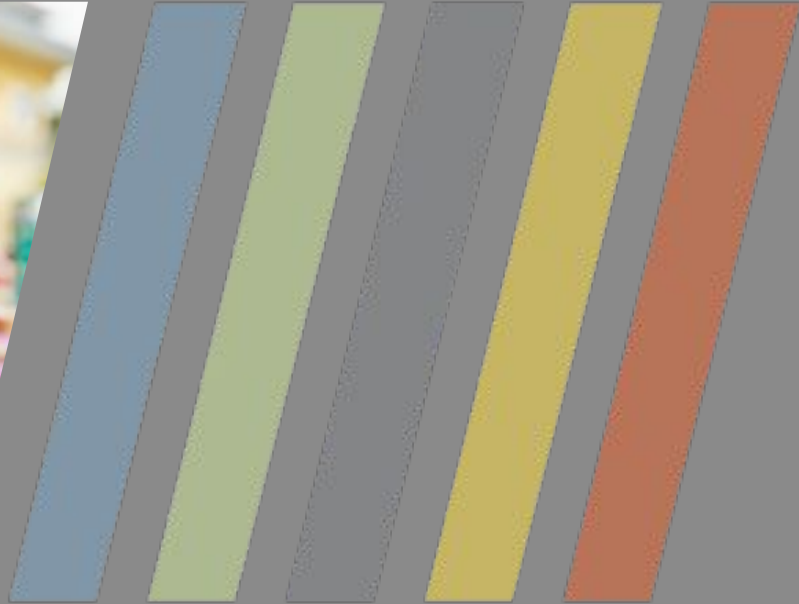


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COMPREHENSIVE EQUITY AUDIT
LA HONDA-PESCADERO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



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PART I

CONTEXT

In this section, please find:

- An overview of the audit process including background and methodology
- Important district context and background

INTRODUCTION

There is currently an active discussion in schools and districts regarding how to ensure that each and every student has equitable access to a high-quality education. Schools and school districts are uniquely situated to impact both educator and student views and actions related to equity. However, without thoughtful planning, clear objectives, and an honest assessment of the current situation, districts will be less likely to achieve educational equity for each and every student.

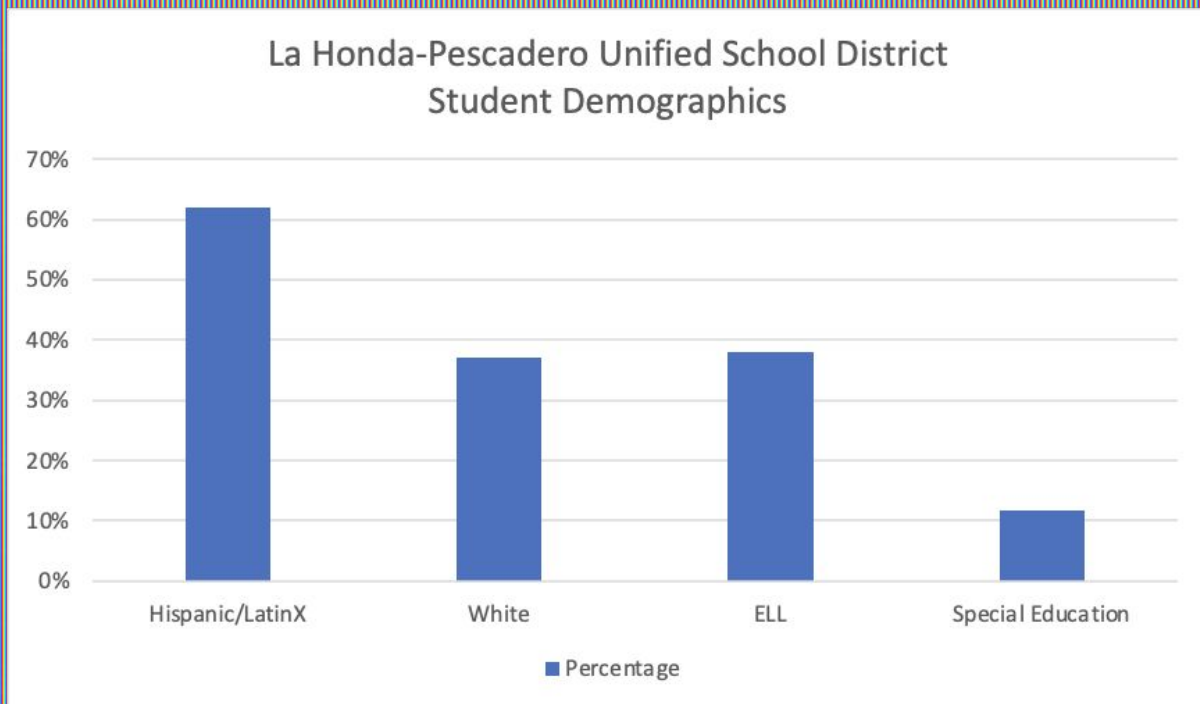
The purpose of this report is to share the results of a comprehensive equity audit that Insight Education Group's audit team conducted in the La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District (LHPUSD). The team met with stakeholders from the district and larger community in order to gain as many perspectives as possible and to confirm trends identified through examination of multiple data sets. The audit included an analysis of district student achievement data, graduation and discipline data, district staffing, professional development, and stakeholder perceptual data.

Data shows that students in the United States face significant disparities in educational opportunity and outcomes. This is especially true for students of color and students from low-income communities. (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2016; Reardon, 2014). When considering disparities in educational opportunity and outcomes, it is important to also consider access, a third variable that we consider to be the critical bridge between the first two. It is our belief that the pressing challenge facing schools and districts is to provide all students with both equitable opportunity and access to high-quality educational experiences in order for them to achieve successful life outcomes.

The equity audit team has developed this report in alignment with our Racial Equity Framework. It includes recommendations that are aligned to each domain in the framework for the superintendent and her team's consideration. This report addresses the current district landscape pertaining to equity and presents an important opportunity for district leadership to develop a plan to implement the recommendations in an aligned, coherent and intentional manner. It is recommended that the district take time to study and make sense of the findings and recommendations to develop a plan to stage the necessary work efficiently and effectively in order to improve outcomes for each and every student in LHPUSD.

The La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District serves approximately 305 students in San Mateo County, California. LHPUSD operates three school campuses and has programs serving preschool-age students through adults. The campuses include La Honda Elementary School, Pescadero Elementary School, and Pescadero Middle/High School. As a local school system, LHPUSD serves a demographically diverse student population in race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, English Language Learner status, and students being served through special education programming. The student population at LHPUSD can be broken down into the following by race and ethnicity: Hispanic/Latinx (62%) and White (37%), with American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander (OPI) less than 1%. At the time of the Equity Audit, 38% of the students were classified as English Language Learners and 11.7% of the students received special education services. An illustration of student demographics by race is provided in Figure 1 titled, "La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District Student Demographics."

