



# Collaborative Equity Audit Report

Auburn, MA School District



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**March 2022**

The Center for Leadership and Educational Equity would like to thank the administrators, staff, teachers, students, and parents of the Auburn Public School District. Your voices, insights, visions, and honesty are deeply appreciated.

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## Executive Summary

This equity audit of Auburn Public Schools (APS) was a **collaborative effort** led and facilitated by the Center for Leadership and Educational Equity (CLEE). CLEE engaged 23 stakeholders from APS in a process to analyze data to identify the district's strengths, reveal inequities, the reasons for the inequities, the high priority areas for improvement, and research-based action steps to address identified inequities.

The **essential question** that APS generated and that guided the audit inquiry was: *“What factors should Auburn Public Schools consider in creating a roadmap for strategic implementation of equitable academic and cultural practices that will improve inclusivity, safety, accessibility, and rigor for each and every student?”*

Overall, **APS is in the initial stages of implementation** of research-based equity-centered practices. While there is evidence of strong relationship practices, there is a need for the district to strengthen culturally conscious practices, inclusiveness and sense of belonging, and educators' capacity to teach each and every student in order to achieve high and equitable outcomes across all subgroups.

### **Priority Reasons for Inequities**

The action steps recommendations below are to address the prioritized reasons for inequities determined by the APS Equity Audit Committee:

1. The understanding and implementation of student-centered engagement strategies by educators are lacking and/or inconsistently implemented.
2. The mindsets, biases, and expectations of some educators impact the opportunities of historically underrepresented students.
3. There is a lack of shared responsibility among all adults in the district to engage in culturally conscious and social-emotional practices that support the well-being and safety of each and every student.

### **Action Steps Recommendations**

The recommendations in this report are designed to increase equity for underrepresented students through improving programmatic, systemic, and educator equity. They are aligned and organized by the high priority reasons for inequities listed above and include specific action steps (measurements are located in the full report).

### [Action Steps to Address Prioritized Root Cause 1:](#)

1. Ensure that curricular materials meet criteria for high quality as defined and rated by [EdReports](#) or [Curate](#). This will ensure that:
  - a. All instructional material is aligned to the common core standards.
  - b. All standards are present and treated with the appropriate depth and quality required to support student learning.
  - c. The material is user-friendly for both students and teachers.
2. Create a short and long-term plan with specific goals and measurable outcomes to ensure evidence and fidelity of curricular implementation.
3. Create a classroom culture in which students have the necessary tools and opportunities and feel safe to:
  - a. Exercise critical voice through which they can question the pedagogy, teacher, each other, and content.
  - b. Collaborate with educators in order to explain and justify ideas to help plan what and how they are going to learn.
  - c. Share ownership that emphasizes equitable student voices and redefines student participation.
4. Engage educators in vetting instructional material for culturally-conscious practices by using a tool such as the [Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scoreboard](#) to ensure positive representation of historically underrepresented groups.
5. Provide ongoing professional development to develop educators' knowledge and skills to leverage high-quality material and solicit higher-order thinking, prior knowledge, inquiry, real-world connections, and multiple perspectives.
6. Create the structures and processes for a professional learning community to share and collaborate with colleagues around practices related to instruction in order to:
  - a. Increase educator capacity to teach students with diverse needs by using research-based strategies effectively (e.g., constructivist pedagogy, UDL, culturally responsive/conscious practices, social-emotional support, modifying, scaffolding, using gradual release).
  - b. Strengthen educators' ability to support the academic success of students with low academic performance by engaging educators in improvement work.

### [Action Steps to Address Prioritized Root Cause 2:](#)

1. Collaboratively expand educators' understanding of what high expectations and academic success for each and every student means, and how teacher expectations play

a role in providing equitable opportunities.

2. Increase advanced course enrollment and persistence for certain subgroups in certain subject areas by:
  - a. Reevaluating policies for student enrollment in Honors/AP classes and consider systems that allow student self-selection in addition to educator counsel.
  - b. Providing middle and high school counselors training on mindsets and how to use College Board data and encourage students to try new classes.
3. Provide professional learning experiences for educators to continuously improve their cultural competence to impact school-specific inequities.
4. Increase the capacity of educators to:
  - a. Observe each other, coach, and use professional learning time to lead discussions and address with colleagues culturally responsive conversations, dilemmas, and practices.
  - b. Use professional learning time to discuss and address with colleagues practices related to instruction, engage in assets-based conversations about student outcomes, and students' feedback of teacher instruction.
  - c. Give and receive collegial feedback to increase educator capacity to change assumptions about students and improve outcomes for all.
5. Implement continuous cycles of improvement to increase the data analysis capacity of educators and to lead improvement work.

#### [Action Steps to Address Prioritized Root Cause 3](#)

1. Include student voice in the development of instructional practices, accommodations, lesson planning, and classroom and school-wide expectations.
2. Recognize positive behavior by providing specific feedback using language from the classroom/school-wide expectations.
3. Implement restorative practices including restorative conferences, circles, family-group conferences/family-group decision making, and informal restorative practices.
4. Consistently utilize screening assessment data to differentiate instruction and identify appropriate learning progressions.
5. Develop and administer student interest and learning surveys to help teachers personalize instruction.



## **Auburn Public Schools' Areas of Strength**

Lastly, the following areas of strength, identified by the committee, can be leveraged in implementing recommendations. The following are the identified strengths of APS:

- **Overall student academic achievement and growth**
- **Setting direction for a safe and inclusive culture within the learning environment to improve outcomes for each and every student**
- **Educators' equity consciousness and commitment to creating a transformative learning culture**
- **Educators' awareness of the need for equity-centered data practices**

By focusing on increasing equity for the most underrepresented in a system, a community learns to collaborate better and improve faster. The community can apply these new skills and dispositions across the entire district to serve each and every student equitably.

## The Center for Leadership and Educational Equity (CLEE)

The Center for Leadership and Educational Equity (CLEE) is a nonprofit organization located in Providence, RI. CLEE's mission is to provide leaders with professional learning and support to create equitable outcomes for students. We believe the best way to learn is together, and the best way to lead is by example. Therefore, our programs engage leaders in professional learning communities that model best practices for staff development in schools.

## The Rationale for the Equity Audit

### Auburn Public Schools' Impetus

Auburn Public Schools (APS) contracted with the Center for Leadership and Educational Equity to lead this equity audit after high school alumni, community members, and educators came together to inquire into how the district was addressing issues of equity. The district's data revealed inequities in the areas of discipline and student achievement. Recognizing that the student population was becoming increasingly diverse, district leaders felt an urgency to address issues of equity and inclusion.

Collectively, the Equity Audit Committee established a shared vision for equity in the district through a World Cafe protocol. Its vision is centered around the three indicators for equity that drove the work of the audit:

#### **Student Outcomes**

- All students would be able to experience success
- All students would feel connected to the school and experience a sense of belonging and community

### **Educator Capacity**

- A staff that provides the best academic, behavioral, and social-emotional support to all students
- A staff that works together as a team with other educators to help give students the tools they need to succeed
- A staff that looks at student and school data together with open minds and engages in honest conversations
- Ongoing Professional Development (PD) for ALL staff for continued growth and clear implementation plan
- A staff that isn't afraid to be uncomfortable

### **Systemic and Programmatic Equity**

- All students have access to grade-level education and opportunities that will help them be successful in school regardless of special education status, socio-economic status, race, religion, culture, language, gender, gender identity, or sexual identity
- Ensuring that all students' needs are met, differences are celebrated, and inclusivity is at the forefront of our work
- A school culture where all members of the community are engaged, feel supported, and have a voice

This report serves as a roadmap to realize a vision of educational equity and disrupt oppressive systems, policies, and practices that create achievement and opportunity gaps for our students who currently are and have been underrepresented. It also summarizes the districts' goals, focus question, current reality, identified reasons for the inequities, equity rating, strengths, next steps, and recommendations grounded in research-based practices.

### **About CLEE's Collaborative Equity Audit**

At first glance, equity may seem synonymous with equality. Both terms reflect the goal for ALL students to harness their unique, unlimited potential to learn and to achieve. But this aim cannot be reached by merely giving learners an "equal," or same, education. Equal access to resources does not always translate to equal

educational outcomes in systems and a society that have disadvantaged many groups over others.

Educational equity means that each and every child gets what they need to reach high and equitable outcomes. A critical part of addressing educational equity involves strengthening educators' capacity and mindsets needed to identify and eliminate practices rooted in low expectations (e.g. tracking, below grade-level instruction, and ableist expressions) and replacing them with transformative, culturally sustaining practices (Johnson & Avelar-LaSalle, 2010). To do so involves an ongoing journey for educators to learn and work collaboratively to use research-based practices that dismantle inequities while using data to monitor the impact, learn, and further evolve practices to increase equity. This equity audit represents one way to engage in this practice.

Assessing educational equity is a cyclical process that requires personal courage, strategic reflection, and goal-driven action of educators and school leaders. However, this process can be a challenge if schools do not have effective ways to self-examine their practices. Equity audits, therefore, are a powerful tool as they constitute a systematic way for schools and districts to assess the extent to which equity exists in their setting and to what degree.

While there are many approaches for conducting equity audits, CLEE's approach is unique for two reasons. For one, the process of conducting the equity audit is a collaborative one. Delpit's (1988) assertion that "people are experts on their own lives" is an underlying assumption at play. Audits are, therefore, more effective when done with the community, rather than to the community. By understanding their world and themselves in their worlds, participants can identify their reality and shift the meaning to transform their conditions (Saavedra, 1996). Another unique quality of this equity audit is its theoretical foundation. Multiple high leverage theoretical frameworks (see [Appendix D](#)) are integrated in order to structure this study and align

it with two main demands of the educational field: the instructional core and effective leadership.

## The Auburn Equity Audit Committee

The Equity Audit Committee members listed in Table 1 were instrumental collaborators in this equity audit. Their perspectives and voices, along with the parents, students, and educators who participated in focus group interviews, represented the APS community. The Equity Audit Committee included district leadership, school leadership, educators, staff, school committee members, students, and parents. This group analyzed the data that was collected throughout the process. With the support of CLEE facilitators, the group provided input that narrowed the focus of the equity audit toward the most pressing equity issues.

**Table 1**  
*Auburn's Equity Audit Committee Members*

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Grade Level</b>
1.	Beth Chamberland	Assistant Superintendent	District
2.	Casey Handfield	Superintendent	District
3.	Rosemary Reidy	Director of Pupil Services	District
4.	Dan Delongchamp	Principal	High School
5.	Jessica Pitsillides	Assistant Principal	Grades 3-5
6.	Greg Walton	Team Chair	High School
7.	Jessica Harrington	School Committee Member	District
8.	Jack Generelli	Parent	Middle School
9.	Tricia Doane	Parent	Middle School
10.	Kim Wells-Dufresne	Parent	Grades 3-5
11.	Judith Young	Parent	High School
12.	Isabel Zukowski	Student	Middle School

13.	Liana Adina	Student	Middle School
14.	Kweku Akese	Student	High School
15.	Hulla El-Gaderi	Student	High School
16.	Eileen Tarini	Teacher	Grades K-2
17.	Terri O'Donnell	Guidance Counselor	Grades 3-5
18.	Wendy Dziemian	Special Education Teacher	Middle School
19.	Jennifer McMenemy	Special Education Teacher	Grades K-2
20.	Tessa Fritze	Teacher	Grades k-2
21.	Tess Jarvis	Guidance Counselor	High School
22.	Sherrie Watson	Guidance Counselor	Middle School
23.	Melissa LaBeaume	Teacher	High School

## The District's Mission and Goals

APS contracted the Center for Leadership and Educational Equity (CLEE) to facilitate a Collaborative Equity Audit that began in September 2021. The process drew on multiple data sources, including student outcome data, policy documents, a staff survey, interviews, and focus groups, as well as the perspectives of a group of 23 Equity Audit Committee members. These data sources included student outcome data, policy documents, a staff survey, interviews, and focus groups, as well as the perspectives of a group of 23 stakeholders ([Table 1](#)).

According to its [website](#), APS's mission is "Strengthening Connections through Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships." The district's vision "is to educate and prepare students for the opportunities and challenges of a changing world."

According to Auburn's most recent strategic plan, the goals of the district are:

- TEACHING AND LEARNING: Further Advance Rigorous and Relevant Teaching & Learning

- TECHNOLOGY: Support Learning, Communications and Operations
- COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS: Strengthen and Create Collaborative Partnerships
- HEALTH, WELLNESS, & SAFETY: Promote a Positive, Safe Learning Environment
- TRANSITIONS: Build and Strengthen Supportive Transitions

The district also expresses a commitment to the following core values, as expressed by the acronym **SHARED**:

- **S**tudent-Centered Decision Making
- **H**igh Expectations for All
- **A**ll Environments are Safe and Respectful
- **R**esponding to Needs Based on Data
- **E**quitable Opportunities for All
- **D**edicated to Continuous Improvements

## The District's Essential Question

In order to set the direction for the audit, the district leadership steering committee generated the following focus question: ***What factors should Auburn Public Schools (APS) consider in creating a roadmap for strategic implementation of equitable academic and cultural practices that will improve inclusivity, safety, accessibility, and rigor for each and every student?***

## The Current Reality in Auburn Public School District (APS)

The Auburn Public School district is located in Central Massachusetts and is a Title 1 district. APS serves about 2500 students in grades PreK-12. The system is composed of five schools; one (9-12) high school, one (6-8) middle school, and three elementary

schools (two for grades K-2 and one for grades 3-5). The preschool program is located in the high school.

The Massachusetts' accountability index (2020) indicates that APS is making substantial progress towards most targets (59%<sup>1</sup>). This means that APS is not in need of assistance or intervention from the Massachusetts Department of Education ([Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020](#)). Student achievement data was visualized by CLEE and explored interactively by Equity Audit Committee in the [Google Studio Dashboard](#). The data can be filtered by various variables; more detail can be accessed by hovering over the charts, and one can access all the pages by clicking on the top left-hand arrow.

The following is a summary of student outcomes data analysis:

## Student Demographics in Auburn Public Schools

As of 2020-2021 school year data (data and terminology are derived from [Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2021](#)), there are 2,518 students that are served by APS. Of those:

- 80.1% ( $n = 2017$ ) students identify as White
- 2.5% ( $n = 63$ ) students identify as African American
- 4.6% ( $n = 116$ ) students identify as Asian
- 9.5% ( $n = 239$ ) students identify as Hispanic
- 0.1% ( $n = 3$ ) students identify as Native American
- 0% ( $n = 0$ ) students identify as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- 3.2% ( $n = 81$ ) students identify as multi-race/Non-Hispanic
- 6.9% ( $n = 174$ ) Multilingual students who do not receive MLL services

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<sup>1</sup> Note this data represents results from 2019. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education did not issue school, district, or state accountability determinations for the 2019-20 school year due to the cancellation of state assessments and school closures related to COVID-19.



- 2.2% ( $n = 55$ ) students receiving Multi-Language Learners (MLL) services
- 10.8% ( $n = 272$ ) students with disabilities
- 22.2% ( $n = 559$ ) students are considered economically disadvantaged
- 32.3% ( $n = 814$ ) students are considered High Needs

## MCAS

The state of Massachusetts uses annual information related to student performance on state tests, chronic absenteeism, high school completion, and advanced coursework completion to determine an accountability rating for schools and districts. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education did not administer Spring 2020 MCAS for the 2019-2020 school year due to the school closures related to COVID-19. Therefore, the assessment data reported here is reflective of the 2018-19 school year.

The 2019 [MCAS assessment](#) demonstrates gaps in achievement between peer and subgroups in English/Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, and Science/Technology/Engineering (STE). For example, in all subject areas, a greater percentage of students characterized as non-disabled reached proficiency in grades 3-10 compared to students with disabilities. In addition, a greater percentage of students who identify as White reached proficiency compared to students who identify as Hispanic/Latino. Students considered non-economically disadvantaged scored higher on the 2019 MCAS in all subjects compared to students considered economically disadvantaged. Finally, students not receiving Title 1 services earned proficiency at greater rates than students receiving Title 1 services. Specific data is listed in the [Auburn Data Dashboard #1](#).

## SAT

The 2020-21 SAT performance scores reveal that the average score for ELA is 564 for and 547 for Math. The performance of economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and students with high needs is 10-40 points lower than

their peers on average. Additionally, a difference in the performance of males and females on the SAT can be seen in the Math assessment with 49% of female students meeting benchmark/proficiency compared to 70% of male students.

## Advanced Course Placement

Analysis of advanced course completion data indicates that the average percentage of Advanced Placement coursework completion of all students is 64.4%; however, when disaggregated for underrepresented subgroups, the completion rate ranges between 75% (students who identify as Asian) and 41.4% (students who identify as Hispanic/Latino). Further, male students are outperforming female students in Math and Computer Science (72.2% of males earned a score of 3-5 compared to 46.7% of females) and Science and Technology (67.6% of males earned a score of 3-5 compared to 52.5% of females).

## Summary

The data analyzed reflects both the strengths and needs of APS. There is evidence of commitment, resources, an advanced course placement infrastructure, and initial steps to support and include each and every student. These need to be leveraged fully in order to align the districts' goal of high and equitable academic outcomes for all.

The data examined reflects that inequities are apparent. Below is a summary of the seven primary disproportionalities that surfaced from the data analysis of the student outcome data:

1. The majority of the student body identifies as White (80.1%), speaks English as a first language (90.9%), and is economically advantaged (77.8%).
2. Students receiving Individual Education Plan (IEP) services and Title 1 services scored significantly lower than their peers on the MCAS assessment (all grades/all subjects).
3. The completion rate of AP courses for students who identify as

Hispanic/Latino is 23% lower than the average percentage of Advanced Placement coursework completion of all students.

4. SAT data indicates the performance of economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and students with high needs is 10-40 points lower than their peers on average.
5. Female students are scoring lower than male students on the Math SAT assessment, and Math and Computer Science, and the Science and Technology Advanced Placement courses.
6. Student demographic data includes student subgroups that are less than 3% of the student population. As a result, districts must develop internal systems to analyze potential inequities among subgroups that are not included in standardized test reporting.
7. Students identifying as White score higher on student achievement tests than students identifying as Hispanic/Latino.

This student learning outcome data was analyzed to create the following problem statement: ***There are academic inequities between APS students in certain underrepresented students and their peers. There are also academic inequities between males and females. Furthermore, there is a lack of racial diversity as reflected in student demographic data. As a result, some underrepresented groups are too small to be a reported category in the data.***

When groups are too small to be represented in data due to privacy, it prevents analysts from using this group's data to derive decisions, instruction, and progress monitoring. This issue in itself poses an inequity.

## Root Cause Analysis

After the identification of the primary inequities found in the student learning outcomes, the equity audit group unearthed the possible root causes of the inequities (see problem statement above). The root cause analysis was conducted in

two parts. Both parts combined the Equity Audit Committee members' experiences and perspectives and varied data sources to understand the causes for the problem statement.

In the first part of the root cause analysis, the examined data sources included staff data at APS and the Learning Community Survey results (LCS). This survey measured the degree to which staff perceived that they and their colleagues engaged in practices of a learning community driving to increase equity. Both sources of data were visualized in a [Google Studio dashboard](#). In the second part of the root cause analysis, the Equity Audit Committee examined both qualitative and quantitative data to help tune and validate the root causes. Data included focus group qualitative interview data, SurveyWorks data, student attendance, and student discipline data. This data expanded the committee's understanding of the reasons for the inequities by providing multiple perspectives of students, families, and educators. See [Appendix E](#) for a detailed analysis of all data sources used to unearth the root causes.

### Summary of Root-Cause Analysis Findings and Barriers

Using the Learning Community Survey (LCS) results, staff and educator data, focus group interviews, student attendance, student discipline, and VOCAL data, the Equity Audit Committee engaged in expanding its understanding of the root cause analysis. As a result of this tuning, the committee identified the following possible six reasons or root causes for the inequities at APS:

1. The understanding and implementation of student-centered engagement strategies by educators is lacking and/or inconsistently implemented
2. The mindsets, biases, and expectations of some educators impact the opportunities of historically underrepresented students
3. There is a lack of shared responsibility among all adults in the district to engage in culturally conscious and social-emotional practices that support the well-being and safety of each and every student
4. The voices and perspectives of all stakeholders in the district are not heard or

represented (e.g., curricular materials, extracurricular opportunities, forums, etc.)

5. There is a lack of staff diversity
6. There is a lack of processes and structures in place to test different ideas for improvement

The evidence of these causes or reasons for the inequities is reflected in the ratings of the specific indicators and best practices that were used by the Equity Audit Committee to understand equity in the district.

## Equity Indicators

### Compiled Data Aligned to the Equity Indicators and Best Practices

All of the data collected during the equity audit (quantitative and qualitative) was used to assess APS's degree of implementation of the three indicators and their best practices for **educator capacity equity** (see [Appendix C](#) for a detailed explanation of data collection and analysis):

1. High-quality teaching skills
2. Educator's equity consciousness
3. Staff development and retention

The various data was also used to assess the implementation of the indicators for **programmatic and systemic equity**:

1. Set the tone for a safe and inclusive culture
2. Staff recruitment and hiring policies
3. Programs and materials

A total of 40 best practices for equity were assessed across educator and programmatic and systemic areas (see [Appendix D](#) for a comprehensive list). These best practices are research-based, and identified by various bodies of literature,

including: Redding, McCauley, Jackson, and Dunn (2018) from the WestEd Center on School Turnaround, and Padamsee & Crowe (2017) from the Foundation Working Group. Other peer-reviewed practices are based on the work of Lisa Delpit (2006), Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995), Elena Aguillar (2020), Kathryn McKenzie & Linda Skrla, (2011), and Christine Sleeter (2008).

Each best practice was assessed for its degree of implementation. The initial ratings of these practices were conducted by a team of CLEE researchers and underwent three tuning stages. In the first stage, the CLEE facilitators used the volume of data reviewed by the Equity Audit Committee to produce the initial ratings. In the second stage, the draft ratings were shared with the districts' steering committee and adjusted through discussion and review of additional sources of data. Lastly, in the third stage, the Equity Audit Committee provided further feedback to adjust the ratings. Each of the best practices was rated for degree of implementation according to this scale:

- A rating of **0** = No evidence of implementation of effective practices
- A rating of **1** = Initial stage of implementation
- A rating of **2** = Approaching effective implementation
- A rating of **3** = Effective implementation
- A rating of **4** = Transformational implementation

[Table 2](#) and [Table 3](#) display the ratings for each best practice and the data sources used to determine the rating. Also included in the tables is the alignment of the indicators and best practices to CLEE's six Core Leadership Practices. None of the best practices received a rating of 4 or 3; 13 descriptors were rated as 2; 16 were rated as 1; 11 were rated as zero.

## Key Indicators to Increase Programmatic and Systematic Equity

**Table 2**

*Key Indicators to Evaluate Programmatic and Systematic Equity and Increase Equity for All Students*

	Indicator	Best Practices	Core Leadership Practice	Data Source	Degree of Implementation
1	<b>Set the Tone a Safe and Inclusive Culture</b>	Evidence of statements of definitions, benefits of and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the mission, vision, strategic planning, etc.	Setting Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">District's mission and vision</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">District's Strategic plan 2021-2022</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn High School Program of Studies</a></li> </ul>	1
2		Clearly defined and specific equity goals and strategies	Setting Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">District's Strategic plan</a></li> </ul>	1
3		A safe and inclusive culture for each and every student, and especially for students from marginalized groups.	Monitoring Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn MS PBIS</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">SIS Handbook</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn HS Handbook</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">VOCAL Data</a></li> </ul>	2
4		All students have opportunities for: Being recognized for being a positive contributor to the school community.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Bryn Mawr Handbook</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Pakachoag Handbook</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">SWIS Handbook</a></li> </ul>	2
5		All students have opportunities to take leadership roles in the classroom.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">AHS Students for Diversity Charter &amp; 5 Year Plan</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Rocket to Rocket Program (unified sports)</a></li> </ul>	1
6		Families are seen as partners and are welcomed to be included in dialogue, their knowledge is tapped into, and have a voice.	Reorganizing Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Parenting Partnership?</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">District's Strategic plan</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn MS SIP</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Bryn Mawr SIP</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Pakachoag SIP</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">VOCAL Survey</a></li> </ul>	2

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Education Advisory Council (SEPAC)</li> <li>• Virtual Mental Health Support for Families</li> </ul>	
7		Members of underrepresented communities on the board and key leadership positions	Reorganizing Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">APS School Committee</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">APS Leadership Team</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Staff Demographic Data</a></li> </ul>	0
8		Short and long-term measurable indicators of the degree to which reaching goals	Monitoring Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">District's Strategic plan</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn HS SIP</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn MS SIP</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Swanson Rd Intermediate SIP</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Bryn Mawr SIP</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Pakachoag SIP</a></li> </ul>	0
9		Have a regular forum to update stakeholders on progress	Monitoring Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Parenting Partnership?</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">School Committee Schedule</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">APS Update Center</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">APS Students and Families Informational Services</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">AHS FAQs</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">AHS News</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">AMS News</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">SIS News</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">BMES News</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">PES News</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Power School Portal</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">School Reopening</a></li> <li>• School Councils</li> </ul>	2
10	<b>Staff Recruitment and Hiring Policies</b>	Job descriptions reflect the goals of increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the district.	Reorganizing Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">LTS AHS English Teacher</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">LTS BMES Grade 2 Teacher</a></li> </ul>	0
11		Job description reflects	Reorganizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">LTS AHS English</a></li> </ul>	0



	the district's clear understanding of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are key to a role in order to lead/teach for more equitable outcomes.	Systems Building Capacity to Teach Building Capacity to Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Teacher LTS BMES Grade 2 Teacher</a></li> </ul>	
12	Teachers and leaders reflect diverse gender expressions, orientations, racial and ethnic cultural composition.	Reorganizing Systems Building Capacity to Teach Building Capacity to Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Staff Demographic Data</a></li> </ul>	1
13	The district utilizes external partners (i.e. preparation programs and community org from underrepresented groups) to recruit candidates from diverse backgrounds and those with competencies to increase equity in their roles.	Reorganizing Systems Building Capacity to Teach Building Capacity to Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">School Committee Policy GCE</a></li> <li>• District Leader Communication</li> </ul>	0
14	Utilizes hiring tools to identify strong candidates	Reorganizing Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">School Committee Policy GA-E</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">School Committee Policy GCE</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">School Committee Policy GCF</a></li> </ul>	0
15	Use of multiple measures and data sources to assess candidates	Reorganizing Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">School Committee Policy GA-E</a></li> </ul>	0
16	Practices to eliminate selection bias	Reorganizing Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">School Committee Policy GA-E</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">School Committee Policy GCE</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">School Committee</a></li> </ul>	0

				<a href="#">Policy GCE</a>	
17		Interviewers from underrepresented groups	Reorganizing Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">School Committee Policy GA-E</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">School Committee Policy GCE</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">School Committee Policy GCF</a></li> </ul>	0
18	<b>Programs and Materials</b>	Financial resources are allotted for the school's equity plans, goals, and initiatives. The school's budget reflects the prioritization of this commitment	Reorganizing Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">FY22 School Budget</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">APS Strategic Plan (2018)</a></li> </ul>	2
19		Advanced course placement, enrollment, and student outcomes.	Monitoring Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Data Dashboard #1</a></li> <li>• Focus Group Interviews</li> <li>• District Leader Communication</li> </ul>	1
20		There is availability and clear communication of college prerequisite courses for college, and these courses are available for all.	Reorganizing Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">2021-2022 Auburn High School Program of Studies</a></li> <li>• Focus Group Interviews</li> </ul>	2
21		Access to high-quality instructional materials	Monitoring Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">2021-2022 Auburn High School Program of Studies</a></li> </ul>	1
22		Instructional material emphasizes higher-order thinking, inquiry approach		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">APS Strategic Plan (2018)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Data Dashboard #3</a></li> </ul>	2
23		Instructional material integrates real-world connections, includes literature of diverse authors, integrates the experiences of historically underserved groups that are not limited or reduced to experiences of suffering		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus Group Interviews</li> <li>• Vocal Data</li> </ul>	1
24		Instructional material			

	emphasizes elicits prior knowledge, allows for discourse and collaboration, multiple perspectives, and student ownership and learning).			<b>1</b>
25	Teachers, coaches, and administration disaggregate data according to race, ethnicity, home language, gender to see evidence of disproportionality and determine the allocation of resources accordingly.	Setting Direction Monitoring Progress Building Capacity to Teach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning Community Survey</li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Data Dashboard #2</a></li> </ul>	<b>1</b>
26	Special Education Program placement and supports that build inclusive of learning and lead to equitable learning outcomes	Monitoring Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus Group Interviews</li> </ul>	<b>1</b>
27	MLL Education Program placement and supports that build inclusive of learning and lead to equitable learning outcomes	Monitoring Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus Group Interviews</li> </ul>	<b>0</b>
28	Disciplinary practices that build an inclusive culture of learning and lead to equitable outcomes	Monitoring Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Disaggregated student discipline data Auburn Data Dashboard #3</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Grades K-2 Student Handbook</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Grades 3-4 Student Handbook</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Grades 6-8 Student Handbook</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Grades 9-12 Student Handbook</a></li> <li>• VOCAL Survey</li> <li>• Focus Group Interviews</li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Dashboard #3</a></li> </ul>	<b>1</b>

Aguilar, E. (2020); Redding, McCauley, Jackson, and Dunn (2018); Padamsee & Crowe (2017); Delipit (2006); Ladson-Billings (1995); McKenzie & Skrla, (2011), and Sleeter (2008).

## Key Indicators to Increase Educator Capacity

**Table 3**

*Key Indicators to Evaluate Educator Equity and Increase Equity for All Students*

Indicator	Best Practice	Core Leadership Practice	Data Source	Degree of Implementation
<b>29 High-Quality Teaching Skills</b>	Educators' belief that all students are capable of academic success	Setting Direction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning Community Survey</li> <li>• VOCAL Survey</li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Data Dashboard #2</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Dashboard #3</a></li> </ul>	<b>1</b>
<b>30</b>	Educators see self as members of the student's community	Setting Direction Build Capacity to Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning Community Survey</li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Data Dashboard #2</a></li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<b>31</b>	Educators maintain a flexible inquiry-based learning environment in which students' knowledge, experience, wisdom, and background are valued and seen as resources for and incorporated authentically into learning.	Build Capacity to Teach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus Group Interviews</li> <li>• VOCAL Survey</li> <li>• Learning Community Survey</li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Data Dashboard #2</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Dashboard #3</a></li> </ul>	<b>1</b>
<b>32</b>	Educators monitor and assess students' needs and then address them with a wealth of diverse strategies with the understanding that success is defined and measured in many ways.	Monitoring Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning Community Survey</li> <li>• Focus Group Interviews</li> <li>• VOCAL Survey</li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Data Dashboard #2</a></li> </ul>	<b>2</b>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Dashboard #3</a></li> </ul>	
<b>33</b>		Educators know students well enough to adapt my practices to meet their needs and offer many opportunities to develop cognitive skills and habits of mind that prepare them for advanced tasks.	Build Capacity to Teach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning Community Survey</li> <li>• Focus Group Interviews</li> <li>• VOCAL Survey</li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Data Dashboard #2</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Dashboard #3</a></li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<b>34</b>	<b>Educators' Equity Consciousness</b>	Educators have a clear picture of how various sub-groups are achieving with attention towards children from historically underrepresented groups compared to their peer group	Monitoring Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning Community Survey</li> <li>• Focus Group Interviews</li> <li>• VOCAL Survey</li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Data Dashboard #2</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Dashboard #3</a></li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<b>35</b>		Educators are aware of their own biases, privilege, and are able to change assumptions about student learning through conversations with other adults at the school	Build Capacity to Collaborate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning Community Survey</li> <li>• Focus Group Interviews</li> <li>• VOCAL Survey</li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Data Dashboard #2</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Dashboard #3</a></li> </ul>	<b>1</b>
<b>36</b>	<b>Staff Development and Retention</b>	Use data to identify the professional learning needs of educators and rapidly respond with professional learning opportunities aligned with increasing equitable practices.	Monitoring Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus Group Interviews</li> <li>• Learning Community survey</li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Data Dashboard #2</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Dashboard #3</a></li> </ul>	<b>2</b>
<b>37</b>		Onboarding for new educators, with personalized support for educators of color, including mentor	Reorganizing System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<b>0</b>

	programs, affinity groups and/or buddy programs.			
38	Professional learning experiences for educators to continuously improve their cultural competence and culturally sustaining practices to meet school-specific inequities	Building Capacity to Teach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus Group Interviews</li> <li>• Professional Development Offerings</li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Data Dashboard #2</a></li> </ul>	1
39	Professional learning experiences for educators to deepen pedagogical content knowledge to support student learning, especially if children are not successful or are below grade-level	Building Capacity to Teach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional Development Offerings</li> <li>• <a href="#">Auburn Data Dashboard #2</a></li> </ul>	2
40	Leverage the effectiveness of culturally responsive/ conscious and sustaining teachers, coaches, and leaders by using them as models and coaches	Building Capacity to Collaborate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus Group Interviews</li> </ul>	1

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Aguilar, E. (2020); Redding, McCauley, Jackson, and Dunn (2018); Padamsee & Crowe (2017); Delpit (2006); Ladson-Billings (1995); McKenzie & Skrla, (2011), and Sleeter (2008).

## Focus Question - Addressed

The focus question that was defined to guide this inquiry was: *“What factors should Auburn Public Schools (APS) consider in creating a roadmap for strategic implementation of equitable academic and cultural practices that will improve inclusivity, safety, accessibility, and rigor for each and every student?”*

As evident from Tables [2](#) and [3](#), APS is mainly at the initial stage or approaching implementation of the identified indicators when looking at specific and effective research-based equity practices. This discovery means that staff, students from underrepresented groups, and their families feel that they are not always valued and that their academic and social needs are not served equitably. Furthermore, in creating a roadmap for strategic implementation of equitable practices that will

improve inclusivity, safety, accessibility, and rigor for each and every student, APS should consider the specific areas that revealed disproportionalities as well as the six barriers identified during the root cause analysis.

## Next Steps

As a result of the collaborative work and data analysis, the Equity Audit Committee identified the following areas of strength, priority areas, and action step recommendations for improving equity in APS. These action steps are essential for APS to consider in order to tap into a high-leverage improvement plan to address equity.

## Areas of Strength

The following are the identified strengths of APS:

- **Overall student academic achievement and growth.** Analysis of MCAS scores for SY2019, PSAT/SAT scores, and Advanced Placement assessments demonstrate the following strengths:
  - Overall scores in state assessments (MCAS) are higher than the state average.
  - SAT Outcomes for 2019 indicate that 79% of test-takers met the benchmark for English Reading/Writing and 59% met the benchmark for Math.
  - A majority of AP Score Outcomes (2019-2020) for all students were within the range of 3-5 with a significant percentage of students (71.13) scoring between 3-5 in English/Language Arts, World History: Modern (91.45), and History: US (83.83).

- **Setting the direction for a safe and inclusive culture within the learning environment to improve outcomes for each and every student.** APS has taken initial steps to foster a safe and inclusive culture within the learning environment. A Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports framework is in place in each school within the district evidenced by detailed descriptions in Student Handbooks for each school. Families are also offered opportunities to provide input on district initiatives and school planning including the development of the District Strategic Plan, School Improvement Plans, and Special Education through the Special Education Advisory Council. In addition, APS is taking the following steps to further develop a safe and inclusive culture:
  - Partnering with the CLEE to engage a multi-stakeholder group in a collaborative equity audit with the goals of identifying inequities within the APS learning community, opening doors to understanding, and motivating change.
  - Allotting financial resources for the district's equity plans, goals, and initiatives.
  - Having a regular forum to update stakeholders on progress.
  
- **Educators' equity consciousness and commitment to creating a transformative learning culture.** Overall, educators at APS have a keen awareness that there is more work to be done in reaching high and equitable outcomes for students. In focus group interviews, educators cited a need for more collaborative opportunities for general and special education teachers to effectively support students. Educators also noted the importance of building the capacity of all stakeholders to promote diversity and inclusivity to develop a more inclusive culture within the district. Finally, as evidenced in focus group interviews, educators understand the importance of strong relationships with students and families and acknowledge that some staff members have fixed mindsets that create barriers to forming productive relationships with



stakeholders. APS has recognized the need for building the capacity of staff and is currently working with external partners to implement the Universal Design for Learning framework that improves and optimizes teaching and learning by accommodating for the needs and abilities of all learners and eliminating unnecessary barriers in the learning process. APS is in the process of developing coaches to support the implementation of the UDL framework within district schools.

- **Educators' awareness of the need for equity-oriented data practices.**

According to the Learning Community Survey results, educators recognize the importance of using data to understand the needs of students and change practices after discussing data with colleagues. Furthermore, setting the groundwork for this transformative culture has begun across the district, as can be seen in isolated instances of educators who engaged in data analysis, relevant professional development to grow their practice and pedagogy, the Equity Audit Committee's ongoing work, and the work of this equity audit.

## High Priority Recommendations

### High Priority Areas to Address

Auburn's Equity Audit Committee prioritized addressing the following three root causes as the highest priority areas:

1. The understanding and implementation of student-centered engagement strategies by educators are lacking and/or inconsistently implemented.
2. The mindsets, biases, and expectations of some educators impact the opportunities of historically underrepresented students.
3. There is a lack of shared responsibility among all adults in the district to engage in culturally conscious and social-emotional practices that support the well-being and

safety of each and every student.

## The Rationale for Recommendations

The recommendations and action steps are based on CLEE’s research-based leadership framework (Braun et al., 2017). Implementing the six Core Leadership Practices provides a starting point for addressing the highlighted areas of inequities in APS. Doing so will guide Auburn to leverage a research-based framework proved effective to lead improvements for increasing equity. This includes setting the direction for the work, monitoring progress, increasing capacity in various areas, and reorganizing the systems that, despite the best intentions, have resulted in inequities.

The following high-priority recommendations and action steps are designed to build on the groundwork already laid out in APS. They are aligned to the best practices referenced in [Table 2](#) and [Table 3](#). While the prioritized root causes to address are numbered, these numbers do not indicate a priority of importance or the order in which the action steps should be taken.

## High Priority Action Steps

**Prioritized Root Cause to Address 1:** The understanding and implementation of student-centered engagement strategies by educators are lacking and/or inconsistently implemented.

### Research-Based Action Steps

1. Ensure that curricular materials meet criteria for high quality as defined and rated by [EdReports](#) or [Curate](#). This will ensure that:
  - a. All instructional material is aligned to the common core standards.
  - b. All standards are present and treated with the appropriate depth and

- quality required to support student learning.
- c. The material is user-friendly for both students and teachers.
2. Create a short and long-term plan with specific goals and measurable outcomes to ensure evidence and fidelity of curricular implementation.
  3. Create a classroom culture in which students have the necessary tools and opportunities and feel safe to:
    - a. Exercise critical voice through which they can question the pedagogy, teacher, each other, and content.
    - b. Collaborate with educators in order to explain and justify ideas to help plan what and how they are going to learn.
    - c. Share ownership that emphasizes equitable student voices and redefines student participation.
  4. Engage educators in vetting instructional material for culturally-conscious practices by using a tool such as the [Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scoreboard](#) to ensure positive representation of historically underrepresented groups.
  5. Provide ongoing professional development to develop educators' knowledge and skills to leverage high-quality material and solicit higher-order thinking, prior knowledge, inquiry, real-world connections, and multiple perspectives.
  6. Create the structures and processes for a professional learning community to share and collaborate with colleagues around practices related to instruction in order to:
    - a. Increase educator capacity to teach students with diverse needs by using research-based strategies effectively (e.g., constructivist pedagogy, UDL, culturally responsive/conscious practices, social-emotional support, modifying, scaffolding, using gradual release).

- b. Strengthen educators' ability to support the academic success of students with low academic performance by engaging educators in improvement work.

### **Measured by**

- Documentation of curricular material and audit for the three EdReports criteria (alignment to standards, presence of all standards, and usability).
- Documentation of a clear short and long-term plan, including timelines, measures, and benchmarks as evidence for consistent implementation of high-quality curricular material.
- Increased capacity of educators of their understanding and implementation of critical constructivist pedagogy, as measured by a survey such as Constructivist Learning Environment Survey, to measure aspects such as critical voice, shared control, and shared ownership, and the VOCAL survey.
- Increased capacity of educators to experiment with different practices and implement them for the first time, as measured by improvement data.
- A positive change in the perceptions of historically underrepresented students as it relates to their academic experiences and the above-mentioned pedagogical and culturally-conscious practices as revealed by empathy interview data.
- An increase in the number of students from specific underrepresented groups enrolled in and achieving in advanced courses.
- Consistent and sustained increases in academic performance as measured by validated screening and progress-monitoring tools.

### **Prioritized Root Cause to Address 2:**

The mindsets, biases, and expectations of some educators impact the opportunities of historically underrepresented students.

### **Research-Based Action Steps**

1. Collaboratively expand educators' understanding of what high expectations and academic success for each and every student means, and how teacher expectations play a role in providing equitable opportunities.
2. Increase advanced course enrollment and persistence for certain subgroups in certain subject areas by:
  - a. Reevaluating policies for student enrollment in Honors/AP classes and consider systems that allow student self-selection in addition to educator counsel.
  - b. Providing middle and high school counselors training on mindsets and how to use College Board data and encourage students to try new classes.
3. Provide professional learning experiences for educators to continuously improve their cultural competence to impact school-specific inequities.
4. Increase the capacity of educators to:
  - a. Observe each other, coach, and use professional learning time to lead discussions and address with colleagues culturally responsive conversations, dilemmas, and practices.
  - b. Use professional learning time to discuss and address with colleagues practices related to instruction, engage in assets-based conversations

about student outcomes, and students' feedback of teacher instruction.

- c. Give and receive collegial feedback to increase educator capacity to change assumptions about students and improve outcomes for all.
5. Implement continuous cycles of improvement to increase the data analysis capacity of educators and to lead improvement work.

### **Measured by**

- Documentation of a clear multi-year plan, including timelines and benchmarks using the recommendations detailed in the roadmap.
- Disaggregated district-identified survey (such as CLEE Learning Community Survey), to monitor progress in educators' perceptions as they relate their capacity to teach students from all cultures, races, identities, learning differences, economic backgrounds, and languages.
- Disaggregated district-identified survey (such as VOCAL) to monitor progress in stakeholder perceptions of educators' mindsets, biases, and expectations of all students.
- An increase in the number of students from specific underrepresented groups enrolled in and achieving in advanced courses.
- Consistent and sustained increases in academic performance as measured by validated screening and progress-monitoring tools.

**Prioritized Root Cause to Address 3:**

There is a lack of shared responsibility among all adults in the district to engage in culturally conscious and social-emotional practices that support the well-being and safety of each and every student.

**Research-Based Action Steps**

1. Include student voice in the development of instructional practices, accommodations, lesson planning, and classroom and school-wide expectations.
2. Recognize positive behavior by providing specific feedback using language from the classroom/school-wide expectations.
3. Implement restorative practices including restorative conferences, circles, family-group conferences/family-group decision making, and informal restorative practices.
4. Consistently utilize screening assessment data to differentiate instruction and identify appropriate learning progressions.
5. Develop and administer student interest and learning surveys to help teachers personalize instruction.

**Measured by**

- VOCAL survey data reflects an increase in student voice and ownership of learning. See examples below:
  - “In at least two of my academic classes, I can work on assignments that interest me personally.”

- “In at least two of my academic classes, students are asked to teach a lesson or part of a lesson.”
- “My teachers use my ideas to help my classmates learn.”
- Disaggregated student discipline data from Aspen/X2 or equivalent management system, as well as state reporting data, that demonstrate equitable disciplinary outcomes for students.
- VOCAL survey data demonstrate equitable disciplinary outcomes for students and student voice in developing rules/expectations. See examples below:
  - “Fair disciplinary practices” score (currently 82.75% of students believe disciplinary practices are fair and equitable) increases.
  - “Students have a voice in deciding school rules” score (currently 32.5% of students believe they have a voice in deciding the rules) increases.
- VOCAL survey data demonstrate an increase in teachers activating student interests. See the example below:
  - “When I need help, my teachers use my interests to help me learn/what I am learning is relevant to me” score (currently 68.5% of students) increases.
- Survey data, from a survey such as the Learning Community Survey, reflects an increase in teachers’ capacity to teach all students.



## The Path Forward

*“I feel like I gained a wider view of our district as a whole, not just my own school. It was helpful to see the ‘big’ picture. I was also heartened that we have a direction to move in with action steps.”*

*“It is always impactful to hear feedback from members of our community, especially our students.”*

*“I gained a lot more understanding as to why many problems happen in schools and even things that I as a student can do to help fix them.”*

*“I think this is an amazing experience, and I'm glad I got to be a part of it.”*

*- Collaborative Equity Audit Participants*

We offer the above recommendations to address the findings outlined in this report and improve outcomes for underrepresented students in APS. Further, the improvements made to improve services and outcomes for the groups of students currently least well-served will improve learning and services for all students. By focusing on increasing equity for the most underrepresented in a system, a community learns to collaborate better and improve faster. It can apply these new skills and dispositions across the entire district to serve each and every student equitably.

The recommendations include action steps that APS can implement to build upon the work it is presently doing to improve continuously. Using a validated, systematic approach to implement and monitor these recommendations will lead to the efficient and effective use of resources, greater adherence and coherence to the established processes, and—most importantly—sustained improvement in high and equitable student learning outcomes. Although implementing each

recommendation on its own is possible, we strongly suggest a comprehensive approach to system change that integrates the recommendations to maximize outcomes and opportunities for underrepresented students.

The recommendations in this report are aligned with conversations and initiatives that have already begun in APS. With continued commitment on the part of leadership and meaningful engagement from families and educators throughout the system, Auburn is well-positioned to see inequities decrease and ensure that each and every student will have their unlimited and unknowable potential unleashed.

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## Appendix A - Learning Community Survey Data Collection and Analysis

The Learning Community Survey was administered digitally to all staff. The survey is a validated research tool that measures perceptions of leadership within schools (Braun, Gable, & Billups, 2015). The survey measures the six core practices that educators use when leading and facilitating work with colleagues:

1. Reorganizing Systems to accelerate equity in your learning community
2. Setting Direction/Vision for your learning community
3. Monitoring Progress and sustaining the momentum of your efforts
4. Building Capacity to Teach so all students have their needs met
5. Building Capacity to Collaborate as a learning community
6. Building Capacity to Lead for everyone in your school community

Research shows that there is a correlation between the implementation of these leadership practices and improved student learning and increased equity in schools (Braun, Gable, & Kite, 2011).

The responses of the survey were anonymous. They were analyzed and visualized at the school level. The items were also disaggregated into the six validated domains outlined above. All data was then visualized on Google Data Studio to allow for an interactive sharing process. The results of the analysis can be explored [interactively at this digital link](#).

## Appendix B - Detailed Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

### Qualitative Data Collection

#### Focus Groups

CLEE investigators conducted four separate focus group interviews. To ensure equitable representation, children ranged in age from middle to high school, parents consisted of those with children in elementary, intermediary, middle, and high school, and educators represented elementary, intermediary, middle, and high school.

There were two student focus groups, one with 10 students in grades 6-8, one with nine students in grades 9-12, consisting of 19 students total. A total of nine family members/guardians participated in the Family/Guardians focus group. In the Educator Focus Group, there were 13 participants. This group consisted of classroom teachers as well as staff and personnel who provide specialized services for students.

District administrators recruited participants for the focus groups. However, educator participation was completely voluntary. CLEE briefed participants from all focus groups at the beginning of the interview about the purpose of the interview, confidentiality guidelines, how the responses would be shared, and that there would be an audio recording of the interviews for transcription purposes. Once informed consent forms were signed, CLEE asked various open-ended questions. These aimed to get feedback about teacher capacity, programmatic quality, and student academic outcomes.

#### Educator Focus Group Questions

1. Please share your name, pronouns, role, what you value most about being an educator at your school/district.

2. How would you describe teacher-student-family relationships in your school? To what extent do you feel that your school is safe and inclusive?
3. Explain to what extent do you feel you have been provided with opportunities to grow and improve your skills to support and teach each and every student, including differently-abled or multilingual learners?
4. In what ways do the curriculum and instructional materials challenge and engage students from all backgrounds?
5. What do you see as strengths and areas of need when it comes to teacher collaboration in your learning community (SPED, MLL)? To what extent is there a shared sense of ownership for teaching all students?
6. To what extent do you feel that most educators implement IEPs and 504s with fidelity?
7. What demographic patterns do you notice about the enrollment of students in advanced level classes (race, ethnicity, religion, SES, gender, IEP, ...)? What can explain these patterns?
8. How do you feel about facilitating conversations about race and bias with colleagues? With students?
9. If you could be granted one wish to improve student outcomes, what would it be?
10. Is there anything you want to tell us that I didn't ask you?

### Families Focus Group Questions

1. Please share your name, pronouns, what grade your child is in, and what you value most about your school/district.
2. How would you describe teacher-student-family relationships in your child's/children's school/s? To what extent do you feel that your child's/children's school is safe and inclusive?

3. Explain to what extent do you feel that the educators at your school prepare your child to learn rigorous content? To what extent do educators expect your child to learn challenging material/courses?
4. To what extent do you feel teachers use practices that are affirming and responsive to students' cultural backgrounds, sexual orientation or gender identity?
5. To what extent do you feel teachers support the social-emotional needs of each and every student?
6. Explain to what extent are the **policies** at your child's/children's school fair for all students? For example: when it comes to discipline, grading, special education, enrollment criteria for AP courses, enrichment, etc ....?
7. What is your understanding of enrichment, honors, AP class opportunities? How much communication is there from the school about your child's eligibility to participate in these opportunities?
8. To what extent do you think the educators at your child's school value families of all backgrounds? (multilingual learners, race, religion, gender expression, sexual orientation, income, urban/suburban/rural, family structure)
  - a. PROBE: In what ways do you feel that you are treated as a partner in your child's education? (Do you have a voice? Is your perspective taken under consideration? Are you involved in decision-making?)
9. If you could be granted one wish to improve student outcomes, what would it be?
10. Is there anything you want to tell us that I didn't ask you?

### Student Focus Group Questions

- How would you describe teacher-student-family relationships in your school? To what extent do you feel that your school is safe and inclusive?
- Tell us about a time when you felt successful at school. What happened? What do you think contributed to your success?

- Tell us about a time when you struggled at school. What happened? Why did you struggle? What do you wish would have happened differently?
- Tell us about a time when you felt like a teacher or educator was helpful or NOT helpful to you in your learning. What did that look like, feel like, sound like?
- How interesting and relevant/important do you find the things you learn in your classes? To what extent do you read/learn about people from different races and ethnicities? Can you share some examples?
- Explain to what extent are the policies at your school fair for all students? Example when it comes to discipline and grading?
- If we were to walk into an honors/AP class, what demographic group (such as race, ethnicity, etc.) am I likely to see in the class? Why do you think this is so?
- Suppose you could have one wish to make your experience at school better. What would it be?
- Is there anything you want to tell us that I didn't ask you?

### Qualitative Data Analysis

The use of multiple sources of evidence broadens the range of issues and the ability to develop a converging line of inquiry (Yin, 2017). The triangulation of the data can help see the intersection of various data points and can be more convincing than a single source of information (Basu, Dirsmith, & Gupta, 1999; Cronin, 2014). The process suggested by Creswell (2014) was adopted to code and analyze the data gathered from different sources. This qualitative data coding process consisted of six steps:

1. Data collection (survey/interviews)
2. Prepare data for analysis (transcriptions, videos, notes)
3. Read, critically, through the data
4. Code the data (located/identified text segments)
5. Code the text for description to be used in the research report

## 6. Code the text for themes to be used in the research report

CLEE considered all data sources to identify categories and patterns of responses. Yin (2003) argued that the danger associated with the analysis phase is if we treat each data source independently, and report the findings separately. In order to avoid taking information out of context, the data was triangulated and integrated to create a chain of evidence, build explanations, and gain a holistic understanding.

Furthermore, following the initial data review, the descriptors were created for various statements, or codes, in the margins of the transcripts. The codes were recorded in a table that displayed the data in a way that helped identify patterns ([Table 6](#)). These codes were later grouped into "larger units of information called meaning units or themes" (Creswell, 2013, p. 193). Lastly, since multiple sources of evidence were incorporated into this audit, data triangulation was used during the data analysis process as well (Patton, 2002). During data triangulation, the comparison of the findings across the data sources was made, including the identification of key findings that were supported by more than one data source.

## Appendix C - Data Collection and Analysis

### Data Collection

#### Process

Some data collection and analysis were conducted in parallel to the CLEE's facilitated work of the Equity Audit Committee. CLEE gathered evidence that illuminated strengths and needs around the three key areas of equity that allow for a "straightforward, delimited audit of equity." These areas are student outcomes, educator capacity, and systems and programs in place.

CLEE facilitated four two-hour virtual sessions with the Equity Audit Committee.

During these sessions, the group utilized specific protocols designed to maintain equity of voices, depth of insights, and minimize bias. Specifically, the Equity Audit Committee engaged in the following processes:

- Analyzed various qualitative and quantitative data to uncover the most critical area of inequity.
- Conducted a root-cause analysis to determine the reasons for the inequity.
- Compiled the reasons for the inequities into statements that describe the causes or barriers to equity (i.e., barrier statements).
- Prioritized the highest leverage barriers to address as next steps
- Began to plan next steps to share the results of the audit with the rest of the community

### Data Gathered

CLEE gathered the following data from June 2021 through March 2022:

**Existing data:** The CLEE team reviewed publicly available existing data, as well as data provided by the APS central office data team and administration. Publicly available data at the [Massachusetts Department of Education](#) included data of the district profile, demographics, enrollment, graduation rate, dropout rate, advanced course placement and completion, discipline, and accountability data, including MCAS achievement results. Other data sources included the Views of Climate and Learning (VOCAL) Survey, PSAT scores, and teacher evaluations.

**Documents:** CLEE collected and analyzed records made available by the school district including policy guidance documents and forms, lists of professional development course offerings, results of CLEE-administered learning community survey, job descriptions, applicant screening tools, and strategic plans.

**Learning Community Survey to staff:** The Learning Community Survey (LCS) is a short survey that was given to all school-level staff at the district, including



instructional assistants, teachers, support staff, and administrators. Staff was invited to complete this brief online survey, developed by CLEE, consisting of 35 Likert-scale items aligned with the indicators of the six core leadership practices identified in the theoretical framework section of this report.

This survey is designed to measure the perceptions and degree of shared leadership of all educators, rather than only of the positional leaders at the district. Research shows that there is a correlation between the implementation of these leadership practices and improved student learning and increased equity in schools (Braun, Billups, & Gable, 2017). (See [Data Dashboard](#) for visualization of the results).

**Focus groups and interviews:** CLEE conducted virtual focus group interviews with APS' students, parents, and staff. The focus group size ranged between 8-12 people. Participants' identities are anonymous for the protection of privacy and confidentiality. However, their profile included students who have active 504 plans or Individual Education Plans (IEPs), are MLL, and whose religion and race varied. The parent focus group included parents whose children were characterized by one of the above criteria. Lastly, the educators in the focus groups were teachers from across the different schools, grade levels, and content areas. (See [Appendix B](#) for a detailed description of the qualitative data collection and analysis).

## Data Analysis

Using the various qualitative and quantitative data sources, the research team triangulated the data through the following process:

- Facilitating the Equity Audit Committee through a process to analyze the student achievement data. In conjunction with district leadership interviews, this led to focus on the highest equity need with the education received by students.
- Facilitating the Equity Audit Committee through a process to analyze the Learning Community Survey data, staff data, and qualitative data to inform

their understanding of the inequities and their recommendations to address the root causes of the inequities uncovered.

- Conducting detailed coding of the focus groups and interviews. Following the initial data review, descriptors were created for various statements, or codes, in the margins of the transcripts. The codes were recorded in a table that displayed the data in a way that helped identify patterns ([Table 6](#)). These codes were later grouped into "larger units of information called meaning units or themes" (Creswell, 2013, p. 193).
- Using all available data discovered through the audit, including the perspectives of the Equity Audit Committee, to identify evidence pertinent to the three critical areas for equitable practice.
- Identifying preliminary findings based on emerging patterns where data illuminated strengths and challenges related to the indicators.
- Aligning findings to a research-based set of sub-indicators ([Table 3](#) and [Table 4](#)).
- Finalizing findings statements and associated supporting evidence.

A team of CLEE facilitators and researchers, all of whom have a background in education research, practice, and policy, conducted this analysis process collaboratively.

# Appendix D - Theoretical Frameworks

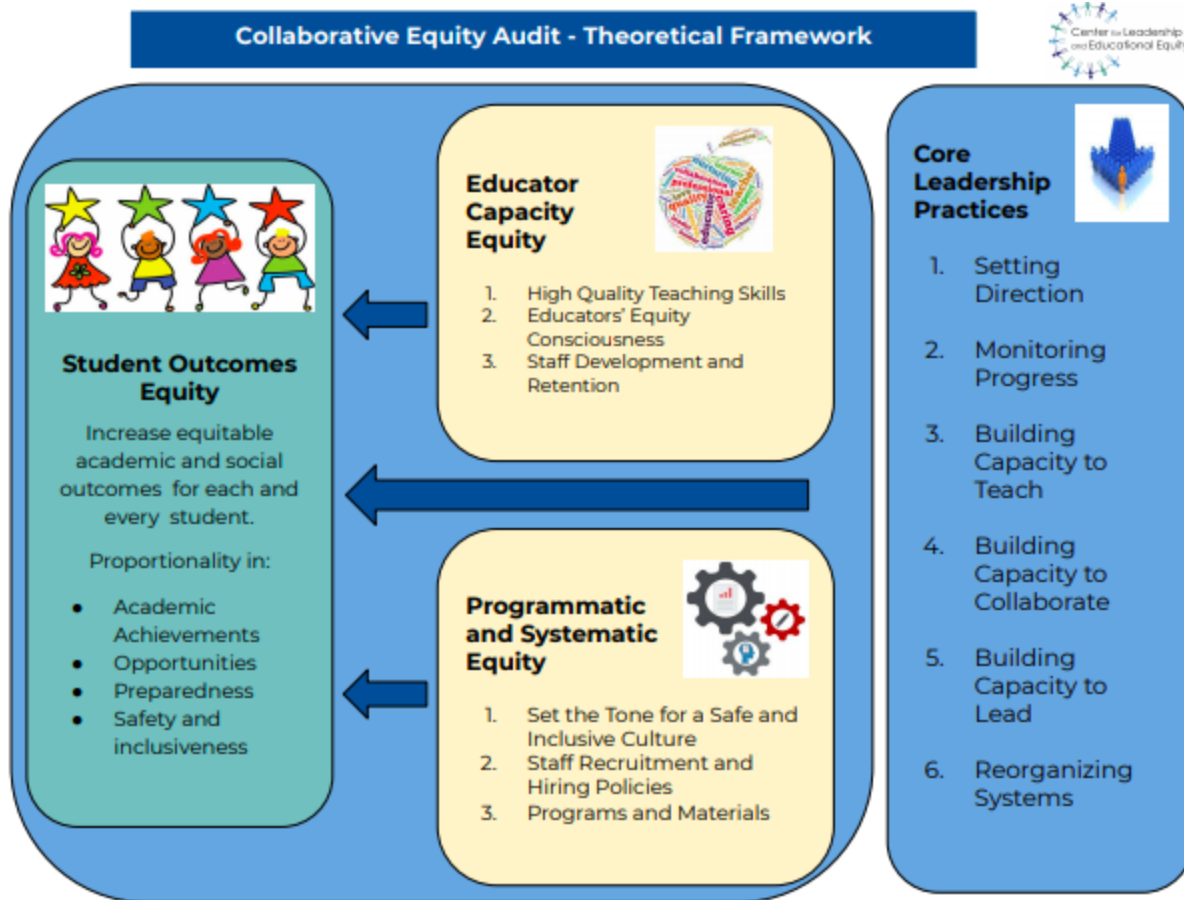
## Theoretical Frameworks

The two main theoretical frameworks that are integrated for this audit study are represented in [Figure 1](#):

1. The equity audit framework used by (Skrla et al., 2009)
2. The core leadership practices adopted by CLEE.

**Figure 1**

CLEE's Integrated Theoretical Framework



## Skrla et al., Equity Audit Framework

Skrla and her colleagues (Skrla, McKenzie & Scheurich, 2009; McKenzie & Skrla, 2011) developed a model for conducting equity audits. This model is based on the assumption that patterns of inequity are systemic. In order to identify internal patterns of inequity, one must have a concrete model to do so. Their model identified three areas of equity that form a simple equation that can guide the overwhelming task of understanding and acting to increase equity:

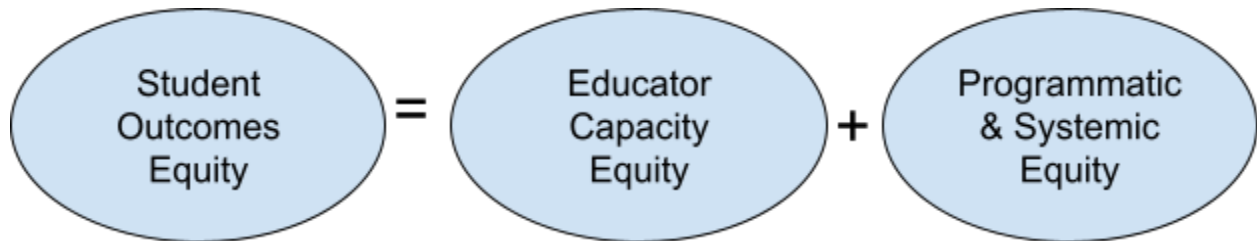
$$\underline{\text{Teacher Quality Equity} + \text{Programmatic Equity} = \text{Achievement Equity}}$$

For each of these areas, Skrla et al. (2009, 2011) also developed four specific indicators to measure each of these areas.

While the simplicity and practicality of this model are very appealing, CLEE expanded on it. This expansion aimed to capture a bigger picture, integrate other pertinent indicators, and align with the instructional core, which is at the heart of teaching and learning (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2018). The instructional core is the relationship between the teacher, student, and the content that determines instructional practices. Therefore, it is crucial to consider the instructional core when measuring the degree of equity present in the practices of educators and school systems, as well as student outcomes. CLEE's modified equity areas are educator capacity equity, programmatic and systemic equity, and student achievement outcomes equity. The modified equation for the equity audit can be seen in [Figure 2](#) below.

## Figure 2

*CLEE's Modified Formula to Increase Equitable Outcomes for Students. It is Adapted from McKenzie & Skrla (2011) and Skrla et al., (2009, p. 24).*



### Student Outcomes Equity

The last summative area of the Skrla et al. (2009) equity audit is achievement equity. The indicators used to measure it include state achievement tests, dropout rates, high school graduation tracks, and SAT/ACT/AP/IB results. Skrla et al. (2009) use these indicators to measure equity as the end goal. CLEE, on the other hand, uses this area of equity at the start of the process to launch the audit and help narrow down a specific area of inequity to delve deeper into. Hence, the reversal in the order in the equity equation. Student outcome data is the highest indicator for disproportionality between one group of students when compared to its peer group. Once the Equity Audit Committee identifies this area, the audit focuses on other sources of data that can tell and explain the entire story.

### Educator Capacity Equity

CLEE expanded Skrla's area of teacher quality equity to educator capacity equity. Quality is not necessarily seen only by examining teachers' education, experience, mobility, and certification, as suggested by Skrla et al. (2009). Instead, educator capacity extends to every teacher, staff, and administrator who provides services for students. Further, we divided educator capacity into three sub-areas, namely (1) high-quality teaching skills, (2) educators' equity consciousness, and (3) staff

development and retention, and aligned them with specific best practice descriptors to measure them. These equity areas and indicators are influenced by Skrla's subsequent work and the work of Elena Aguilar (2020), Lisa Delpit (2006), Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995), and Christine Sleeter (2008). They have identified research-based, high-quality teaching skills. There are 12 specific best practice descriptors that CLEE developed to measure educator capacity equity. These are:

1. Educators' belief that all students are capable of academic success.
2. Educators see themselves as members of their students' community.
3. Educators maintain a flexible inquiry-based learning environment in which students' knowledge, experience, wisdom, and backgrounds are valued and seen as resources for and incorporated authentically into learning.
4. Educators monitor and assess students' needs and then address them with a wealth of diverse strategies with the understanding that success is defined and measured in many ways.
5. Educators know students well enough to adapt practices to meet their needs and offer many opportunities to develop cognitive skills and habits of mind that prepare them for advanced tasks.
6. Educators have a clear picture of how various sub-groups are achieving with attention towards children from underrepresented communities comparable to their peer group.
7. Educators are aware of their own biases, privilege, and are able to change assumptions about student learning through conversations with other adults at the school.
8. Use data to identify the professional learning needs of educators and rapidly respond with professional learning opportunities aligned with increasing equitable practices.
9. Onboarding for new educators, with personalized support for educators of color, including mentor programs, affinity groups, and, or buddy programs.

10. There are professional learning experiences for educators to continuously improve their cultural competence and culturally sustaining practices to meet school-specific inequities.
11. There are professional learning experiences for educators to deepen pedagogical content knowledge to support student learning, especially if children are not successful or are performing below grade-level expectations.
12. Leverage the effectiveness of culturally responsive/conscious and sustaining teachers, coaches, and leaders by using them as models and peer coaches.

### Programmatic and Systemic Equity

Skrla's second area of equity audit is programmatic equity. CLEE modified this to include systemic and programmatic equity. Initially, Skrla et al. (2009) measured this equity area by focusing on educational programs such as special education, gifted and talented, bilingual education, and student discipline. While these programmatic indicators are essential, CLEE expanded on this equity area to include policies and practices that are used programmatically and systemically to design the conditions for the current reality. These are not limited only to the four areas identified by Skrla et al., (2009); instead, they are expanded to include the following three sub-areas: (1) Setting the tone for a safe and inclusive culture, (2) Staff recruitment and hiring policies, (3) Programs and materials, and 26 best practice descriptors and sub descriptors:

1. Evidence of statements of definitions, benefits of and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the mission, vision, strategic planning, etc.
2. Clearly defined and specific equity goals and strategies.
3. Safe and inclusive culture for each and every student, especially those from historically underrepresented groups.
4. All students have opportunities for being recognized for being a positive contributor to the school community

5. All students have opportunities to take a leadership role in the classroom
6. Families of historically underrepresented groups are seen as partners and are welcomed to be included in the dialogue, their knowledge is tapped into, and have a voice.
7. Members of underrepresented communities on the board and key leadership positions.
8. There are short and long-term measurable indicators of the degree to which reaching goals.
9. Have a regular forum to update stakeholders on progress.
10. Job descriptions reflect the goals of increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the district.
11. Job description reflects the district's clear understanding of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are key to a role in order to lead/teach for more equitable outcomes.
12. Teachers and leaders reflect a diverse racial and ethnic cultural composition.
13. The district utilizes external partners (i.e. preparation programs and community organizations from underrepresented groups) to recruit candidates from diverse backgrounds and those with competencies to increase equity in their roles.
14. Utilizes hiring tools to identify strong candidates.
15. Use of multiple measures and data sources to assess candidates.
16. Practices to eliminate selection bias.
17. Interviewers from underrepresented groups
18. Financial resources are allotted for the school's equity plan, goals, and initiatives. The school's budget reflects the prioritization of this commitment.
19. Advanced course placement, enrollment, and outcomes.
20. There is availability and clear communication of college prerequisite courses, and these courses are available to all.
21. Access to high-quality instructional materials.
22. Instructional material integrates higher-order thinking, inquiry approach



23. Instructional material emphasizes real-world connections, including literature of diverse authors, integrates the experiences of historically underserved groups that are not limited to reduced experiences of suffering.
24. Instructional material elicits prior knowledge, allows for discourse and collaboration, multiple perspectives, and student ownership and learning.
25. Teachers, coaches, and administration disaggregate data according to race, ethnicity, home language, gender, etc. to see evidence of disproportionality and determine allocation of resources accordingly.
26. Special Education Program placement and support that build inclusive learning and lead to equitable learning outcomes.
27. MLL Education Program placement and supports that build inclusive learning and lead to equitable learning outcomes.
28. Disciplinary practices that build inclusive culture and lead to equitable outcomes.

### Core Leadership Practices Framework

The second theoretical framework, integrated into this equity audit is leadership theory. It asserts that effective leadership is the key to increased student achievement, particularly in underperforming schools and that serve low-income communities (Jacobson, Johnson, Ylimaki, & Giles, 2005; Klar, Brewer, & Whitehouse, 2013; Werts, Green, Della Salla, Knoeppel, & Lindle, 2012). Many have argued that the principal's leadership can have a significant effect on students' learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). This notion was expanded by other researchers beyond focusing on the local school principal to determine core categories of specific practices vital for successful school leadership (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). Doing so shifts the leader's role from managerial and hierarchical to someone who collaborates and builds the capacity of others to lead improvement efforts (Brown, 2005; Elmore, 2006). While the methods may be labeled and categorized differently, the identified effective practices remain consistent (Klar & Brewer, 2013).

CLEE has adopted six core leadership practices defined in leading for equitable outcomes and reducing inequities in student learning (Braun, Gable, & Billups, 2015):

1. *Setting Direction and Vision* - Continuously engage self and others in developing a shared understanding of the current reality and why inequities exist. Cultivate a vision that holds up belief in high and equitable outcomes for all and research-based action steps for improvements.
2. *Monitoring Progress and sustaining the momentum of efforts* - Guide teams, teachers, and students using relevant data in cycles of improvement to monitor and celebrate efforts and growth toward the vision.
3. *Building Capacity to Teach so all students have their needs met* - Engage educators in learning experiences and structures that promote the improvement of craft aimed at increasing equity.
4. *Building Capacity to Collaborate as a community* - Develop a climate of belonging, interdependence, and respect as engaging educators in collaborative learning. This climate will help facilitate adult learning, give and receive collegial feedback, and create a receptive space where assumptions are questioned.
5. *Building Capacity to Lead for everyone at the school community* - Model and make space for others (educators, parents, students) to take responsibility to reach the vision.
6. *Reorganizing Systems to accelerate equity* - Build shared commitment, not just compliance, to clear, evolving systems and structures that ensure high and equitable outcomes.

To summarize, two theoretical frameworks of equity audit and core leadership practices contextualize this audit. These frameworks integrate specific indicators for each of the equity areas and align with particular core leadership practices (see [Table 5](#)). The leadership practices will be proven helpful and practical, especially when forming the next steps.

## Appendix E - Data Sources for the Root-Cause Analysis

### Reasons for the Current Reality - Part 1

#### Staff at Auburn Public Schools

In the 2020-21 school year, APS had a total of 335 staff members, 179 of which are teachers, and the rest are support professionals and administrators. Out of 335 staff members, the vast majority 319 identify as White, while 10.5 identify as Hispanic, 2.5 as Asian, 0 as Native Americans and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 1 as multirace, and 2 as African Americans. Gender demographic data of staff members indicate that 285 are females and 50 are males. The visualization of this data can be seen on the [data dashboard linked here](#). Lastly, teacher to student ratio at the APS is 14:1, and 100% of the teachers are certified.

The state of Massachusetts adopted the Educator Evaluation Framework to assess educator performance. It is based on the Classroom Teacher Rubric, which describes teaching practices. This rubric supports the evaluation cycle for all teachers, including teachers of whole classrooms, small groups, individual students, or any combination of the above. The rubric is designed to evaluate general education teachers from pre-K through Advanced Placement. This rubric also applies to teachers with specialized classes or knowledge, such as teachers of English Language Learners and special education teachers. Districts may also choose to use this rubric for educators in other roles, such as specialists. There are four broad categories, or standards, of effective practice detailed in the regulations:

1. Standard 1: Curriculum, Planning, and Assessment
2. Standard 2: Teaching All Students
3. Standard 3: Family and Community Engagement
4. Standard 4: Professional Culture

Each standard has specific indicators, which are specific knowledge and skills. There are 17 indicators in total for teachers. Teachers' level of performance falls in one of four categories: Unsatisfactory, Needs Improvement, Proficient, or Exemplary. According to the APS educator evaluation performance rating data of 195 evaluated teachers in 2019-20, 0% received a rating of unsatisfactory, 2.1% needed improvement, 90.3% were proficient, and 7.7% were exemplary. Further, out of the 12 administrators evaluated, 0% received a rating of unsatisfactory, 0% needed improvement, 75% were proficient, and 25% were exemplary ([see DESE- Educator Evaluation Data](#)).

Standards 2 and 3 of educator evaluation are particularly relevant to assessing equitable practices since they have cultural proficiency indicators:

#### Standard 2

- Indicator II-A - Instruction - Measures the degree to which the educator uses instructional practices that reflect high expectations regarding content and quality of effort and work; engage all students; and are personalized to accommodate diverse learning styles, needs, interests, and levels of readiness.
- Indicator II-D - Cultural proficiency - Measures the degree to which the educator actively creates and maintains an environment in which students' diverse backgrounds, identities, strengths, and challenges are respected.

#### Standard 3

- Indicator III-A - Family Engagement - Measures the degree to which the educator uses a variety of culturally responsive practices to welcome and encourage every family to become active participants in the classroom and school community.

For standard 2 - When looking specifically at teachers' ratings based on the Classroom Teacher Rubric, 0% of teachers were rated as "Unsatisfactory" and 1.4% of teachers were rated as "needs improvement."

For standard 4 - 0% of teachers were rated as “Unsatisfactory” and 0.7% of teachers were rated as “needs improvement” (see [Data dashboard linked here](#)).

### The CLEE Learning Community Survey (LCS)

The Learning Community Survey (LCS) was administered to all 335 staff members at APS between June 14 and June 18, 2021. One hundred and seventy-six individuals took the survey, representing 53% of all staff. The survey uses a Likert scale for respondents to answer each question on the LCS which is converted to a numerical scale (strongly agree = 4; agree = 3; disagree = 2; strongly disagree = 1) for the analysis. Survey items are shown as averages, where "1" is the lowest and "4" is the highest (see [Data dashboard](#)).

The survey examines the perception of leadership and school culture within six domains of the Core Leadership Practices: (1) Reorganizing Systems, (2) Setting Direction, (3) Monitoring Progress, (4) Building Capacity to Teach, (5) Building Capacity to Collaborate, and (6) Building Capacity to Lead.

Participants' perceptions of "Building Capacity to Teach" had the highest average responses among the six domains, whereas "Monitoring Progress" and "Building Capacity to Lead" had the lowest averages. The lowest and highest responses from each category revealed the following narrative: (See [Table 5](#)):

- On average, staff felt that **adult collaboration** was an integral part to impact student learning (3.39). They also reported that they do not have consistent use of collaborative time (2.66), consistent and protected time for adults to engage in group conversation (3.48) and group conversations are often unstructured (2.61). Additionally, educators reported that group conversations with adults enable them to better meet students' needs and change their practices (3.14) and problem solve (3.03), yet, they do not get much feedback from other adults (2.98).

- Evidence for collaborative practices was also seen in the high score of the core leadership practice “Building Capacity to Collaborate” (3.48).
- On average, staff reported that they **use do not consistently use data** to understand students' needs (2.74) or to monitor students' progress (2.44). Also, data practices are not implemented by students to understand their progress and needs (2.41). Nevertheless, educators reported that they know their students well enough to adapt their practices to meet their needs (3.31).
- Not all staff perceive that all students can **learn at high levels** (2.99).
- On average, staff reported that they are more likely to model the attitudes and practices they hope to see other adults enact (3.4). However, they are less likely to address adults who are not upholding the **norms** (2.29), or re-focus conversations with adults if they begin to stray away from the purpose or goal (2.73).
- Lastly, on average, staff reported that they do not have a **voice** in deciding the school goals (2.96), in prioritizing the actions the school takes to reach the goals (2.51), or in creating the systems and processes used to ensure all students' needs are met (2.7). Staff also felt as though they are part of a school community that works to find solutions to its most challenging problems (3.13).

**Table 4**

*Results of the Auburn Public Schools' Learning Community Survey (LCS) (2021)*

	Average Score	Lowest Scoring Response	Highest Scoring Response
<b>Reorganizing Systems</b>	<b>2.73</b>	<i>There are processes in place to ensure all students' needs are met.</i>	<i>There is consistent and protected time for the adults in the school to engage in group discussions and collaboration</i>
<b>Setting</b>	<b>2.96</b>	<i>I influence the achievement of</i>	<i>I have a voice in deciding</i>

<b>Direction</b>		<i>students</i>	<i>the school goals</i> <i>I have a voice in prioritizing the actions my school takes to reach our goals</i>
<b>Monitoring Progress</b>	<b>2.73</b>	<i>I use data to understand the needs of students</i>	<i>Students use data to understand their progress and needs</i>
<b>Building Capacity to Teach</b>	<b>3.31</b>	<i>I know students well enough to adapt my practices to meet their needs</i>	<i>Group conversations with adults at my school enable me to better meet students needs</i>
<b>Building Capacity to Collaborate</b>	<b>3.01</b>	<i>I am willing to discuss data and work from my students with the adults in my school</i>	<i>Group conversations with adults in my school are structured and facilitated to ensure everyone contributes and learns</i>
<b>Building Capacity to Lead</b>	<b>2.78</b>	<i>I model the attitude and practices I hope to see in the adults in my school</i>	<i>I address adults who are not upholding the practices or norms agreed upon by the staff</i>

\*Note: See [Appendix A](#) for detailed description of the LCS scale descriptions. The LCS visualized results can be found at this [linked interactive Google Studio document](#). The results can also be filtered by schools by clicking on the top right corner icon of the linked document.

## Reasons for the Current Reality - Part 2

### Focus Groups Interview Data

CLEE investigators conducted four separate focus group interviews:

- **Two student focus groups:** One group consisted of students ranging from 6th to 8th grade. The other group consisted of students ranging from 9th to 12th grade.

- **One family/guardian focus group:** The parent/guardian group had families with children in APS. CLEE offered a time slot in the afternoon/early evening to accommodate families' busy schedules.
- **One educator focus group:** The group consisted of educators, including school support professionals and teachers representing elementary, middle, and high school grade levels, who provide instructional expertise and educators' perspectives.

To ensure equitable representation, these groups were balanced for various demographic factors, such as social-economic status, race, ethnicity, regular education, special education, services received, gender, and identity. For further information on focus groups, see [Appendix B](#)).

### Emerging Themes

[Table 6](#) shows the number of times the various identified codes were mentioned during the focus group interviews. Overall, there are 15 topics, or codes, that surfaced. Further, groups identified a topic that was of high relevance to them as determined by code frequency. Four main themes were then created from the codes. These themes, summarized in [Table 7](#), support the equity focus and the highest leverage barriers identified by the Equity Audit Committee.

**Table 5**  
*Coded Focus Group Interviews Data in Auburn Public Schools*

Code	Total	Code Weight Mean	Students	Families/Guardians	Educators
Academic rigor of curriculum and instruction	<b>19</b>	1.73	12	4	3
Communication	<b>12</b>	2.25	1	7	4
Culturally-conscious practices*	<b>78</b>	1.60	17	23	38
Educator capacity to improve practice	<b>12</b>	1.33	2	0	10
Educator capacity to teach ALL students*	<b>80</b>	1.6	35	10	35



Expectations	<b>11</b>	2.09	10	0	1
Inclusiveness and sense of belonging*	<b>96</b>	1.84	12	54	30
Opportunities (for students, educators, and families)	<b>35</b>	1.55	17	8	9
Policies (Assessment, grading, and discipline)	<b>29</b>	2	21	8	9
Relationships*	<b>100</b>	2.13	30	40	30
Relevance of the Curriculum	<b>21</b>	1.80	21	0	0
Safety	<b>11</b>	1.81	2	8	1
Social-Emotional Learning/Support	<b>10</b>	2.3	5	1	4
Staff diversity	<b>9</b>	1.55	0	3	6
Student engagement	<b>15</b>	1.6	15	0	0

*Note: The number of times the above codes/descriptors came up during the interviews. The \* indicates codes with the highest frequency of occurrences.*

**Table 6**

*Summary of Main Themes that Emerged from the Focus Group Interviews*

Theme	Theme Summary
1. Relationships	This theme is defined as the ability to form and sustain meaningful student-to-student, student-educator, and educator-family relationships.
2. Inclusiveness and sense of belonging	This theme is defined as the extent to which all students are included and feel that they are part of the community.
3. Educator Capacity to Teach ALL Students	This theme is defined as an educator's skills and expertise to academically support each student, regardless of ability, by differentiating curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

4. Culturally  
Conscious  
Practices

This theme is defined as an educator’s set of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that develop and expand one’s own and others’ awareness and understandings of culture, with the goal of affirming and creating high and equitable outcomes for students and families, especially those from non-dominant groups.

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## Themes

### **Theme 1 - Relationships**

The theme of Relationships was the most frequent theme that surfaced in the focal group interviews. This theme is defined as the ability to form and sustain meaningful student-to-student, student-educator, and educator-family relationships.

The theme of Relationships seemed to be most notable with families/guardians, followed by educators and students.

The focal group interviews revealed that educators understand the importance of forming strong relationships with students: “I do the best that I can [with developing relationships with students], but I, I always want to do better.” Another educator shared their perspective on the value of collaborative relationships among colleagues: “I feel like I always have someone to bounce ideas off and talk to. So I really appreciate the people in my building who helped me get through the day and are really here for the kids.” However, one educator shared their perspective on an area of growth for APS regarding the negative impact closed-minded thinking can have on developing relationships with students:

I still find we have some adults who, you know, their opinions are formed and their opinions are what their opinions are. Or we also have some adults that

like they just come out and say some things and they don't really even realize the impact that it can have or has on students and adults.

One educator highlighted difficulty forming a relationship with a student because of the student's background, "I had a student one year who came from Iraq and they came here because of their safety, but, you know, to have a conversation with them, it was difficult because I couldn't relate." Another educator reflected on a lack of systems to communicate with families/guardians, "[We] don't have a clear line of who's responsible for communicating with the parent. So I think that we're developing it, but it is in the beginning stages." An educator agreed that there is a recent focus on building relationships with families, "I think what I value most is the connections that we're able to make with the families. I think especially the past couple of years, there's been a huge emphasis on that."

In the families/guardians focal group interviews, participants expressed gratitude for a focus on educating the whole child and its impact. One family member remarked, "I have to highlight both AMS and AHS recently for their proactive approach to working with the whole child. [I] have seen very positive results, improved academics, and behavior, as a result." Another family member commented on feeling valued and a partner in their child's education because of two-way communication between the school and family:

In our experience, we have felt very valued. I will say that we have been proactive from the start—approaching the schools with information about our children and what works best for them. The school teams have been very receptive and appreciative. We often share what is going on with them at home in order to help with best directing them at school. We do feel we have a voice and that our perspective is taken under consideration. When it comes to important decision-making, we do feel involved as needed.

However, families noted that relationships between families and schools can vary based on grade level. A family member commented, "Moving through the grades

establishes a great relationship in the younger grades. But, I feel, we've lost that as my child has grown older.” Another family member surveyed related stating:

That's the nature of the beast [when] you get into middle school, you get into high school, you have a bunch of different teachers. They change every trimester. So it's harder and it's a shorter time to establish that relationship. But even though having a [accommodation] plan, it's like, you feel like you're doing the same thing every four months with new teachers trying to get everyone on board.

Students provided specific insight on relationships with teachers. One student commented on the support received from teachers during a difficult time:

All my teachers knew what was going on and they really helped me. They gave me extra time if I needed and they were really supportive. They were just very nice and made me feel safe, like a sense of security in school that if I didn't have that at home, I had that at school.

Another student commented on how a strong relationship with a teacher was impactful, “My teacher was like, she knew I was sensitive. So she would usually help me try to stay calm and not get frustrated with my work.” However, a student in the focal group interviews also expressed a lack of personalization from school educators, saying:

I feel like the administration and some teachers forgot that they're dealing with people and students who have lives. And I feel like they treat us like numbers on a spreadsheet sometimes. I wish they would take a step back and imagine that we were their children.

The structure of the secondary level in comparison to elementary presents additional considerations for relationship development. Instead of having one teacher for a majority of the school day, students at the secondary level have multiple teachers throughout the day and the school year. This results in fewer opportunities for

teacher-student interaction at the secondary level. As noted in focus group interviews, this structure can prove difficult to navigate for families and students and should be a consideration for next steps for secondary schools in APS.

## **Theme 2 - Inclusiveness and Sense of Belonging**

Inclusiveness and Sense of Belonging was another top theme that surfaced in the focal group interviews. This theme is defined as the extent to which all students are included and feel that they are part of the community.

Inclusiveness and Sense of Belonging was the most prominent theme surfaced by families and guardians. Educators also noted this as a concern based on the frequency in which this theme emerged, followed by students.

Positive examples of an inclusive culture and a sense of belonging were noted by families and guardians, specifically as partners in their children's education. A family member stated, "With regards to my children's IEPs and 504 plan we have always been able to be involved to include the student's voice as well." In addition, a family shared their similar experience, "Throughout the years of my son being on a 504 plan I do feel I have been part of the decision making."

However, families and guardians surfaced instances of inconsistencies regarding establishing an inclusive culture. For example, a family member stated:

Some teachers are super accepting. Their rooms are safe spaces for my child. Others are absolutely not safe places. My child has been told when they were running for student council in middle school and the platform was going to be starting a Gay Student Alliance, that this isn't the place for that, that we don't talk about that here. So that shut my child down.

Another family member shared their perspective of the inconsistencies existing in the district specific to inclusivity and creating a sense of belonging, "I think in the lower grades, there are a lot more opportunities for parents to be involved."

Students voiced examples of inclusivity in their interview including this statement from a student: "I've always felt included here at Auburn. I mean this is a high school, so everybody has their own cliques and whatnot, but I don't, I've never really seen a problem with including people. I feel like we do a good job of that here." Another student echoed that sentiment stating, "I do feel that there's a good majority of accepting people at the school." However, students also surfaced negative examples from their experience in regards to inclusivity and a sense of belonging. One student discussed feeling patronized based on their background, stating:

I would say being a minority is difficult in a mostly Caucasian school. I've felt at times like I was given opportunities not because I had earned it, although I was well qualified, but more so that I could be a poster child and make the school system look better.

Another student mentioned potential bias from teachers impacting inclusivity, stating, "I think that some teachers' views get in the way of just accepting the students for who they are."

Educators do believe that APS is inclusive but that more work needs to be done. This is evidenced by the following statement from an educator: "I do think that we do a good job of being inclusive, but I think that we could do better." Another educator agreed that a better understanding of inclusivity is needed from both educators and students, stating, "I would wish that teachers and students have a better understanding of how to promote diversity and inclusivity in our schools."

### **Theme 3 - Educator Capacity to Teach All Students**

Educator Capacity to Teach All Students was the third most frequent theme that surfaced in the focal group interviews. This theme is defined as an educator's ability to support all students academically, regardless of ability and background. In order to support all students academically, an educator must have the capacity to

differentiate curriculum, instruction, and assessment in regards to each student's ability and background.

Educator Capacity to Teach All Students was a common theme shared by both students and educators. Families and guardians also noted this theme but at a lower frequency.

Students shared positive experiences specific to receiving support from teachers when struggling. For example, a student stated:

I was struggling with school, classes a lot, and I had gotten close to failing but never did. I had gotten pretty close and one of my teachers, I would talk to her and she would make [an] appointment and we would meet after school and during our free period and stuff to our activity and we would talk and she really helped me get through that.

Similar sentiments were voiced by additional students regarding receiving support including, "Luckily I had a really nice teacher, and she helped me when I was having a hard time. I'm glad I made it through last year," and "It usually takes a little time for the teachers to understand the problem but when they do they do everything they can to make sure that you can get the answers that you can understand."

Students recognize the importance of personalizing instruction based on need as evidenced by the following quote:

[I wish that all teachers understood] that everyone's on a different learning level and not everyone gets a subject once it's been explained [or that] once people do, [they] would like to go a little deeper before they really understand that. I feel like a lot of teachers are really good with that.

However, a student shared that not all teachers take the time to be cognizant of all students' needs explaining:

I feel like [teachers] don't take time to really understand their students. They see us up to like eight hours a day at school and they just don't care and don't really understand students. I feel like they should understand and take the time to understand their students and make the environment better for them. So students could be successful. They can't do that without their teacher really understanding where they're coming from.

The educator focal group interviews revealed a lack of collaborative systems between and amongst teachers to learn from each other and grow their capacities to meet the needs of all learners. One educator explained the need for both additional training and teacher collaboration:

It's just really hard to try to meet the needs of all the kids and make sure and get in everyone who comes in with a different skill set. Some teachers are more easily able to do it. And some teachers need a lot more help and finding that time, not only for the collaboration, but also the training for those who need it.

In addition, educators described a differentiation between general education teachers and special education teachers impacting opportunities for collaboration to address the needs of all learners stating, "I hear it all the time from the special education teachers that they feel like they are a different entity in the building. They don't get to collaborate with the general education teachers as much as they want to."

Families and guardians shared opinions on the importance of teaching all learners and meeting the needs of all students noting the myriad learning levels of students in classrooms. A family member stated:

I think [it] is important for educators to understand that not everybody learns at the same pace. I do understand that there is a curriculum and they have to meet the requirements of the state and all of that. But at the same time, you



know education is changing and you cannot expect that everybody's going to be as fast as their classmates.

#### **Theme 4 - Culturally Conscious Practices**

Culturally Conscious Practices was the fourth most frequent theme that surfaced in the focal group interviews. This theme is defined as an educator's set of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that develop and expand one's own and others' awareness and understandings of culture, with the goal of affirming and creating high and equitable outcomes for students and families, especially those from non-dominant groups.

The theme of Culturally Conscious Practices is the most prominent with the educators who were interviewed, followed by families/guardians, and then students.

Based on interview data, APS is at the formative stages of integrating culturally conscious practices into the curriculum. Educators noted that new curricular materials included diverse perspectives, stating, "Our new Wonders program does a good job of representing many people. There are stories from many different cultures which include different languages in the text." However, at some levels, there is a hesitation to incorporate materials including diverse perspectives based on how they may be received. An educator commented, "[Teachers] have those same concerns when implementing the new and diverse texts. We believe in what we're doing, but are unsure of how it will be received." Educators are in support of incorporating more diverse curricular materials and acknowledge that more training and support are needed to effectively implement culturally conscious practices in the curriculum. An educator noted:

I don't think that people know what to do. I think people want to know, [but] they don't think they necessarily know what to do. And that's a problem. Kids are more diverse than the staff are. And so it makes it really hard for people to

relate to what the kids are going through or to empathize with them even though we try the best that we can. That's kind of where we are.

Families/guardians concur with educators and support more training for educators. During the interviews, a family member commented:

If I had one wish to improve student outcomes, it would be that the teachers receive training regarding diversity, inclusion, cultures, etc. Furthermore, teachers need to learn how to truly be inclusive and how to understand and show empathy for kids and families who are of different backgrounds, not just the traditional white New Englander family with a mom and a dad.

Families/guardians also provided insight into what culturally conscious practices would look like when integrated into the school environment. A family member offered, "I'd love to see a district-wide approach to being more inclusive (culturally, ability-wise, family structure) and the whole team (every single staff, coach, teacher, etc) expected to operate with compassion and an open mind."

In addition, families/guardians acknowledged the need for collaboration between educators and families to promote culturally conscious practices. A family member discussed the importance of family involvement but also cited challenges, stating:

We've talked about it, how to get parents involved, how to diversify and things. It's a challenge. It's a challenge because something as simple as the Columbus Day holiday. How do you navigate that and how do you do it in an appropriate way, in an inclusive way? I think there's still a lot of work to be done.

Students echoed both educators' and families' concerns for more training and integration of culturally conscious practices in the curriculum. Students recognize this need based on traditional instruction in the classroom and a lack of diverse perspectives presented. During the interviews, a student noted:

I feel like they continuously choose to teach things and materials that they've taught forever just because that's what you do. But I don't think it would be worthless to go out and try to teach things that actually pertain to what's going on in society right now. I don't think we've ever learned about or read Asian American literature or anything like that. I mean, we've read a couple of things with African-Americans, but I sometimes feel like when it comes to race or different ethnicities, I mean, obviously, we're a predominantly white county or, like, town and school system. So I feel like there are times when they teach something not because they believe it necessarily has value, but more because they just want to say that they've done it.

Students also raised a concern that current events specific to culture are not discussed consistently or included in the curriculum. Specifically, a student commented that certain topics are included in classroom instruction when novel and are discussed superficially. A student commented:

With Black Lives Matter and things like that going on, I felt like everyone was talking about it, but now no one even remembers it. It's not that it's no longer relevant, but it's not popular, so let's not talk about it. When we teach things about race at school, it's not even because they want to, it's just so that they can say at school committee meetings, "Oh yeah, we're, we're doing this." But it has almost no weight to it. Like they just gave it at face value almost to check off a box and say, "Oh, we've done it." But really I feel like it's not going anywhere.

### Student Attendance Data

The Equity Audit Committee reviewed and analyzed attendance data in order to widen the understanding of the inequities. The visualization of this data can be seen in [Data Dashboard 3](#) and disaggregated for various student subgroups. Overall, percentages of students with lower attendance, who were absent for 10+ days or more of the academic year, were as follows:

- All students 13%
- Students with disabilities - 23.3%
- Students with high needs - 18.5
- Economically disadvantaged - 19.8%
- English Language Learners - 13.8
- Race & Ethnicity - Multi race 14.3%, Black 9.1% Hispanic/Latinx, white students 12.7%
- Gender - Males were absent 12.5% compared to females 13.4%

**Summary:** There are lower school attendance rates for students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, high needs, and Hispanic/Latinx. These students also have the highest chronic absenteeism rates. According to research, missing 10% of school days is associated with lower academic performance (Gottfried, 2019), the likelihood of dropping out (U.S. Department of Education, 2016; Ready, 2010), increased risk of entering the criminal justice system, and lower persistence in college (Coelho et al., 2015; Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

### Student Discipline Data

Another identified source of data that the collaborative team analyzed was disciplinary data, visualized in [Data Dashboard 3](#). APS student discipline data indicates that 69 out of 2,681 students were disciplined in 2019-2020, constituting 2.57% of the student body. When disaggregated, Black/African American students received the most disciplinary action (11.86%), followed by students with disabilities (7.77%), Hispanic/Latinx students (4.3%), and economically disadvantaged students (4.3%). Other subgroups with higher percentage rates of disciplinary action when compared with the student body average include students with high needs (4.22%), and males (3.89%).

**Summary:** Students from the above sub-groups show evidence for disproportional discipline when compared to their peer group. This data pattern is similar to student attendance data. It helps shed light on the root causes for the disproportionality since it adds to the understanding of the experiences and engagement of various students in The Auburn Public School system.

### VOCAL Survey Data

The last source of data used to expand the committee's perspective of the reasons for the inequities was the 2021 Views of Climate and Learning Survey (VOCAL). This survey is an annual state-wide survey administered to all schools in Massachusetts by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. It solicits responses from students and provides schools with valuable feedback that is helpful to improve public education for all students. This survey measures three dimensions of school culture and climate: engagement, safety, and environment. These dimensions are further divided into nine topics: cultural competence, relationships, participation, emotional safety, physical safety, bullying, instructional environment, mental health environment, and discipline environment. The Equity Audit Committee's analysis of the VOCAL survey data revealed the following trends: ([See Data Dashboard 3](#))

- Overall school experience of students is positive. Nevertheless, as students advance through the grade levels, they feel less safe or supported. This is particularly true for economically disadvantaged students.
- As students advance through the grade levels, they do not see themselves reflected in the curricular materials. This is particularly true for males, Hispanic/Latinx students, students with an economic disadvantage, and students with disabilities.
- Older students are less engaged and enthusiastic about school and see it as less relevant.
- Boys experience more bullying than girls and report being less happy in school.

It is noteworthy that no data were reported for African American students and lacking for English Language Learners and Asian students in higher grades. This is because the number of students in these subgroups is too small to be a reporting category. This lack of data availability raises questions of equity for these groups as there is no data to measure their perceptions and include their voices.

**Summary:** Overall perceptions of school engagement, safety, and environment indicate that students have positive experiences in lower grades, but as they advance to higher grades, they feel less engaged and safe. They also have less favorable views of the instructional and mental health environment. Particular attention should be devoted to improvement efforts to the experiences of economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, males, and Hispanic/Latinx students.

## Appendix F - Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
<b>A 504 Plan</b>	A 504 Plan is a plan developed to ensure that a child who has a disability identified under the law receives accommodations that will ensure their academic success and access to the learning environment.
<b>Access/WIDA Assessment</b>	A test that is given to multilingual students to measure their language proficiency in English.
<b>Advanced Placement (AP)</b>	High school classes that offer college-level learning and examinations.
<b>AIMS Web</b>	A test that measures K-12 reading, math, spelling, and writing skills. Performance levels scale: • Well-Below Average: 1st–10th percentiles • Below Average: 11th–25th percentiles • Average: 26th–74th percentiles • Above Average: 75th–89th percentiles • Well-Above Average: 90th–99th percentiles.
<b>Asset-Based</b>	An approach that focuses on strengths. It views diversity in thought, culture, and traits as positive assets. Teachers and students alike are valued for what they bring to the classroom rather than being characterized by what they may need to work on or lack.
<b>Assumption</b>	When we jump to conclusions based on a piece of information that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof.
<b>Bias</b>	Prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair.
<b>BIPOC</b>	The acronym stands for "black, Indigenous and people of color"
<b>Circles/Realm of Influence and Concern</b>	<p>The "Circle of Concern" includes the wide range of concerns you have.</p> <p>Your "Circle of Influence" are the things that concern you that you can do something about.</p> <p>This protocol refers to a narrowing of the events we worry about</p>

so we can do something about – either directly or indirectly.

**Common Core State teaching Standards (CCSS)**

The Common Core State Standards detail what K–12 students throughout the United States should know in English Language Arts and mathematics at the conclusion of each school level.

**Continuous Improvement Science**

A body of knowledge that describes how to improve safely and consistently. Improvement methodology has a cyclical pattern consisting of four stages: Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA).

**Core Leadership Practices (CLP)**

Six research-based leadership skills that are associated with improved student learning and increased equity in schools. Reorganizing Systems to accelerate equity in your learning community:

1. Setting Direction/Vision (SD) for your learning community
2. Monitoring Progress (MP) and sustaining the momentum of your efforts
3. Building Capacity to Teach (BCT) so all students have their needs met
4. Building Capacity to Collaborate (BCC) as a learning community
5. Building Capacity to Lead (BCL) for everyone in your school community
6. Reorganizing Systems (RS) to accelerate equity in your learning community

**Culturally Conscious/ Proficient Practices**

Culturally Conscious - An awareness and deeper understanding of different cultures, with the ability to accept differences without judgments about right and wrong.

**Curriculum/ Curricula**

Course/s of study.

**Data Dig**

The process of analyzing data.

**Deficit Thinking**

'Deficit thinking' refers to the notion that students (particularly those of low income, racial/ethnic minority background) fail in school because such students and their families have internal defects (deficits) that thwart the learning process (for example, limited educability, unmotivated; inadequate family support).

**Differentiation**

Tailoring instruction to meet individual needs. Whether teachers differentiate content, process, products, or the learning environment, the use of ongoing assessment and flexible grouping makes this a successful approach to instruction.

**Disaggregated**

Data organized by demographic and school-labeled groups, such



<b>Data</b>	as students with special education, students without special education services, racial/ethnic groups, MLL, non-MLL students, gender, socioeconomic status, students with disabilities, and/or other categories that are meaningful to the school community.
<b>Disproportionality</b>	When the outcome of one group is much higher or lower than the other.
<b>Economically Disadvantaged</b>	Students from historically under-resourced neighborhoods.
<b>Educational Inequity</b>	When a group’s demographic characteristics (e.g. race, gender, income level, language) determine their educational experiences and outcomes because of the unfair way they are treated by educators and the educational system. Equity (each learner getting what they need) is not the same as equality (each learner getting the same thing).
<b>ELA</b>	The subject of English Language Arts, which includes reading, writing, and speaking skills.
<b>Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL)</b>	A national program that determines student eligibility to receive a free or reduced lunch cost based on family income.
<b>Growth Mindset</b>	The belief that most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and resilience that is essential for great accomplishment.
<b>Historically Underrepresented Groups</b>	Groups that have historically been denied opportunities to be involved in economic, political, cultural, and social activities. Groups can be characterized by race, culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, or ability.
<b>Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)</b>	A plan or program developed to ensure that a child who has a learning difference receives specialized instruction and related services to ensure their academic success and access to the learning environment.
<b>Instructional Core (IC)</b>	The relationship between three elements: the teacher and student in the presence of content. It is the relationship, and not the qualities of any one element that determine the nature of the instructional practice.

At the heart of this trinity is the Instructional Task: what students are being asked to do in the classroom.

**iReady**

A standardized test that measures reading and math skills. The scores are scaled and range from 0 to 800. The default passing threshold for i-Ready lessons is 67 percent.

**Ladder of Inference**

A framework that describes how our values, assumptions, and beliefs can be reflected in the data we choose to focus on. However, using the ladder of inference can help us to question our assumptions about the data we focus on and avoid taking action based on those assumptions.

**Learning Agreements**

A set of guidelines that enables everyone in the group to assume responsibility for their learning, ensures that the group interaction is focused, and fair.

**Learning Community Survey (LCS)**

The **L**earning **C**ommunity **S**urvey is a short survey given to all educators of a school community (e.g. instructional assistants, teachers, support staff, administrators). The survey measures the six core practices that educators use when leading and facilitating work with colleagues.

**Multilingual Learner (MLL)**

Students who speak more than one language, and their primary language is other than English.

**Problem Statement**

An expression of a current issue or problem that requires timely action to improve the situation

**Proficiency**

Degree of expected expertise and competence in a particular subject area.

**Proficiency Index**

Degree of expertise and competence in a particular subject area. It is often expressed as a percentage.

**PSAT**

The **P**reliminary **S**cholastic **A**ptitude **T**est (PSAT) is a standardized test given to high school students to help them prepare for the SAT. Each section of the PSAT has a range score of 160–760 points, adding up to a maximum score of 1520.

**Qualitative Data**

Qualitative - Data that describes qualities or characteristics. It is collected using questionnaires, interviews, or observations, and frequently appears in narrative form.

<b>Quantitative Data</b>	Quantitative - Type of data whose value is measured in the form of numbers or counts.
<b>RICAS</b>	The <b>R</b> hode- <b>I</b> sland <b>C</b> omprehensive <b>A</b> ssessment <b>S</b> ystem (RICAS)- The RICAS tests in math and English Language Arts are aligned to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and measures students' understanding of the concepts, skills, and content in the Common Core State Standards for ELA and Mathematics in grades 3-8.
<b>RIDE Report Card</b>	An Interactive online information system that reports state and schools' data.
<b>Root Cause Analysis</b>	The process of discovering the reasons for a specific problem in order to identify appropriate solutions.
<b>SAT</b>	<b>S</b> cholastic <b>A</b> ptitude <b>T</b> est (SAT). The SAT measures a student's college-readiness skills in reading, writing, and math. Each section of the SAT has a range score of 200–800, adding up to a maximum score of 1600.
<b>Special Education (SPED)</b>	The practice of educating students in a way that provides accommodations that address their individual differences, and special needs.
<b>Stakeholders</b>	In education, anyone who is invested in the welfare and success of a school and its students. This can include anyone in the community such as administrators, educators, staff members, students, parents, families, community members, local business leaders, and local elected officials.
<b>STAR</b>	A standardized test that measures reading and math skills. STAR Reading and STAR Math scaled scores range from 0–1400.  STAR Early Literacy scaled scores range from 300–900. For the Spanish versions: STAR Reading Spanish and Star Math Spanish scaled scores range from 600–1400 STAR Early Literacy Spanish scaled scores range from 200–1100.
<b>Student Outcome Data</b>	Data that shows student academic learning proficiencies and or wellbeing.
<b>SurveyWorks</b>	An annual survey that the Rhode Island Department of

Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) sends to students, parents, teachers/staff, and administrators to measure school climate and culture. This survey is part of a coordinated effort to improve schools.

**Zones of Comfort,  
Risk, Danger**

A framework to help us check in with ourselves on how we experience things and also gives us shared language on how we each experience things differently.

- Comfort Zone: easy, happy, comfortable, needs harder work.
  - Risk Zone: challenging, growing, excited, trying your best... this is the optimal place of learning.
  - Danger Zone: nervous, too hard, embarrassed, shut down.
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