

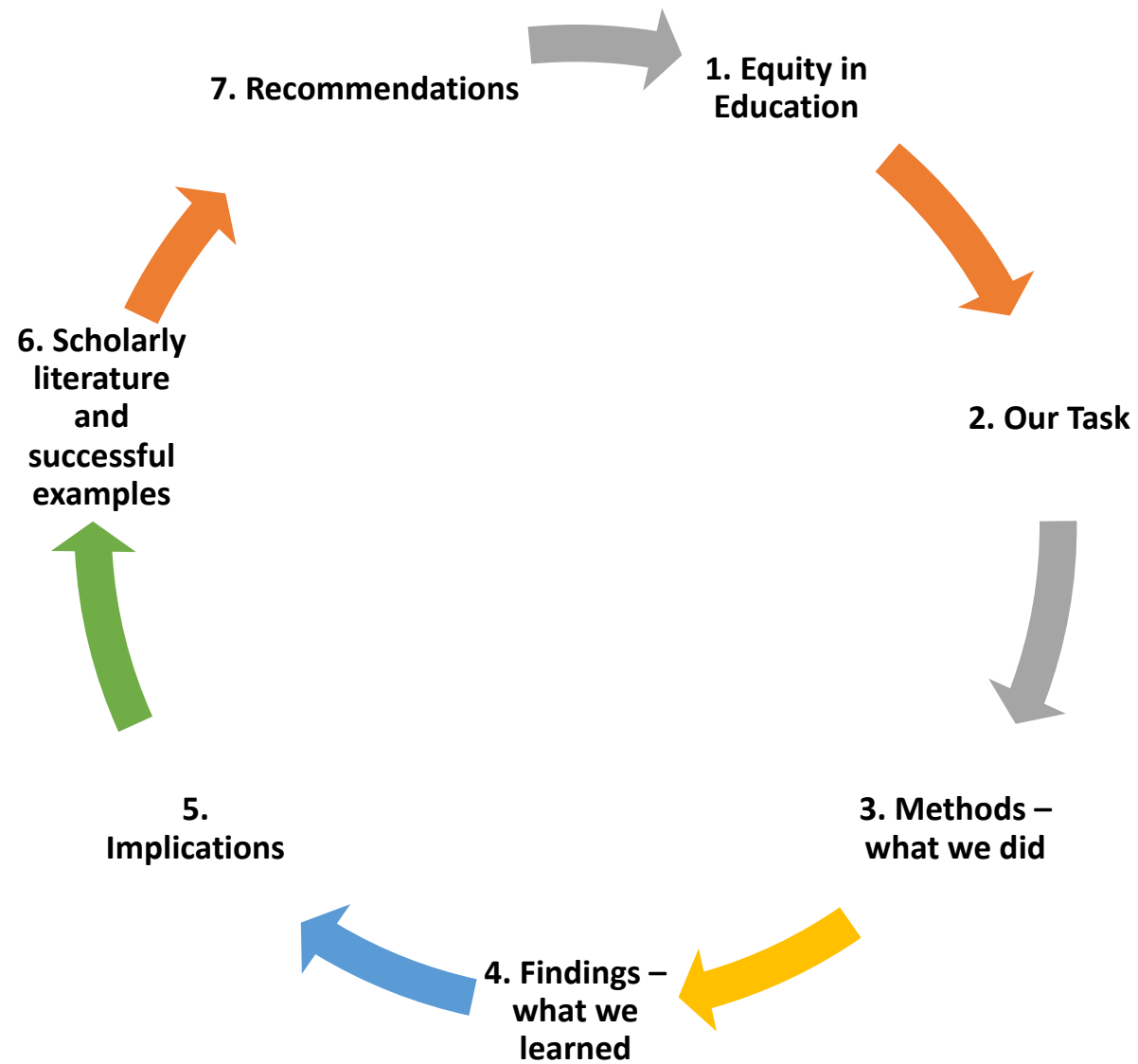
San Mateo-Foster City School District

Community Responsive School Initiative for the North Central San Mateo Community

PAN Ltd Partnership

June 10, 2021

Agenda



Equity is a commitment to ensure that every student receives what they need to succeed.

