San Mateo Foster City Elementary School District

Equity Impact Action Plan
Equity Task Force Summary

Board Update Report
Phase I
October 2021

VISION OF DISTRICT

The San Mateo-Foster City School District educates, inspires and empowers every student in every school every day to live, lead and learn with integrity and joy.

MISSION OF DISTRICT

The San Mateo-Foster City School District provides rigorous, high quality and equitable education while partnering with our families and community to support all students to achieve their full academic, social and emotional potential.

EQUITY TASK FORCE

The San Mateo-Foster City School District Board of Trustees is committed to ensuring that all students in the district succeed and to addressing the underlying factors that prevent this. In this spirit, the District adopted the National Equity Project's Equity Definition and established an Equity Task Force. The Equity Impact Plan represents the first phase of recommendations to result from the Equity Task Force's work

The district has grappled with many areas of educational equity over time. District equity challenges include schools that are socioeconomically segregated, magnet program challenges, inequitable funding structures, punitive discipline approaches and longstanding achievement gaps that disproportionately affect students of low-income and students of color. The causes of these inequities are complex and their solutions will require systems level approaches to policy, funding and practice.

The Equity Task Force was created to develop, research and propose recommendations that would address equity issues while creating a mechanism to support and sustain systemic changes for equity. The Equity Task Force explored equity issues that are impacting the community and participated in learning opportunities to further their collective understanding of equity. With the support of Nicole Anderson and Associates Consulting and district staff, the Task Force worked to deepen their collective understanding of equity, develop an appreciation of the history of public education and comprehend not only the barriers to equity, but also what holds inequities in place. The team experienced a process that enabled them to not only bond through sharing their own identities, but to recognize the differences and unique perspectives that those identities bring. Overcoming the discomfort associated with discussing and addressing inequities, delving into root causes, exploring missing perspectives and drafting initial action plans were part of the growth and development process.

Community and student listening sessions were held to gather information from and hear the voices of the community and begin the process of learning and understanding this history and manifestation of oppression not just in the United States as a whole, but specifically in San Mateo-Foster City School District. While community sessions were primarily formed to address

the issue of School Resource Officers, they provide a replicable framework that the Equity Task Force can use going forward to capture input on a variety of topics.

WORKING EQUITY STATEMENT

Adopted from the National Equity Project

Educational equity means that each student receives what they need to develop their full academic and social-emotional potential as measured through multiple data metrics.

Working towards equity involves the following:

- Ensuring equally high outcomes for all participants in our educational system; removing the predictability of success or failures that currently correlates with any social, cultural or racial factor.
- Interrupting inequitable policies and practices while examining and eliminating biases to create inclusive multicultural school environments for adults and students.
- Discovering and cultivating the unique gifts, talents and interests that every human possesses.

EQUITY TASK FORCE MEMBERS & CONTRIBUTORS

Task Force Members

- Students: Nailah Blake, Carolyn Mish and Geneva Williams
- Parents / Guardians: Francisco Guzman, Diana Harlick, Mira Park, Rosie Rivera, Karla Rodriguez, Kristen Sevillia
- Community Members: Rev. Dr. Marlyn Bussey and Colleen Sullivan
- Classified Staff: Denise Fournier, Anthony Barnhill
- Certificated Staff: Sue Wright, Jennifer Young, Laura Evans
- Administrators: Aleyda Barrera-Cruz, Patrick Hurley, Chad Slife

School Board Liaisons

- Shara Watkins
- Noelia Corzo

Superintendent

- Dr. Joan Rosas

District Staff Liaisons

- David Chambliss
- Sue Wieser
- Wini McMichael
- Alicia Heneghan

ADDRESSING INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

Recently, outrage has been expressed in the community and around the nation over the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis Police. The increased visibility of police violence, anti-black sentiments, and racially motivated attacks on people of color, including immigrants and Asian American Pacific Islanders, have forced many to reconsider their views on race and racism in schools. These realities, coupled with the declaration by the United States Department of Homeland Security that white supremacist terrorism is the largest domestic terrorism threat to America, have led many organizations to take action to address institutional racism. Structural or systemic racism refers to a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. It identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with "whiteness" and disadvantages associated with "color" or proximity to "blackness" to endure, adapt and magnify over time. Structural racism is not something that a few people or institutions choose to practice. Instead, it has been a feature of the social, economic and political systems in which we all exist in our nation (The Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change).

