.
- **Professional learning partners.** Design teams may need to bring in partners to provide or identify professional learning opportunities aligned with school goals that also meet design team members’ interests, or to provide microcredentialing for design team members gaining specific skills. This is particularly important for the highly nuanced work around antiracism and cultural proficiency, which many districts lack the internal capacity to address.
- **Meeting logistics.** The design team needs to carve out time to meet, which may require stipends and the navigation of teacher duties and the union contract, depending on the school situation. Additionally, there should be dedicated time for individual learning. However, flexibility is key: educators have different schedules than parents and students, but engaging these two groups is important. Mechanisms for remote (virtual) meetings when possible are worth considering, if technology access is not an impediment.
- **Individual learning journeys.** The group must determine when the responsibility to initiate a personalized professional learning plan begins with the individuals who volunteer to assume certain learning responsibilities, and when the group or leader determines that a certain learning experience is mandatory for some or all its members. This is when equity becomes an important consideration—not all members have the same needs, and not all the members have the same capacity to dedicate their time and energy to learning. Moreover, all work exploring racial equity considerations within a school should not fall on the shoulders of the people of color; white team members may have *more*, not less, work to do to prepare themselves and their colleagues for a real change.
- **Trust.** Has the design team built their community on trust and equitable practices so as to lay a foundation for a school design built on these features?



Phase 2: Rediscovering Our Community



The act of rediscovering the school community is both critical and daunting. Root cause analyses, school quality reviews, and equity audits are often lengthy processes that necessitate significant funding and facilitative coaching.

Often associated with accountability measures or compliance with inquiries by the Office of Civil Rights or state agencies, these analyses have not traditionally been sought proactively by schools and districts for the purposes of improving equitable student outcomes.

There are some signs that this is changing. For example, CCE recently partnered with a medium-sized urban district in the process of a district-wide equity root cause analysis, focused on analyzing both quantitative data and community feedback. While amply funded by a major grant and supported by coaching, conventions, and a multidistrict cohort model, the process was nevertheless proactively sought by the district to better understand—and meet—the needs of its marginalized students and families. The process was lengthy, but it allowed the district and its partners to develop a set of recommendations founded on authentic data, with the potential for immediate and sustainable impact. At least six districts in New England participated in this cohort alone, and we have worked with a host of other districts that have leveraged data-based inquiry specifically to identify and dismantle inequities or simply to provide a more nuanced analysis of the schools' strengths and areas for growth than statewide quality measures typically evince.

What to Expect from This Phase

All schools that are “building for equity” must rediscover their community using data-based inquiry throughout Phase 2; however, some inquiry questions necessitate or benefit from comprehensive equity audits. The intensive nature of equity audits is why there are several books devoted entirely to them. Readers desiring a comprehensive equity audit at the classroom, school, or district level during Phase 2 would do well to seek out additional support beyond this guide, including those noted in the list of suggested resources in this section.

Whether in the absence of, or supported by, a comprehensive equity audit, the tools and resources detailed in this phase can provide important guidance regarding the more general task of gathering data and information about the school community. Moreover, data-based inquiry need not always be so intensive in order to surface the necessary information to support visioning, goal-setting, and planning. The scope of the inquiry should be carefully aligned to the scale of the

inquiry question. This phase supports design teams in developing an approach that is appropriate in scale and effective in gleaned just the right amount—and type—of information.

Suggested Equity Audit Resources

- **Book:** For schoolwide equity audits, we recommend *Using Equity Audits to Create Equitable and Excellent Schools*, by Linda Skrla, Katherine Bell McKenzie and James Joseph Scheurich (Corwin, 2009).
- **Book:** For classroom-focused equity audits, we recommend *Using Equity Audits in the Classroom to Reach and Teach All Students*, by Katherine Bell McKenzie, and Linda Skrla (Corwin, 2009), which focuses more specifically on classroom-based and instructional practices.
- **Online tool:** Rhonda Broussard from Beloved Community developed an [online equity audit tool](#) aimed at supporting any organization's self-assessment through this process.
- **Expertise:** A highly trained facilitator can support a school or district in planning and building an equity audit tailored to the locality and the inquiry question.
- **Expertise:** Consultants with experience in conducting equity audits or school quality reviews with an equity lens may provide insights and make observations about factors that those within the community itself may not notice.

Essential Questions for This Phase

- *Whose voices and perspectives are important to include on our design team as we begin to analyze data, conditions, and feedback in and about our community?*
- *How does my own identity and my role within the systems of our society affect the way that I seek, analyze, and interpret data and feedback?*
- *What areas of equity and inequity exist in our school community?*
- *How ready is our school (and district) community to shift toward more culturally responsive and student-centered practices?*
- *What are the root causes of the existing inequities in our district that must be addressed in tandem with any efforts at school transformation?*



Steps within This Phase

Step 1: Explore the School Context

Step 2: Uncover Root Causes

Step 1: Explore the School Context

During this step, design teams spend time looking at the school context, both at the systems level and at the classroom level.

First the group should consider what data would be most relevant and useful for its inquiry question(s). The Equity Audit Planning Guide, introduced below, can support the team with this planning. Collecting quantitative (“hard”) data is one starting point but is often more compelling and useful when complemented by qualitative data gathered through interviews, surveys, and forums; and by observational data. These may include

- **Discipline data:** in-school and out-of-school suspensions, referrals, rules, accountability, other consequences [qualitative/quantitative]
- **Academic data:** enrollment, proficiency, drop-out, graduation [quantitative]

- **Curriculum and instruction data:** requirements, methods [qualitative/observational]
- **Relationship data:** students, teachers, families [qualitative]
- **Student postsecondary outcomes data:** college, career [quantitative]
- **School data:** structures, schedules [observational]
- **Teacher qualification data:** degrees, licensure, placement, years of experience [quantitative]
- **Professional development data:** scope, depth, availability [qualitative/observational]
- **Educator cultural proficiency data:** attitudes and beliefs, approaches for bringing student identities into the school building and classroom, grasp of approaches to content/curriculum from multiple perspectives [qualitative]

Most design teams must gather at least some information about the school and its wider community, regardless of how narrow the scope of the inquiry question(s). However, as shown on the table below, the scope of inquiry may dictate which information-gathering activities are most useful and appropriate.

Gathering Information to Rediscover Your Community

Suggested Mechanisms for Gathering Stakeholder Input and Data

District-wide Inquiry	Whole-School Inquiry	Targeted Inquiry	Classroom Inquiry
The work looks beyond the individual school site.	The work will have a significant impact on multiple areas within the school.	The work will impact more than just classroom instruction.	The work is centered on classroom instruction.
Comprehensive data-based equity auditing across the district	Surveys targeted at teachers, students, staff, parents/families	Focus groups with teachers, parents/ families, other staff	Classroom-level equity auditing; engage all parties affected
Policy focus group with school board/committee	Comprehensive data-based equity auditing within school	Targeted survey for teachers, students, staff, parents/families	Determine educator cultural proficiency
Focus group with district personnel	Student focus groups	School observations (nonevaluative)	Brief survey with students, parents/families
Community-wide survey	Interviews with school leader(s)	Targeted data analysis on focus topic	Classroom observations (nonevaluative)
Interviews with district leaders	Parent and family forums	Some/all suggested mechanisms to the right	
Open community forums	Some/all suggested mechanisms to the right		
Some/all suggested mechanisms to the right			



Successful approaches to data gathering in this step will vary by inquiry question and school context, but most projects benefit from, at a minimum, one or more community forums, some stakeholder surveying,¹⁸ and a self-assessment of schoolwide conditions (such as the *Building for Equity* School Self-Assessment described later in this chapter).

Classroom Data. Regardless of the scale of the design or redesign work, gathering data on classroom practice is immensely important for accurately depicting the daily student experience. Classroom-focused data-gathering generally covers the classroom environment, the curriculum, and the classroom culture (including discipline), looking at cultural responsiveness, respect, rigor, routines, and representation.

There are a variety of tools that can support educators who are gathering classroom-level data, depending on the focus question(s) and goals articulated. The Approaches to Gathering Classroom Equity Data Tool highlights some of the approaches and resources for the individual or design team. This tool details the kind of information that each source may provide and offers some guidance about the most effective use of each approach. Some, such as a peer observation, emphasize the learning opportunities for those engaged in the process, while others, such as an equity audit, are specifically focused on a deep investigation and on change within the classroom under study.¹⁹

The Culturally Responsive Classroom Walkthrough Tool, created by CCE's partners at the Equity Institute, supports classroom observations. This seminal tool, introduced and reproduced later in this chapter, can be an asset to teams looking at classroom practice with any inquiry questions that involve equity considerations. However, depending on the focus of the data-gathering, other kinds of observations specific to instruction, culture, and materials; quantitative data around student performance and discipline; and qualitative sources, such as student feedback and personal interviews, may also be appropriate to illuminate classroom practices that are, or are not, culturally responsive.

Step 2: Uncover Root Causes

Only after the team has analyzed the data and noted areas of equity and inequity, as well as other assets and challenges, can the group move on to considering changes in practice or seeking opportunities for improvement. This analysis does not simply rely on the data as it appears at first glance; rather, it requires that the group dig deeper than the data inquiry

itself to uncover the root causes of the existing inequities and build solutions. This step has two primary analysis goals:

1. **Data Analysis:** exploring data to identify a set of discrete problems, based on evidence, that require deeper analysis prior to solutions development
2. **Root Cause Analysis:** uncovering the root causes of the existing inequities and “problems” identified

Data Analysis. At the end of the data-gathering process (following whole-school or classroom-focused inquiry, as appropriate to the inquiry question), the group should convene to analyze the data in a “data retreat” meeting. We recommend that the group complete the analysis using a structured protocol, such as [School Reform Initiative’s “Atlas: Looking at Data” protocol](#) or its [Data-Driven Dialogue protocol](#), the latter being more appropriate to extensive data. Protocols such as these ensure that the team can be as objective as possible in initial observations before discussing interpretations and implications.

Following the process of analysis, the group must carefully determine what happens next. Depending on the situation, any of the following may be appropriate:

- **Acquire more data** from any sources missed or insufficiently consulted, staying within this step until the group has obtained and analyzed sufficient data to draw effective conclusions
- **Contract additional data analysis** from an outside data expert to help the group distill the information into conclusions, graphic depictions, etc., which may support a second analysis process by the design team
- **Disseminate data** to a wider group of stakeholders or to the entire school community, for transparency as well as to help build public goodwill and buy-in around the school redesign
- **Perform a root cause analysis** (that is, what follows below)

Even after the group has determined its next step, there still will be myriad opportunities to return to this stage as appropriate. Data analysis is not something done once during the Equitable Redesign Cycle; rather, it’s an ongoing endeavor that supports data-informed decision-making throughout the process.

Following the data analysis, the group can begin the challenging work of identifying a problem. Often, individuals

18 For CCE’s data inquiry work, we have started with some excellent surveys, including the [Panorama Student Survey](#) (which looks at student engagement and attitudes). Panorama also has a new [Equity and Inclusion Survey](#) with a promising design. Both surveys are copyright of Panorama Education ([panoramaed.com](#)).

19 Individuals or small groups hoping to improve equity within their own classrooms rather than immediately considering a whole-school redesign should, similarly, ensure that their chosen approach to data gathering and analysis is congruent with this focus. Another important consideration for this circumstance is that a team approach ensures that educators can consider equities, inequities, strengths, and challenges more objectively than they might individually.



or pairs begin by brainstorming ideas on sticky notes or index cards, and then the larger group collects and organizes the full set of problems generated. The group’s full set of problems can then be listed on a Problems, Solutions, and Outcomes Chart, along with supportive evidence (pulled from any data explored), as the first step of solutions generation. At this point, or later within this phase, groups typically develop outcomes statements based on the problems identified; solutions generation on the same chart occurs in later phases.

Problems, Solutions, and Outcomes Chart

Problem Statements		Solutions/ Recommendations		Outcomes Statements	
Problem Identified	Evidence of the Problem	Existing Solution(s) to Leverage	Solution(s) to Innovate	Desired Outcome(s)	Evidence of Success
1.					
2.					
(and so on)					

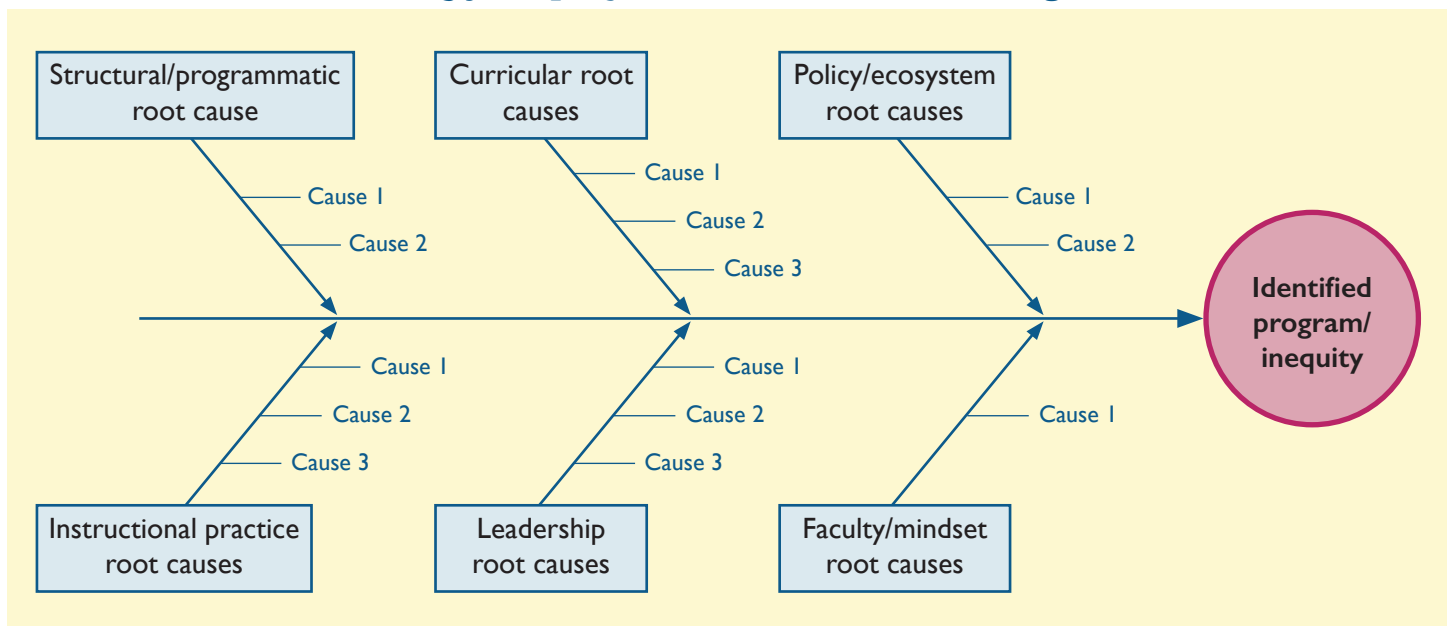
Root Cause Analysis. Unpacking each of the primary problems/inequities identified helps ensure that they are diagnosed, moving the group’s focus from the symptoms to the cures. Truly solving root causes of existing inequities is [adaptive work](#), which is messy, time intensive, and controversial, especially when it means confronting systemic racism or addressing a lack of cultural proficiency, for example. Yet this

work is immensely valuable, and it is the only way to make more equitable outcomes a possibility.