Equity

Equity in Education

- Equity is premised upon a recognition that because **all children are different** there must be a deep commitment to meet the needs of every child in order to ensure that each student receives what they need to grow, develop, and succeed.
- Instead of being defined by their behavior, labeled because of their needs, and discarded, all children must be served by **schools that are organized to meet their needs**.
- This means that **educators must be supported** to (and have the skill/knowledge necessary to) get to know all students so that they can spend time cultivating talents and build on their potential.



On Equity...



The starting point for equity is creating a community where the needs of each student are thoroughly known, and each member understands their role (**so that we know our children, how they learn, what motivates them, and what challenges they face**).

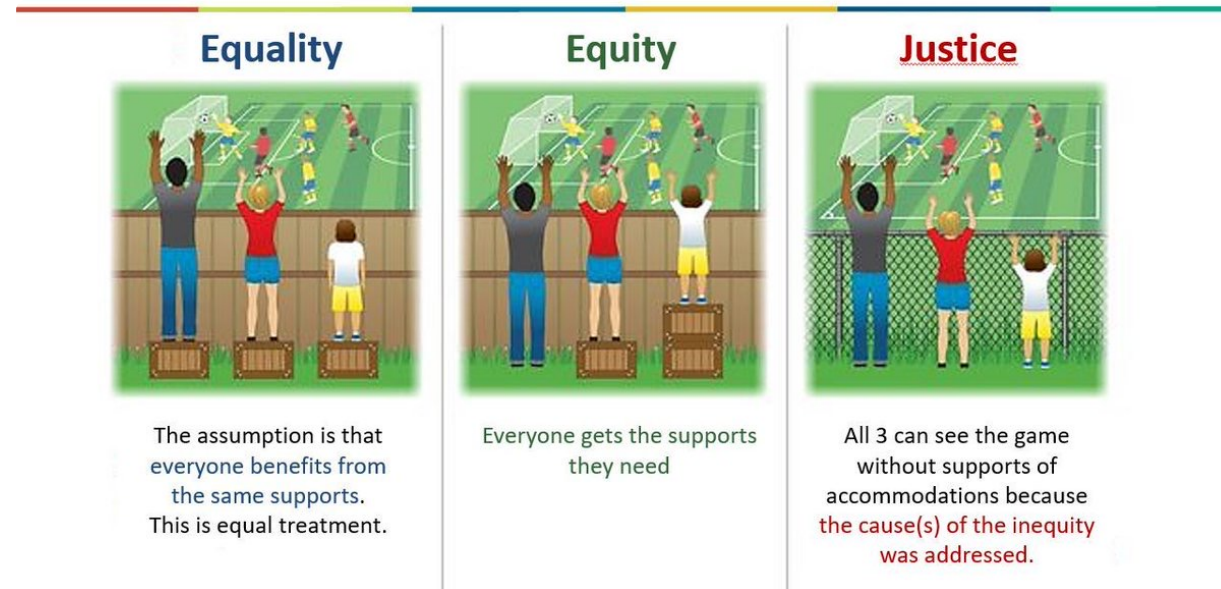
- Equity is not about treating all students the same or lowering expectations
- Equity involves forging collaborative relationships among adult stakeholders and a shared commitment to the common goal of meeting the needs of all students among all stakeholders
- Students can and should be a part of this process and space should be created to enable them to tell us what they need to be successful

(Caution) Equity is...

- Often subverted by the assumption that there must be winners and losers (zero-sum thinking)

In this district, we heard equity described as a “Robin Hood policy”

- Close examination of educational performance in the U.S. has shown that we’ve made little progress and, in some cases, declined, which is attributed to growing inequality
- Instead of **building the capacity of schools** and providing them with additional support to meet the complex needs of students, we continue to rely on pressure and humiliation as a means of prodding schools to improve
- The strategy hasn’t worked.



Equity involves Moving Toward a New Paradigm

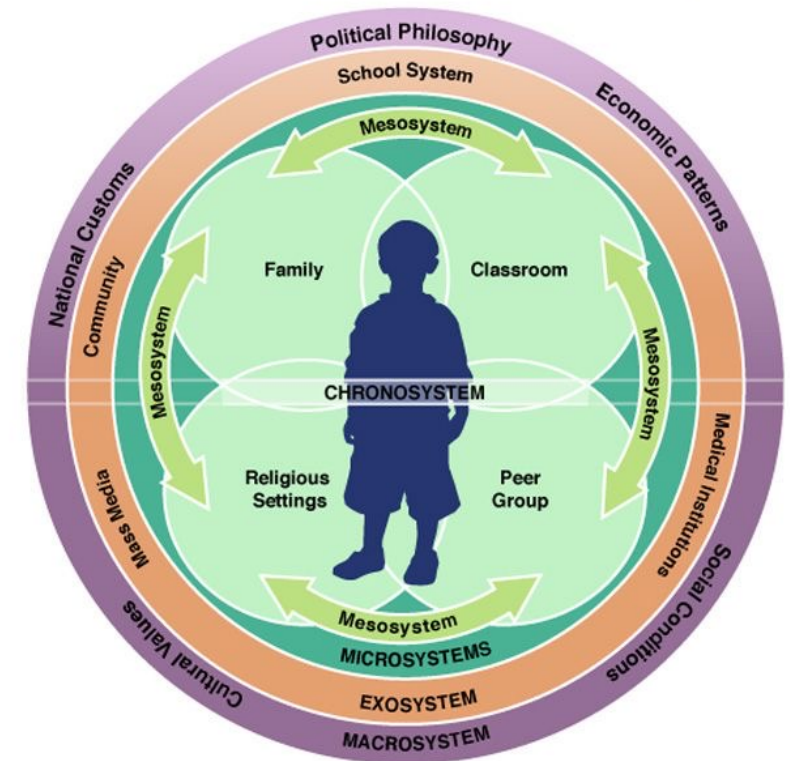
- **(Not just a new gimmick)** Premised on a different epistemological outlook that makes it possible for us to see our work through a different lens.
- **(The Old Way)** the belief that intelligence is an innate property that can be measured and assessed (Lehman, 1996).
 - **Meritocracy:** the notion that society should be organized on the basis of merit (e.g., talent, effort, and skill) rather than privilege or status (Bell, 1973).
- **(Current Patterns)** In most schools throughout the U.S., a child's race, socioeconomic status, and zip code predict not only how well they do in school but also the quality of school they will attend.
- **(Opportunity Gaps)** We should reward talent and effort; we must also recognize that far too many children are denied the opportunity to have their talents developed



Foundations of the new paradigm

- 1. Child development** - (cognitive, emotional, psychological, and physical development) – has influenced a) curricula, b) learning strategies, and c) the training of teachers
- 2. Neuroscience** – we no longer regard the brain as a static organ that undergoes few changes after childhood; we know that the neural pathways and synapses that wire the brain go through ongoing changes in response to behavior, the environment, and neural processes.
- 3. Environmental influences** – we have known for many years that environmental influences including family, peer group, and neighborhood environmental factors influence child development and student learning.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of Child Development



Moving Toward Equity



WE NEED SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS TO
DELIBERATELY TAKE THE TIME TO
UNDERSTAND THE ENVIRONMENTAL
FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE CHILDREN
THEY SERVE.



WHEN THE THREE PILLARS ARE USED
TOGETHER IN A COHERENT SYSTEM FOR
RESPONDING TO AND ADDRESSING THE
NEEDS OF CHILDREN, THE ABILITY OF
SCHOOLS TO MEET THE DEVELOPMENTAL
AND ACADEMIC NEEDS OF STUDENTS
INCREASES SIGNIFICANTLY



THIS IS A NEW PARADIGM BECAUSE IT
REPRESENTS A VERY DIFFERENT WAY OF
THINKING ABOUT HOW SCHOOLS CAN
SERVE THE LEARNING NEEDS OF STUDENTS

Courageous Leadership

- **The courage to act**
(going beyond talking about equity and studying it)
- **Getting to your core**
(why and how must connect with personal and collective vision, mission, and values)
- **Making Organizational Meaning**
(bring cohesion to schools and systems that are otherwise fragmented is critical for galvanizing and unifying all stakeholders toward a common vision and goals)
- **Ensuring constancy and consistency in purpose**
(clear focus, opportunities to learn, practice, receive feedback, and try again)



2. Our Task

To engage a diverse group of community stakeholders and review research on educational programs serving similar populations to provide guidance for the creation of a community responsive educational program that will be implemented in a new elementary school in North Central San Mateo.



3. Research Methods

Methods



Focus Groups and Interviews:

11 Focus Groups, 4 Interviews (more than 90 participants)



Survey: Distributed to families in zip code 94401

713 responses received (308 Spanish; 405 English)

- 15.8% reported their child receives special education services
- 26% reported their child receives English learner services
- 56.2% reported child receives free and reduced lunch



Review of literature:

- Educational equity
- Community schools
- Community responsive education practices

Focus Groups

We asked focus group participants to reflect on:

1. The North
Central
Community

2. The Vision
and Mission of
the New School

3. Care, Health
and Safety

4. Curriculum
and Pedagogy

5. Supporting
Equity

6. Community
and Family
Partnerships

7. Leadership,
Governance and
Accountability

4. Findings





Findings – What we learned

Highlights: NC families want to have a voice in their children’s education and be included in important decisions about a) what they learn, b) after school programming, and who is hired to teach and lead

Survey Data:

93% of respondents strongly or somewhat agree that families must have a voice in what students learn

Additionally, families agreed or strongly agreed that it is important for schools to include them in decisions about:

- What students learn (90%)
- Afterschool (89%)
- Hiring administrators (81%)
- Hiring teachers (77%)
- Budget priorities (73%)

Families are less concerned with a “school theme” and more concerned with structures and practices that shape student experiences and enable them to contribute to decisions

- Themes of interest include: 1) STEM (49.4%), 2) Language & Culture (21.8%), 3) Arts & Music (19.4%)

Findings – What we learned

Teaching and Learning

- Will need staff (teachers and leaders) who are multilingual
- Should be a culturally and linguistically responsive school
 - Bilingual program or immersion program
 - Strong ELD programming and pedagogy
 - Skilled literacy teachers
- Collaborate with and open classroom to families – build trusting relationships
- Whole-child approach to learning
- Deficit thinking (about students and families) is a barrier
 - Low expectations of students and families
 - Little attempt to involve families – think they don't care
 - Lack of accommodation for need to travel

Findings – What we learned

Leaders

- Should be “community connectors” – resourceful, knowledgeable of organizations in the city and area so that strong and meaningful partnerships can be established to supplement services
 - Shared leadership structures to enable collaborative decision-making processes
 - Honor and respect the diversity and cultures of the local community
 - Strong parent outreach strategies and supports
 - Regular hosts community gatherings
 - Spanish speaker who recognizes the need to involve families in decisions and maintain clear, open lines of communication
- Instructional leader capable of supporting teacher capacity building
 - Instructional leader who can be hands-on
- Will likely lack support from the district for equity matters
- Will need autonomy

Findings – What we learned

Vision for the New School

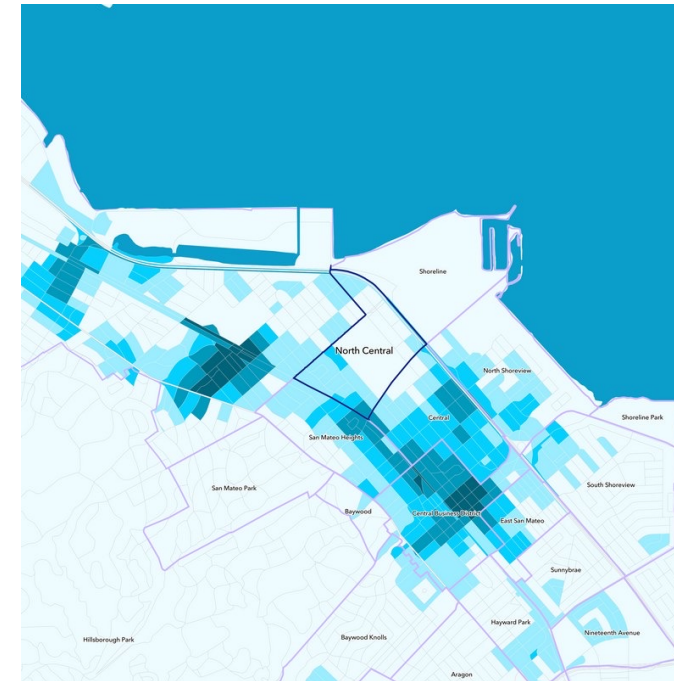
Across stakeholder groups, participants expressed a desire to see the new school function as a “community hub”:

- Should be co-envisioned with community members
 - Families should be involved in determining the name and school themes
- Should be culturally and linguistically responsive (bilingual leaders and staff)
- Wrap-around services and whole child approach to learning
 - Before and afterschool programming
 - Social workers and school psychologists needed
 - Open-door policy for families
- Year-round programming
 - Adult education and learning enrichment opportunities for students in the summer
 - Language classes for family members
 - Internet access
 - Health services
 - Food access
 - Tutoring

Findings – What we learned

NC Community:

- Perception that the NC community has been displaced and disempowered
 - NC has the greatest socioeconomic need and largest EL population in the district
 - Largely Latinx population with many Spanish speakers
 - Disconnect with the community is normalized and the community is not well understood (numerous Indigenous language speakers, for example)
 - Misunderstood and stigmatized in the district (e.g., “Bus children”; perception that families are “illiterate” and/or don’t care about education)
 - In fact, it is a tight-knit community, parents care deeply about their children and their success in school
- NC community is resource-rich: Opportunity for many school partnerships with community organizations
- Will need to feel that the new school is their school (through **access, programming, and practices**)
- Many believe there should be well-resourced team of parent and community liaisons to support outreach and engagement



Focus Group Findings – What we learned

District:

- History of lack of support has led to a lack of confidence in district's ability to support
- Perception that capacity building efforts have been scattered and do not always follow through to completion
- District struggles to support principals and teachers
- Equity work has been slow and not as productive as needed
- District-wide, and within schools, low expectations for NC families and students are common
- Concerns about how the district will differentiate support for the new school



5. Implications



Implications

Leaders, Teaching, and Learning:

- Educators must be competent in same areas that many staff (teachers and administrators) require support (e.g., teaching literacy skills and English language development strategies; command of and integration of Spanish language; culturally responsive engagement with students and families)
 - There is a need to apply equity logic to teachers (as learners) as well as to students
- Culture must be recognized as an asset that can be used to leverage engagement and relevance
 - Culture should also be understood not only as racial/ethnic differences, but local circumstances, expressive culture (arts, music, movies), and “fundamental culture” (individualism, interpersonal competition, communalism, movement expression)
- Leaders and teachers will need the skills, knowledge, and support to collaborate with families and community members in generative ways
 - In order to move toward equity, it is critical to recognize that we cannot “know” in isolation. More robust ways of knowing must be developed, with careful attention to enabling communication for disenfranchised or minoritized groups.
 - Staff should intentionally engage in knowledge construction with community, which can be empowering, clarifying, and instructive.
 - Developing a shared vision of learning and clear understandings of roles, responsibilities, and expectations across stakeholder groups is critical to the success of the future school
- Families from the NC community will need to feel that the new school is their school (through **access, programming, and practices**)

Implications

NC Community:

- Viewed as a neglected and inconvenienced part of the community
- Residents (students and families) stigmatized
- Untapped strengths

New School:

- Will be something new for the district – effective in areas that other district schools struggle
- Could be a model for other schools in the district
- Should be viewed through an ecological and relational lens
- Must be a pillar of health and wellbeing in the community

Implications

District:

- Recognize that there is a history of equity efforts being resisted at the institutional and community level, and there is a continuing tendency for equity efforts to be resisted
- Must interrupt and stop the displacement of the North Central community residents who are overburdened by not having a school in their community
- Will need to consider how to differentiate support for a community responsive school
- The prioritization of equity is not only an issue in the North Central community (or for the future school); equity needs exist throughout the district
- Must strengthen its “ways of knowing” to ensure that an accurate understanding of the context for change is known
- Must demonstrate that the NC community is valued and that its residents matter by taking action

6. Scholarly literature and successful examples

Given what we've learned from community stakeholders, what does the scholarly literature say about these issues?

Are there examples of similar schools to what NC community members hope for that we can learn from?



What the Four Pillars of Community Schools Look Like in Action



The Coalition for Community Schools defines community schools as “both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources, [with an] integral focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement.”

Structures and practices honor and nurture **whole child development** in ways that are supported by the science of learning and development.

1. **Collaborative Leadership and Practices** – culture of professional learning, collective trust and shared responsibility
2. **Integrated Student Supports** – dedicated staff to address out-of-school learning barriers for students and families; mental and physical health support services
3. **Active Family and Community Engagement** – school is a neighborhood hub with opportunities for enrichment for adults and families as well as children; stakeholder interaction is promoted
4. **Expanded and Enriched Learning Time and Opportunities** – The hub is a space for real-world learning and community problem solving, year-round

Full-Service Community School - Theory of Action

- Pushing beyond the goals of coordinating services and strengthening networks, the theory of action behind FSCSs calls for equal voice among partners.
 - Community partnerships rejects a deficit perspective of parents and communities as simply needing services. It uses, instead, an asset perspective that values and builds on the contributions families and community members can make to their children's learning.
 - The learning and developmental needs of students are best met when family, school, and community members partner "to articulate the community's goals for its students, and to help design, implement and evaluate activities" (Blank et al., 2003, p. 2).
 - In addition to a coordinated or school-based set of full services, students' learning and development are best served when there is a cultural shift toward democratic decision making through community input.
 - Community and parental **engagement** replace the more traditional ideas of service provision and parental **involvement**.
 - Robust partnerships that provide multiple opportunities and varied venues for parents and community members to become involved in **decision making** and **interact with children in academic, social, and cultural contexts**.

"Engagement in community schools occurs when parents, students, school staff, and neighbors invest in the school, co-creating and owning it" (Williams, 2010, p. 10).

Conditions for Success

1. Deliberate focus on change that goes beyond the organization of the school to change that occurs in the deeper normative and cultural dimension. In contrast to the other models, considerably more emphasis is put on the intertwined cultural themes of democratizing the school with community input, bridging culture and power gaps between parents and educators, transforming school leadership, and fostering leadership in parents, teachers, and community members.
2. A variety of forums and committees are used to develop and sustain a partnership model based on trusting relationships and shared decision making.
3. Schools partner with groups that have community roots, credibility, and the capacity to bring in a large, diverse part of the community.
4. An active and diverse community site team and a full-time community school coordinator (or team) are structural features of cross-boundary leadership. A culture of shared influence and shared responsibility is a normative condition that facilitates effective interactions across role boundaries.
5. Assistance for principals in developing more collaborative leadership styles, and the necessity of active support for parents and community members to take on leadership roles.

Case: Edison Elementary School (San Diego, CA)

School Mission:

To improve student achievement by building a professional learning community with collaborative teams whose members work interdependently to achieve common goals linked to the purpose of learning for all.

Academics:

- High expectations along with methodical planning and instruction lead to effective classroom practices which, for the past two years, have made Edison the top performing school in Math and Language Arts among its cluster of 13 schools.
- To advance academic achievement, teachers emphasize formative assessment, understanding and teaching the standards, English Language Development, and proven teaching strategies.
- Successful biliteracy program which promotes 5th grade students fluent in Spanish and English.

Parent Involvement:

- Familial support is encouraged and nurtured through various opportunities for families to participate and be involved with their children's education including our School Site Council, English Learner Advisory Committee, Family Fridays, Family Art Night, monthly parent workshops, volunteering, and more.
- Translation services and childcare are provided in order to remove any barriers which might prevent participation.

Edison Elementary School, San Diego

Staffing:

Edison has a veteran staff who is committed to the community:

- The least and most veteran teachers have been educators for 15 and 32 years, respectively. In addition, the average number of years teaching at Edison is 13.
- As such, there is great historical knowledge about the community and a robust collaborative and collegial environment prevails.
- Each year the school welcomes hundreds of children with formidable academic, social, and emotional needs. For this reason, the school has funded a full-time counselor and an English language support resource teacher

Counseling Mission:

The mission of the Edison Elementary School Counseling Program is to support teaching and learning by providing all students with a comprehensive school counseling curriculum in the areas of academic achievement, career development and social-emotional growth. Through collaboration with teachers, administrators, parents and community engagement, the school counselor helps all students reach their maximum potential and become successful lifelong learners.

- The close working relationship between all staff members is fortified by the addition of this support staff who provide **invaluable supplementary assistance to staff and students.**

7. Recommendations



Recommendations

The district will need to use the broad view of equity to guide the work.

Equity is about 3 things:

1. Giving children what they need academically and socially to be successful
2. Eliminating the barriers that contribute to inequity
3. Organizing the schools so that the skills of the staff match the needs of the kids.

It's not about choosing who to serve. It's about identifying needs and barriers and building capacity.

- The goal is not to develop a “silver bullet”. The goal is to create conditions where the learning needs of all students can be met.
- This will require strong leadership, parent involvement, student engagement, and high levels of teacher efficacy.
- When the strategies that are embraced overlook the need to build capacity in response to need, the lofty promises of reform are rarely achieved.



Recommendations

The district must develop a strategy to address student needs right now while building the plan for the long-term goal of establishing a community responsive community school in the North Central Community.

- a) Take action to provide support systems in response to known areas of student, family, and community needs
- b) Prioritize teaching capacity building for equity
- c) Develop and carry out a multi-year plan to open a culturally and linguistically responsive community school

Stage 1a: Right now

Take action to provide support systems in response to known areas of student, family, and community needs

1. Targeted (local) academic support to meet the needs of students who are not being served well – the district must tap into community and organizational partnerships to provide targeted support to students and families
2. Summer academies to address known learning gaps – engage this community!
3. Parent academy (all these take place wherever the kids/people are)
4. Empower parent liaisons with more resources and support – enable them to declare priorities
5. Engage in district review to understand existing strengths and areas of growth in order to develop clear priorities for capacity building and improvement
6. Equity must be prioritized at the district level and centered across the district

Stage 1b: Right now

Prioritize teacher capacity building for equity, which must involve:

1. Whole child teaching
 2. The strategic use of formative assessments
 3. Differentiation and targeted intervention
 4. High quality feedback and opportunities to retake/resubmit
 5. Teaching/learning strategies for English language development
- Student guiding functions: self-efficacy, self-regulated learning, incremental beliefs about ability (are mutually reinforcing)
 - We cannot afford to view the need to grow in these areas as only relevant to the NC community. These needs exist throughout the district.

Stage 1c: Begin building for the future

Develop and carry out a multi-year plan to open the school and educational program that the community hopes for – a culturally and linguistically responsive community school

1. Equity must be prioritized at the district level: hire bilingual, equity driver of change to lead this initiative and begin developing a team to lead the NC community responsive education project
2. Partner with community to collaboratively design tools for advocacy, build trust from the beginning, and develop a communication strategy
3. This group should be involved in the groundwork of developing a collaborative vision and mission, school systems, identifying a capable school leader, and supporting teacher recruitment, year-round programming, before/after school services, partnerships – as well as thinking about scale
4. Ensure close collaboration between district equity leaders and NC community responsive education team to integrate learnings into plans for leadership and teacher capacity building
5. We recommend that the District consider utilization of the College Park site for the new school. We also recommend that the district explore sources of additional funding to support the proposed wrap-around services.



Caution

- We must be careful not to develop plans to mitigate current challenges and then not act on building a comprehensive community school
- We also cannot develop the long-term plan to create a culturally and linguistically responsive community school but not respond to known student and family needs right now.

We have an obligation to do both.

Thank you