In order to effectively engage in the work of interrupting institutional racism, it is critical that safe space be established among all who are impacted by the work. The following four community agreements provide a guide for stakeholders taking a deeper dive into the sensitive and uncomfortable work of addressing racism.

These agreements include the following:

- **Stay engaged**: Staying engaged means "remaining morally, emotionally, intellectually, and socially involved in the dialogue"
- **Experience discomfort**: This norm acknowledges that discomfort is inevitable, especially, in dialogue about race, and that participants make a commitment to bring issues into the open. It is not talking about these issues that create divisiveness. The divisiveness that has existed for centuries in society and has been foundational in our schools has never been interracially addressed. It is only through dialogue, even when uncomfortable, that healing and change begin.
- **Speak your truth**: This means being open about thoughts and feelings and not just saying what you think others want to hear.
- **Expect and accept nonclosure**: This agreement asks participants to "hang out in uncertainty" and not rush to quick solutions, especially in relation to racial understanding, which requires ongoing dialogue

(adapted from the work of Glenn E. Singleton & Curtis Linton, Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools. 2006. pp.58-65. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin)

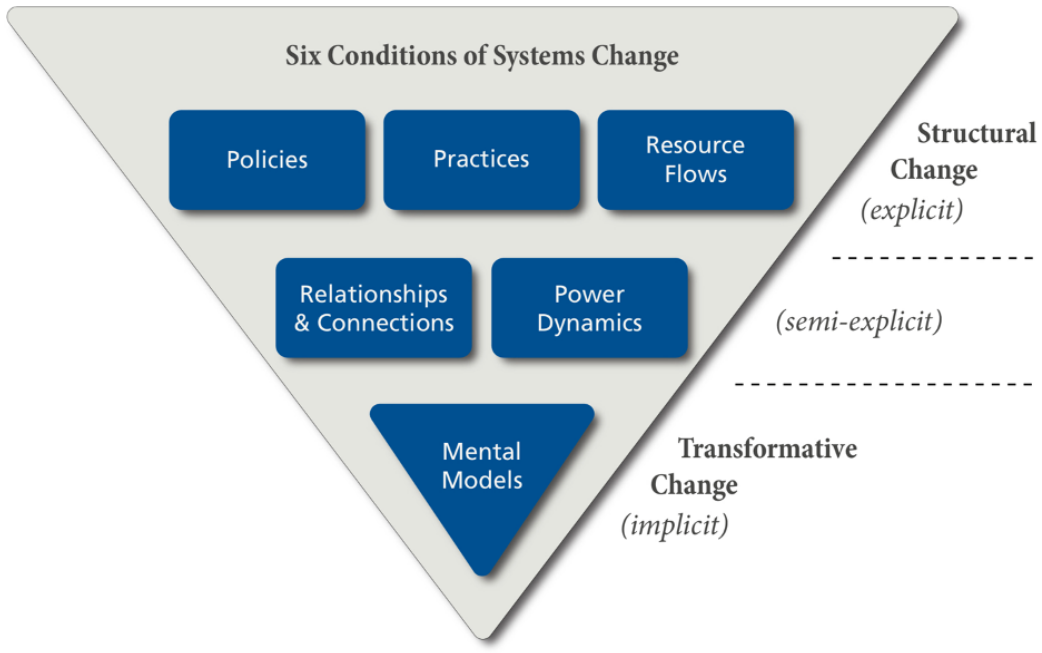
SYSTEMS CHANGE FRAMEWORK

It is imperative that a systems change approach and its accompanying framework be utilized to identify and address inequities within an organization or system in order to realize sustainable change and elimination of equity gaps. The Task Force process focused on building a political and social infrastructure that supports systemic change, employs new skills and practices, and celebrates progress. As part of this, they utilized the systems change framework found in the Water of Systems Change (John Kania, Mark Kramer, and Peter Senge in June 2018).