Figure 1
La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District Student Demographics



DATA COLLECTION

Insight Education Group conducted an Equity Audit in LHPUSD between May 2021 and January 2022. The team met virtually with stakeholders from the district and larger community to gain as many perspectives as possible to determine district trends using an equity-focused lens by collecting multiple datasets.

In this section of the report, we will review the foremost components of our methods surrounding the Comprehensive Equity Audit for LHPUSD. To begin we will provide a detailed overview of the data collection process. We will share data analysis techniques employed to inform our understanding of trends occurring in LHPUSD, both in strengths and areas for future improvement.

The Insight audit team worked closely with the district to amass a robust set of district data and documents for review in the initial phase of the Equity Audit as well as to engage stakeholder groups throughout the data collection process during the first semester of the 2021-2022 school year.

The data collection process included the following activities to assess district beliefs, policies, and practices in relation to equity:

- Review of graduation and discipline data
- Evaluation of student achievement data
- Review of district documents
- Assessment of district finances
- Stakeholder surveys
- Focus groups

DISTRICT DATA

Graduation rates supported audit team members' appraisal of how frequently, consistently, and to what percent LHPUSD students graduate. Audit team members also reviewed previous academic achievement data in English and mathematics found on the California State Department of Education website for 3rd, 8th, and 11th grade students to survey the academic performance of LHPUSD students by various demographic subgroups. These two critical developmental points allowed team members to detect relatively persistent gaps in academic performance between peers in terms of race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English Language Learner status, and special education classification.

Team members reviewed discipline data to understand discipline related trends in terms of frequency, school site, type of infraction, and punitive responses to student infractions. Moreover, Insight evaluated discipline data by infractions attributed to groups of students demographically.

In addition to preliminary quantitative datasets provided by LHPUSD, the audit team conducted an evaluative review of district documents to establish additional trends involving equitable beliefs, practices, and policies maintained by the district. The audit team evaluated district artifacts within the scope of five domains outlined by the Insight Equity Framework. The five domains are outlined as follows and will be described in further detail with relevant research in latter sections of this report: 1) Structures, Systems, and Resources; 2) Culture and Community; 3) Equity in the Educator Workforce; 4) Professional Learning and Personal Growth; and 5) Curriculum, Instruction, and Learning.

The Insight audit team reviewed district organizational charts and strategic planning documents to evaluate the structures and systems in place at the district level utilized to provide an equitable education for all of La Honda-Pescadero's students.

Insight audit team members reviewed the LHPUSD website, social media sites, and outgoing communication to the community, such as published Board meeting notes, to evaluate trends aimed towards building a culture and community grounded in equity within the district. Additionally, team members reviewed district discipline policies and student codes of conduct for punitive actions and escalation practices as well as any biased or discriminatory language.

To assess LHPUSD's educator workforce with a focus on racial equity in the recruitment, retention, placement, and promotion of district educators, Insight audit team members supplemented LHPUSD school leader and LHPUSD staff demographic data with data made available via survey descriptive statistics. Furthermore, audit team members reviewed professional learning opportunities extended to LHPUSD educators to foster a sense of professional growth and learning as well as district recruitment cycles.

Lastly, the district provided assessment calendars, access to state-wide achievement archives, as well as accelerated course information to evaluate equitable policies for student education relative to equitable access to programs and opportunities.

STAKEHOLDER SURVEYS DRAFT

In partnership with Insight’s audit team, LHPUSD invited a diverse stakeholder group to complete a survey evaluation of equity within the district as well as the assessment of equitable practices and policies exhibited throughout the district. Survey questionnaires ranged in length from 25 questions to 40 questions depending on which stakeholder group the participant maintained membership. The six stakeholder groups included: central office staff, school leaders, school district staff, non-school based district staff, family and caregivers, and students. In the first section of each survey, respondents provided descriptive information including personal demographics: race, age, gender, length of professional career, and school affiliation.

After completing this demographic section, participants were asked to respond to equity specific questions related to the district and district schools. In this portion of the survey respondents recorded their answers on a 4-point Likert scale. Participants responded to a statement prompt and recorded their level of agreement with the statement. An example student participant would respond to the statement, “My school prioritizes equity.” In response, the student participant indicated their agreement using the following: “1” strongly disagree, “2” disagree, “3” agree, and “4” strongly agree.

The third section of the stakeholder survey was qualitative in nature. Participants were asked three to five questions, depending on their respective stakeholder group, centered on equity in the district.

Responses provided by participants were securely acquired, stored, and managed by the Insight audit team. Respondents participated on a voluntary basis and were assured that their confidentiality throughout the data collection and reporting process would be upheld.

In a second round of surveys with families and caregivers conducted in March 2022, La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District employed a targeted recruitment strategy to receive additional feedback that was considered more representative of their demographic makeup. As such, LHPUSD representatives enlisted the help of District Community Liaisons to reach out to families and caregivers with limited access to technology in remote locations to complete a paper version of the Equity Audit survey in-person or at parent conferences. The results from the second round of surveys can be found in Appendix A.

FOCUS GROUPS

LHPUSD recruited stakeholders from multiple groups to engage in focus group sessions with Insight audit team members. During the recruitment process, LHPUSD invited potential group members from the following stakeholder groups: executive leadership team, La Honda Elementary School staff, Pescadero Elementary School staff, Pescadero Middle/High School staff, high school students, and families/caregivers. Sixty-four individuals from those stakeholder groups were invited to participate. Due to some scheduling and technology issues, some participants were interviewed individually.

Focus groups were facilitated by Insight team members held virtually via Zoom tele-conferencing platform with attendees. Focus groups were approximately 60 minutes in length. Individual interviews were also conducted using the same questions. Those interviews were approximately 30 minutes in length.

During the focus groups, participants were provided the opportunity to share their lived experiences in the district. In particular, focus group participants conveyed the district's definition of equity as well as their understanding of equity as communicated by the school district in beliefs, policies, and practices. All focus groups maintained a standard operating procedure where group members were led in a discussion guided by the same set of questions across all groups facilitated by audit team members.

For ethical and integrity reasons, participants were notified their participation in the focus group was voluntary and should they choose to no longer participate, they were at liberty to terminate their involvement. Participants were assured their identifying information and views expressed during the focus group would remain confidential. As such, audit team members would anonymize all details during the reporting process.

DATA ANALYSIS

Insight audit team members conducted data analysis in three stages. In one stage, audit team members employed descriptive statistical analysis to data sets provided by the district where analysts documented trends in school profiles, student demographics, discipline rates, and academic indicators. Insight analysts also coded the qualitative data sets derived from district artifacts during this stage of analysis.