One useful way to push the team to consider the myriad possible factors that have created and compounded the equity gaps that the group has identified is to create a fishbone diagram tailored to identify school inequities.²⁰ Groups (ideally with a practiced facilitator) should draw the diagram on a whiteboard or on chart paper, adding “prongs” for each category of root cause, with specific causes listed along the appropriate category prong. Each of the root causes identified should be addressed within the action or implementation plan that the group will develop in Phase 3, and each may become a separate “problem” listed on the Problems, Solutions, and Outcomes Chart. This is an intensive process, but it can be a crucial safeguard against inadvertently bypassing key factors contributing to the challenges under study, especially inequities.

Once the group has listed its “hunches” for existing problems based on its early data and root cause analyses, the group is ready to move into visioning and planning, described within Phase 3. However, rarely does root cause analysis—or data analysis in general—stop here. Rather, the entire Equitable Redesign Cycle is a true data-based inquiry process, throughout which additional data must always be considered and older data revisited, leveraging the Critical Drivers and careful steps to ensure that while the redesign process is iterative, it is also truly transformative.

Building for Equity Root Causes Fishbone Diagram



20 CCE’s diagram is inspired by the fishbone diagram designed by Kaoru Ishikawa for product management; see Kaoru Ishikawa, *Introduction to Quality Control*, trans. J. H. Loftus (Tokyo: 3A Corporation, 1990).



Resources and Tools

Equity Audit Planning Guide. This guide is an interactive form that helps design teams identify and plan for potential sources of data (quantitative, qualitative, and observational) to include in Phase 2. It can serve as an action planning template for the phase and includes columns focused on suggested sources; approaches to data-gathering, potentially sourced from the Gathering Information to Rediscover Your Community Tool above; timing; and action steps.

Building for Equity School Self-Assessment Tool. This tool is a rubric of school-level conditions conducive to student-centered and equity-focused learning and provides research-based indicators of success for each of the defined conditions. Design teams can use this tool as a self-assessment to gain an understanding of their school's starting point in terms of the presence of these conditions. This tool is located in the Supportive Reading and Resources section at the end of this guide.

CCE typically recommends that each school-based Design Team review each condition or principle and its list of indicators within the tool and tailor as necessary in order to create a customized survey. Use of a tailored version of this tool will allow for school leaders to articulate clear targets for readiness and continuous improvement with all stakeholders in a way that is aligned with the school's mission.

Approaches to Gathering Classroom Equity Data. This chart can serve as a guide for teams seeking to include classroom data in their equity audit and details various resources appropriate to the scale and goals of the inquiry.

Culturally Responsive Classroom Walkthrough Tool. This observation form focuses specifically on classroom practices. With clear and tangible criteria for three critical areas—classroom culture/environment; student relationship-building; and instructional strategies—this tool can assist design team members or other stakeholders in determining the extent to which a given classroom is culturally responsive. Producing a reliable assessment with this tool may require classroom walkthrough observations that are long enough to span a substantial portion of a given class period, conducted by observers who have an awareness and understanding of culturally responsive teaching. However, the tool includes helpful indicators to ensure that the right kind of evidence is considered for each area. This tool is located in the Supportive Reading and Resources section at the end of this guide.

Key Considerations for Equity

Strong school equity audits help school change agents avoid what Skrla, McKenzie and Scheurich term “equity traps,” defined as “patterns of thinking and behaviors” that “stop or hinder” movement toward equity.²¹ McKenzie's previous research with Scheurich identified four key equity traps to avoid, two of which are particularly salient here:

- **Deficit view.** A deficit view, which focuses on what is lacking, can be overcome by actively developing an asset-based view of students and families, particularly students and families of color, those in poverty, and other students who are marginalized.
- **Racial erasure.** Racial erasure can be exacerbated by attempts to be “colorblind.” Every school does not experience opportunity gaps by race, but subsuming racial equity gaps within, say, poverty gaps neglects a central aspect of the identity and experience of students of color.²²

Other important considerations for effective data inquiry at the classroom level include

- **Anecdotal evidence.** Anecdotal evidence *is* valid qualitative data, but it must be used with caution. Student stories and feedback, student work artifacts, even individual visits to a classroom provide important information, but this information is insufficient *when taken alone* to draw conclusions about students as individuals or groups or about the classroom as a whole. However, this is true of any data source, which is why more evidence always helps to paint a clearer picture.
- **Data ethics.** Before gathering any privileged information, those engaged in the inquiry process must make sure to ask school leadership about any restrictions on who can visit a classroom, who can view nonpublic data, and how data can be used and disseminated. Even if permission to view and share data is secured, student privacy is still the foremost concern. Student artifacts may be shared ethically only once names and identifying information are removed.

While Phase 2 cannot be rushed, teams that pause too long at this point risk “admiring the problem”—in other words, letting its gravity paralyze the group—rather than dismantling it. Fortunately, Phase 3 is both optimistic and engaging, a surefire remedy for any burgeoning paralysis.

21 Linda Skrla, Katherine Bell McKenzie and James Joseph Scheurich, *Using Equity Audits in the Classroom to Reach and Teach All Students* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2009), 101.

22 Kathryn Bell McKenzie and James Joseph Scheurich, “Equity Traps: A Useful Construct for Preparing Principals to Lead Schools That Are Successful with Racially Diverse Students,” *Educational Administration Quarterly* 40, no. 5 (December 2004), 601–32.



Phase 3: Envisioning the Change



During the 2015–16 school year at Social Justice Humanitas Academy, a Pilot high school²³ within the Cesar Chavez Education Complex in Los Angeles Unified School District, the school had a substantial truancy problem; high numbers of students were arriving late every day. Of the 534 students enrolled that year, 96 percent were Latinx, 92 percent were economically disadvantaged, and 6 percent were homeless. In December, frustrated by his inability to improve the truancy rate, Principal Jose Navarro decided to switch gears. Rather than repeating the common refrain to students (“You’re late!”), he began asking them, “What is preventing you from getting to school on time? How can we help?” Instead of the excuses he anticipated, he heard things like “I had to drop my little sister and brother off at their school first,” “I work until 10 p.m. every night to help support my family and do homework until well after midnight,” and “I had to go to the hospital with my mother to translate for her.”

Armed with this data, Principal Navarro sat down with faculty and brainstormed what they could do to better accommodate the life circumstances their students were facing. With Pilot status, the school has autonomy to be more innovative and nimble in its design. By the end of the meeting, they had a consensual agreement: starting in the second semester in late January, they would implement a new staggered schedule with two shifts—the current one and another starting one hour later. Staff would work one of the two schedules. The result: truancy rates dropped dramatically in the second semester. Today, with a zero percent suspension rate, largely because of their student-centered approach, the school graduates 96 percent of its students.

In 2016, Andre Perry, a noted African American commentator, penned an article entitled “Black and Brown Boys Don’t Need More ‘Grit,’ They Need Schools to Stop Being Racist.”²⁴ His message was that if schools have as their lens the daily lives and cultures of their Black and Latino students and empower them to challenge injustice rather than adapt to “broken systems,” schools would look and treat their students quite differently. In Phase 3, this kind of perspective shift becomes more than just a mental exercise.

What to Expect from This Phase

The visioning and planning work of school redesign is usually an exciting time. When riding on the wave of strong data analysis, it can also be a *productive* time. And this productivity is more than just efficient: it helps to build momentum. At times, however, data analysis alone, particularly when it demonstrates pervasive equity gaps, can depress the group’s collective will. It’s important for the group to move into active planning before such a sentiment spawns lethargy.

Typically, depending on the scope of the redesign work, visioning occurs a few weeks (in more focused projects) or a few months (for schoolwide innovations) into data analysis, which might mean a small overlap of Phase 2 and Phase 3 work. Information about current inequities, assets, and challenges within the district may—and should—impact the vision and goals, not to mention the specific plans.



²³ Pilot high schools like this one are in-district schools that are granted certain autonomies, such as autonomy over curriculum, staffing, or budget, as compared to schools in which the district has greater control.

²⁴ Andre Perry, “Black and Brown Boys Don’t Need More ‘Grit,’ They Need Schools to Stop Being Racist,” *Hechinger Report*, May 2, 2016, <https://hechingerreport.org/black-brown-boys-dont-need-learn-grit-need-schools-stop-racist/>.

The Critical Drivers of *Building for Equity* are arguably even more critical within Phase 3 than they were earlier in the Equitable Redesign Cycle. Design team members (as well as the wider school faculty) must continue an ongoing exploration of their identities as they intersect with systems of privilege and oppression; every step of the process must be equity minded and community driven; and here for the first time culturally responsive design principles can inspire or even become the cornerstone of the planning phase.

Essential Questions for This Phase

- *What is our vision for a truly culturally responsive and student-centered school, and how does this redesign project fit within that vision?*
- *What are our equity-focused goals for this redesign work based on our analysis of the data we have acquired, and what are our priorities that will inform and focus our work?*
- *How do we leverage the diverse array of perspectives and skill sets on our team and within the wider school community as we begin designing, or redesigning, our school?*
- *How do we begin to generate ideas for equitable innovation—and synthesize and distill these ideas to develop structures, programs, and plans?*
- *What kinds of school or district structures are necessary to ensure that our plans are achievable?*
- *How can we leverage other stakeholders and groups in the community to ensure the sustainability of our equity-focused innovations?*

Steps within This Phase

Step 1: Develop a Student-Centered, Equitable Vision

Step 2: Set Equitable Goals

Step 3: Generate Plans

Step 4: Establish and Strengthen Partnerships

Step 1: Develop a Student-Centered, Equitable Vision

Step 1 of this phase focuses on the big-picture vision for the school (or a particular program), grounded in equity and culturally responsive practice, as in the story shared above, as well as the shared priorities of the community.

In order to reach this vision, educators must bring not only their experiences but also their imaginations to the proverbial

drafting table, and they must be joined by a diverse and representative group of stakeholders. Often, visioning will include participants outside of the group steering the process, so even if the design team is inclusive and representative of the school community's diversity, these are still important factors to consider when asking others to be part of the visioning stage.

Using structured visioning exercises, group members can free themselves of practical constraints, which will tether them to reality soon enough, and dare to dream together about an alternative to the reality of school inequity that we all know too well. CCE has adapted versions of School Reform Initiative's [Future Protocol](#), but our most reliably useful approach to visioning is the "Vision of a Graduate" protocol included and described later in this chapter. After completing the chosen visioning exercise, most design teams select a smaller group or an individual to develop a vision statement from the model established by the group (or multiple groups), which can be presented and tuned before being considered final.

Regardless of the protocol used, the vision should be refined side-by-side with the existing school mission statement and other foundational documents. The emphasis must be on ensuring that the vision simultaneously aligns with the school's identity and results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all students in the school, especially those from historically marginalized racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Explicitly consider this before, during, and after any visioning protocol to ensure that the goal of equitable opportunities and outcomes remains a central part of the ultimate vision.

Some Visioning Guidelines

- **Facilitation:** Ideally, the visioning process should be facilitated by an objective, adept external facilitator.
- **Structures:** The process should be structured to prevent logistics and other anticipated challenges from hampering the group too quickly.
- **Boldness:** Audacity is important in the context of disrupting a stubborn and complex system such as K–12 public education; compromises around tactical "how" concerns are for later stages.
- **Collaboration:** The process should provide structures to support equal voice, the opportunity to resolve dissonance, and the move toward consensus on an ultimate vision.
- **Synthesis:** The process should emphasize a synthesis of ideas such that the final vision statement melds the best aspects of the individual ideas



Step 2: Set Equitable Goals

Before the design team can move from visioning to planning, the team must work to resolve this vision into goals and priorities, sifting its optimistic portrait through the sieve of the problems, hurdles, and constraints that the group has already identified. In other words, the work of Phase 3, Step 2, focuses on translating big ideas into right-size priorities in order to bring the vision demonstrably closer to reality.

In order to do this, the group will compare the challenges (“problem statements”) suggested by their data analysis with the goals suggested by the vision. By crosswalking these two sets of information, and by weighing the ideal against reality, the group will be able to

- Determine the most important **priorities**, based on the most problematic or pressing challenges, to address in planning and (ultimately) implementation
- Establish concrete **goals** (or “desired outcomes”) for the equitable redesign work

This will, in turn, set the stage for the development of solutions that bridge the gap between the priority challenges and the desired outcomes.

After resolving on priority challenge areas, the group can officially move into a goal-setting mindset. Using the Problems, Solutions, and Outcomes Chart from Phase 2, Step 4, the group should generate a set of outcomes²⁵ to match each of the identified/selected problems (as well as potential evidence or metrics of success, as appropriate). At this point, groups benefit from reading their list of outcomes alongside their vision statement to ensure alignment, recalibrating one or both if necessary. Once this is complete, the group can translate these outcomes into a set of goals to use for the remainder of the redesign cycle.

Step 3: Generate Plans

Step 3 focuses on design thinking and other means of early idea generation. By this point, the “problems” and challenges facing the school community should be somewhat clear. Now the group can begin to generate potential solutions. At its core, ideation can be an exciting time of unlimited potential, when possibility is more important than the roadblocks that may impede it. Strong design work features divergent

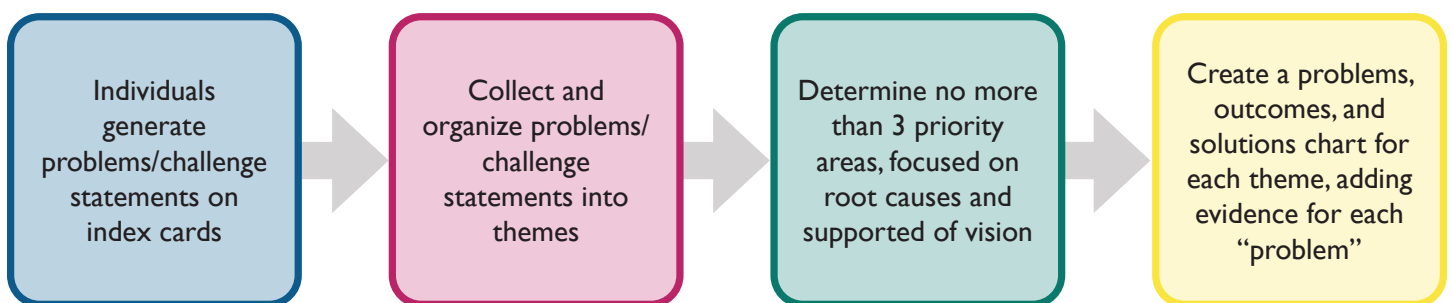
Ideation can be an exciting time of unlimited potential, when possibility is more important than the roadblocks that may impede it.

problem solving—that is, innovating *new* solutions that vary from each other, in contrast with the idea of finding a single, “right” answer. Such true innovation is particularly useful in equity-focused work, since existing structures may need to be dismantled and assumptions unpacked.

Prior to engaging in design work, participants, particularly those steering the work, can benefit from a slate of learning experiences that may include site visits, guided professional development, or shared reading (as described in Phase 1), as well as the opportunity to hear from the community (as described in Phase 2). Design work does not interrupt the community-driven process but may formalize it by providing strong mechanisms for participation. There are many such mechanisms from which the design team may choose, including

- A full, equity-focused design thinking process²⁶
- A brief (60 minute) design thinking mini-hack protocol²⁷
- [Rapid Prototyping for Classroom Innovations](#), a CCE tool provided at the end of this chapter

Setting Priorities

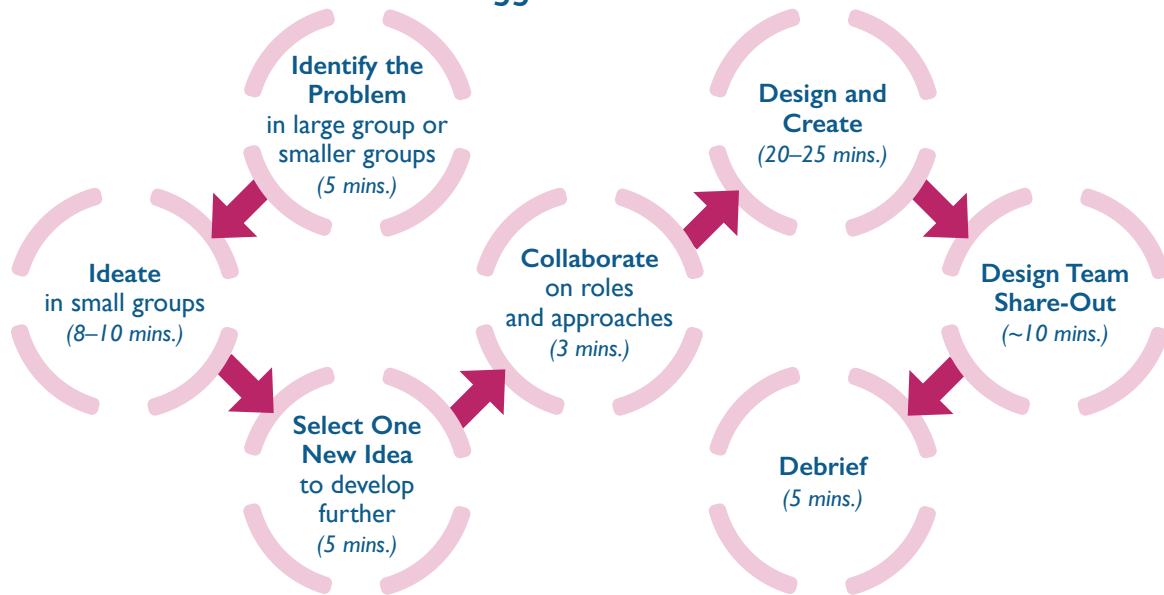


25 Outcomes are statements of a desired result or an improvement that is measurable with evidence. Outcomes can be revisited and revised later in the process, but most groups find it helpful to draft them early in order to guide their work.

26 There are many strong design thinking protocols. CCE has developed our own for use in sessions we facilitate, and we also like the free online course and tools offered by equityXdesign; see the course page at equityXdesign.com, <https://courses.equitymeetsdesign.com/p/introduction-to-equityxdesign1>.

27 The structure of a mini-hack protocol is ideal for a very large group. It works well for bigger-scale or big-picture innovation and can be inclusive of many viewpoints.

1-Hour Design Thinking Mini Hack Suggested Process



Ultimately, the ideas generated by a large group of stakeholders during any of the above processes provide fodder for a smaller group (e.g., the design team) to begin to build plans and establish structures to support equitable change.

Once equity-minded ideas have been generated, the team should consider *feasibility* and *sustainability* of each, so that the equity innovations the group develops don't languish or encounter preventable roadblocks. Here, the design team explores and vets the design work, considering all the while which possible solutions seem poised to bring equitable and sustainable results. The two Solutions columns in the Problems, Solutions, and Outcomes Chart already in development are a useful place to record these ideas.²⁸

Ultimately, for each priority "problem," the team will likely need to reference data and come to a consensus about the following:

- Solutions to recommend to the wider school community for piloting²⁹
- Additional data, input, or feedback needed
- Solutions that require further development (by the design team or a task force) before becoming part of the group's implementation plan

- Solutions to dismiss because they don't address the challenge(s) or are impossible to implement
- Recommendations for future consideration

Policy and Governance Considerations. Once a slate of solutions has been compiled, the group may find that some necessitate shifts in policy or governance within the school. Some schools have the option of pursuing official autonomies (over staffing, budget, schedule, professional development, governance, and curriculum) to facilitate these shifts, while others are more constrained.³⁰

Many schools find that distributing leadership beyond the traditional two to three centralized school administrators pays great dividends during a wider school redesign process, though official changes to school governance sometimes require policy shifts, as noted above. Whether or not such changes are official, decision-making roles are clearer and more effective when spelled out in writing; the decision-making tool appearing later in this chapter offers a useful template.³¹

²⁸ Please see Phase 2 for more information on how to develop such a chart.

²⁹ Alternately, the group can prepare and present multiple options to focus groups or to the wider community for a vote, as appropriate.

³⁰ Even when official autonomies are limited, design teams proposing high-impact, school-wide changes may still need to work with the district and the teachers union to create a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to ensure that policy permissions are officially in place to enable the proposed changes. Some require full-faculty votes or school board approval.

³¹ This template should be adjusted to reflect the decision-making bodies and stakeholders that the school is planning to include.



Step 4: Establish and Strengthen Partnerships

Communities across the nation, especially in low-income, racially diverse urban areas, hold within them a treasure of resources that, when leveraged properly, can supply schools with greatly needed supports to ensure success for all students. When schools, families, and community organizations work together, there are powerful, mutually beneficial outcomes, including, for example, an increased efficiency in the use of resources available to both schools and community organizations.³² Local business can offer internships or field trip experiences. City workforce advisory teams can partner with schools to identify the skills and dispositions students need workforce success. Community health centers can host appointments for mental health screening, dental checkups, physicals, or eye exams right in school nurse's offices.

As the design team refines the slate of proposed solutions to priority challenges, they should identify points where the school may need external support and assess how those needs align with existing community assets.³³ Bringing new partnerships to life, especially the number needed to sustain

significant workplace learning or wraparound supports, for example, consumes a great deal of time and can exceed staff capacity. Some schools establish new staff roles to meet these needs, while others set up a task force. These individuals or groups can help navigate the multiple conversations and (sometimes) formal agreements required to create partnerships and ensure that school community members can access the partners' resources effectively.

In short, while community engagement is a perpetual effort, establishing and strengthening community *partnerships* warrants particular attention during this early planning phase.

Resources and Tools

Vision of a Graduate Protocol. This protocol provides an inclusive and structured process for establishing a school-wide or district-wide vision that can serve as a beacon throughout the Equitable Redesign Cycle. While best when facilitated by a trained consultant and used by a wide slice of the school community, it can be modified to serve many purposes. This tool is located in the Supportive Reading and Resources section at the end of this guide.



32 Harvard Family Research Project, “Partnerships for Learning: Promising Practices in Integrating School and Out-of-School Time Program Supports,” March 2010, <https://archive.globalfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/partnerships-for-learning-promising-practices-in-integrating-school-and-out-of-school-time-program-supports>.

33 Guides and templates for an assets and needs assessment are available from organizations such as the Coalition for Community Schools. See http://www.community-schools.org/resources/needs_and_capacity_assessments.aspx for an example.

Rapid Prototyping for Classroom Innovations Protocol.

This protocol is another structured process that groups can use during Phase 3, Step 3, to guide generative design-thinking that focuses on classroom- or program-level change. This activity works well as a means of including those outside the central design team.

Decision-Making Table. This table can be a template for schools reconsidering governance structures to support proposed whole-school changes. Often, changing governance structures and decision-making roles can be *in and of itself* a process that results in a more equitable and inclusive school. This tool can be initially completed by smaller focus groups for wide input, finalized by the design team, and formalized and approved by a community vote, administrators, or school board members, as appropriate.

Key Considerations for Equity

- **Equity-minded goals and priorities.** Groups may evolve and endeavors may be sidetracked, but if the goals and priorities are equity focused, then the group can much more easily recalibrate when necessary to achieve equitable outcomes. Some important questions that the group should consider when looking at each priority and goal include
 - *Does this goal address high achievement for all students?*
 - *Will this goal be a lever to ensure equitable access and inclusion for all?*
 - *Does this goal consider the members of our school community in an asset-based way?*
- **Why, then what, then how.** Some groups are so concerned about the potential pitfalls of new ideas that novel innovations with promise are dismissed because they seem too big or bold. In dismantling school structures designed to be inequitable, audacity is required. By starting with the “why” before generating the “what” and considering the “how,” the group ensures that anticipated roadblocks don’t derail the group’s commitment to its vision.

- **Placing responsibility in the right places.** Design teams must balance the inclusion of affected stakeholders “at the table” during decision-making with the need to avoid overburdening groups that are often asked to step up as representatives during school redesign work, such as parent volunteers, teachers of color, and student leaders.
- **Access to opportunity.** As the team and community generate ideas, it’s easy to neglect ensuring that the students who need change the most are slated to benefit from the new opportunities being created. Sometimes, despite having access to services through other channels, well-connected students will leverage community services through school, thereby “taking spots” from students who may not have the same opportunities outside of school. This is of particular concern when it comes to health services and college and career growth opportunities such as internships and fieldwork experience. One way to mitigate such inequities in a community-partnered school is to employ a student learning profile structure. Within a designated learner profile, faculty, staff, and administrators can take an inventory of the services each student could benefit from and prioritize students in need.³⁴

³⁴ Student learning profiles/plans are a hallmark feature of many student-centered schools. While instructions for how to build these plans are beyond the scope of this toolkit, more information on student-centered instructional approaches are included in the Supportive Readings and Resources section at the end of this guide.



Phase 4: Implementing for Equity



In 2016, Holmes Elementary School in Dorchester, Massachusetts, was struggling. The school, which served predominantly students from disadvantaged families, had an accountability ranking of 3 percent, among the lowest state-wide, placing it at risk of state intervention because of low standardized test scores. A large portion of the student base also struggled with social-emotional issues that were not being met and with the resulting poor level of engagement with classwork.

Under the leadership of principal Yeshi Gaskin and with coaching and support from CCE, the school went through a process of building for equity. After a period of planning supported by professional development around flexible learning, teachers at Holmes began to put a flexible learning model into practice. Meanwhile, staff devised a new school schedule to better emphasize core subjects, converted their library into a maker space, and planned how to better meet students' social-emotional needs. Notably, Holmes [began a boxing program](#) in the school gym that helped students alleviate some social and emotional stresses. Over time, steered by the administration and the innovation team, these piloted practices began to cohere, and the team developed a formal plan that garnered them Innovation School (semi-autonomous) status, additional funding, and the blueprint for implementation that would sustain their work into the years ahead.

Now, Holmes Innovation School (newly renamed) has moved out of state- and district-level intervention, significantly improving its academic performance while building deeper and wider engagement from its community. And even as the school, with a new principal, undergoes new and serious transitions two years into its implementation, its plan, new structures, and two years of expertise ensure that the school is poised to continue to flourish long into the years ahead.

What to Expect from This Phase

No matter how successful the planning phase may have felt, early implementation will be a challenging time because of a tension between two seemingly contradictory lessons learned from CCE's work supporting school redesign:

- Tenacity for the first year or two of implementation is critical to ensure that the group overcomes any dreaded "implementation gaps" and to cement the resilience of a school's design.
- Planning and implementation are always iterative: the reflection, self-assessment, and analysis built into

early implementation *will always* require recalibration, deeper learning, or scaling. In other words, no school can rest on its laurels. Continuous improvement is just that: continuous.

In order to balance this tension, Phase 4 must include (1) a willingness to engage in piloting and to conduct mini-cycles of data-based inquiry and (2) the eventual determination of a plan to guide the group's work over time. Without the former, the implementation would be rushed and unsuccessful; without the latter, it would be unsustainable.

While Phase 4 represents a period of transition for the design team, the group remains an essential force in ensuring that the wider community is "onboarded" effectively onto the project the group has been immersed in for so long and with such focus. Yet if the team carefully and gradually releases its ownership of the redesign, it will ensure that the entire school shares in the responsibility of its execution.

Essential Questions for This Phase

- *How will we determine whether an innovation we've developed can be successful within our school community?*
- *How do we bring our many ideas together into a cohesive plan for implementation?*
- *How do we continue to engage an increasingly wider segment of our school community to ensure shared responsibility and deep buy-in?*
- *How do we gather information about our process and its results?*
- *How is our school redesign going to ensure true equity in outcomes? After the redesign implementation, how will we know if our school is better serving the students who most need its support?*

Steps within This Phase

Step 1: Pilot Early Innovations

Step 2: Finalize an Implementation Plan

Step 3: Lead Implementation

Step 4: Reflect and Monitor Progress

Step 1: Pilot Early Innovations

Briefly put, piloting, or "pilot testing," is an opportunity to test-drive a particular recommendation from the Problems, Solutions, and Outcomes Chart, a design thinking exercise, or a subcommittee. Within the context of equity-minded redesign, piloting serves an even more targeted purpose:



Planning Chart

Pilot Plan (proposed design element change)	Pilot Setting (classroom, grade level, etc.)	Target Population(s)	Pilot Length (in weeks)	Measurable Goal	Evidence of Success (including equity data)	Owner and Participants

it ensures that the proposed structures, approaches, and changes are tested prior to affecting the full complement of students at a given school. This ensures that, first and foremost, the initiative “does no harm,”³⁵ while demonstrating the potential of eliminating inequities.

Timing and Practical Considerations. Typically, piloting should occur after initial solutions generation³⁶ and when the Critical Drivers for equitable innovation are well underway, at least among those involved in the pilot. Piloting in redesign typically occurs over a period of one semester or one year of school, but for more targeted innovations, it may be shorter. Regardless, the piloting phase should be limited to just two or three elements of the redesign plan.

Planning a Pilot. While planning a pilot, teams may want to set up a planning chart that makes several considerations explicit, as in the example provided above.

In addition, team members will benefit from considering each of the following questions as they plan the pilot:

- **Which element(s) of the redesign plan do we want to pilot? For how long?**
Consider selecting elements of the redesign for which feasibility or impact is uncertain. It’s also important to pilot any changes that will directly affect the student learning experience.
- **What supports are necessary to prepare the chosen settings—and staff—for piloting?**
Teams may identify that supports such as resources, professional development, or additional time may be necessary for piloting.
- **How will we receive feedback on the piloting process?**
- **Success metrics: What are the measurements for success during the pilot? How will we determine whether to move this component of the redesign plan forward?**
- **Did the pilot produce equitable outcomes?**
Based on the outcomes, the team will decide among

possible next steps: (1) do not move forward with the proposed design element change, (2) move forward with the proposed design element change as is, or (3) move forward with the proposed design element change with modification.

These questions help the team prepare not only for a successful pilot but for full implementation later. Successful pilots are not simply those that “go well”; they also include those that demonstrate important barriers not previously considered and those that fail to achieve desired outcomes. In any of these cases, the group emerges from the pilot with more knowledge than before about how to ensure that the final implementation plan meets the needs of the entire school community, particularly those whose needs have not been fully met before.

Step 2: Finalize an Implementation Plan

In larger redesign projects, implementation is often a multiyear period, meriting a detailed and printed plan that will guide the school through this lengthy phase with fidelity, despite changes in staffing and student populations that occur over time. When the change is more targeted, the design team may still want to consider an action plan that details the changes that will be taking place so that all impacted stakeholders have a clear sense of both *what* is to come, and *how*.

Regardless of an implementation’s scale, teams will find it helpful to consider three fundamental questions when drafting its plan:

- *Over what period of time should implementation rollout occur?*
- *In what sequence should each component of the design plan be implemented?*
- *How will we monitor the implementation phase?*

Discussing these questions will help generate the content necessary for a comprehensive implementation plan. In particular, answering the third essential question—*How will we*

³⁵ Particularly to the school’s most vulnerable populations.

³⁶ Such as the completion of the Problems, Solutions, and Outcomes Chart introduced earlier in this guide.



monitor the implementation phase?—will support the design team’s focus on equity and ensure continuous monitoring for equitable implementation and outcomes for all stakeholder groups.

The implementation plan should include a coherent slate of actions from, ideally, no more than three or four major areas of focus. To establish a plan, the design team should review data from any pilots as well as the full list of solutions recorded on its Problems, Solutions, and Outcomes Chart. Then, the team should create a plan for work for each chosen focus area. The sample implementation plan at the end of this chapter, which can be used as a template, is modeled on the plan developed, with CCE’s guidance, at a comprehensive high school near Boston. Each plan for work answers questions across five areas of consideration:

- **The “Why”:** *What is the goal of this focus area? How will this priority area improve (equitable) outcomes for students?*
- **Recommended activities:** *What are the high-level implementation goals for each year?*
- **Timeline for implementation:** *What are the action steps needed to achieve the high-level implementation goals each year? When will they take place?*
- **Professional Development and Resource Needs:** *What professional development will be needed to support students, staff, and the community through implementation? What other resources are necessary?*
- **Policy, Contract, and School Committee Considerations:** *What implementation recommendations will require approval from or negotiations with the school committee, the local union(s), or other governing board(s)?*

Timing. The implementation phase of a large-scale redesign plan typically lasts two to five years, with each element of the plan rolling out strategically over the course of the full implementation period. In large-scale and whole-school redesign projects, teams should plan to spend approximately three to six months just on this step—proposing, refining, and finalizing the multiyear plan for implementation. This will allow for drafted plans to be shared with students, faculty, staff, and families such that all stakeholders can be incorporated into the process of identifying a reasonable timeline for the work.

Step 3: Lead Implementation

Once the implementation plan is final, work begins to bring it to life. Sustainable, equitable change that will survive inevitable implementation gaps and provide marginalized students with the tools to learn for liberation³⁷ requires particular attention, beyond other leadership and management strategies, to six primary principles of inclusive change leadership that ultimately support all the moving parts and challenges inherent in early implementation:

- **Shared Ownership:** Any variety of involved stakeholders and special task forces can lead aspects of the change appropriate to their roles, and formal leaders can oversee a gradual release of responsibility³⁸ for these aspects. The more stakeholders who feel deeply integrated into the change process there are, the more people will be invested in ensuring the success of the transformation.
- **Regular Communications:** Emphasizing language accessibility (in terms of both translation and avoiding jargon), proactive outreach, and opportunities for oral communication about the plan all can enhance understanding and, ultimately, buy-in, particularly for those who have previously felt disenfranchised. Another consideration is that communication must be two-way: listening is as important as sharing information.
- **Why > What > How:** The “why” behind school changes is a strong motivator if it’s conveyed clearly and in a way that addresses each stakeholder appropriately: these are the talking points that can be used for the communication strategy. Only once the “why” is clear should the “what” and “how”—the vision and plan—be tackled. Emphasizing the reason behind the change builds resilience that will sustain the effort through inevitable challenges.³⁹
- **Ongoing Professional Learning:** While Phase 2 developed an approach to professional development for the design team itself, professional development and other forms of support must also be made available to the wider faculty during implementation, especially in challenging areas such as the Intersection of Self and Systems.⁴⁰
- **Celebration:** Celebration is often a missing component of school redesign and improvement efforts, despite the fact that celebrating successes can be a

37 That is, so that they may no longer be subjected to oppressive systems and have freedom from inequities.

38 This can follow a model similar to Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey’s Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) instructional approach. More information is available at their website, www.fisherandfrey.com.

39 For a great book to support learning on this topic, see Peter Block, *The Answer to How Is Yes* (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2001).

40 Micro-credentials, learning communities, and other mechanisms can provide opportunities for teachers to build their skills where they need the most support. See chapter 3, phase 2, for more information on professional learning mechanisms like these.



powerful way to provide positive reinforcement for faculty and other stakeholders alike.

- **Confront Adaptive Problems:** Adaptive problems are the toughest ones to solve because they require significant changes in roles, relationships, and even beliefs.⁴¹ These challenges require critical conversations in a variety of spaces, creativity, and an exploration of identity and biases. We suggest that each design team dedicate time to uncovering and diagnosing adaptive problems explicitly. Our Technical Problems and Adaptive Challenges Tool, included below, can support this endeavor.

Celebration is often a missing component of school redesign and improvement efforts.

Step 4: Reflect and Monitor Progress

After the earliest implementation stage, the team overseeing the work benefits greatly from a period of focused reflection and progress monitoring, simultaneously assessing implementation and the process that led to it.

Progress Monitoring. The goal of progress-monitoring during implementation is to deliberately and proactively seek feedback, warm and cool, that can inform the design team in determining what additional observations are necessary and, ultimately, whether modifications to the initial plan are required to more effectively achieve the initial goals. There are many means of gathering early feedback about progress on the execution of new plans. Core mechanisms for gathering feedback are highly similar to some of those introduced in Phase 2 and include

- Observations and walk-throughs (classroom, school-wide; internal, and external; non-evaluative⁴²), which are part of a cycle described in more detail below
- Surveys, focus groups, interviews, and other means of hearing from individuals
- Data analysis, especially collaborative

If serious problems emerge, the group can deepen its analysis and consider recalibration, a process outlined in detail in a later chapter. However, the main goal at this step is to

employ observation cycles and other feedback mechanisms to monitor current progress on the implementation plan, paving the way for later measurements of progress toward overall goals.

At this step, the group is monitoring the progress *of the implementation plan* rather than the school's overall growth *toward greater equity and stronger overall outcomes*. Both are important, but the former—monitoring the implementation itself—comes first and is the focus here. In order for this process to be effective, it must be clear to the school community, from the outset, that the observation mini-cycle is not evaluative: it is assessing how embedded, successful, and sustainable the changes are school-wide.

Progress Monitoring Process

- **Preparation and Communication:** ensure all parties are on the same page
- **Observation:** actual short observations within the school (focused on a specific area, even if as part of a larger redesign plan).⁴³
- **Discussion:** collaborative discussion immediately following the observation noting warm and cool feedback, questions, and take-aways
- **Reflection:** both individual and collaborative
- **Application:** How will this feedback, data, and information be used to review/improve the action plan?

In terms of observation tools, CCE often employs the observation protocols developed by the School Reform Initiative (SRI),⁴⁴ including the [Collaborative Ghost Walk](#), the [Video-Camera Protocol](#), and the [Focus Point Protocol](#). Another option, given the explicit emphasis on equity, is for observations of the implementation to include a more specific equity lens. The Culturally Responsive Classroom Walkthrough Tool introduced in Phase 2 can be used as an interim assessment of culturally responsive instructional practices, for example. The *Building for Equity* School Assessment Tool is also appropriate here if used as an interim assessment.

Reflection: While slowing down to reflect during a busy implementation feels counterintuitive, reflection is a useful and fundamental part of redesign or other innovative work, and it is *critical* to any equity-minded innovation. A process-oriented complement to progress monitoring, it

41 Ron Heifetz introduces concepts of adaptive challenges and technical problems in *Leadership without Easy Answers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

42 That is, the observations are not used as part of educator evaluations or school quality measurements.

43 As with other aspects of a Community-Driven Process, this step benefits from a diverse and representative group of observers, including noneducator stakeholders (such as families and students).

44 All four of the following protocols are copyright of School Reform Initiative and are available on their website, schoolreforminitiative.org.



can include opportunities to address any conflicts, problematic actions, and persistent inequities that surfaced during the process itself or in preliminary outcomes.⁴⁵

Ultimately, reflection creates data, which should be considered along with all data points that allow the team and the wider school community to look back at what has been accomplished, consider ongoing tensions, and think in a meaningful way about what has been learned. Ideally, each member of the design team and the community will participate in the reflection process/cycle individually, then as a team. Finally, other stakeholders or the wider school community (for larger redesign projects) may be invited to participate and engage in reflection.

Several reflection protocols developed by the School Reform Initiative (SRI) build equity of voice into their structures.⁴⁶ CCE has used some of these in our school-based reflection work, including the Success Analysis Protocol, the Microlab Protocol, and Chalk Talk.

These protocols vary widely, and some may need slight modifications to suit the work of the group, but they provide useful options to support reflection. To complement these or other protocols, CCE has developed a Reflective Questions Tool (described further below) to support the planner or facilitator in asking strong reflection questions that will spark important dialogue. Most importantly, the results of reflection can impact the ongoing process of implementation for equity.

Resources and Tools

Sample Implementation Plan. This sample, which can be used as a template, shows part of one useful implementation plan and provides an example of how one comprehensive high school completed their implementation plan. While completed implementation plans may well include a longer initial narrative, more detailed action plans, and so on, we have found that most include the sections outlined on this template. Typically, more complex redesign work has multiple areas of focus; our example here, for simplicity, includes

Reflection is a useful and fundamental part of redesign or other innovative work, and it is critical to any equity-minded innovation.

the plan for just one.

Technical Problems and Adaptive Challenges Protocol.

This protocol is an approach to unearthing and, ultimately, planning how to unpack the existing adaptive challenges that may impact implementation, both immediately and in the years to come. During early implementation is when school-wide (or even district-wide) roadblocks become evident and when long-held biases surface and translate into an apparent lack of buy-in. In reality, a lack of buy-in often signals an adaptive challenge.

Once diagnosed, the problems must be untangled and addressed directly over a series of encounters—often through critical conversations—with the stakeholders involved in, or bearing responsibility for, the challenge and its solution. Adaptive challenges must be solved by those whom they affect; a solution can't be effectively prescribed in this or any other guide or addressed through top-down management. Often, vigilant attention to the other four aspects of change leadership described above can help untangle the knots that complicate the adaptive challenges, making their root causes—and their solutions—more evident. Other times, they hint at new root causes of inequity and may be the genesis of the next redesign cycle.

Building for Equity Reflection Questions. This tool organizes a series of critical reflection questions into layers of increasing depth and “probing.” The first three “levels” of questions work well during the individual reflection that precedes a group meeting, whereas the latter levels may be more appropriate alongside, or as part of, collaborative reflection activities. Design teams may use this tool to help guide their reflection activities according to the following guidelines:

- Going shallow to go deep: Groups who are more resistant to reflection benefit from starting small, with accessible activities and noncontroversial questions, before moving into more intensive activities or questions.
- Structures of mutual accountability: Assigning thought partners or “reflection buddies” can ensure that everyone feels accountable to others to engage in reflection between, or even during, meetings.
- Anonymity: Individuals benefit from the act of reflecting, and the group benefits from the collective reflections, and both of these outcomes can be accomplished in the context of anonymity.

⁴⁵ These come up despite the best of intentions in many processes because of the persistent influence of systems of oppression that cut broadly through society and have influenced systems as well as individuals engaging with the work. These include white supremacy, ableism, ageism, sexism, and many other systems of oppression that affect schools and those who work within them.

⁴⁶ All protocols listed here are copyright of the School Reform Initiative and available from their website, schoolreforminitiative.org.



Key Considerations for Equity

- **Feedback from the margins.** Throughout Phase 4, feedback from students (and their families) in subgroups for whom the current system is not working is crucial. Many a redesign effort has resulted in increased learning and improved outcomes for “high-fliers” or even “middle of the pack” students, but the purpose is to ensure equity for *all* students. During piloting, feedback monitoring, and reflection, these perspectives are important data points.
- **A second look.** During this period, the design team should be mindful to take an additional look at the implementation plan and critically examine it for sources of inequity. In many cases, it can be extremely supportive to bring in an outside consultant or coach for a final read-through as the external lens may be able to expose potential areas of reinforcing inequities that the design team could not easily see. A few places that inequities can hide include
 - *Disparities in which subgroups have access to various elements of the design plan at various stages of implementation*
 - *Inequitable opportunities for various stakeholders to offer input on the implementation plan*
 - *Missed opportunities to solicit continuous feedback on the progress and impact of implementation*
- **Culturally responsive leadership.** While a host of change leadership models exist that might support teams as they lead the implementation phase, few are designed to be culturally responsive. While addressing the priority areas outlined above, teams should ask themselves the following questions to ensure a culturally responsive, equity-focused approach to leading change:
 - *Who is being included as a leader in this process? Has the opportunity to drive this work been shared equitably?*
 - *Are our communications methods reaching everyone in our community? How can we better ensure that all parties have the opportunity to listen and to speak?*
 - *Is our “why”—our vision for equity in our school—foremost in our implementation, or are we letting our worries about “how” compromise our vision?*
 - *Have we enabled our faculty to go through the kind of exploration of their own identities, biases, assets, and challenges that will support their professional growth and enable them to implement our new plan successfully?*
 - *Have we explored the assets that various stakeholders bring to the table? Can we offer our wider community the opportunity to celebrate our success in a way that respects the contributions of all, especially those most marginalized?*
 - *Have we included the perspectives of the marginalized in our conversations about our implementation problems? Have we uncovered and approached with courage the adaptive challenges that stand between us and our vision for equity?*

By asking these questions at regular intervals throughout implementation, schools can ensure that their approach to leadership enables truly transformative change.



Determining Next Steps

Building for Equity, when done well, provides a framework for schools working toward sustainable, *indelible* change in outcomes for all their students, and especially for those who have previously been marginalized. The Equitable Redesign Cycle, however, requires that the end be a new beginning—one in which its redesign innovations endure even as they inform continued progress toward truly equitable outcomes.

There are many directions that the design team can go as it reaches the end of its Equitable Redesign Cycle.

Ultimately, the team must choose its next steps based on the results of Phase 4, Step 4, as well as any other feedback or evidence mechanisms built into the implementation plan.

The Equitable Redesign Cycle requires that the end be a new beginning.

Analysis

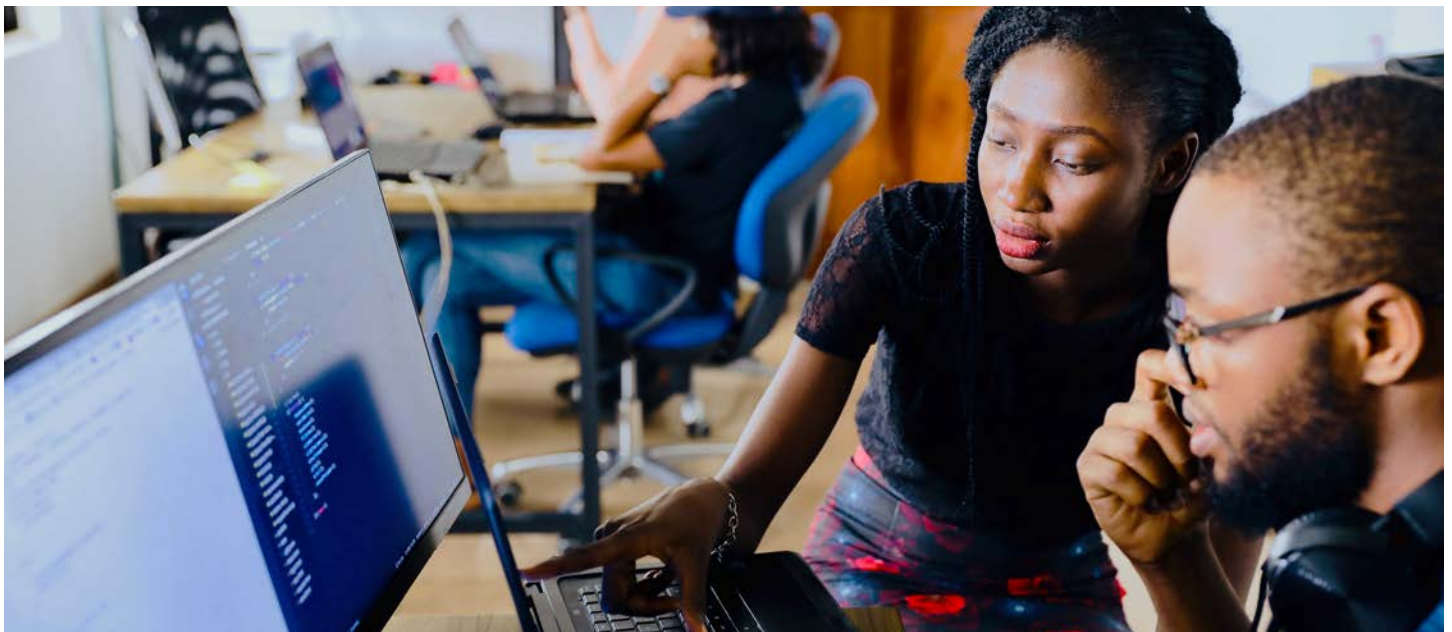
In order to complete an analysis of the implementation plan and its outcomes, the team must gather together for a results analysis and calibration meeting. This should occur *no sooner than one semester after implementation began* (and often a full year later in the case of larger redesign or new school design projects). This ensures that the group doesn't draw conclusions too hastily during the earliest moments of implementation, when fidelity and buy-in have not yet hit sustainable, long-term levels and when wrinkles have not yet been ironed out.

What to Bring to the Analysis

- The implementation plan, along with any supplemental action plans or evidence
- Documentation gathered in Phase 4, Step 4 (“Monitor Early Feedback”)
- Reflection documentation recorded in Phase 4, Step 5 (“Reflect on Progress”)
 - Any early data (of any kind) on outcomes that can inform the group of the success of the innovation toward meeting the initial goals.
- [If applicable] Results of a completed summative walk-through/evaluation process, such as one using the [Building for Equity School Self-Assessment Tool](#).

During the meeting, the group should look at how the data they've gathered on outcomes compares to the outcomes goals as listed in the implementation plan. The group should consider both overall success toward outcomes and any persistent challenges or areas of inequity. School Reform Initiative's data analysis protocols⁴⁷ can prove helpful in providing structure to these conversations.

During this analysis and recalibration meeting, the group must ultimately determine its next steps. The table on the next page lays out some of the most common: Scaling, Sustaining, Recalibrating, and Digging Deeper.



⁴⁷ Please see the School Reform Initiative website, schoolreforminitiative.org, for their collection of protocols.

Next Steps	Consider This If...	Suggested Actions
Scaling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ambitious outcomes are achieved in full, with equity across all subgroups ▪ Time period allowed for implementation at least twice of the initial plan (two terms or two years, depending on the goals and focus area) ▪ There exist other sites or other areas within the site to expand an adapted version of the innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a new inquiry question about scaling the innovation to a new or expanded setting OR to innovate a new and complementary equity innovation ▪ Engage in the full Equitable Redesign Cycle to lead, contextualize, plan, and implement the adapted innovation
Sustaining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outcomes are promising but incompletely achieved or with some ambiguous results despite a deep look at data and evidence ▪ Equity in outcomes shows continual improvement ▪ It has been less than 3 years since the initial completion of Phase 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to engage in implementation, using Phase 4, Steps 3–5, to guide the work ▪ Determine the next check-in date, after at least 1 more term ▪ Continue to gather data to analyze at the next check-in. If outcomes continue to be incompletely achieved, move to Recalibrating (below)
Recalibrating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improvement in outcomes is inconsistent, modest, or includes some persistent inequities ▪ It has been at least 1 term since Phase 4 was completed in full ▪ Data indicators point to one or more concerns that need to be addressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a new, more focused inquiry question around the area(s) of concern ▪ Engage in the full but smaller-scale Equitable Redesign Cycle with a tighter focus on areas of concern and a targeted Phase 2, potentially skipping Phase 1 if the group does not need restructuring
Digging Deeper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outcomes are mostly not achieved or inequities persist with little to no improvement ▪ It has been at least 1 term since Phase 4 was completed in full ▪ Data analysis does not clearly point to 1–3 specific areas of concern (that is, concerns are more ambiguous, hard to pinpoint, or involve more than 3 specific areas) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revisit Phase 1, Step 1, to ensure that the group is well composed; if not, make necessary changes ▪ As a group, develop an inquiry question with a broader or deeper focus ▪ Return to Phase 2 with a wider lens that includes a close look at potential root causes. This may need to include the wider community/district. ▪ Proceed to Phase 3 (and 4) only when the group has new hypotheses about root causes of persistent challenges.

With the above guidance, the group can build an action plan that returns appropriately to the Equitable Redesign Cycle. In many cases, widening, deepening, or more tightly focusing the inquiry question can be an important first step to support the group in returning through the loop of the Equitable Redesign Cycle productively, with an eye toward strategic, rather than incoherent, iteration.

Just as learning is meant to be lifelong for students, growth for schools is meant to be eternal. Data-informed iteration becomes part of the DNA of an equitable school with the goal of continuous improvement. However, the completion of the Equitable Redesign Cycle is a time for celebration

that we recommend schools embrace. Culturally responsive schools who have engaged in this process defy the entropic forces of inequity to bring sustainable, equitable outcomes for all their students. These results are more than simple serendipity: they are a mark of distinction for a school that is truly built for equity.



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Student Engagement

When the principal of a suburban Vermont school was asked at a school redesign convening what was the biggest lesson he had learned so far, he answered succinctly: “students, students, students, students, students.”

His answer highlights a key stakeholder group that, however central they are to schools, are often excluded from crucial conversations around redesign. This is a mistake. As the Vermont principal stated firmly, “Talk to students, interact with students, engage students. If we’re not reimagining high school for them and their benefit, then why are we bothering?” He shared that his school design team had made the mistake—as many do—of underestimating students’ capacity to participate in the redesign process of their high schools. Students were kept in the wings, invited to provide feedback on adult-generated ideas in adult-designed, adult-driven settings. When piloting began, everything slowly began to unravel because the adults had forgotten who they were designing for; they’d neglected to ask the students what they needed from a school redesign.

“Talk to students, interact with students, engage students. If we’re not reimagining high school for them and their benefit, then why are we bothering?”

In each phase of school redesign, the design team can benefit from deliberately engaging students. In Phase 1, this means inclusion of students on the design team and in early community outreach at the start of the inquiry process. Phase 2 requires specific data-gathering mechanisms targeted at students, as well as the potential inclusion of students during meaning-making and analysis. In Phases 3 and 4, student participation, either in student-only focus groups or mixed heterogeneously with other stakeholders, enhances visioning, design thinking, piloting, and feedback monitoring, among other things.

Strategies for Fostering Student Voice in Redesign

- Student focus groups ensuring equitable representation
- Student advisory councils ensuring equitable representation
- Information sessions during lunch, after school, or during the school day ensuring equitable outreach targeting students who may face barriers in attending at other times
- Student surveys
- Student participation in data analysis, observations, and assessments
- Text a question school-wide (some texting apps let you blast a question to the full student body)
- Butcher block paper display at school entrance for students to write responses to questions
- Have students ask students! Leverage a student council or similar group to be the task leaders in collecting student input
- Student members of the design team ensuring equitable representation

To read some perspectives directly from students involved in school redesign, please see our [Student Voices blog series](#) on our website.



Key Considerations for Equity

- **Proactive outreach.** As with other stakeholder groups, students in any school are highly diverse, even in schools without a great deal of apparent racial diversity. Any student engagement, then, necessitates a proactive outreach to students with *potential* to contribute who may have been previously marginalized, rather than simply to the obvious “high flyers,” who tend to be more privileged than their peers.
- **Designing “at the margins.”** Even for students who experience success in school, the existing model is failing to adequately prepare our learners for higher education, careers, and life success, but we nevertheless believe that redesign must be driven “at the margins,” that is, with students most marginalized by the status quo. Briefly stated, to design at the margins means to design with the students in mind who are least “average” in the existing system. In a typical high school, for example, this means designing not for the “average” student, but for both the “high-flyers” and the students repeating junior year for the third time. Teams should design, then, for their English learners and special education students; for high achievers and for students who repeatedly interact with the school discipline system.⁴⁸
- **Make conversations accessible and engaging.** Provide on-ramps for students to contribute authentically to the group’s work. For example, eliminating education jargon wherever possible (or defining terms as necessary), using inclusive protocols for conversation, ensuring that meetings are accessible from a scheduling and transportation perspective, and providing multiple means of offering input can enable more students to contribute their wisdom to the larger project. These on-ramps may well benefit other participants as well. In fact, many of the strategies and cautions that apply to student engagement apply equally to the engagement of parents, families, and the wider community of stakeholders with a relationship to the school. The next section shares similar but more targeted guidance for how best to include these stakeholders in equity-minded school redesign.



⁴⁸ For more on the concept of designing at the margins, we encourage you to check out Caroline Hill’s work at her website, www.carolinehill.com, especially the equityXdesign process, developed by Hill, Michelle Molitor, and Christine Ortiz and described in “Racism and Inequity Are Products of Design; They Can Be Redesigned,” November 15, 2016, <https://medium.com/equity-design/racism-and-inequity-are-products-of-design-they-can-be-redesigned-12188363cc6a>.

Family Engagement

Schools may traditionally focus on what happens between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m., give or take, but the learner experience does not end with the ring of a bell. Education research studies on poverty and on English language learners, for example, demonstrate ample evidence that a student's life outside the classroom deeply affects his or her performance within a classroom. Rather than ignoring students' lives beyond school walls, innovative schools can leverage family and community engagement practices as tools for increasing educational equity. Traditional views on family engagement or parent involvement can serve to accentuate and exacerbate inequities in our schools, which makes the right approach to family engagement critical.

As the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE) defines it, family engagement is

a shared responsibility in which schools and other community agencies and organizations are committed to reaching out to engage families in meaningful ways and in which families are committed to actively supporting their children's learning and development... Effective family engagement cuts across and reinforces learning in the multiple settings where children learn—at home, in prekindergarten programs, in school, in after

school programs, in faith-based institutions, and in the community.⁴⁹

Engaging parents and families is essential to equitable innovation. For design teams looking to engage family members in a significant way, we recommend paying attention to the adult caregivers who ask questions, who have expressed interest in being involved with their child's education, or who show a sense of efficacy in expressing expectations for their child or in how they connect with other parents.

However, parent engagement is more than just the attachment of a few parents to the design team itself. During the launch of the school redesign work, design teams should consider each of the following approaches in order to effectively engage families to benefit the school redesign initiative; many of these approaches can enhance a new school design as well.

- **Audit current family engagement.** While such an audit may be appropriate at any point, family engagement audits are particularly useful during Phase 2 of the Equitable Redesign Cycle. Two tools for conducting a family engagement audit that we recommend for design teams are [Family Maths Toolkit's "Parental Engagement Audit Tool"](#) and [National College for School Leadership's "Leading and Developing Parental Engagement" Tool](#).



49 "Family Engagement Defined," National Association for Family, School and Community Engagement website, <https://nafsce.org/page/definition>.

- **Do your homework.** Another highly recommended resource for schools moving to increase parental engagement during redesign or otherwise is the seminal book *Beyond the Bake Sale*,⁵⁰ which contains important “look-fors” around family engagement that include equity considerations.
- **Build capacity.** Capacity-building helps educators prepare for parents and other community stakeholders to be authentically involved in the school redesign. In some communities, capacity-building might begin with the educators: *The Essential Conversation*, by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot,⁵¹ is a great text for both educators and administrators to explore the dynamics between teachers and parents/guardians. Schools might also consider using Maria Paredes’s “[Family and Community Engagement Standards](#)”⁵² with families, teachers, and administrators.
- **Establish roles.** Many successful redesign teams bring parents and family members into their folds, which necessitates several of the same inclusion considerations as student participation. Other mechanisms for family engagement include:
 - **Community forums** (*often featured in Phase 1, Step 2, or in Phase 2*)
 - **Advisory groups** (*often during Phases 3 and 4*)
 - **Surveys and focus groups** (*often during Phases 2 and 3*)

Key Considerations for Equity

- **Partnership.** Family engagement is about a true *partnership*, and both parties have to come to the table willing to learn, grow, and change. Second, educators must understand cultural differences in perspectives on family engagement. Resources within this chapter (as well as those within Phase 1, Step 1) can be beneficial in helping school-based designers prepare for encounters with families for whom partnership with schools is an unfamiliar concept. Third, the team should plan to have to change course a few times. A *partnership* is something that is ever-evolving.
- **Removing barriers.** Finally, school design teams neglect logistical barriers at their peril. Design teams should consider access for all their events to ensure that languages, literacy levels, access to technology, and scheduling are not barriers to participation. Similarly, providing babysitting services and transportation for events, offering meals when meetings occur during typical meal times, and supplying interpreters proactively are ways to enable maximum access to the families and community members whose perspectives are most critical during an equity-focused school redesign project.

50 Anne T. Henderson, Karen L. Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson, and Don Davies, *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships* (New York: New Press, 2007).

51 Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, *The Essential Conversation: What Parents and Teachers Can Learn from Each Other* (New York: Ballantine, 2004).

52 Maria C. Paredes, *Family and Community Engagement Standards* (San Francisco: WestEd, 2012), <http://www.azed.gov/parents/files/2013/10/2012-family-engagement-standards-rubric.pdf>.



Building Urgency about Equity

During the development of this framework, the CCE team was speaking with a room full of equity-focused educators when a suburban classroom teacher raised his hand and raised a question that upended the discussion. “Those of us who chose to come to this session already care about equity. If there were rooms full of people like us on every school’s administrative team, I’d know exactly how to use this toolkit. But what do you do in a school where no one even talks about equity—when no one even thinks inequity is a problem?”

Too often, it takes external forces to draw attention to the inequities and barriers plaguing a given community. And in communities that believe themselves to have excellent schools, there may be a willful ignorance that shields people from seeing that there are problems that need addressing. Why disrupt, any community member may well ask, a system that seems to be working so well for so many? Building for equity requires careful strategies in some systems and communities, especially majority-white and well-resourced communities willing to leave on their blinders about systemic inequities that they ascribe to “other” districts.

When a system that is mired in a state of cultural incapacity fails to recognize the need for equity-focused intervention, a series of targeted strategies will be needed in order to gain a sense of urgency around pursuing it. The strategies below may be worth considering for any school communities in which this is the case.

“*But what do you do in a school where no one even talks about equity—when no one even thinks inequity is a problem?*”

- **Provide more opportunity for community voice and organizing.** The community’s marginalized or under-served groups need collaborators within the system to provide them with access. Gathering testimony can be a lengthy process, but it pays dividends in creating a groundswell. And those within the system understand the cultural capital necessary to navigate the political and relational dynamics unique to that system. These individuals can strategize to create both informal and formal encounters with the existing power structures in order to move outsiders to the inside.
- **One-two-one.** The general reason to form the design team (Phase 1) before leading an equity audit or root cause analysis (Phase 2) is the need for a diverse and inclusive set of eyes on the data gathered in Phase 2. However, there are some settings in which a smaller team can disseminate (some of) the data and analysis within Phase 2 in order to shed light on existing inequities and start the conversation. This work may then build bridges to new allies to engage in the work, which may produce the need to immediately return to Phase 1 to broaden or refine the team.
- **Text- and data-based discussions.** Those with a strong position of authority within the school, such as an administrator or a teacher with a strong set of allies, can sometimes spark dialogue through carefully chosen text-based discussions or even data analysis using provocative, carefully selected data sets. Sometimes this is a good way to identify early allies (or “co-conspirators”) in the change process.

Although none of these strategies are foolproof, they can often become part of a winning approach to initiating school change. Resources to support each of these approaches may be found earlier in the guide, particularly within Phases 1 and 2.



Glossary

Accountability Rubric

A pre-established assessment tool to track progress on a particular project through demonstrable and trackable attributes

Affinity Group

In this context, refers to subgroups of individuals with the same identity—in this case, by specific racial/ethnic identity, or simply as white people or people of color.

Antiracism

The active process of raising awareness regarding racism and taking action by changing systems, structures, policies, and practices as well as culture so that power is redistributed and shared equitably

Authentic Learning

Students engage in standards-aligned workplace, project-based, and community-based learning, with multiple opportunities to demonstrate what they know and are able to do. Learning that is “authentic” is culturally relevant and focused on students’ interests and needs.

Bias

A tendency to prefer one person to another through favorable actions toward a particular individual based on their traits

Classroom Audit / Data-Inquiry Project

Utilizing qualitative and quantitative student data to surface the challenges faced by a classroom community

Competency-Based Learning

Students move at their optimal pace and receive credit when they demonstrate mastery of competencies, or learning targets, at each new level.

Critical Consciousness

The ability to recognize and consider systems of inequality alongside the commitment to action against these systems

Cultural Boundaries

Attributes that are shared and expressed by a socially cohesive community

Cultural Capital

The knowledge one holds about any particular institute or community and the values, beliefs, and processes that community operates within

Cultural Hegemony

Domination or rule maintained through ideological or cultural means, achieved primarily through social institutions

Cultural Humility

A process-oriented approach to learning about others that starts with an examination of our own beliefs and cultural identities in order to build trustworthy relationships. It calls for lifelong self-assessment, reflection, redressing of power imbalances, and engagement in advocacy for systems change. Cultural humility is a lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique whereby the individual not only learns about another’s culture but starts with an examination of their own beliefs and cultural identities.

Cultural Proficiency

The policies and practices in an organization or the values and behavior of an individual that enable the person or institution to engage effectively with people and groups who are different from them

Culturally Competent

An awareness of one’s own cultural identity and views about difference, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families

Culturally Sustaining

In teaching and learning (and mindsets), refers to sustaining the cultural practices and beliefs of marginalized communities and individuals; sustaining a culture rather than devaluing or even eradicating the cultural practices of individuals as the only means of their access to opportunity

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)

A learning environment that uses cultural knowledge while honoring students’ prior experiences as well as understanding diverse students’ learning styles to make learning more effective and relevant

Deficit Perspectives

A perspective and mindset that attributes children’s educational failures to perceived deficits within the children, their families, and their cultures

Design at the Margins

Design with the students in mind who are least “average” in the existing system



Design Principles

Largely applicable laws, guidelines, biases, and design considerations which designers apply with discretion

Design Team

A primary group of individuals responsible for the leadership and management of a school redesign, with equitable outcomes as its central focus

Design Thinking

Thinking that is human-centered and encourages educators and organizations to focus on the people they're creating for, which leads to better user experiences

Differentiated Assessment

Involves teachers making adjustments to and modifying assessment activities for individual students or a group of students to cater to different learning needs or a range of learning styles and preferences.

Dispositions for Learning

With a focus on equity, identity, and concern for others, students develop the attitudes and habits necessary for academic growth and preparation for life in a global society.

Dominant and Subordinate Identity

People who belong to the group with more power, by virtue of their identity, are said to have dominant group membership. Those who belong to the group with less power, by virtue of their identity, are said to have subordinated group membership.

Equity-Agnostic

Potentially benefiting some students more than others unless cultural responsiveness is deliberately emphasized

Equity-Minded School Culture

Refers to the culture created by the perspective or mode of thinking exhibited by practitioners who call attention to patterns of inequity in student outcomes.

Family Engagement

A collaborative and strengths-based process through which early childhood professionals, families, and children build positive and goal-oriented relationships

Flexible Learning

Time, space, and teacher roles adapt to the needs of students through the use of technology and flexible structures, rather than being a fixed, "one size fits all" experience

Identity Work

How people categorize themselves and are categorized by others

Implicit Bias

An unconsciously held association about a social group. Implicit biases can result in the attribution of particular qualities to all individuals from that group. Also known as stereotyping

Individualized Instruction

Different tasks for each learner and support at the individual level, based on the idea that all learners have different needs and therefore require an approach that is personally tailored

Inquiry Questions

Areas of focus that inspire all the subsequent activities of the Equitable Redesign Cycle; open to research, unresolved and debateable, divergent, ambitious, and equity minded

Knowledge Construction

A collaborative process that aims to produce new a understanding that exceeds what that anyone alone could achieve

Learning Culture

A collection of norms, values, practices, and processes. These conventions encourage employees and organizations to develop knowledge and competence

Micro-credentials

A mini badge of expertise that a learner earns for developing a particular skill

Microaggression

A subtle action that reveals a person's bias against a marginalized group and leaves members of that group feeling uncomfortable or insulted

Neuroplasticity

The brain's ability to reorganize itself by forming new neural connections throughout life.

Personalizing Learning

Refers to intentional educational interventions or activities to address the learning needs, interests, aspirations, or cultural backgrounds of individual students. Also known as personalization.

Positionality

One's position in a group, within a wider sociopolitical context, as defined by identities such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, ability, and other innate or perceived attributes



Prejudice

Belief that one's values, beliefs, and perspectives are better than those of another group; includes making a judgment that conveys a belief of being better than those of another group

Privilege

A system of advantage and benefit granted to or enjoyed by an individual as a result of group membership based on gender, sexual orientation, sexual identity, ethnicity, age, skin color, etc.

Professional Development (PD)

Supplemental education experiences intended to help administrators, teachers, and other educators improve their knowledge and effectiveness through competency and skill building

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

An intentional community of individuals with an interest in education, such as a grade-level teaching team, a school committee, a high school department, or an entire school district. The goal of strong PLCs is the elevation of the teaching practice, which translates into improved student outcomes.

Racial Identity Development (RID)

Recognizes that the social construct of race positions everyone into a racial identity that, like all development, is fluid and has the potential to move an individual through a progression of phases during one's lifetime

Schema

A cognitive framework or concept that helps organize and interpret information. Schemas can be useful because they allow us to take shortcuts in interpreting the vast amount of information that is available in our environment.

Sociocultural Consciousness

The awareness that a person's worldview is profoundly influenced by life experiences that have been lived through the lens of an individual's given social identities, which include race, ethnicity, gender, and social class

Sociopolitical Systems

Systems in which aspects of identity are politicized, including gender, sexuality, religion, and language, resulting in persons being not simply social beings, but political just by being themselves.

Stereotype

An oversimplified generalization about a person or group of people without regard for individual differences. Even seemingly positive stereotypes that link a person or group to a specific positive trait can have negative consequences.

Student-Centered Learning / Personalized Learning

The tailoring of pedagogy, curriculum, and learning environments by learners or for learners in order to meet their different learning needs and aspirations

Student-Driven Learning

A learning method in which students exercise voice and choice in their learning and cocreate personal academic profiles and learning plans focused on their interests, aspirations, and learning challenges



Tools

Intersection of Self and Systems Personal Learning Guide (from Chapter 1)	47
Building for Equity School Self-Assessment Tool (from Chapter 2 and from Chapter 3, Phase 2)	49
Building an Inclusive Team (from Chapter 3, Phase 1)	52
Individual and Group Learning Plan (from Chapter 3, Phase 1)	53
Equity Audit Planning Guide (from Chapter 3, Phase 2)	55
Approaches to Gathering Classroom Equity Data (from Chapter 3, Phase 2)	56
Culturally Responsive Classroom Walkthrough Tool (from Chapter 3, Phase 2)	57
Vision of a Graduate Protocol (from Chapter 3, Phase 3)	60
Rapid Prototyping for Classroom Innovations Protocol (from Chapter 3, Phase 3)	63
Decision-Making Table (from Chapter 3, Phase 3)	64
Sample Implementation Plan (from Chapter 3, Phase 4)	65
Technical Problems and Adaptive Challenges Protocol (from Chapter 3, Phase 4)	66
Building for Equity Reflection Questions (from Chapter 3, Phase 4)	67



INTERSECTION OF SELF AND SYSTEMS

PERSONAL LEARNING GUIDE

This resource is intended to provide essential questions and critical reflection questions in order to support individual educators and other school stakeholders in learning about their own identity as well as their positionality within social systems.

Essential Questions

- Personal:** How deeply have I explored the social constructs in our society, especially the aspect of identity and its complex impact on educational systems and achievement?
- Conditional:** How and to what extent has my school district prioritized courageous conversations about equity as part of its professional culture?

Time Required

Varies; individual reading work varies in length; suggested reflection process

Who Should Use This Guide

Any identity-focused process works best for individuals working at their own pace to deepen their own learning alongside congruent group activities. This particular set of resources is aimed at those early in their journeys.

Preparation

Reading about the Critical Driver “Intersection of Self and Systems” or a similar professional development topic is an important precondition to provide sufficient context to the readings and questions within this tool.

Process

1. Select one of the suggested resources included within your chapter, professional development module, or the guide below to read or watch, individually or in an ad hoc reading group, to support a deepening your understanding of personal identity (including dominant and subordinate aspects of identity) or one’s positionality within social systems. Read/watch the chosen resource. *Duration varies; readings of longer than an hour are best broken into multiple sessions.*
2. Begin a short, sacred period of open personal reflection related to the resource, which should include journaling on paper or electronically. *10–20 minutes, depending on length of resource.*
3. Engage with the prompts and questions provided by this tool (if applicable) to guide deeper and more targeted reflection and learning.

Please note:

While group discussions and activities are often beneficial, they are not described above. These discussions may be challenging to navigate with considerations of equity and are best facilitated by consultants well-versed in issues of equity, positionality, and anti-bias work. Many schools and districts find that professional development focused on this Critical Driver is a sine qua non for supporting sustainable growth in educator mindset and practice.

Some Recommended Early Resources with Reflective Questions

Stages of Racial Identity Development^a

Growth in all aspects of our lives is developmental. How we understand our position in the larger context of society is very much related to how we understand the significance of difference and the impact our racial identity has on us. The RID stages give insight into how individuals come into awareness of their own racial identity and their indicators.

- Locate yourself on the RID table based on your racially identify, then, as you read each stage, think about what age you were when you were in that stage of development and reflect on what lived experience you recall related to that time in your life.
- Find where you are at this time on the RID chart based on your racial identity and consider if you have moved in and out of the stage earlier in life or if you are at the stage for the first time and how you know. Consider what questions come up for you at this time. If you are able, talk with someone who has also gone through this exercise and for whom you have enough comfort to share how you are feeling.

“White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” by Peggy McIntosh^b

This classic article has been used in diversity and race work for decades. Peggy McIntosh demonstrates the privilege she and her children have every day to be affirmed in society and in their school experiences.

- Reflect on the power and privileges you possess or those you do not. How are these relevant to your role as an educator? How do you think your students experience the classroom based on this reading?
- How does the way we are socialized impact our values and beliefs about ourselves, students, and their families and communities? How do these beliefs impact our teaching approach?

“How to Overcome Our Biases? Walk Boldly toward Them,” by Vernā Meyers^c

In this 2014 TED Talk, Vernā Meyers gives attention to the plight of violence black males face in our society, connecting this to the engrained and unconscious biases that all humans possess, and provides suggestions on how one can improve awareness and challenge one’s own biases.

- What examples does Meyers offer that give evidence to the reality that Black males are treated with bias? How does her example transfer into our school communities and classrooms?
- For each of the three suggestions Meyers offers toward decreasing or reassociating one’s biases, how can you take personal action? Are there actions you can take that will impact your school, classroom, or school community?

^a This document, developed by the Interaction Institute for Social Change, is available at the Racial Equity Tools website, racialequitytools.org.

^b This essay is available at Racial Equity Tools website, racialequitytools.org, and is excerpted from Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women’s Studies,” Working Paper 189, Wellesley College Center for Research on Women (1988).

^c Video available at TED.com: https://www.ted.com/talks/verna_myers_how_to_overcome_our_biases_walk_boldly_toward_them?language=en.



BUILDING FOR EQUITY SCHOOL SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

The goal of this needs assessment is to determine a school's readiness for culturally responsive, student-centered learning and to support the strategic planning process.

Culturally Responsive School Design Principles	Along with the Critical Drivers:	Will result in:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Culturally Proficient Teachers and Leaders Inclusive School Culture Student-Centered Academic Learning Supportive Resources Engaged Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intersection of Self and Systems Community-Driven Process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excellent, sustainable, and equitable student outcomes.

Rating Scale:

- 1**—Area of Concern: demonstrates insufficient evidence of creating a culturally responsive, student-centered school
- 2**—Demonstrates little evidence of creating a culturally responsive, student-centered school
- 3**—Demonstrates some evidence of creating a culturally responsive, student-centered school, but more evidence is needed
- 4**—Demonstrates evidence of creating a culturally responsive, student-centered school

Design Principles to Support Sustainable, Equitable Outcomes

Culturally Proficient Teachers and Leaders	1	2	3	4
1. An equity-minded mission and vision for the school drives policy and practices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The school leadership team demonstrates strong, consistent, and equity-focused management and organizational skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Distributed, effective, and supportive leadership supports educators and students, using governance and decision-making platforms such as instructional leadership teams, committees, advisory councils, and design teams.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Teachers and leaders are highly diverse (across various factors and including race/ethnicity).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Educators (including both teachers and leaders) are provided resources, time, and support to engage in work exploring their own identities as related to systems of privilege and oppression, and are pursuing ever-deeper cultural proficiency.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Educators pursue ever-deeper cultural proficiency through a variety of learning opportunities while fostering asset-based language and behaviors about and among students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. The school, using data, develops and implements rigorous plans to address inequitable patterns of achievement and reviews the results of such plans to maintain attention to and further address inequities of opportunity and outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Professional learning communities and professional development opportunities elevate and support continual improvement toward equitable student outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Inclusive School Culture	1	2	3	4
1. The school fosters and sustains high expectations for all students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Culturally responsive discipline practices ensure all students are physically and emotionally safe, using culturally sustaining, restorative practices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Strong relationships between teachers and students, especially including students from historically marginalized groups, support learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Inclusive School Culture	1	2	3	4
4. All students and other community members feel a strong sense of belonging, supported by a welcoming environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. All classes and programs are fully integrated and inclusive, such that all students have opportunities to interact with others from different backgrounds.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The school embodies a value for learning and fosters a growth mindset for both educators and students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Social-emotional learning activities/programs exist in the school and support students' social and emotional development, promote optimal mental health, and prevent risk behaviors (e.g., counseling, antibullying, service learning, character education, student support services, etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Equity and data are evident in professional conversations, practices, programs, and belief systems in the school; the school collects, analyzes, and uses, on a regular basis, data (disaggregated by race, income, EL status, and other relevant factors) about student discipline, academic achievement, and social-emotional proficiency.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Student-Centered Academic Learning	1	2	3	4
1. Educators facilitate students' exposure to a diverse array of relevant, engaging, and rigorous learning materials, designing learning experiences "at the margins" to ensure universal access to learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Students are granted agency over their learning, including choices of what standards-aligned content they learn, and when and how they learn it; and they have access to instruction and assessment strategies aligned with their preferences, assets, and needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Competency-based education supports all students in pursuing a blend of high expectations and deep learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. There are multiple pathways to promotion/graduation (career academies, college prep. curriculum, International Baccalaureate, internships, apprenticeships); all are college- and career-aligned.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. A collaborative learning environment exists in which the teacher is perceived as both director of instruction and a facilitator or activator of learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Students are provided opportunities to learn with and within the wider community, including through internships, externships, capstones, service-learning projects, or public demonstrations of learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Educators work together to align, design, and analyze rigorous common performance assessments that are valid, reliable, and culturally responsive; these in turn increase student achievement and equity of outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Teachers use the results of quality performance assessments to guide their daily instruction, assignments, and larger revisions of curriculum and to make high-stakes decisions related to graduation and promotion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Curriculum and instruction support students' cognitive and social-emotional development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Supportive Resources	1	2	3	4
1. Curriculum and materials displayed in school and provided to educators support a rigorous and culturally responsive pedagogy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Curriculum and materials reflect/depict diverse cultures, individuals and perspectives.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Support staff, coaches, and specialists effectively help meet the needs of all learners.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The teacher schedule includes sufficient time, resources, and support for planning, collaboration, and data analysis to ensure the effective planning and delivery of (culturally responsive and student-centered) authentic learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Co-curricular activities to broaden the student experience are accessible to all.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Supportive Resources	1	2	3	4
6. When students struggle, they know how to access various supports within and outside the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Engaged Community	1	2	3	4
1. The school has opportunities, including groups, teams, and events, for families and community members to provide input as well as to serve in significant roles toward fulfilling the school's vision/mission.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The school embraces and celebrates the diversity of its community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The school creates the conditions necessary to enable families to attend parent/student/teacher conferences, student presentations, and other important events.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The school has established substantial reciprocal community partnerships which help address identified needs and support the achievement of the equity-focused vision/mission of the school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The school implements culturally appropriate communication practices, including printed materials in all major languages to ensure that all prospective and current students and families understand the school's vision/mission and programs offered.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The school fosters civic engagement for students in and with the wider school community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. There are opportunities for students to take on leadership roles in the classroom, school, and community; and proactive outreach/support includes students from marginalized groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE TEAM

Engaging Ambassadors to Share Your Story

As you think about building a team of ambassadors to share your work and mission, consider the **key stakeholder groups** in your community and the **identities and backgrounds in your community** that should be included to ensure diversity of voice.

Key Stakeholder Groups

- Teachers and staff
- Administrators
- Family members
- Students
- Partner organizations
- Community supporters

*Depending on your community, you might also consider including teachers union representatives, school board members, design leaders, municipal and state representatives, funders, and/or PTO members.

Identity/Backgrounds

- Racial/ethnic
- Language
- Gender
- Age
- Disability
- Socio-economic

Key Considerations

- What unique perspectives can your ambassadors share?
- What are some stories that your ambassadors can tell about their experiences or work?
- How can you incentivize your stakeholders to take on the role of ambassador?
What are the benefits to them?

Action Plan

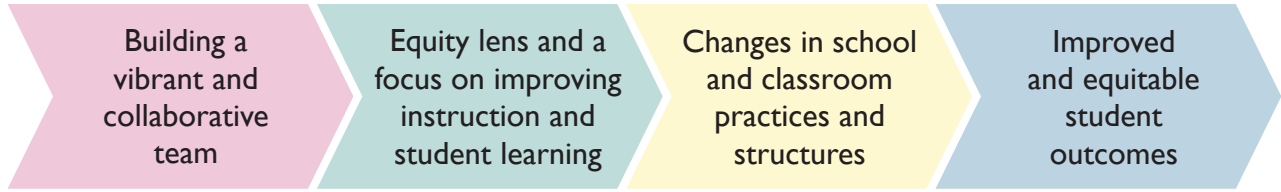
Who have you already engaged as ambassadors for your work and mission?

Who else do you want to engage as potential ambassadors?

INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP LEARNING PLAN

Phase 1

This tool is designed to support groups engaging in both collaborative learning and individual learning with the goal of building shared capacity to lead systems change and positively affect equity in student outcomes.



Group Inquiry Question(s) [whole-school redesign, new school design, or targeted focus]

One or more question(s) should be explicitly equity focused.

Intersection of Self and Systems

What learning goals, resources, and activities will support the group’s learning around positionality, systems of privilege and oppression, and identity and bias, as relates to the inquiry question(s)?

Primary Learning Goal(s)		
Selected Resources	Individual Learning Activities	Planned Group Activities

Culturally Responsive School Design

What learning goals, resources, and activities will support the group’s learning around potential school structures, teaching practices, and other design elements, as relates to the inquiry question(s)?

Primary Learning Goal(s)		
Selected Resources	Individual Learning Activities	Planned Group Activities

Community-Driven Process

What learning goals, resources, and activities will support the group's learning about the school community and the existing inequities, assets, and challenges, as relates to the inquiry question(s)?

Primary Learning Goal(s)	
Possible Data Sources to Consider	
Individual Responsibilities	
Who	Inquiry Action

Individual Plans

Individuals may document their own plans for learning and inquiry within each of the three Critical Drivers that are synchronous with the larger group's goals and planned activities documented here.



EQUITY AUDIT PLANNING GUIDE

Phase 2 / Step 1

This tool helps design teams plan appropriately for both limited and comprehensive school-wide audits.^a Use requires a diverse, representative group of stakeholders, some with a strong equity lens. Please see Phase I for more guidance on group composition.

Inquiry Question: ^b			Action Steps:
Relevant quantitative data^c to gather (circle): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achievement ▪ Discipline/referrals ▪ Attendance ▪ Course level access ▪ IEP referrals ▪ Other: 	Ways to gather this information:	Timing:	
Relevant qualitative data/ feedback sources (circle): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students ▪ Teachers/faculty ▪ Administrators ▪ Parents/family ▪ Community reps. ▪ School self-assessment ▪ Other: 	Ways to gather this information:		
Relevant observational data sources (circle): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Classroom observations ▪ School walk-throughs ▪ Materials/curriculum audits ▪ Other: 	Ways to gather this information:		

^a However, teams that would like a structured approach to a comprehensive equity audit may benefit from a more detailed guide to supplement this guidance.

^b Please use additional copies of this page for each inquiry question, if the group has more than one.

^c Data should be disaggregated by race/ethnicity, income level, gender, IEP status, EL status, or other factors relevant to the inquiry.

APPROACHES TO GATHERING CLASSROOM EQUITY DATA

Phase 2 / Step 2

This tool outlines some of the approaches an individual or design team may take to gather classroom data, in support of a classroom equity audit or as a complement to a whole-school equity audit. Approaches reflect the scale of the inquiry, ranging from comprehensive (at the top) to highly focused (at the bottom of the chart).

Approaches to Gathering Classroom Equity Data

Need	Suggested resource	Purpose	Works best for equity data analysis when...
Comprehensive classroom equity audit	<i>Using Equity Audits in the Classroom to Reach and Teach All Students</i> ^a	Provides educator with the fullest picture of existing inequities and barriers to full equity in their classrooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results indicate that inequities exist Educator(s) can read the entire book and undergo process in full School leader(s) grant educator(s) release time Classroom(s) being audited is/are part of the planned redesign
Peer/ supervisor/ coach observation (nonevaluative)	SRI Peer Observation Protocols, especially “ Video Camera ,” “ Focus Point ,” and “ Collaborative Ghost Walk ” ^b	Varies; provides targeted feedback that can support educators in auditing current practices or piloting new ones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equity is named explicitly as the focus of observations Teachers voluntarily partake in the visit and trust is established Multiple classrooms are visited/discussed The emphasis is on the learning, not on individual classroom redesign
	Equity Institute’s Culturally Responsive Walkthrough Tool	Exposes practices and aspects of classroom environment that impact equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom(s) being visited is/are part of the planned redesign Some or all observers have experience with equity-focused professional development
Self-assessment	Equity Institute’s Culturally Responsive Walkthrough Tool or their “Building Equity into Your Teaching Practice” Tool	Individual educators gain an equity lens through which to consider, and work to improve, their classroom practices and environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accompanied by a learning community or professional development about cultural proficiency, culturally responsive teaching, or equity The emphasis is on the individual’s growth and learning for the benefit of the classroom and the students
Targeted data analysis	Specific quantitative data based on targeted student surveys, student scores on classroom assessments disaggregated by demographics, etc.	Varies by data source; provides a portrait of student engagement, outcomes, or other data points and exposes gaps and inequities objectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accompanied by a learning community or professional development about cultural proficiency, culturally responsive teaching, or equity The emphasis is on change and setting new goals Classroom(s) being analyzed is/are part of the redesign or piloting

^a Kathryn Bell McKenzie and Linda Skrla, *Using Equity Audits in the Classroom to Reach and Teach All Students* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2011).

^b For more information, please see the School Reform Initiative (SRI) website, <https://www.schoolreforminitiative.org/>, and Phase 4, Step 2.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE WALKTHROUGH TOOL

1. Classroom culture/environment: How do I create an inclusive environment?

Indicators	“Look Fors” in the Classroom	
	Teacher Practice	Student Practice
The environment is socially and intellectually safe for all students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers uses language that validates multiple identities, encourages questioning and builds discourse. Teacher instructs and models a growth mindset Teachers emphasize effort Teachers creates expectations and criteria for peer collaboration and feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students take risks in their learning. Students engage cooperatively and collaboratively in their learning. Students engage in exploration, discovery and hands-on learning activities. Students admit when they need help or don't know something
Rituals and routines have been established that reinforce self-directed learning and academic identity (Who am I as a learner?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher provides an opportunity for verbal and written reflections Teacher embeds self-evaluation into lessons. Teacher creates learning groups in which all students learn to work collaboratively and independently.** Teachers give timely feedback on student work Teachers familiarize students with how they learn. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students reflect on their learning Students exercise voice and choice in their learning. Students are able to provide feedback on lessons. Students can process feedback with the teacher Students are able to work for appropriate periods of time without direct teacher directions.
The classroom has been organized so that the physical landscape includes images, materials, and resources that reflect a wide range of diverse people and perspectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher has several classroom areas (reading corner, class library, shared meeting space). Teacher includes images and visuals that are reflective of diverse student identities. Teacher makes problem-solving visuals noticeable and accessible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students know how to use each area of the classroom. Students know how and when to use visuals provided around the classroom. Students contribute to creating images that are reflective of their identities.
Key concepts and facts are interrogated across subject areas to account for multiple perspectives and representation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher uses lessons that represent differing viewpoints. Teacher encourages all students to see, question, and interpret concepts from a variety of perspectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are able to cite multiple points of view on a given topic Students engage in critical conversations about complex topics

Teacher involves and guides students in assessing their own learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher involves students in creating criteria for success on assignments and projects. • Teacher creates opportunities for peer collaboration and intentional peer feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students contribute to creating criteria for success in lessons and projects. • Students commit to improving and evolving work based on feedback from teachers and peers
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2. Student Relationship Building: How do I build trust and respect with my students?

	“Look Fors” in the Classroom	
Indicators	Teacher Practice	Student Practice
There is evidence of understanding of how race, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexual identity are powerful factors that shape students identities and therefore impact their educational experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher uses empowering language like “I” statements and choice. • Teacher shows high expectations for all students. • Teacher involves students in reflecting on teaching practices and the learning environment. • Teacher provides equitable opportunities for support, praise, and participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students provided opportunities to reflect on their own learning and behavior. • Students acknowledge when they make mistakes and hold themselves accountable. • Students practice giving and receiving critical feedback.
Expectations for achievement are clear and allows all students to take responsibility and advocate for their own learning.* <i>*Communicates clear “criteria for success.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher uses formative assessment for instructional purposes • The teacher supports productive disagreements • The teacher clearly states, posts, and maintains high and clear standards for all students • The teacher provides rubrics that are engaging and transparent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are able to paraphrase expectations for their work as well as teacher feedback • Students support statements about their own learning with evidence • Students advocate appropriately for what they need in the classroom • Students engage with rubrics that are visible and transparent
Teacher demonstrates awareness of biases <i>*Also applies to building a safe classroom culture.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher provides encouragement and affirmation to all students. • Teacher creates meeting high expectations for all students. • Teacher creates evaluations that measure the multiple ways students learn information. • The teacher solicits feedback about classroom culture from students • Teacher provides space for restorative practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students contribute feedback regarding experiences with bias and overall classroom culture. • Students are given structure and space to articulate harm or perceived bias. • Students can share perspectives about classroom culture without fear of retribution.

3. Instructional Strategies: How do I ensure that I'm being culturally responsive with my instruction strategies?

Indicators	"Look Fors" in the Classroom	
	Teacher Practice	Student Practice
Lessons are developed using student experiences and prior knowledge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher uses students' backgrounds to activate prior knowledge. • Teacher provides multiple access points to challenging assignments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students indicate interest and understanding of the context and framing for new learning.
Key concepts and facts are interrogated across subject areas to account for multiple perspectives and representation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher uses lessons that represent differing viewpoints. • Teacher encourages all students to see, question, and interpret concepts from a variety of perspectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are able to cite multiple points of view on a given topic • Students engage in critical conversations about complex topics •
Teacher involves and guides students in assessing their own learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher involves students in creating criteria for success on assignments and projects. • Teacher creates opportunities for peer collaboration and intentional peer feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students contribute to creating criteria for success in lessons and projects. • Students commit to improving and evolving work based on feedback from teachers and peers

VISION OF A GRADUATE PROTOCOL

Phase 3 / Step 1

This protocol's purpose is to develop a vision of what a graduate from a school should know, understand, and be able to do.

Roles: 1 whole-group facilitator and 1 whole-group recorder; small-group facilitators, recorders, and timekeepers. (If possible, include students, parents, and community members in this process, integrating them into all the groups.)

Materials: Sticky notes, chart paper, markers

Preparation: *Prior to the meeting, create* a large silhouette of a student on chart paper.

Prior to the meeting, create separate charts representing the head, heart, hands, feet, and eyes of a student and post them in “stations” around the room with plenty of space between them. (Note: Guiding questions to be written on or next to the charts are listed at the end of this protocol.)

Timing: 135 minutes

Before the meeting begins:

- Form groups of 5–6 participants for “vision teams.”
- Give the recorder for each vision team a marker whose color will be used only for their group.
- Identify a place for each team to post their free-writing.
- Give sticky notes to each team for the Gallery Walk.

Process

1. **Decide who will be the vision team facilitator, recorder, and timekeeper.**
2. **Protocol review (3 minutes):** Facilitator reviews the protocol with the group.
3. **Journal:**
 - a. Facilitator reviews the school's mission statement with the group.
 - b. Facilitator reads the question “What should a graduate from our school know, understand, and be able to do?” and team members free-write their individual responses to the question. (8 minutes)
 - c. Share responses with vision team members, then post. (2 minutes)
4. **Carousel (30 minutes):**
 - a. Each team goes to a station that represents one “part” of the student—head, heart, hands, feet, or eyes—and the recorder charts the group's responses to the questions posed on the chart. (5 minutes)
 - b. Each group rotates to the next station, representing another “part” of the student, reads what the previous group wrote, and builds on the existing comments by adding ideas or posting questions. (5 minutes)
 - c. Groups continue to rotate at 5-minute intervals and build on the previous groups' work until each student “part” has comments from all groups.
5. **Final word (3 minutes):** Each group member does a last walk-through to add any final notes.
6. **Synthesis and product (35 minutes):** Each group returns to the station where it began, reviews the comments by all the groups, consolidates the ideas, writes them as “essential” ideas, and prioritizes them to produce a “clean,” synthesized representation of each part to exhibit in the gallery. Each group posts its final work.
7. **Gallery Walk (15 minutes):** Participants circulate among the gallery of charts, taking notes and leaving sticky notes indicating “Wows” (impressive ideas) or “Wonders” (ideas that make you think or raise questions) in response to what they see.
8. **Whole group sharing (15 minutes):** The facilitator for the whole group poses the following questions while the recorder for the whole group charts the comments:
 - a. What did you notice?
 - b. What seems important?
 - c. Do our ideas promote equity in our schools?

- d. Do our ideas align with what we know about teaching and learning?
 - e. How do you hope the information will be used?
 - f. What worked about the process, and what didn't work so well?
9. **What next? Extensions and next steps** (15 minutes): The whole-group facilitator and recorder lead the group in completing the chart below. Pair shares or journaling may be appropriate for 2 minutes of the total time.

Consider the following questions:

- a. How coherent is our vision at this moment? What will it take to make it readable and understandable?
- b. Who needs to know? How do we communicate our vision to all members of the school community?
- c. How do we celebrate and make it public to the whole school community?
- d. How often do we need to revisit it?
- e. How can we tell if the vision is embedded in all the work of the school?

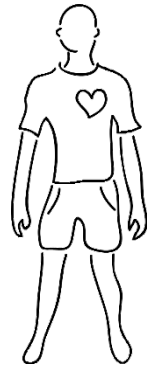
What needs to happen?	Who needs to be involved?	When does it need to happen?	Where does it need to take place?	What resources are needed?



Advance Preparation Of Charts

1. Cut outs or drawings that represent each “part” of the student make the process visually more interesting as well as easier to identify and remember the focus.
2. Guiding questions: Beside or on each of the following charts, write the questions suggested for that chart.
 - a. **Head**—What should every graduate know? Consider general and specific facts, concepts, and ideas. What should they understand? What thinking skills should they have?
 - b. **Heart**—What traits, qualities, or characteristics should every graduate embody?
 - c. **Hands**—What should graduates be able to do and produce? What skills should they have?
 - d. **Eyes**—What perspectives should graduates have? How discriminating should their vision be regarding STEM and humanities?
 - e. **Feet**—How would we most like to see our students moving in the world? Where should their education take them?
3. It may be helpful to post this small chart beside each of the “part” charts.

Feedback Key	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Agree
!	Strongly Agree
?	Questions
X	Strongly Disagree



Adapted and used with permission from Future Protocol “Back from the Future,” a National School Reform Faculty protocol by Scott Murphy, August 2001.



RAPID PROTOTYPING FOR CLASSROOM INNOVATIONS PROTOCOL

Phase 3 / Step 3

Prototyping is a way to draft initial design ideas without dedicating a significant amount of time. The purpose is to invoke equity-focused problem solving, ideal for more targeted challenges. It works well with classroom teachers (or others directly supporting classroom practice) in a group of any size.

Roles: Facilitator (acts as timekeeper and does not participate in the process)

Materials: Markers, poster paper / white boards, brainstorming placemat

Timing: Flexible (60–100 minutes)

Process

1. Facilitator reads the purpose of the protocol to participants.
2. Rapid Fire Questions (prewritten on poster paper) (1 minute each):
 - a. What existing inequity or area for growth are you attempting to solve?
 - b. What is your desired outcome (or “solution statement”)?
 - c. What are some specific classroom innovations, big or small, that could solve the inequity or growth area listed above and move toward the desired outcome?
3. How will you evaluate any of these innovations for equity and achievement of the desired outcome(s)? How will you measure success? (5 minutes)
4. Choose one of the innovations generated above (step 2c). What specific steps, actions, or changes would bring this about successfully? (15 minutes)
5. Feedback Loop 1: Share your work with two other people. (15 minutes)
 - a. Person 1 presents thinking so far (3 minutes)
 - b. Persons 2 and 3 give quick feedback (2 minutes)
 - c. Repeat for idea prototypes from Persons 2 and 3 (5 minutes each)
6. Refine your plan based on feedback and draft a pitch for how this aligns with larger school- and district-wide assets, needs, and goals (15 minutes)
7. Feedback Loop 2: Complete Step 5 again for feedback. (15 minutes)
8. Develop an action plan to pilot and evaluate this innovation. (15 minutes)
9. Feedback Loop 3: Complete Step 5 again for final feedback. (15 minutes)
10. Debrief the process. (5 minutes)

DECISION-MAKING TABLE

Phase 3 / Step 4

This is a template for a school’s design team, leadership team, or larger stakeholder group to use when determining how to equitably distribute decision-making power and responsibility within the structures of the school.

Key: **D** should be marked to denote the individual or group with **decision-making** authority about a given category of decision. **I** should be marked to denote individuals or groups to be provided the formal opportunity to offer **input** to the decision. (The responsibility for offering this opportunity falls on the person or group with decision-making authority.)

Category	Governing Board	Principal	Admin Team	ILT	Teachers /Staff	Guidance	Parents/ Guardians	Students
Vision								
School vision/mission								
School improvement plan								
Teaching/learning								
Grading policies								
Student assessments								
Curriculum								
PD: whole school (calendar)								
Instructional focus								
Graduation requirements								
School culture								
Establishing school norms								
Behavior policies								
School safety								
Partnerships								
Operations								
Budget								
Hiring teachers								
Hiring principal								
Hiring nonteaching staff								
Facilities								
Fundraising								
Administrative periods								
Organization								
Master schedule								
Teacher schedule/calendar								
Evaluation								
Teachers								
Staff								
Administrators								
Principal								

SAMPLE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Phase 4 / Step 2

Design team can use this chart as a template in their work to develop a final implementation plan for planned equitable innovations or larger redesign goals. It is completed, modeled after the work of a medium-sized urban district, as an example and shows only one focus area. Complete individual charts for each focus area of your redesign (e.g., project-based learning, performance assessment, social-emotional learning, advisory, etc.) Full implementation plans may include an introductory narrative, a chart like the one below for each focus area, and a section focused on projected outcomes with a plan for evaluating their attainment.

Focus Area: Habits of the Graduate	
<p>The “Why”</p> <p><i>What is the goal of this focus area? How will this priority area improve (equitable) outcomes for students?</i></p>	<p>Students will be lead agents of learning experiences that allow them to learn with purpose and that will empower them to address real-world problems working in collaboration with teachers, practitioners, and community. By establishing common Habits of the Graduate to reinforce schoolwide, we can establish a common language and approach that helps us ensure that all students, especially those currently underserved, graduate ready to engage fully in college, career, and community.</p>
<p>Recommended Activities</p> <p><i>What are the high-level implementation goals for each year?</i></p>	<p>Every SHS student will develop eight habits by the time they graduate, currently drafted as: Critical and Creative Thinking, Growth Mindset, Communication, Collaboration, Postsecondary Readiness, Culturally Competent Citizenship, Physical and Emotional Wellness, and Professionalism. While two habits of focus will be identified for each grade level, ALL habits can be referenced and developed in each grade level. At full implementation, these Habits of the Graduate will be adopted by all faculty and students and embedded in all English, math, science, social studies, world language, health, visual and performing arts, special education, ELE, and CTE courses, and in performance assessments that students complete.</p>
<p>Timeline for Implementation</p> <p><i>What are the action steps needed to achieve the high-level implementation goals each year? When will they take place?</i></p>	<p>June 2020: Host family and faculty feedback forums for draft of Habits of the Graduate</p> <p>August 2020: Habits committee completes final Habits based on feedback</p> <p>Fall 2020: Incorporate Habits into classroom expectations</p> <p>November 2020: Reference Habits in assistant principals’ and counselors’ meetings with students</p> <p>May 2021: Award students for exemplifying the Habits during Academic Awards Night</p> <p>September 2021: Incorporate a section on mastery of specific Habits of the SHS Graduate into Performance-Based Assessment (PBA) rubrics</p> <p>December 2021: All PBA rubrics evaluate students at their end-of-semester PBAs on Habits, and educators have calibrated scoring to ensure fairness</p>
<p>Professional Development and Resource Needs</p> <p><i>What professional development and resources will be needed to support students, staff, and the community through implementation? What other resources are necessary?</i></p>	<p>All staff will be provided the following resource supports in year 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sample reflection rubrics for assignments ▪ Signs for classrooms and offices ▪ Add to Program of Studies / Student Handbook <p>PD and resources prior to year 2: teacher mentors are provided with PD, presentation guidelines, and a rubric to help students prepare to present in the final weeks of the semester; training provided to all teachers on task scoring calibration</p>
<p>Policy, Contract, and School Committee Considerations</p> <p>(see Phase 3, Step 3)</p> <p><i>What implementation recommendations will require approval from or negotiations with the school committee, the local union(s), or other governing board(s)?</i></p>	<p>Our school administrators will be negotiating with the district to include an additional page on our report cards that details a student’s progress toward the Habits of a Graduate. An initial meeting is set for September 2020, with the aim of including this page in report cards by December 2021.</p>

TECHNICAL PROBLEMS AND ADAPTIVE CHALLENGES PROTOCOL

Phase 4 / Step 3

This document is designed to be a tool for schools or design teams during implementation as they determine how best to approach the various challenges that they encounter in implementing their plans for a school redesign. This approach is best facilitated by a trained coach.

Preparation: Print out copies of the tool.

Materials: Copies of the tool, chart or whiteboard, markers, sticky notes, writing utensils

Timing: 50–60 minutes

Key Considerations: Ideally, groups should contain 4–12 people and have a set of working norms together. In establishing groups, consider DEI: diversity (of identity and perspective), equity (of voice), and inclusion (ensuring all participants, including those in noneducator roles, are made welcome).

Process

- 1. Brainstorm (5 minutes):** On sticky notes (one note per idea), staff should silently and individually brainstorm any current or anticipated challenges/problems arising from implementation, the change process, etc.
- 2. Share (8 minutes):** On a whiteboard or chart paper, the group members should share their ideas, by taking turns in a round, bringing one urgent idea up to the board until all urgent challenges are included. Then, everyone should work together to group similar and related challenges.
- 3. Sort (12 minutes):** The group should determine which challenges are adaptive and which are technical (see below) and rate the urgency for each of the challenges/problems identified.
- 4. Delegate (10–15 minutes):** Any problems that the group identified as “technical” should be assigned to a particular owner (who can be a member not in the group) to be tackled. This can be managed using an Action Planning Tool so as to note owners, deadlines, and other key considerations.
- 5. Prioritize (10–15 minutes):** Any problems that the group identified as “adaptive” should be considered more closely by the group. The group then should consider which persons (very rarely is an adaptive challenge “solved” by one person) should meet to unpack each of these challenges and determine which of the adaptive problems have first priority. For each problem, the group should also identify an initiator who will work to convene those who will be unpacking and addressing the identified adaptive challenge.
- 6. Debrief (5 minutes):** The group should reflect collectively on how the process went and how individuals feel about the activity and its outcomes, then review next steps.

Technical Problem <i>attributes</i>	Adaptive Problem <i>attributes</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focused on one particular area of a school ▪ An individual expert or small task force could solve the problem permanently if provided time and resources ▪ Most people would agree on the source of the problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Impacts multiple areas / stakeholder groups in the school ▪ No one is quite sure where to start to unpack this complex issue ▪ Some people are in denial or do not wish to acknowledge it ▪ Solving this challenge requires changes in beliefs, attitudes, roles, or relationships

BUILDING FOR EQUITY

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Phase 5 / Step 4

This tool provides questions to support a collaborative reflection activity as an integral step within an equity-minded design process. These may be answered individually, in group dialogue, or through another process selected by the group.

Description

- In your own words, what happened during this project?
- What was your role, and how did it evolve?
- What resulted from your work on this innovation?
- What evidence of bias, inequity, or other problematic elements surfaced in the development of this work?

Feelings

- What did you feel before this project began? During the work? Now?
- How do you think other people feel about this work? Is that different from how you feel? Why/why not?
- Do you feel better or worse about issues of equity in your setting following this project?
- At what points did you feel uncomfortable, if any? Why?
- Were any voices unheard or feelings hurt over the course of this work? How?

Evaluation

- What went well with this endeavor? What went poorly? [Subjectivity is OK here.]
- What do you think were the most positive outcomes? The least?
- What did you contribute to the success of the work? What did others contribute?
- How has this work served to eliminate, or perpetuate, inequities?
- What work still feels unfinished, if any?

Conclusions

- What conclusions can you draw from your previous reflective responses?
- What conclusions can you draw when considering your responses alongside those of others?
- How could this process have been more positive for those on the design team?
- What would you do differently in a future collaboration for equity-minded school change?
- What skills should you, or others, develop to ensure greater success with similar endeavors in the future?

Analysis and Action

- What areas of inequity still exist that need to be addressed? [Subjectivity is OK here.]
- What should the group consider more carefully or look at more closely?
- What feels unfinished?
- What is your personal plan of action?
- What do you think the group's next steps should be?