Systemic change is long, slow and very challenging to implement with fidelity. Recognizing the magnitude of the work being approached is critical to understanding both the complexity in each step and the human needs throughout the process.

The Systems Change framework makes equity a consistent guiding principle across the entire organization and will help the San Mateo Foster City school district change the way we do business. The overarching purpose of the framework is to guide the elimination of systemic causes of racial and other identity disparities in the schools and district, promote inclusion, belonging and full participation for all educators, families and students in the district, as well as reduce identity-based disparities in our communities. The development of baseline quantitative and qualitative data can be used by board and district leadership, staff, students and community members alike to better understand and measure the impact of inequities. The framework can enable district departments and staff to make data-driven decisions about programs and policies to address these inequities and ensure equitable access to opportunities and services. It can also enable community members to monitor the district's progress towards improvement. Future reports should measure change in racial disparities, identity oppression and social injustices to enable staff and leadership to work in collaboration with community members to implement changes to the equity impact action plan.

FIGURE 1. SHIFTING THE CONDITIONS THAT HOLD THE PROBLEM IN PLACE



EQUITY IMPACT ACTION PLAN DRAFT

The Equity Task Force selected three preliminary areas of focus for its work: 1) Staffing, 2) Safety, and 3) Academic achievement gaps. The work group recommendations are designed to provide high level guidance for district staff, who are then charged with the most appropriate plan for strategic implementation. The recommendations include documentation of the analytical processes used, data reviewed and the group thinking involved. The Task Force and equity action planning should continue, with consideration of how to refine the group process for maximum impact.

	Staffing	**Safety – LGBTQ+**	**Academics**
Equity Gap	Recruitment, retention of staff that represent diverse student groups; culturally proficient Special Education, Language immersion Welcoming inclusive culture	LGBTQ data-chks Intersection of race, gender identity (not trans, unsure) , and sexual orientation (straight, lgb, questioning) 1) LGB students 7x more alcohol use than straight 2)LGB students 4.7x more likely to consider suicide than straight. Trans (not sure) 4.2x more likely to consider suicide than not trans 3) LGB students under 2.1x more emotional distress 4) LGB student have 22% less academic motivation	Achievement gap for English Language Learner, Latino/Hispanic, and socio-economically disadvantaged students Disproportionality in referral and enrollment of Latino/Hispanic students to special education services Disproportionality in punitive disciplinary practices affecting students of color and students with special needs Access gaps to G.A.T.E, compacted math and school-based enrichment for above mentioned groups

Goals	Increase staff diversity that reflects the demographics, spoken languages and desired culturally proficient mental models of students and families in the district and support the staffing to prevent attrition and encourage leadership building capacity. Create a desirable, supportive and inclusive work environment by providing professional development plan/opportunities to center on cultural competency, anti racist pedagogy, healing centered engagement (trauma informed) to shift mental models from compliance to a commitment to equity and antiracist education.	(1) Reduce equity gap in the key indicators of mental health challenges/more positive psychological outcomes between LGBT students and non-marginalized students E.g. chks outcomes: (alcohol use, suicide consideration, social emotional distress, academic motivation, cyberbullying) (2) Have inclusive schools where students feel more safe in their school communities (3) More comfort talking to teachers and staff whether older or younger about SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity) (4) Parents, students and staff are educated about SOGI (5) Eradication of stigma for LGBTQ+ students (6) Representation of the LGBTQ+ experience in the curriculum	Adopt Multi-Tiered System of Support as a systems framework to reduce education achievement gaps Prioritize the preschool to third grade years for high quality, research based instruction, to identify and address learning challenges as early as possible, and to accelerate closure of achievement gaps Implement rigorous program evaluation, including intervention tracking, in order to identify which strategies at which sites are working best to improve student outcomes.