During a second stage, Insight analysts conducted survey response analysis across all stakeholder surveys in relation to the five domains of the Equity Framework first with descriptive statistics followed by inferential statistics. All participant responses were coded and cleaned prior to analysis whereby all responses were de-identified using numeric demographic codes, response codes, and responses containing missing data not at random were removed prior to analysis. In Table 1, responses by stakeholder group are provided as well as the percentage of responses with missing data and the total participant number denoted by *n*. As part of this stage of analysis, Insight analysts utilized the statistical software package SPSS to evaluate differences in mean scores of respondents by subgroups.

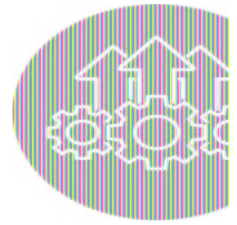
Lastly, analysts began qualitative data analysis for focus groups as well as researcher field notes and memos (Emerson et al., 2011). Analysts employed an iterative coding cycle to documents and texts where they executed coding cycles until saturation was reached (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Saunders et al., 2018). Audit team members collaborated during the data analysis phase of the equity audit to ensure inter-rater reliability was achieved among team members for each of the noted district trends, findings, and recommendations. Of note, audit team members triangulated data sources to support all discussed trends, findings, and recommendations from the equity audit of LHPUSD.

PART II

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, please find:

- Findings and recommendations for the district grounded in the five domains of the Insight Racial Equity Framework.



DOMAIN 1

STRUCTURES, SYSTEMS, AND RESOURCES

Operations, finance, and organizational structure can feel very technical in a school district. But what sits under those technical components is a belief system and understanding of the impacts of bias on adults and students. A growing body of scholarship emphasizes the critical role of district leadership in ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities for students. Districts must intentionally design organizational structures and routines that support the success of historically underserved students, otherwise schools may “function as sites of oppression” rather than places of opportunity (Irby et al., 2019).

A district’s commitment to equity relies on fundamental systemic change throughout the organization, as well as the anti-racist beliefs and actions of individual educators and leaders (Welton et al., 2018). Furthermore, districts must explicitly centralize equity in their school improvement plans to ensure that resources are equitably distributed to students in both policy and practice (Starr, 2018; Gorski, 2019).

At the foundation, strategic planning (a district process of establishing goals and the strategies that will be employed to achieve those goals) should explicitly name race and equity as a priority in the organization. Goals must be meaningful and represent access and opportunity, not just absolute achievement, in order to ensure equitable support of all students. In order to achieve this, district goals, as well as their measurable targets, must be developed collaboratively with leaders and stakeholders.

Upon the foundation of strategic planning sit the technical decisions and systems that comprise budgeting; the allocation of resources; access to clean, healthy and updated facilities, access to technology hardware, software and internet; quality food and nutrition programs; and safe and effective transportation. Therefore, this domain addresses both the degree to which the school board and senior leadership team have and continue to develop racial competence and use that to plan strategically, make technical decisions and create structures and systems that promote equity.

There is a clear and direct link between student achievement and access to material and nonmaterial resources such as effective teachers, high-quality instructional materials, academic rigor, and learning-ready facilities (Travers, 2018). The allocation of these resources at the macro level can alleviate or exacerbate inequities across an organization. Research suggests that districts and school boards often do not direct resources to students with equity in mind, resulting in intra-district disparities in teacher assignment, curriculum, and building quality (Darden & Cavendish, 2011). Cheatham, Baker-Jones, and Jordan-Thomas (2020) suggest that districts can demonstrate their commitment to racial equity by “intentionally allocating their resources more flexibly based on the changing needs of individual students” through strategies such as reconfigured funding formulas and differentiated instructional designs.

An important aspect of the structures, systems, and resources that allow a district to ensure equitable practices and improved outcomes for each student is a clear message that equity is important to all members of the district. Frequently, this is represented through an equity plan, including the district's vision for equity, that all stakeholders are aware of and understand. The district showed their commitment to this work by establishing the Climate Assembly in 2017.

Mission of the Climate Assembly

"The Climate Assembly will serve as an open space for conversation related to how we can develop and nurture inclusive, equitable school spaces where students, parents and teachers feel a strong sense of belongingness."

This group worked together to establish a clear equity definition for the district, began to look at updating policies, offered professional development opportunities to staff, and conducted a student survey. Although this team lost some of its members and is not currently meeting anymore, it did kick off important equity work for the district.

Although the Climate Assembly established a clear equity definition for the district, participants in the focus groups were not all clear about the district definition. Here are some of the focus group responses to the question, "What is the district's definition of equity?":

LHPUSD Staff Member: I couldn't tell you word for word, but equity is equality of opportunity and helping people take advantage of the opportunities.

LHPUSD Staff Member: Kids should be given what they need.

LHPUSD Staff Member: I don't know. Is there a statement?

LHPUSD Staff Member: Maybe the definition is in a handbook.... I didn't see it. I don't know.

LHPUSD Staff Member: Equity is when each student receives what they need and there's a systematic approach to eliminate gaps for race, gender, SES, age, ability, and sexual orientation.

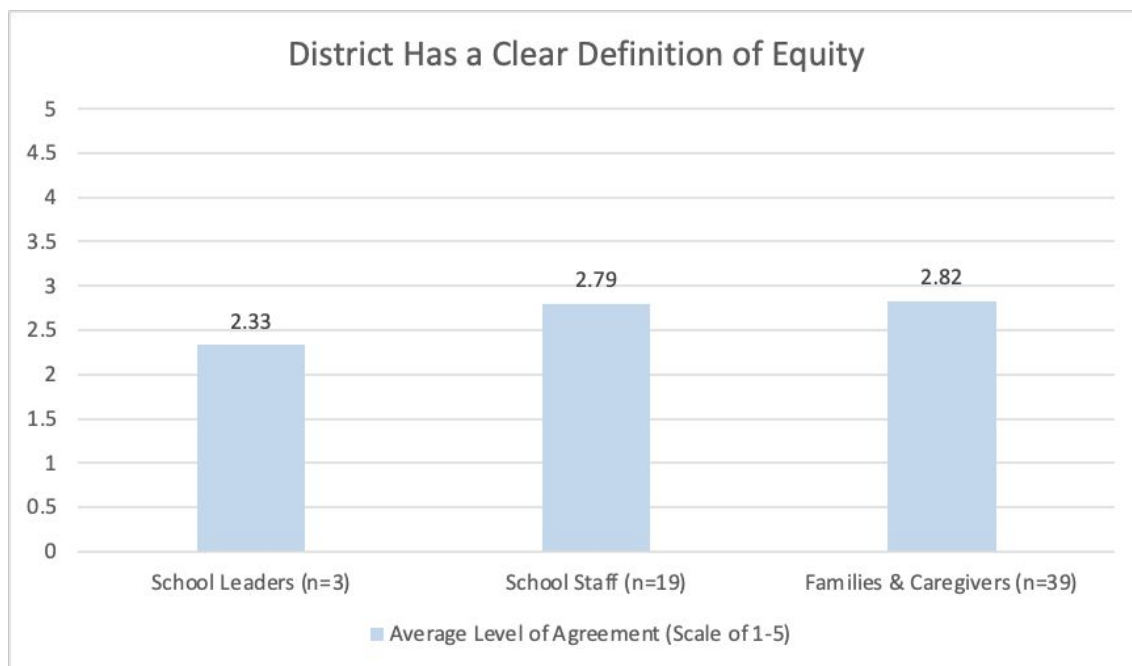
LHPUSD Staff Member: Equity work is something we just started. I'd have to go to my email to find the definition.

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LHPUSD Staff Member: I think that in our district, we all think we know what we mean by equity, but we don't have a shared definition. Everyone thinks equity is just about supporting our Latino families, but what about other groups? It shouldn't just be about students of color. What about students with mental health needs? The term equity is misused by people in the district.

Stakeholder survey results on agreement with the statement, "The district has a clear definition of equity," is provided in Figure 2 titled, "District Has a Clear Definition of Equity."

Figure 2.



It is also important that districts have a clear plan for addressing gaps in academic achievement between subgroups of students. La Honda Pescadero's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) does demonstrate a need for increased academic achievement and outlines a plan to address pervasive gaps that are present in English language arts and mathematics content based on student subgroups found in the district. The district also has a multi-tier system of support available and appears to be used consistently throughout the district.

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The district also does an excellent job of leveraging community resources to reach and overcome the unique challenges found in their geographically rural context.

The La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District appears to be in a significant amount of transition as they proactively seek to reform policies about equity, diversity, inclusion, and race. As the work continues, there is a need for open, transparent discussions regarding the rationale for changes and helping stakeholders understand how the equity work impacts resource distribution among district schools. There were some comments shared in focus groups that some staff members do not feel their school has access to the same resources that other schools receive, which is contributing to them feeling an “us vs. them” mentality in the district. They felt it was inequitable not to have access to the same resources for their students.

LHPUSD Staff Member: Some schools in the district don't feel they have the same support.... How come that site has XYZ and we don't?

More transparent conversations about how resources are allocated and what budget decisions are made at the building level may help alleviate some of those concerns. It is also important that stakeholders understand that schools might receive slightly different resources based on student need. Continued work around helping stakeholders understand “equity vs. equality” would be beneficial.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1

Rebuild the Climate Assembly team with a cross-section of staff members across the district and empower them to take an active role in leading the district's improvement in equitable opportunities, access, and outcomes for all students.

- Identify key district stakeholders from the collective La Honda-Pescadero School District community to serve as members on the Climate Assembly team. Include parents, students, instructional and non-instructional staff, as well as community partners.
- Identify clear roles and responsibilities for the Climate Assembly team.
- Identify and implement structures and processes, including consistent meeting times for the Climate Assembly team that will elevate the team's autonomy to serve in an advisory role in the district rather than just a problem-solving entity.
- Empower the Climate Assembly team to work collaboratively with district leaders to lead development of a district equity plan aligned to the strategic plan and that builds on the previous district vision and definition of equity. As part of the work, this committee should conduct an ongoing review of pertinent district data, set goals for progress in identified areas, identify metrics to measure progress toward goals, and identify professional learning opportunities for all stakeholders.
- Provide autonomy to the Climate Assembly team to implement key elements of the district equity plan, including instituting necessary changes to ensure equitable opportunities, access, and outcomes for all students.
- Develop a communications plan to ensure that all district stakeholders are aware of the work being done by the Climate Assembly team and provide opportunities for stakeholders to give input.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.2

Develop and adopt a board equity policy to establish clear guidelines for operationalizing equity and removing systems that prevent equitable outcomes for all students.

- Conduct a systematic review of equity policies from other school districts.
- Incorporate the definition and vision for equity established by the Climate Assembly team, while also outlining the board's commitments to the work.
- Provide guidance around expectations for the work of the Climate Assembly and development of the district equity plan, including details about how it will be developed, shared with the community, and reviewed regularly.



CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

Racial competence is central to a culture in which students, educators, and families of color feel safe, welcome, and valued as integral members of their school and district community. Establishing a culture of racial competence requires creating an anti-racist climate in every building, utilizing social and emotional supports for active engagement with racial issues, and leveraging family and community partnerships to develop social trust. With racial competence as the foundation of a district's culture, students, educators, and families can understand and challenge the racial biases that affect every aspect of teaching and learning, engage in productive conversations about race and equity, and reach their full potential in a safe and supportive school environment.

The distinction between school climate and school culture is nuanced but can be explained as follows: climate refers to a school's attitude, while culture refers to its personality. A school or district's culture is shaped over time through changes to its climate (Gruenert, 2008). Therefore, creating an equitable, anti-racist climate in every school is necessary for establishing a deeply ingrained culture of racial competence throughout a district.

An equitable school climate gives all students, staff, and families—regardless of racial or socioeconomic background—access to “effectively supported high expectations for teaching, learning, and achievement; emotionally and physically safe, healthy learning environments for all; caring, courageous, self-reflective relationships among and between peers and adults; and multiple, culturally responsive pathways to participation” (Ross, Brown, & Biagas, 2020).

A district's commitment to racial competence requires teachers and leaders to have an asset-based approach to educating and serving students and families of color. This means that diversity is viewed as a strength and individuals are valued for their unique contributions to the school and district community.

A racially competent school climate mitigates the potentially harmful effects of policies and practices on staff and students of color. Dress, hair, and conduct policies often include coded or racialized language about appearances and attitudes, with negative consequences for students of color, including harsher punishments and increased time away from the classroom (Fregni & Zingg, 2020). Black children, especially males, are disciplined at higher rates than their white peers as early as preschool and throughout grades K-12, with long-term implications for their likelihood of arrest and incarceration as adults (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2016; Bacher-Hicks, Billings, & Deming, 2020).

Restorative discipline is a promising alternative to traditional disciplinary methods that “fosters belonging over exclusion” and helps improve school climate and culture (Institute for Restorative Justice and Restorative Dialogue, n.d.). Social and emotional learning (SEL) can also be used as a driver for racial equity in education. According to the National Equity Project, SEL “offers the possibility of acknowledging, addressing, and healing from the ways we have all been impacted by racism and systemic oppression” (National Equity Project, n.d.). SEL in schools should be approached with the explicit purpose of creating a culture of racial competence through improving the self-awareness and social and emotional intelligence of all students and educators with respect to race and equity.

Establishing an equitable school climate also requires including the voices of diverse students, staff, families, and community members in decisions related to school policy and facilitating “courageous conversations” about equity on an ongoing basis (Ross, Brown, & Biagas, 2020). Research has shown that family and community engagement benefits not only individual student achievement, but also overall school improvement. Yet many districts do not effectively involve families and communities of color in their school improvement efforts, often due to misguided deficit thinking about non-white cultures and attitudes about education (McAlister, 2013). School and district leaders must develop social trust and positive relationships with families and community organizations to strengthen the culture of racial competence and improve.

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LA HONDA PESCADERO SCHOOL DISTRICT FINDINGS

The La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District has many assets in place when it comes to building a socially welcoming environment for all stakeholders, particularly families and caregivers. As noted in surveys where 91 students responded, they indicated that their caregivers felt comfortable speaking to teachers and administrators with an average level of agreement of 3.08. This was further supported by family and caregiver survey responses where parents responded to the prompt, “I feel comfortable talking to teachers and administrators of my students’ school” with an average level of agreement of 3.28. This high level of agreement by parents and supported by students’ responses indicates that families do maintain positive feelings and perceptions towards speaking with teachers and staff members from the district.

The students who participated in the focus group also shared very positive views about the school. Words that were used to describe their experience included:

- Close-knit
- Small community
- Lots of trust
- People getting along with no hatred or rivalry between groups

In addition, educators of La Honda-Pescadero Unified Schools indicated high levels of agreement with most well-being indicators of this survey particularly belonging at 3.37 and being happy and fulfilled in their jobs at 3.26.

Finally, district and school leaders, along with the board of education, are working to create an anti-racist, culturally responsive school, and classroom environment, as evidenced by:

- Preparation of staff and school community through culturally responsive professional learning.
- Multiple initiatives at the district and school level including discipline reform
- Restorative justice practices
- Addition of social justice library
- Embarking on equity audit as well as curriculum audit for RIDE principles

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Overall, there was a high level of agreement from parents/caregivers that they feel comfortable talking with teachers and administrators. However, there is a statistically significant difference to levels of agreement by respondents based on the school site their student attends. Families attending La Honda Elementary reported a 3.57 level of agreement to the prompt compared to families from Pescadero Elementary who reported a level of agreement 2.80. It should also be noted there was not an equal representation of families/caregivers who filled out the survey from each school. Of the 39 family and caregiver respondents, 54% of these respondents were from La Honda Elementary. Although we set aside times for parent focus groups, we did not have any parents participate. The district has taken steps to increase parent engagement and outreach by offering community meetings, a parent education series, by providing translators, hiring a Spanish-speaking parent outreach team, and partnering with Puente, but several employees and parents/caregivers expressed that more should be done to engage Spanish-speaking families and/or families with technology barriers who may not be able to engage through traditional means.

LHPUSD Board member: Right now we have inequity in language. We don't have strong access to Spanish and our liaison drives 1.5 hours to go out to ranches to have conversations with families.

LHPUSD Staff member: Parent communication is lacking at my school. I call or text parents because I speak Spanish. It's hard for other teachers who don't speak Spanish, though.

LHPUSD Staff member: COVID has made parent communication harder. We have a technology gap right now. We want the parent input, but we're going to have to figure out how to do that with our current technology barriers.

LHPUSD Parent/Caregiver: I would like more information about the achievement of my children in school. I would like to hear about how they are doing more than a report given twice a year.

LHPUSD Parent/Caregiver: They need notify parents when something happened that is not right with their child and not just wait until conferences to talk about it.

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Families and caregivers also had mixed views on the prompt, “The school building(s) my students(s) attends is safe, healthy, and in good physical condition.” The total average level of agreement for respondents was 3.10, however, when looking more closely at how respondents answered based on school site a difference between schools emerged. La Honda Elementary families (n=21) believed their school is safe, healthy, and in good physical condition with an agreement level of 3.43 compared to families from Pescadero Elementary (n=10) whose average level of agreement was 2.60 and Pescadero Middle/High families (n=8) whose average level of agreement was 2.88.

In addition, there were mixed perceptions by stakeholders to the prompt, “School discipline policies and practices are enforced consistently with all students across the district.” Of note, no stakeholder group met an average level of agreement at 3.00.

- School Leaders: 2.67
- Staff: 2.79
- Families and Caregivers: 2.85
 - A difference by school site arose between families from La Honda Elementary and Pescadero Elementary. Average levels of agreement were 3.10 and 2.50 respectively.
- Students: 2.67

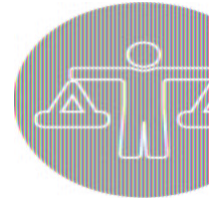
Finally, one additional thing to consider when it comes to educator engagement in the equity work is the idea that a few teachers/staff are leading the charge for equity, diversity, race, and inclusion. Although there is a small number of teachers pushing forward the equity agenda—supported by school leaders, district leaders, and board members- their small numbers are also opposed by a small number of teachers/staff on the opposite side of the issue. Because both extremes are “so loud” in their space or in defense of their ideas, this leaves the 80% in the middle who could be swayed in either direction, but it also more importantly impedes any real movement in the direction of initiatives for race, inclusion, diversity, and equity. Helping to find additional champions for the work will be essential for helping to take the equity work to the next level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1

Enlist the entire school community to work toward establishing a supportive community focused on equitable outcomes and inclusivity among all stakeholder groups

- Identify additional stakeholders who can champion the equity work. In addition to teachers, identify support staff, central office leaders, students, parents, and community members to join the movement. Invite them to be part of the Climate Assembly and to serve as ambassadors for their respective schools.
- Establish a culture of two-way communication by developing and communicating a transparent process by which all stakeholder voices can be heard and acknowledged.
- Develop stakeholder comfort by holding meetings with LHPUSD leaders, staff, caregivers, and students (particularly students of color, those from the LGBTQ+ community, those with disabilities, etc.) on specific issues relevant to them. It is critical to use a process of deep listening with students, parents, and staff who endeavor to be part of a more inclusive and transparent school improvement process.
- Set a clear expectation that the equity work is non-negotiable for everyone in the district. Provide training and support for all staff members to engage in the work and engage in honest conversations about reasons why people are hesitant to engage.



EQUITY IN THE EDUCATOR WORKFORCE

Every student deserves educators who will provide them with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in school today and in their futures. Some of the most compelling research in recent years indicates the significant positive impact that teachers of color have on all students—particularly students of color—in terms of student achievement and expectations for success.. A racially diverse educator workforce represents a district’s dedication to creating equitable access to excellent educational opportunities for all students, as well as its commitment to eliminating barriers to entry and providing equitable career advancement opportunities for educators of color.

Given the significant impact of effective educators on student outcomes, getting the right people in the right positions should be a top priority for school districts. When educator talent is managed well, a district can transform entrenched bureaucratic systems into more nimble processes that support the ultimate goal of ensuring all students have access to effective teachers in every classroom and effective leaders in every school.

Equitable beliefs, policies, and practices are necessary at every stage of an educator’s progression through a school district, from recruitment and hiring, to retention, to placement and promotion. People of color are both less likely to enter education at all and more likely to leave if they do enter. Therefore, a district must employ intentional strategies to attract racially diverse candidates into open positions, equitably place them in schools and classrooms, encourage them to remain in the district at proportional rates, and provide equitable opportunities for them to progress upwards in the organization.

These strategies could include involving diverse voices in the hiring and onboarding process; implementing induction programs and leadership academies specifically for educators of color; and ensuring that school and district leaders understand the positive and negative experiences of teachers and staff of color. Together, these strategies can mitigate racial inequities and ensure the equitable representation of educators of color at all levels of the organization.

Diversity benefits every workforce, and teaching is no exception. Research repeatedly indicates that teachers of color benefit students of color—particularly Black males—in a variety of ways, including increased test scores, lowered school suspensions, improved academic attitudes, increased student attendance, and reduction in the risk of dropping out (Gershenson et al., 2017; Lee, 2018; Miller, 2018; Partelow et al., 2017). Racial diversity among teachers also helps break down biases across races, thus having a positive effect on all students (Partelow et al., 2017).

Yet most districts do not effectively recruit and retain educators of color. In 40% of U.S. schools, there is not a single teacher of color on staff, and teachers of color only represent 18% of the overall teaching population (Partelow et al., 2017; Putman & Walsh, 2016). Many school districts are not yet implementing strategies to address this challenge: only one in three districts actively recruits from HBCUs or MSIs, only 40% of districts even consider a teacher's contribution to workforce diversity when hiring teachers, and 80% of districts "do not provide any specific supports geared toward inducting teachers of color" (Konoske-Graf, Partelow, & Benner, 2016).

Teachers of color tend to leave the profession or transfer schools at higher rates than white teachers (Barshay, 2018). In fact, national data indicates that there is a turnover disparity of approximately 7 percentage points between Black and white teachers (Barnum, 2018). According to a recent report by Dixon, Griffin, and Teoh (2018), teachers of color often leave their districts and/or education altogether due to antagonistic school culture, unfavorable work conditions, lack of agency and autonomy, feeling undervalued, and the high social and emotional cost of being a teacher of color.

In many districts, there is a trend to place higher percentages of teachers of color in hard-to-staff, low-income schools with less experienced leadership and with fewer professional development opportunities, leading to frustration and teachers exiting the district. Additionally, findings suggest that Black teachers tend to change schools or leave the profession if they aren't exposed to Black colleagues or a principal of color (Mahnken, 2018).

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LA HONDA-PESCADERO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT FINDINGS

The data regarding equity in the educator workforce in LHPUSD reflects many of the challenges outlined in the research above. Currently, 62% of the students in LHPUSD are Hispanic/Latinx, but the teaching staff is 77% white and only 19% Hispanic/Latinx. Evidence collected in the district does show that the district has increased the number of teachers and staff of color and bilingual staff over the last 5-10 years, but additional should be done in this area.

Research supports the importance of encouraging racially diverse candidates to remain in districts at proportional rates and provide them equitable opportunities to progress upwards in the organization. LHPUSD displayed limited opportunities for career advancement for educators and professionals of color given the demographic descriptive statistics derived from school leader survey respondents.

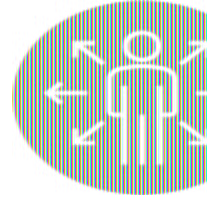
When it comes to district retention of staff there seems to be a higher level of agreement among staff members who indicated a 2.63 level agreement to the prompt the district effectively retains educators of color, but they felt the district effectively recruited educators of color at a lower rate of 2.37. These low levels of agreement indicate that staff members also believe the district has room to improve how they recruit educators of color to increase the diversification of staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1

Develop or refine talent management strategies for the district. Strategies should address recruitment, retention, and development of a talent pipeline to identify career options and advancement, particularly for staff of color.

- Build on existing recruitment practices by developing meaningful partnerships with local universities to actively recruit teachers of color and bilingual teachers into teaching and administrative roles, especially those who have evidenced commitment to working in hard-to-staff schools. Consider providing a stipend or signing bonus for bilingual teachers and staff members as a recruitment tool.
- Create conditions for district leaders to take time for deep reflection on their personal biases and their institution's history with race and how these factors may be impacting their decisions regarding recruitment, retention, and advancement of staff of color.
- Review hiring practices to ensure interview questions identify candidates' experience and skills in working with diverse populations.
- Develop a "career ladder pathway model" to ensure opportunities for career growth for staff of color, including advancement from classified to certified positions, participation in leadership academies, instructional and leadership coaching, and other leadership development opportunities.



RESEARCH

DOMAIN 4

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

For years, educational equity work has centered primarily (and necessarily) on our students- their race, culture, language, socioeconomic status, and identity. However, too often, the impact of educators' race, culture, and identity on students has been left unacknowledged. Placing equity at the center of educator practice means building structural, individual, and collective consciousness among all staff around issues related to racism, bias, and power, and the ways in which they interact to undermine equitable education for students. By engaging all educators in personalized, aligned professional learning that critically examines individual and systemic biases and provides effective tools and practices, schools can improve their effectiveness in working with diverse populations.

As districts work towards creating systems that dismantle systemic racism, it is imperative that their professional learning examine, question, and address personal and institutional issues of race, bias, and power head-on. People are not born racially competent—the skills and attitudes that comprise racial competence are learned through continuous questioning, reflection, and realignment. And yet, that work is often avoided out of fear that it will “expose our gaps in racial competence, and people might think we are racist. But without asking questions or taking risks, we can’t grow. If schools adopt a growth mindset about race, we can create a culture in which everyone is continuously developing their racial competence” (Michael, n.d.).

Additionally, research shows that professional learning is most effective when it is content-focused and job-embedded. When creating professional learning to develop the racial consciousness of educators across the district, it is important to not only meet staff where they are in their personal learning, but also to ensure that the offerings are tailored, as is appropriate, for their specific role. Engaging educators in collaborative professional learning and providing opportunities for them to have an active role in the development and implementation of professional learning is essential for sustaining an effective and responsive professional learning program.

In order to ensure that the district creates a professional learning culture grounded in the need for continuous development of racial competence, it is critical to seize every opportunity to engage educators in the understanding and ownership of the priorities around equity. In doing so, improvement feels cohesive and relevant, and becomes an invaluable part of what it means to be a racially competent educator.

Recent research repeatedly corroborates the link between teacher quality and outcomes for students (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018). According to the Center for Public Education, teacher quality has a greater impact on student achievement than other factors often associated with academic outcomes, including a student's race, socioeconomic status, and prior academic record (Schmidt et al., 2017).

In order to have a positive impact on outcomes for all students, teachers must be provided with the training, resources, and supports needed to deliver high-quality instruction to all students. Research also shows that teachers and their implicit biases can be a barrier to students of color reaching their full academic potential (Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2016). Teachers must be provided with opportunities to participate in equity-focused training so that they are willing and able to continually and critically reflect on the ways in which their personal and professional identities inform their ability to effectively meet the needs of a diverse student population (Larrivee, 2000).

While the impact of teachers cannot be overstated, students' experiences in schools are influenced by all adults employed by the district. Ongoing professional learning in equity and bias must be designed to allow all educators to reflect on their implicit biases and learn culturally responsive best practices.

Educators who engage in professional learning related to race and equity learn to formulate strategies for collectively addressing equity issues in their schools. Through this process educators gain a deeper understanding of equity and equity-related problems in their school context and are more empowered to contribute to the solutions.

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LA HONDA-PESCADERO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT FINDINGS

Professional learning opportunities on race and equity have been available since 2017 and have still been available during this school year. These learning opportunities are aligned to the goals listed in the district strategic plan and support raising achievement levels in English/language arts and math. However, some individuals have questioned whether the key learnings from the trainings are being implemented in the classrooms. There are also some questions or concerns about whether or not these professional learning opportunities should be required. They currently are optional, so only a subset of staff members choose to participate.

Both school-based staff and district staff indicated a high-level of agreement to feeling empowered to take responsibility for their own learning when it comes to topics of race and equity. The average agreement score for both groups was 3.26. This is also evidenced by conversations with staff members on their ability to make change when it comes to the addition of a social justice library, new content provided for personal professional learning as well as initiatives when it comes to race equity diversity and inclusion.

Instructional staff indicate high levels of agreement to having the training and tools necessary to impact student achievement. Based on survey results, instructional staff (n-17) indicated the following average agreement levels:

- Equipped to handle diverse learning needs of students (3.24)
- Using data to eliminate gaps between peers (3.24)
- I am trained in culturally responsive instruction and use the techniques in my classroom. (3.24)

Some staff members also expressed interest in receiving additional professional development opportunities to help them grow in their practice.

LHPUSD Staff member: I wish I had more professional development on reviewing materials through a lens of equity... and even a reminder to think about materials and content with a lens of equity. More support from the district would be helpful in this area.

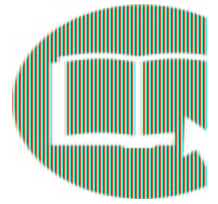
Several teachers expressed wanting extra professional development support in that area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1

Capitalize on staff members' interest in receiving robust, equity-focused professional learning by implementing a district-wide, consistently implemented course of professional learning with a focus on cultural competence for all levels of staff, including district office staff members.

- Elevate the leadership of the Climate Assembly team (see Domain 1 Recommendations) by providing opportunities for them to receive advanced, intensive cultural competence professional learning so that they can then develop and deliver professional learning sessions for all LHPUSD staff.
- Partner with an external organization with demonstrated experience in training school district staff members in developing culturally competent mindsets and practices.
- Ensure that all aspects of equity and cultural competence, including race, ethnicity, LGBTQ+, and other identities, are provided during professional learning.
- Develop a multi-year training plan that ensures consistency in professional learning schedules and content for all members. Topics should include understanding systemic racial, cultural, and linguistic inequities.
- Develop a specific short-term process, based on identified needs, to build staff members' cultural competence and ability to improve equitable conditions for all students in all settings.



CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND LEARNING

The quality of a student’s learning environment and their access to opportunity play a key role in their academic and developmental life outcomes. Research has shown that a racially conscious curriculum and teaching practices are beneficial to all educators and learners. An equitable learning environment provides the culture, climate, and content needed to enable all students to thrive in the global economy. The establishment of equitable teaching and learning practices and the equitable provision of teaching materials and resources ensure positive student outcomes by providing racially affirming and high-quality instruction, diverse and inclusive curriculum, and programmatic access and equity.

Good practice dictates that educators analyze student performance and identify gaps in learning. However, if those educators do not reflect on the systems, biases, and practices that lead to such inequitable outcomes, there is a tendency to engage in deficit thinking and seek to “fix” the students. Educators who instead focus on fixing the system are those who have invested in increasing their own understanding of the historical and social context of students, their culture, and education through reading, reflection, and discussion with colleagues and students.

These race-conscious educators:

- Ensure each student feels like an active member of an inclusive learning family through engagement and connection.
- Center all students by promoting their voice and celebrating their identities, interests, cultures, and context.
- Actively engage each student in meaningful learning experiences through collaboration, differentiation, and exploration.

Providing students with equitable learning opportunities builds trust, enhances rapport with learners and, consequently, improves student motivation (Weimer, 2010). As noted by Chiefs for Change in their 2019 report “Honoring Origins and Helping Students Succeed: The Case for Cultural Relevance in High-Quality Instructional Materials,” a commitment to cultural relevance is a commitment to honoring student diversity and increasing student engagement and cannot result in the decrease of academic rigor. Providing a high-quality education to all students requires that a district offer them equitable access to a variety of courses. Students are best prepared for successful lives when they are engaged in teaching and learning that goes beyond knowledge transfer and pushes them to generate new ideas, engage with content critically, express themselves effectively, and work with others to solve problems in a global world.

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LA HONDA-PESCADERO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT FINDINGS

The La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District exhibited efforts to identify and close the academic achievement gaps based on content from their strategic plan. Despite these efforts, disparities in academic performance between groups of students remain. As mentioned in domain one, achievement levels for students of La Honda Pescadero are low as students average scores within the yellow range in both mathematics in English language arts.

Parents/caregivers expressed a desire for more tutoring and support to be made available for students who are struggling.

LHPUSD Parent/Caregiver: Can teachers and administrators talk more with students so they can know their needs and help them?

LHPUSD Parent/Caregiver: If a child needs help in a subject or asks for help, they should be able to get tutoring.

The district does provide tutoring, but more communication with families about what tutoring opportunities are available and how students can access those opportunities would be beneficial.

Although school leaders and staff members expressed agreement that they acquire course content and materials that are reflective of student identities, students that responded to the stakeholder survey indicated a low level of agreement that their curriculum and materials are reflective and representative of their identities. In particular, students rated their level of agreement at 2.58 to the prompt their curriculum is reflective. Additional focus groups with students could provide more insight into what they would like to see more of in the curriculum or to hear examples of materials or classroom activities that are being used which they feel are not representative of different races, cultures, and backgrounds.

Students (n=91) indicated a level of agreement average of 2.84 to the statement that district staff provide the space and opportunities to discuss diverse local events as well as matters of race, gender, sexual orientation, and other diverse issues. According to students from the focus group, there are a few teachers that create the environment to hold conversations around race, equity, and other cultures in a way that engages students in an impactful way.

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LA HONDA-PESCADERO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT FINDINGS

On average, students agree they are provided the same opportunities in class (2.88) and have equal access to extracurricular activities and special programs (2.98). Although the average for student agreement to being provided the same opportunities in class approached a consensus agreement level of 3.00, a statistical difference did arise between students based on gender. In particular, students that chose not to disclose their gender identity agreed to the aforementioned prompt at an agreement level of 2.33 compared to females who reported an agreement level of 2.87 and males who reported an agreement level of 2.98.

Instructional staff indicate high levels of agreement to creating the conditions for an inclusive and welcoming classroom, despite limited opportunities to discuss diverse identities. Based on survey results, instructional staff (n=17) indicated the following average agreement levels:

- I incorporate strategies and tools to navigate across different languages spoken in the classroom. (3.29)
- I incorporate strategies and tools to create an inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ students. (3.12)
- My lesson plans and instructional materials represent many different races, cultures, and backgrounds. (3.29)

RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1

Inspire educational gains among your most vulnerable student populations by developing a plan to ensure tiered intervention across grade levels and content areas.

- Adopt and communicate a clear district theory of action regarding the importance of improving core instruction and tiered interventions. Invest heavily in clarifying what good core instruction looks like and training teachers on how to achieve it.
- Upon adoption of new curricula, examine current intervention programs to ensure alignment.
- Adopt intervention strategies and programs as appropriate.
- Provide training and guidance for schools on the appropriate use of Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions and on implementation of the district's selected program(s).
- Communicate with families about what intervention opportunities are available for students who are struggling or need extra support.

5.2

Develop and staff an internal data alignment, data evaluation and systematic review process, with clear expectations for closing opportunity and achievement gaps.

- Charge an internal data driven-program evaluation team with disaggregating and analyzing student performance data across subgroups at consistent points across the year.
- Develop a standardized method of data review at each building, with the expectation that a written plan is developed to mitigate differences in achievement among subgroups.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5.3

Establish a district-wide culture of developmental responsiveness which ensures that the practices adults use respond to students' individual, cultural, and developmental learning needs and strengths.

- Invest in professional development that provides educators with robust support and resources on the following:
 - Use of active and interactive teaching practices
 - Creating and sustaining a classroom environment that represents students
 - Use of words and non-linguistic models
 - Developing connections and ways of knowing their students

PART III

APPENDICES AND REFERENCES

In this section, please find:

- Appendices that support the findings and recommendations noted in Part II
- List of all references used in the compilation of this report.

RESULTS FROM THE SECOND ROUND OF SURVEYS WITH PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

In a second round of surveys with families and caregivers, La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District (LHPUSD) employed a targeted recruitment strategy to receive feedback that was considered more representative of their demographic makeup. As such, LHPUSD representatives enlisted District Community Liaisons to reach out to families and caregivers with limited access to technology in remote locations to complete the paper version of the Equity Audit survey in-person or at parent conferences.

Forty equity audit surveys were received by the Insight Equity Audit team. After conducting the same survey cleaning and coding protocols from round one of stakeholder surveys, a total of 34 surveys were rendered viable for data analysis. Within the 34 survey respondents; 35.3% were primarily associated with Pescadero Elementary, 44.1% with Pescadero Middle/High, 20.6% were associated with more than one school site, and there were no respondents from La Honda Elementary solely (one respondent was associated with La Honda Elementary plus another school site and was thusly accounted for as a "Multi-site" respondent). Survey respondents that identified as female accounted for 47.1% of all respondents, male accounted for 38.2%, and those that preferred not to disclose their gender accounted for 14.7% of respondents. Most respondents received services such as Free/Reduced Meals at 44.1% and multiple services at 20.6% followed by Special Education Program Services at 8.8% and Gifted and Talented Programming or Speech/Language Therapy both at 2.9%, while 20.6% of respondents' student(s) received no services.

When comparing mean scores or the average level of agreement between family and caregiver groups by the round of equity audit survey data collection (e.g., Round 1, Round 2) in which they participated, no statistically significant differences were detected across all prompts with the exception of one; "My student(s) has friends from other backgrounds." For this prompt families and caregivers of Round 2 recorded a higher level of agreement at 3.29 compared to families and caregivers of Round 1 who recorded an average level of agreement at 3.10. On average, Round 2 family and caregiver mean scores trended upward compared to Round 1 family and caregiver mean scores on survey prompts. For further information on prompt mean scores by each round of data collection, please see the table found at the end of this addendum brief.

Similarly, when comparing mean scores among and between family and caregiver groups, no statistically significant differences were detected by race or gender.

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Finally, when comparing mean scores by school sites across both rounds of survey data collection, differences arose for the following prompts:

	Round 1	Round 2
Equity is important to the district.		
La Honda Elementary School	3.19	No data
Pescadero Elementary School	2.50	3.33
Pescadero Middle-High School	3.38	3.53
Adults at the school(s) my student(s) attends treat all students fairly.		
La Honda Elementary School	3.48	No data
Pescadero Elementary School	2.80	3.42
Pescadero Middle-High School	2.50	2.80
My student(s) is supported socially at school.		
La Honda Elementary School	3.43	No data
Pescadero Elementary School	2.80	3.08
Pescadero Middle-High School	3.00	2.80

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APPENDIX B

COMPARISON OF SURVEY RESPONSES FROM THE TWO ROUNDS OF PARENT/CAREGIVER SURVEYS

Survey Prompt	Survey Group	Mean Score
The district has a clear definition of equity.	Round 1	2.82
	Round 2	2.79
The school(s) my student(s) attends has a clear definition of equity.	Round 1	2.82
	Round 2	2.97
Equity is important in the district.	Round 1	3.05
	Round 2	3.38
Adults in the district treat all students with respect.	Round 1	2.95
	Round 2	3.12
Adults at the school(s) my student(s) attends treat all students fairly.	Round 1	3.10
	Round 2	3.06
School discipline policies and practices are enforced consistently with all students across the district.	Round 1	2.85
	Round 2	2.94
The lessons and homework my student(s) receives reflect different people, cultures, experiences, and backgrounds.	Round 1	2.90
	Round 2	3.06
The teachers of my student(s) make sure I know how they are doing in class.	Round 1	2.97
	Round 2	3.15
I am comfortable speaking with the teachers or administrators of my student(s).	Round 1	3.28
	Round 2	3.35
I have been invited to be actively involved in planning initiatives, supporting programs, and/or providing input at	Round 1	3.10
	Round 2	3.21
My student(s) has friends from other backgrounds.	Round 1	3.10
	Round 2	3.29
The school building(s) my student(s) attends is safe, healthy, and in good physical condition.	Round 1	3.10
	Round 2	3.00
My student(s) is supported academically at their school(s).	Round 1	3.26
	Round 2	3.26
My student(s) is supported emotionally at their school(s).	Round 1	3.05
	Round 2	3.00
My student(s) is supported socially at their school(s).	Round 1	3.18
	Round 2	2.94

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