Root Cause	Lack of staffing diversity, lack of cultural competence, lack of opportunities for educators of color to have opportunities to be in education or lack of interest due to their own experiences. Policy: Hiring practices and having implicit biases on potential candidates. Recruitment teams that are homogeneous and therefore unattractive or unwelcoming to potential staff of color. Opportunities for community members of color, socio-economically disadvantaged of with diverse perspectives to pursue certifications	**Policy:** Education code (lack of LGBTQ+ experience represented in education (FAIR ACT); lack of strong and consistent policies across sites; lack of inclusive naming policies that refer to students by their preferred names. **Practice:** Lack of training for staff and parents on how to support LGBTQ+ students. Lack of enforcement of anti-bullying policies (in person, on-site); gender stereotypes (bleu=boys, girls=pink), e.g. in cards to write student info each year, lack of curriculum teaching gender and sexual orientation **Resources:** Lack of gender neutral facilities, lack of attendance data, adoption of additional resources (SFUSD, Gender Spectrum) **Relationships**: Lack of parent engagement, Lack of counselors and safe spaces at school sites, lack of allies. **Power dynamics:** Lack of respect for student + parent perspectives to help us understand the data; lack of empowerment for LGBTQ students to report harassment; Lack of empathy from educators for students that do not resemble them. **Mental models:** Beliefs related to LGBTQ+ Communities and the relevance of their needs and concerns	Lack of common vision and equity framework across all 21 schools; culture of school autonomy Too many competing initiatives within and across schools Differing resources across schools; inequities in enrichment and paraprofessional support caused by PTA funding Isolation and differing pedagogy of some magnet schools, resulting in antiquated learning strategies Socioeconomic segregation of some student populations at schools Early opportunity gaps caused by poverty, racism and other societal factors Punitive approaches to students with learning challenges and special needs Lack of consistent, early identification of academic delays and learning challenges

Stakeholders missing	Parents (need more than one parent perspective), classified staff (ie instructional associates) Board Members Educators of Color High School Students College Students Classified Staff Educators who left the district New Hires	Students, Parents, Teachers, Administrators, Campus personnel involved in student support	Educators Parents from multiple perspectives Students Support Staff Administration Special Education Staff
Data missing	Staff listening sessions, Student listening sessions Reflections from the educators of color affinity group Understanding experiences in education and what support would be needed to become an educator	1) Listening sessions/circles for students 2) Listening sessions/circles for parents 3) Listening sessions/circles for staff	Research / case studies on best practices to close opportunity gaps Identified local best practices Input from teachers on what supports they need Input from families of struggling students

Research	Hiring Practices, Support programs, Best practices in providing a positive educational experience for educators of color to want to become a part of the district	1) Understanding the barriers to reporting harassment. 2) Understanding of the curriculum development process and implementation	Data collection & analysis to identify which classrooms or schools in the district are closing gaps faster, so those local best practices can be replicated Best practices to support English language learners, students with special needs, and students behind grade level in literacy and math

Summary of Recommended Actions by Framework Category			
Categories	Staffing	Safety - LGBTQ+	MTSS
Policy	Establish policy explicitly seeking to diversify the perspectives of all staff by actively recruiting and supporting administrators, educators and staff from various backgrounds. Focusing on underrepresented perspectives within the district.	Create and adopt a policy regarding transgender and gender non-conforming students	Explicit policy about expectations to support educators and students academically, social- emotionally and behaviorally through a tiered evidence-based approach.

Practice	Intentionally diverse hiring panels to ensure multiple perspectives are present in decision making spaces. (Include staff of color as part of recruitment teams. Allow for voice in the process to shift practices that do not support the candidacy of applicants with diverse backgrounds and perspectives.) Develop a pipeline for teachers. Consider strategies for current classified staff and graduating students. (i.e. alder) Support classified para educator capacity to support equity efforts and increase academic achievement and social emotional development. Consider experienced current staff to provide equity focused training opportunities (Find presenters for PD noted above from within the school system to the extent possible. This creates a sharing of best practices).	Establishing inclusive curriculum Acknowledging in school culture Parent workshops to support families on the journey	Adopt Multi-Tiered System of Support at 75% of schools within 5 years, for preschool through eighth grade inclusive. Every school and the district office will have a functioning MTSS leadership team that works toward supporting students in all domains (SEL, academic behavior). Conduct universal early literacy and math screening using valid/reliable tools from preschool to third grade as a basis for guiding Tier 1-3 instruction/interventions and to identify learning challenges as early as possible Clearly identified Tier 1-3 interventions in literacy and math at all schools, starting in preschool Invest in professional development focused on preschool to third grade to support teachers in the latest science of English language development, early literacy and math development Invest in professional development focused on preschool to third grade to support teachers in understanding the warning signs for learning disabilities and special needs, and universal design for learning strategies

			Process at the board level for vetting new initiatives, projects and grants against district equity priorities and intentional consideration of the impact of new initiatives on over-burdened staff
Resources	Examine current use of recruiting and retention resources to incentivize the strategies that will attract diverse pools of candidates. Consider partnerships to supplement, offset costs and support completion of credential/certification pathway with funding and resources Consider experienced current staff to provide equity focused training opportunities	Further disaggregate the data from CHKs survey and identify indicators of safety and mental health of LBTQ+	Coordinate and structure support personnel currently funded to provide education and related services within a MTSS delivery model Time for site and district teams to analyze data, have inquiry, hold discussions and meet as teams

Relationships	Mentorship program for certificated/classified staff to experience connection with diverse array of perspectives and identities. Build affinity groups to support, affirm and gain perspective from historically underrepresented, marginalized and underserved certificated, classified and administrative staff	Engage LGBTQ+ students and families and learn about their experiences, possibly reaching out to Rainbow (GSA) groups for focus groups	Support teachers in building relationships with students to support SEL growth Support administrators in building relationships with educators that support their growth Connect with bargaining groups to assess implications on staff and faculty.

Power Dynamics	Professional development to build leadership capacity Intentionally diverse hiring panels to ensure multiple perspectives are present in decision making spaces.	Eliminate the stima surrounding LGBTQ students and families through education and ensure that they feel safe and accepted in their school communities.	Adopt Multi-Tiered Systems of Support at district office to model and align systems approaches Executive Cabinet level position focused on the early childhood grades (preschool to third grade) Executive Cabinet level leadership to assess connections needed between departments to implement MTSS Find ways for underrepresented families to have voice, including exploring the use of family liaisons, to decrease the over-representation of privileged families at board meetings and in official district work groups.

Mental Models	Professional development focused on cultural competency, Anti Racist pedagogy, and implicit cultural bias to focus on shifting the mental model from compliance to commitment. Develop explicit common ideas of the meanings of human resources terms and expectations	Examine and educate admin, faculty, staff and community about the needs of and expectations for supporting all students to feel both physically and emotionally safe.	Safe spaces for teachers and staff to be vulnerable and buy-in to a different way of doing things Flexibility of pedagogy – especially at magnet schools– to evolve instructional approaches to meet the needs of *all students*

DATA COLLECTION

The Equity Task Force work groups had specific feedback on areas of future data collection. A specific concern was raised with regard to the lack of available data on how existing targeted interventions are impacting student outcomes. An overarching recommendation for the board and staff to consider is more effective data collection that allows the district to specifically identify (in a database) which individual students are getting which supports, so that student outcomes can be compared for groups receiving and not receiving specific supports. This information in turn can be utilized to identify what is working so that local best practices can be replicated more broadly across the district. Once common, valid and empirical K-3 literacy and math assessments are identified and implemented, student growth data in the early years should be analyzed to similarly identify classrooms and schools where growth rates are stronger, so that the strongest local instructional practices can be replicated more broadly. This will allow the district to accelerate the closure of opportunity gaps by focusing efforts on the years in which high quality instruction and academic and developmental interventions have the greatest impact.

PROCESS CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE EQUITY TASK FORCE GOING FORWARD

The Equity Task Force has made significant progress towards building and supporting the strategic implementation of an Equity Impact Action Plan. As a team they learned together about equity, spent time getting to know one another, shared stories, gained

perspective on the barriers to equity and reviewed the history of public education and some relevant information to inform their understanding of their equity challenges.

The next phase of Task Force development will benefit from formalizing and standardizing internal processes including leadership roles. Task Force member recommendations for continuing to improve the efficacy and responsiveness of the work include the following:

- Develop an onboarding process for new members to minimize the challenges of shifting membership while continuing the collective work.
- Develop a mechanism for the Task Force to address urgent and real time equity issues coming before the SMFCSD school board.
- Continue the operation of a small, representative leadership work group to proactively plan for and solve Task Force process and workflow issues, and to assist in the prioritization and action focus of the work.

APPENDIX X: COMMUNITY & STUDENT LISTENING SESSIONS

To support the information gathering process, a community forum was held on November 2, 2020 followed by a student forum on November 9, 2020. These forums were focused on school safety, facilitated by Nicole Anderson and Dr. Shelley Jones-Holt and were attended by members of the Equity Task Force. The district is encouraged to continue to collect data through community and student dialogues at least 3 times per year to provide trend data over time.

The objectives of the student and community forums are as follows:

1. Gather data on experiences/feelings and impact on lives of target stakeholder groups affected by inequities around school safety
2. Gather data on examples, events, policies, practices, and resources that impact inequities around school safety
3. Collect data from sample of groups based on diverse ethnic/gender representation and power structures (students, parents, police, educators, community, etc)
4. Qualitative data collection to inform future methods: Surveys, listening sessions, observation, interviews
5. Data collection to inform action steps in equity impact action plan within the 6 levels of the systemic change framework: policy, practice, resources, relationships, power dynamics, and mental models
6. Provide qualitative and quantitative data that is high quality, reliable, and timely
7. Provide data that can be measured over time to calculate trends and patterns that indicate inequities amongst target stakeholder groups
8. Inform the greater context of data and analysis by stakeholders to yield interpretation that provide indications of inequities and impact on marginalized stakeholder groups
9. Collect and analyze data that is focused on identifying the root cause of inequities to inform response by power structures

During student/community forums, demographic data were captured through a zoom poll feature as well as self entry during breakout room question discussions for panelists, attendees, staff, and students. Information collected included:

- Quantity
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Grade
- School
- Role in community - students, parents, police, city leadership, faith based groups, advocacy groups, district/school staff-teachers, etc

The community forum consisted of 8 panelists and 26 attendees, whose demographic information is listed below:

- Demographics of community panelists
    - Ethnicity (2 African American/Black, 2 White, 3 LatinX)
    - Gender (6 Females, 1 Male)
- Demographics of community attendees
    - Asian 8% (2/26)
    - Middle Eastern 4% (1/26)
    - White 58% (15/26)
    - African American 15% (4/26)
    - Latinx American 4%(1/26)
    - Mexican American 8% (2/26)
- Demographics of attendees:
    - Parents 23% (6/26)
    - District 54 (14/26)
    - City/Police 8% (2/26)
    - Faith 4% (1/26)
    - Community 12% (3)

The questions for the community forum were:

1. How do you define educational equity?
2. What are the challenges to school safety?
3. What strategies can schools use to effectively address issues of school safety?

The questions for the student forum were:

1. How do you define educational equity?
2. Do you feel safe at school? Why?
3. What are the challenges to feeling safe at school ?
4. What can school leaders and teachers do to make you feel safe in school?
5. What role do police play in your school? Give an example. How does this make you feel?

COMMON THEMES

[where are the themes from these sessions? Not understanding the reason for putting this here if we don't have the feedback from the community that came out of it]

Appendix X – Resources / References

Water of System's Change article

Water of System's Change action plan exercise
Avoiding Racial Equity Detours article
History of Public Education timeline
Elephant and Blind Men Poem
Equity Walk Tool
A History: The Construction of Race and Racism
From safe to brave spaces
Unrealized impact: Case for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion