



BUILDING

EQUITY



**POLICIES AND PRACTICES TO
EMPOWER
ALL LEARNERS**



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Introduction

A Chinese-American man dressed in workout clothes and flip-flops was on his way to the gym when he stopped by his local elementary school to enroll his son in kindergarten. The staff member at the front desk asked for ID and proof of residence. The man produced his ID and a utility bill, which his neighbors had assured him would be sufficient. The front desk worker apologized. The school needed to see a mortgage statement or rental agreement in addition to a utility bill, she explained. Two days later, this same man stopped by this same elementary school on his way home from work, dressed in a suit and tie. He had the required mortgage statement, but this time, the person working at the front desk asked only for a utility bill. His son was enrolled within minutes.

Some might look at this parent's experience and think, "No harm done." There was a minor obstacle, but eventually the man enrolled his son. Others see inequity—an example of the kind of bias that is all too common in schools. We don't know if the first staff member always requires two forms of documentation and the second only one, or if this parent's race and clothing influenced the treatment he received. What we do know is that he came away from the experience wondering why he was targeted and whether or not his son would be treated fairly in this new school.

A fair shot—that's what parents and students expect from their schools. Of course, some would not mind a little special treatment, but they believe that, at the core, schools have to be fair.

What it means for schools to be fair has changed over the decades. At one point in history, it was deemed fair to exclude girls from science classes. It was once considered fair to segregate students based on their race or

ethnicity. Today, we think of fair as being not just equal but equitable. That's an important distinction. Whereas *equal* means everyone gets the same treatment and services as everyone else, *equitable* means each person gets what he or she needs to succeed. For example, in an equal situation, everyone running the race has shoes; in an equitable one, everyone has shoes that fit and are meant for running, as opposed to some having track shoes and others having shoes that are too small, boots, or high heels. In an equal school situation, we build staircases that learners can ascend to higher levels of achievement; in an equitable one, we make sure to build ramps alongside those staircases.

Equity in education is an important concern because schools are essential in the maintenance of democracy. Our founding fathers had two plans in place to ensure that the democracy continued. First was the three branches of government, and second was the need and commitment to educate citizens so that they would be sufficiently informed to participate in decision making. Our system of government is based on the idea that all people are created equal and have the same rights under the law. These are principles we teach our students, and they are principles we honor by working to ensure every student develops the skills and knowledge necessary to pursue his or her dreams.

School Equity

Imagine a school in which

- The student body truly *represents the diversity of human experience* and each member is being prepared to interact, survive, and thrive as 21st century learners and world citizens.
- The culture, educational program, and support services are *informed by and sensitive to the student body's social and emotional needs* such that each student is fully present and engaged in learning.
- The kind of opportunity roadblocks that cause the “haves” to receive more of what education has to offer and the “have-nots” to receive less have been identified and eliminated, and *all doors are open*

to opportunities to engage each student in challenging learning experiences.

- *Instructional excellence* is the norm, and each member of the instructional team is not just committed to professional mastery but also supported in a way that allows for its development and demonstration.
- The student body is *motivated and supported* to discover their passions and advance toward positive personal, familial, social, civil, and vocational goals and opportunities.

Now imagine transforming your school into one that is fully aligned with these principles and pursuing this overall vision. To that end, we have developed an organizational structure called the Building Equity Taxonomy (BET) and a set of aligned data-collecting tools—the Building Equity Review (BER) and Building Equity Audit (BEA). Our work to date in over 200 schools in Southern California and hundreds more throughout the United States encourages us to believe that this structure and these tools, applied in tandem, will help you clarify the equity concerns you have about your school and respond by initiating responsive equity-building practices. We offer this book to support your work to map a vision of equity for your school and promote concrete action to achieve it.

The Building Equity Taxonomy

The Building Equity Taxonomy (see Figure I.1) focuses on the equitable practices and outcomes that support critical standards of equity in a school or district.

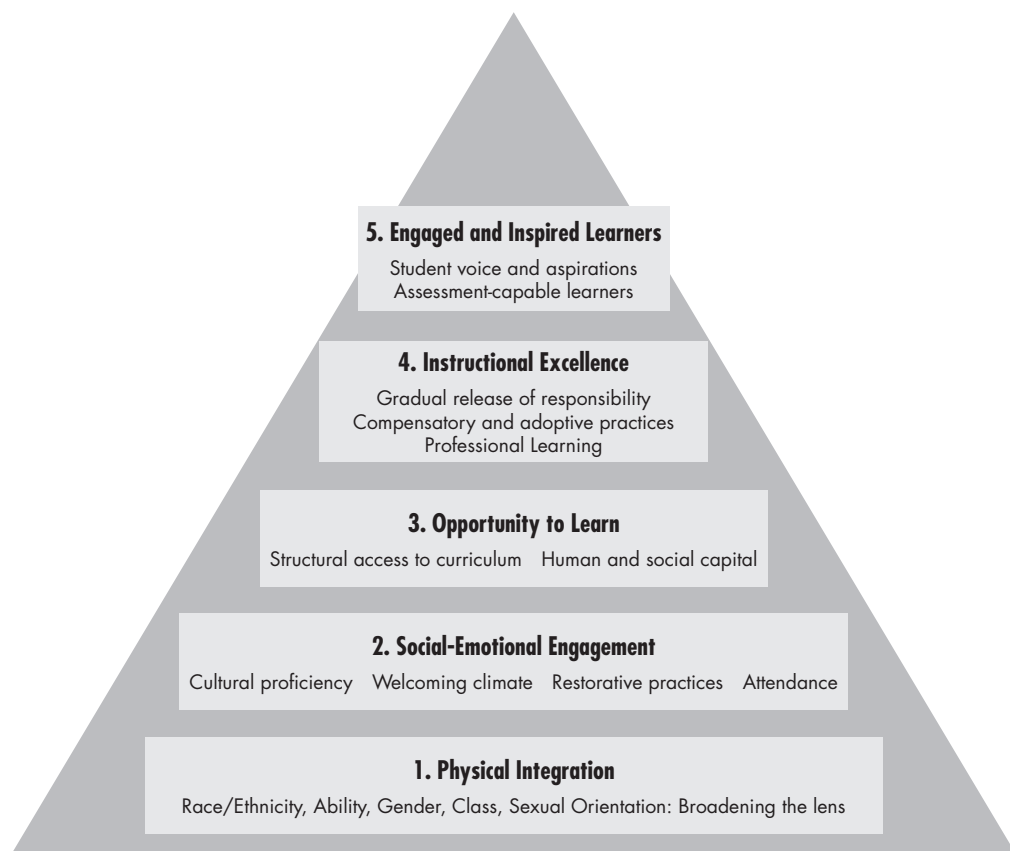
As illustrated in the figure, the taxonomy has five levels, each of which will be explored further in the chapters to come:

1. **Physical Integration.** Equitable schools are diverse ones, and they value their students' differences and unique experiences with the world. In Chapter 1, we focus on integration efforts and broaden the lens from a focus on race and ethnicity to include class, gender, language, ability, religion, and sexual orientation.

2. **Social-Emotional Engagement.** Equitable schools address the needs of the whole child. In Chapter 2, we explore social aspects of the learning environment, including the creation of a welcoming climate as well as the value of restorative practices and efforts to improve student attendance.
3. **Opportunity to Learn.** Equitable schools analyze and challenge the structural aspects of the curriculum and identify areas that hinder students' opportunities to engage in deep learning. In Chapter 3, we focus on human and social capital within schools as well as compensatory and adaptive approaches to learning. We explore the ways in which school systems can provide students with opportunities based on *their* needs, which may differ from the needs of peers in the same class or school.
4. **Instructional Excellence.** Equitable schools provide all students with an excellent education that allows them to collaborate with other learners. In Chapter 4, we review the types of learning environments that students deserve—ones that include clearly articulated learning targets, well-defined measures of success, and tasks that are rigorous and aligned. We focus on the implementation of the gradual release of responsibility as a framework to ensure that students develop confidence and competence.
5. **Engaged and Inspired Learners.** Equitable schools see all students as capable and accomplished learners who are constantly building and reinforcing their identity and agency. Students are empowered to use their education to pursue new interests, skills, and aspirations, and the school provides support in the form of viable action plans and opportunities. In Chapter 5, we look at how students can learn to direct their own learning and identify what else they must learn to reach their dreams.

Each level in this taxonomy is an integral component of an equitable and excellent schooling experience. Unless all are addressed, schools will fall short of providing students with the education they deserve. For example, many

FIGURE 1.1
The Building Equity Taxonomy



schools have achieved physical integration but have neglected to change the learning environment to a degree sufficient to promote the achievement of all students. Other schools have done admirable work to promote social and emotional learning but have not addressed curriculum and instruction or student engagement and inspiration. Still others have focused on providing quality instruction but not on ensuring this instruction is accessible to all students and that every child has the opportunity to learn.

This piecemeal approach to school equity has not resulted in outcomes that we can all be proud of. There are still far too many students whose aspirations are not realized, with dreams deferred or destroyed. We advocate for a much more comprehensive approach to equity work, one in which school systems consider every level of the Building Equity Taxonomy. It's a way to see equity not as "one more thing" but as *the* thing that drives a school's collective efforts.

A Means of Organizing Equity Concerns and Responsive Practices

Taxonomies have long been used in science to explain the world around us. A taxonomy identifies and separates things into groups and communicates the structural relationships that exist among these groups. Readers are undoubtedly familiar with Bloom's taxonomy and its 21st century update, which was proposed as a means of classifying educational learning objectives and then establishing and differentiating the relationship's among the groups of learning objectives based on relative complexity (Krathwohl, 2002). These groups of learning objectives were subsequently placed at different levels to indicate a hierarchical relationship.

Similar to Bloom's taxonomy, the Building Equity Taxonomy—with its five standards of equality and associated equity concerns and responsive practices—is organized into levels set in a hierarchical order. The order of the levels does not argue for the importance of one set of concerns and practices over another, nor does it imply that a school needs to completely address all issues located within the first level before attending to concerns and practices at the next. Rather, each BET level is presented in the order that we believe will promote practical progress toward equity. In other words, a school attempting to address concerns at the upper levels of BET will find limited success if it is ignoring many of the concerns at the taxonomy's lower levels. For example, BET Level 2 addresses the social and emotional needs of students, which is an equity concern based on the assumption that learners disengage when their social and emotional needs are unmet. BET Level 4

addresses access to excellent instruction, which is an equity concern under the assumption that educational achievement depends on quality instruction. Level 2 is a foundation for Level 4 in that students' ability to benefit from quality instruction will be magnified as they are socially and emotionally prepared to engage in their learning.

Even as we recognize the Building Equity Taxonomy as hierarchical, with each level providing an optimal foundation for the one above it, we caution against viewing the levels as a simple linear progression. For example, no school can afford to delay action to ensure quality instruction (Level 4) due to the fact that many students' emotional needs still require significant attention (Level 2). A trauma-informed school is still responsible for delivering quality instruction, and rather than seeing these initiatives as competing, effective schools work out the symbiotic relationships between responsive academic and nonacademic practices.

BET Level 5 (Engaged and Inspired Learners) does deserve a bit of special attention in this introduction. Levels 1 to 4 address equity concerns and practices that schools should consider when designing school equity plans. They focus largely on inputs—that is, on things the school might choose to do in order to promote a more equitable learning environment and experience. Level 5, in contrast, is much more focused on student outcomes—that is, on what educators hope to achieve as a result of their efforts to promote equity and excellence. Level 5 is about determining the effect of those inputs on the overall development and achievement of a student body. It's about asking, "How do we know whether our students have been affected by our responsive practices to further equity? Is our mission and vision for our school and student body truly being realized? What does a student demonstrate in skill, knowledge, and disposition that tells us our attention to school equity is approaching a quality educational experience?"

In order to conceptualize a response to these Level 5 questions, we looked to another taxonomy: Maslow's (1954) Hierarchy of Needs. In it, Maslow listed levels of needs that are foundational for the ability to realize and even transcend one's potential. He labeled his top level *self-actualization* and implied that meeting the four levels of more basic needs below it was

the way to enhance one's ability to realize potential (i.e., to self-actualize) and then create new goals (i.e., to self-transcend). The analogy to education and to Building Equity Taxonomy was obvious to us, and we hope that as you read and discuss this book, it will become clear to you as well. Where Maslow's hierarchy is a psychological model that addresses conditions of a self-actualized person, our taxonomy is an educational model that addresses conditions necessary to foster an engaged and inspired student body. Maslow focused on four levels of basic human needs foundational to creating motivational drive and accomplishment; the Building Equity Taxonomy focuses on four levels of equity concerns foundational to fostering a self-actualized student body that is engaged and inspired to learn.

The Building Equity Review and Full Audit

As we have described, the taxonomy is a way of organizing equity concerns and responsive practices in a manner that promotes a school's ability to address them effectively. The Building Equity Review is a practical means to get that action under way. This 25-item, survey-driven tool gives school teams an entry point for their equity initiative (see Figure I.2). The statements, which are associated with specific levels of the Building Equity Taxonomy, target core, foundational equity concerns. Based on our experience, asking staff to explore agree/disagree responses to these statements is a good starting place for equity work. We hope that these 25 items, discussed in the chapters ahead, will help your school gather data on your strengths, generate a list of areas for potential growth, and engage in powerful and enlightening conversations.

A longer and more expansive tool—the full Building Equity Audit—is available for schools looking to move from inquiry to action. The audit consists of targeted surveys for staff and students. We've seen schools adapt these to provide a parent-focused survey as well, and we are working on developing a formal parent version of our own. You can find a copy of the staff and student versions of the Building Equity Audit in this book's Appendixes, along with links to download them. Like the shorter Building Equity Review, the

FIGURE 1.2**Components of the Building Equity Review**

LEVEL 1: PHYSICAL INTEGRATION

1. Our student body is diverse.
2. Our school publicly seeks and values a diverse student body.
3. Efforts are made to promote students' respecting, and interacting with, students from different backgrounds.
4. Our school facilities and resources are at least equal to those of other district schools.
5. Classroom placement and student schedules ensure that diversity exists in all learning environments.

LEVEL 2: SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

6. The social and emotional needs of students are adequately supported in the school, from prosocial skills development to responsiveness to trauma.
7. Teachers and staff show they care about students.
8. The school has programs and policies that are designed to improve attendance.
9. The school's discipline plans are restorative rather than punitive.
10. Students are treated equitably when they misbehave, and consequences are based on an ethic of care rather than demographic characteristics.

LEVEL 3: OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN

11. We do not use tracking to group or schedule students.
12. Students have equitable access to class placement and course offerings.
13. All students have access to challenging curriculum.
14. Teachers have high expectations for all students.
15. There are active working relationships between home and school to increase opportunities to learn.
16. Soft skills are developed and valued in our school.

LEVEL 4: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE

17. All students experience quality core instruction
18. There are transparent and transportable instructional routines in place schoolwide.
19. Grading and progress reports are focused on subject matter mastery and competence.
20. Teachers notice students' individual instructional needs and have systems to differentiate as needed.
21. Educators have access to professional learning that builds their technical and intellectual skills.

LEVEL 5: ENGAGED AND INSPIRED LEARNERS

22. Students are engaged in a wide range of leadership activities within the school.
23. Student aspirations are fostered.
24. Students select learning opportunities related to their interests.
25. Students are provided authentic and applied learning experiences that link with their goals and aspirations.

survey items in the Building Equity Audit are organized by guiding statements that align with each of the Building Equity Taxonomy levels—from Level 1: Physical Integration through Level 5: Engaged and Inspired Learners. In addition, 25 key items from the full Building Equity Audit are discussed in Chapter 6 to provide further insight into the percentage of students who perceive themselves to be engaged and inspired learners.

When developing our equity audit tools, we borrowed from a progressive human resources employee evaluation practice called 360-degree feedback, in which one’s performance is evaluated not just by a supervisor but also by peers, subordinates, and customers. Imagine a group of people standing in a circle and looking into the middle at the same event. Each of their perspectives on the event will be somewhat different, based on where they are positioned. The Building Equity Audit provides a way to solicit and combine the perspectives of various stakeholders (i.e., students, staff, and parents) into a full picture of equity concerns and responsive equity practices. In short, it can show you where the strengths and vulnerabilities lie so that you can move forward with better, smarter action.

The Building Equity Audit’s greatest value is its ability to mine the perspectives and experiences that exist within your school right now in relation to each level of the Building Equity Taxonomy and identify which students are more prepared to benefit from current practice and which need additional support. To speak in metaphor, it can show you where a ramp should be provided alongside the stairs you’ve already put in place. The audit statements selected for inclusion in the Building Equity Review and discussed in this book are offered to provoke conversations, and the associated actions we propose focus on adding the right type of ramps so that more students can reach higher levels of attainment. A school’s commitment to building those ramps, in essence, becomes its equity plan.

Conclusion

Progress toward a society in which all people recognize themselves as equals and respect one another’s inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of

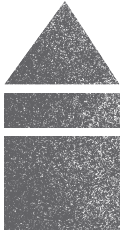
happiness requires all of us to reexamine the distinction and relationship between equity and equality. It requires educators to challenge the institutional discrimination that still exists in our schools.

The pursuit of equity is not an easy path, and in many cases, it is realized as a “two steps forward, one step backward” process. But in order to move forward, even in fits and starts, we must understand where education as a field has been and what it might become.

Educational policymakers, researchers, leaders, and practitioners most often engage in this work by asking, “How are we going to ensure all students receive an equitable education?” In his brilliant 2004 book on community building, Peter Block points out that asking *how* is the wrong essential question. Before people can conceive of *the how*, he explains, they must first understand *the why*. That is, in order to figure out how to address inequity, we must understand why inequity exists—what we’re doing or not doing that keeps it alive.

Why would anyone write a book about creating an equitable school without first addressing why equitable schools are important and what they might achieve? Why would *we*, who understand the importance of having a well-stated purpose for every lesson (Fisher & Frey, 2011), write this book without clarifying our intention? We know very well that the practice of communicating learning expectations and success criteria is highly correlated with instructional effectiveness and student learning (Hattie, 2009). Therefore, we chose to begin this book by clearly stating our purpose: *To extend the conversation about equity for all students and to provide educators with a comprehensive model for evaluating their current systems while providing a blueprint for improvement.* Our students deserve no less than a high-quality, inclusive, equitable learning experience.

Just imagine how different the world will be when children brought up to value individual differences grow up to run it.



CHAPTER 1

Physical Integration

Separate Is Not Equal

There's a verse in Bob Dylan's 1964 song "My Back Pages" that provided us with both confidence and a caution as we embarked on our school equity work:

*A self-ordained professor's tongue
Too serious to fool
Spouted out that liberty
Is just equality in school
"Equality," I spoke the word
As if a wedding vow
Ah, but I was so much older then
I'm younger than that now*

Dylan recognized that in the midst of the great civil rights awakenings of the 1960s, public education continued to be a hallmark of this country's commitment to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We can find a record of the hopes and expectations bound up in U.S. public education in letters exchanged by Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe. In these letters, each asserted the need and commitment to educate every citizen and expressed the belief that, as Jefferson (1787) wrote, education provides "the most security for the preservation of a due degree of liberty."

Like the protagonist of “My Back Pages,” we have come to see the naiveté of assuming that the relationship between school equality and liberty is a simple or a linear one. Since Dylan wrote this song in the mid-1960s, there have been many policy-driven changes in public schools that have made them more equal, and yet widespread inequity persists. The words of the singer—wiser now, having shaking off the received truth of “self-ordained professors”—capture what we ourselves have come to believe through our work in schools: that a faithful focus on quality is not enough to promote liberty and justice for all. Equality is rooted in the concept of fairness, and a fair race is impossible when its various runners start at variable distances from the finish line, and the course takes them over very different terrains. Similarly, providing equal access to the stairway does not promote fairness to those who use wheelchairs. Achieving equity requires that this fact be acknowledged—and that we build a ramp alongside every stairway.

Without doubt, there are many groups that have been historically marginalized by both private sentiment and public policy. This deep-rooted marginalization is why both equality and equity remain critical concerns for public institutions, including our schools. Resources are not distributed equally among our schools, and some of the students who enter them are less prepared to benefit from the resources that are available. It’s important to pause for a moment and considered how these concerns are intertwined. Advocating for advanced teacher education to support English learners (which is an equity-related resource that can help level the playing field) in a district’s lowest-achieving school with its highest percentage of English learners may not address the underlying issue of low student achievement when the school is staffed with the district’s least-experienced or least-qualified teachers (which reflects unequal distribution of resources).

Why Integration Is Important for Equity

The physical integration of students in classrooms and schools is foundational to the equity efforts that follow. Without a continuing focus on the inclusion of all children, it is likely that there will be an erosion of opportunity

for some based on race, ethnicity, language, gender, and sexual orientation. Although physical access is not sufficient to ensure equity, it is an important consideration. There are still a lot of students who do not have the same access to their neighborhood school or public schools of choice that other students have. Physical integration is foundational to equity work because separate is not equal.

Taking Integration from Equality to Equity

Despite the framers of the Constitution's assertion that public schools were to be both the fuel and model of democracy, racial inequities have permeated and persisted in business, social, and governmental structures. There has been a pervasive movement to provide equal and equitable access to public education, fueled by a landmark Supreme Court ruling declaring that the doctrine of separate but equal had no place in public schools. This was followed by the Court's rulings requiring school districts to desegregate with deliberate speed. Thwarting these progressive efforts were 70 years of Jim Crow laws, pushbacks to forced and often poorly supported busing programs, and housing patterns that have maintained and increased the number of racially segregated neighborhoods. Whether it is a result of pervasive racism, poorly conceived public policy initiatives, or the effect of poverty and housing trends on school placements, the fact remains that the number of minority-majority schools is increasing, and that distinction continues to be a key indicator of educational performance. Despite notable exceptions, the more "separate" students are, the more unequal their outcomes remain. This is why physical integration is the foundational tier in the Building Equity Taxonomy.

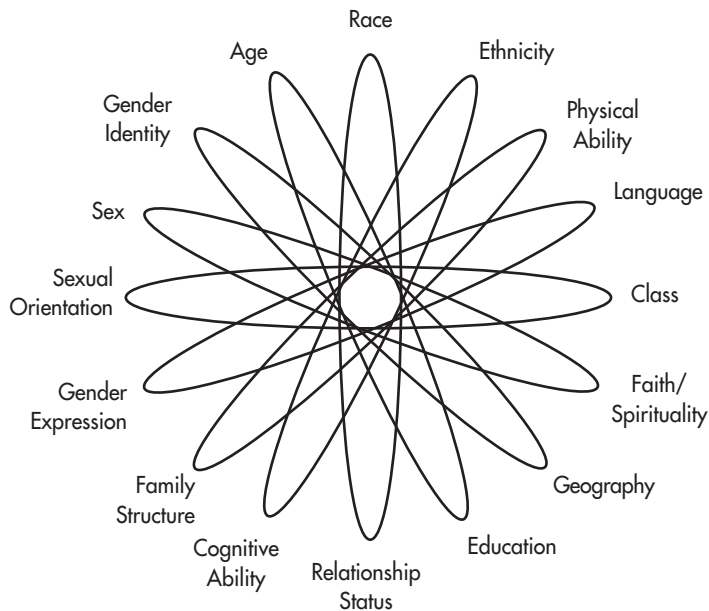
Most of the policies and practices capable of rectifying aspects of inequity are beyond the purview of building-level decisions and, therefore, beyond the purview of this book. However, we must be aware that efforts to create more equitable learning environments will be limited by the extent to which schools remain segregated based on race, socioeconomic status, and ability. These inequities must be addressed through progressive and institutional urban

development, housing and educational policy initiatives, and structural changes designed to cope with the present-day effects of a long history of exclusion and segregation. We must remember, too, that the real goal to work toward is success for every student—and simply getting students in an integrated setting is insufficient to change the outcomes for many students. To truly level the playing field, educators must move beyond a focus on equality and start demanding equity. By focusing on equity, we expand our efforts beyond student placement. And in doing so, we can broaden our vision to include not only equity for students of all races and ethnicities but also for students of all socioeconomic statuses; degrees of language proficiency; gender identities; sexual orientations; and physical, emotional, behavioral, and intellectual abilities.

Broadening the Equity Lens: From Race to Identity

Over time, the recognition that separate schools could not be equal schools codified in *Brown vs. Board of Education* has evolved from a single-issue focus on race to conversations that include ethnicity, language, gender, sexual orientation, and disability. Whereas integration in U.S. public school was once primary about racially balancing a school's population of African American and white children, more recent explorations of identity have complicated the metrics of integration. First, we moved to consider an expanded number of racial and ethnic identities—Asian American, Latino, white, and Native American students as well as African Americans. Next, we opened our eyes to the numbers of low-income students, English language learners (ELLs), and students with disabilities. Now, we're factoring in intersectionality (e.g., Crenshaw, 1989; Jones & McEwen, 2000) and recognizing that our students are more than just a single racial, ethnic, or ability group assignment—that they have layered lives and affiliate with others through a complex mix that includes not only the aforementioned identities and the societal lens applied to each but also religion, geography, family relationship status, and age (see Figure 1.1).

FIGURE 1.1
Dimensions of Identity



Source: Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, DHS LGBTQ Community Training Team/SOGIE Project Team. Reprinted with permission.

To provide just one illustration, a 9-year-old girl with Pacific Islander heritage living in Springdale, Arkansas (home to the largest expatriate population of Marshall Islanders in the world), is likely to experience schooling differently than a 9-year-old girl living in a community where hers is the only Pacific Islander family. The experience of this student would shift in all sorts of ways if her family were the wealthiest in the community or the poorest, if she were transgender, if she were gifted or had an intellectual or emotional disability, and on and on. Educators' efforts to improve the learning lives of all children must consider how dimensions of identity beyond traditional demographic measures can inform how we address social-emotional

engagement, create more robust opportunities to learn, strengthen instructional excellence, and empower students.

Expanding the Interventions: From the Classroom to the Whole School

Ensuring equitable educational opportunities is a concern at both the school and district levels. Certainly there will be a need for targeted interventions, but creating a culture of achievement is an issue that touches the lives of all students, albeit in different ways. By broadening single-focus equity initiatives to comprehensive, schoolwide measures and approaches, we can make the practices that support equity standard practice.

Although the outward expression of inequitable practices may differ by group—for example, gender inequities look substantially different from limited opportunities to learn for black and Hispanic/Latino students living in poverty—each serves as a litmus test of a school’s or district’s responsiveness to the biases that its students experience. We can’t move forward in discussing social-emotional engagement, opportunities to learn, instructional excellence, and student engagement and inspiration without first examining whom our efforts might affect.

Building Equity Review Statements: Physical Integration

It’s time to delve into a discussion of the first group of statements in the Building Equity Review. These statements—and the examples we share of how teachers, administrators, and students we have worked with have responded to these statements—are meant to provoke conversation and kick off your equity work. Ultimately, we hope they will inspire your school to engage in the full Building Equity Audit and take targeted action.

As you review the set of statements associated with Level 1 of the Building Equity Taxonomy, keep in mind that physical integration is a necessary but singularly insufficient response to the equity crisis. Said another way,

students have to be present in a valued learning environment, *and* we have to address their social-emotional engagement and their opportunities to learn. We have to ensure instructional excellence, *and* we have to give students voice while honoring their aspirations. To our thinking, this work starts with getting students in an integrated educational setting.

1. *Our student body is diverse.*

This statement asks teachers to consider what a diverse student body really is, with the reminder that that the definition of diversity should not be limited to a student body's racial, ethnic, or cultural composition. Ideally, a school should represent the diversity that exists in society. What complicates this ideal is that the immediate community and neighborhoods may not represent the diversity of society at large, and this is something the stakeholders in a school should bear in mind by considering who is represented and under-represented. Knowing this is empowering, as it casts a light on who may be left vulnerable or isolated. Further, it affects the ways in which a school can address issues of fairness, privilege, and need. Awareness of diversity can generate ideas for supports, services, curriculum, and projects, and these ideas can find their way into equity plans that are generated throughout each tier of the Building Equity Taxonomy.

Sometimes physical integration is just a matter of an invitation. Members of the staff of Heritage Elementary School noticed that there were several neighborhood children who were being bused to another school that had a specialized class for students with significant disabilities. They talked with their principal about this, and she crafted a letter to these children's parents and guardians inviting them to consider enrolling their child at Heritage. As part of her letter, the principal wrote, "You may be asking yourself why our school decided to reach out to you. Simply said, our current students are missing the opportunity to learn from, and with, your child. There is a wide range of human experience that our current students are missing—and part of that is because your child is not in attendance here." Of the seven students whose families received the letter, four were enrolled immediately. The school asked for and received district-level support in terms of staff and professional

learning, and the principal said that she was thrilled with the outcomes. The parents of the students with significant disabilities reported increases in their children's social skills, friendships, and academic performance, and there was widespread agreement among the Heritage stakeholders that this step toward increased integration enriched the learning experience for all.

2. Our school publicly seeks and values a diverse student body.

Regardless of the current demographics of your school, this statement prompts you to analyze the environment for evidence that educating a diverse group of students is important to the people who work there. There are any number of ways that a school can demonstrate its values, including inviting students who do not currently attend to join the campus, as the principal of Heritage did. Further, when staff members step up to point out that their school does not represent the diversity found in the community and advocate for change, it sends a clear message that all students are welcome.

The staff at Valley View Elementary School post signs around the school in Korean, even though they have only a few enrolled students who speak the language. As one of the teachers noted, "Language and culture are interconnected. When people see their language, they feel more comfortable. It's like we're saying, "We value you here." The teachers know that there are many more Korean-speaking students in an adjacent community, and they want everyone to know that they are welcome. The parents notice. One was overheard saying, "They take the time here to make you feel important. All of the directions and signs are in Korean, not just English and Spanish. I've told my friends that they should think about coming to this school." Valley View staff are quick to point out that this isn't about enrollment competition but about clarifying to the community that every child matters.

The signs in Korean are just one way that the staff at Valley View have publicly expressed their support for educating a diverse group of students. They also recognize that a significant percentage of their students live in poverty, and they have taken steps to show these students and their families that they are important in the school community. As one outward expression of this, Valley View installed washing machines and dryers in a former staff

room so that parents could clean their children's clothes at no cost (a small community grant covers the expense). While the clothes are being washed, parents are invited to attend language development classes or financial literacy seminars or to volunteer in the classrooms.

Sometimes, staff education is a necessary precursor to publicly valuing a diverse student body. When Kennedy Middle School first began seeing female Muslim students wearing the hijab, or traditional headscarf, several staff members went to the administration with concerns. As one of the teachers wondered, "If Rabab can wear the hijab, what other things will students want to wear? I can just see my boundary-pushing kids saying they want to wear ski masks or pajamas all day. Does this mean our dress code will go right out the door? It clearly says that there are no caps, hats, or bandanas allowed."

Understanding that there was both a lack of information and a bit of fear behind such remarks, two history teachers invited a local Islamic religious leader to the school—setting up a completely voluntary after-school informational session for all staff. Attendees were urged to ask questions and to learn more about the traditions valued by Muslims. The teacher who made the comment about her student Rabab said afterward, "I had no idea that wearing the hijab was a custom, like wearing the cross is for me. It's not some random thing; it's part of a religious tradition. I feel bad for suggesting that it was just in defiance of our dress code."

The Valley View staff decided that they needed to update the dress code, which they did. But even more important, they decided to update their promotional materials to feature photographs of Muslim students wearing the hijab. They also scheduled a series of public seminars for the community and assemblies for students to facilitate their understanding of Islamic traditions. This last action generated some pushback from other religious communities, and the staff decided to host an annual Day of Understanding that would allow people to learn about cultures and traditions present in the community that are different from their own. The staff also invited religious leaders to attend the student-focused events and changed the emphasis from Islamic traditions to comparative religion.

3. Efforts are made to promote students' respecting, and interacting with, students from different backgrounds.

The whole idea of integration is for diverse groups of students to interact with one another. Unfortunately, in a lot of integrated schools, students form groups in which membership is defined by ethnicity, language, gender, or some other demographic.

The staff at Red Canyon Middle School noticed that parts of their school were highly segregated, despite the fact that their school represented the larger community well and was demographically very diverse. A look into the lunchroom highlighted this fact. In one area, all of the students were black. In another area, all of the students were Latino. Students did not interact across racial/ethnic lines during lunch or, the staff also noted, on sports teams or at social events such as dances.

When this student self-segregation was brought up during a faculty meeting, one of the teachers commented, "The kids are integrated during their classes. I think that they can choose to be with their own kind during their free time if they want." There was an audible gasp in the room, then a long pause. The teacher who had made the comment continued, "What? Don't students have the right to choose their friends?" After another long pause, another teacher responded, "Yes, students should be able to choose their friends. But I wonder what we're doing or not doing that means they don't have friends across races and ethnicities. There wasn't a single black kid sitting with a white or Hispanic student at the last dance. Why is that? It's bigger than student choice. It's an unwritten rule at this school that we need to change."

And change it they did. It started with a series of race and human relations lessons, which was followed by a mandatory interdisciplinary unit on individual differences. The staff at Red Canyon made a conscious choice to help students interact with a broader range of peers. They engaged students in discussion about their observations and held forums to gain further student feedback. The teachers emphasized more collaborative learning opportunities and problem-based group projects in their classrooms. It took time, but the results were impressive. Not only did the school's achievement scores

increase, but so did student satisfaction. On Red Canyon's annual student perception survey, participants noted feeling safer at school and feeling more connected with fellow students and staff. Looking back on the progress the school had made, one of the faculty noted, "It was just something we missed. We had an integrated school but not an integrated experience. When that changed, this school became a better place for students to learn."

In addition to facilitating interactions, equity-conscious schools ensure that students feel respected for who they are. This requires careful attention to bullying prevention and addressing harassment when it occurs. We will focus on repairing harm in a later chapter in this book, but right now, we want to say a little about helping students learn to respect one another. Lack of respect can be displayed in many ways, and it can affect a wide range of students. For this example, we'll draw on the experiences of Danielle, who started a new school year by asking teachers and students to call him Danny and change the pronouns they used to refer to him from "she" to "he." Danny's choice was hard for some students and staff members to accept, as it violated their sense of right and wrong. In fact, after a great deal of soul-searching, one of the staff members at Danny's school actually transferred to another school, saying, "I can't accept Danielle as a boy, but I don't want to be part of the problem for her, or him, or whatever."

Other staff members recognized Danny's transition as an opportunity to teach respect. The English team purchased a number of adolescent literature titles that included transgender characters, such as *Luna* (Peters, 2004), *I am J* (Beam, 2012), and *Some Assembly Required: The Not-So-Secret Life of a Transgender Teen* (Andrews, 2014). They informed the students that the books were available for those who were interested. After a parent complained about *Luna*, staff scheduled a meeting with that parent and opened up a discussion of literature's role in helping readers understand the world around them. As one of the English teachers said, "The fact is that Danny goes to school here, and some students want to understand his life a little better. We didn't assign this book or any of the other new books that include transgender characters, but we did make them available so that students could become informed." Over time, Danny taught his peers and teachers

that he was more like them than he was different. He wanted a good education and a fair shot at life. He wanted to be understood and respected. School became more equitable for him when his teachers accepted him and helped other students respect him.

4. Our school facilities and resources are at least equal to those of other district schools.

One of the ways that school systems telegraph messages about who is valued and who is less valued is through the facility. Within the same district, there can be significant disparities between the facilities available for students. Of course, when new schools are built, they are frequently better than older facilities; that's typically just the reality of new construction. The question is not whether the district's newest campus is "the same" as its oldest campus, but rather what is being done to modernize every campus and whether the expenditures for these facilities are available for public scrutiny.

The coaching staff at Johnson High School could not schedule night games because the school's athletic fields did not have lights. When asked about this, a district official tried to explain away the inequity. "When this campus was built," he stated, "the perception was that it was not safe [to be in this community] at night, so they didn't install lights." A school built around the same time, only seven miles away, had lights for its athletic fields, so the students from Johnson were bused to that school for evening practices and games. Just think about the message this sends students and their families.

It took the alumni association to kick off change. Former students raised several thousand dollars, and the district matched the funds so that Johnson could have lights installed on its sports fields. The pride the students felt on the first night of a genuine home game cannot be overstated. As one of them said, "I'll remember this for my whole life. People cared enough for me to have a win in my own neighborhood."

Of course, facilities are more than sports fields. When the teachers at Avondale Elementary completed their Building Equity Audit, they noted that most other schools had replaced computer labs with laptop carts that travelled from classroom to classroom. "We lose a lot of instructional time

walking from class to the lab,” one teacher noted. “The computers in the lab are outdated, and our kids only get to use them every so often, when we sign up. It doesn’t seem fair that other schools have updated their technology so much more than we have.”

When Avondale staff contacted the district office, they learned that there was a technology phase-in plan in place and that they would eventually get new tools for their students to use. The principal, advocating for students and teachers in terms of equity, asked if there was a way to accelerate the process. In response, the district technology staff said yes, but that would mean that the work would have to be done while students were in session rather than during the summer break. The staff readily agreed, and the school had updated technology months ahead of schedule. It was wrong for Avondale students to have waited as long as they did, but coordinated action between motivated educators and the district meant they would wait no longer.

5. Classroom placement and student schedules ensure that diversity exists in all learning environments.

Getting students into neighborhood schools that value diversity is a worthy goal and has been the focus of much of the school equality work of the past several decades. However, once students are on the campus, they are often at risk of being segregated. As we noted in an earlier section, sometimes students do this themselves as they form their friendship groups. In that case, educators can intervene to provide students with opportunities to get to know a wider range of people. Other times, it’s the educators who segregate students. We have to believe that they do so with good intentions, despite the fact that separate remains unequal. Sadly, this is all too common, so we’ll spend a bit more time providing examples of what teachers and administrators have done to address within-school segregation.

Perkins Elementary School has a group of students who live in poverty. The number isn’t big enough for Perkins to have a schoolwide program, so the staff decided to schedule a reading intervention class for students who qualify for Title I services. Every day at 9:35 a.m. or 11:00 a.m. (depending on the grade level), targeted students left their regular class to be taught in

small groups by a reading specialist. The staff tried hard to ensure that only students who qualified for the added intervention received it, but in doing so, they segregated students based on family income. Meanwhile, missing regular lessons led many of these students to fall further behind in class, despite the intervention intended to support their achievement.

When the Title I teacher retired and a replacement was hired, he asked if his schedule could include time to provide support for students within their regular classes. In a discussion with a group of 1st grade teachers, the new Title I teacher said, “I think we could have more success if students had access to your content with my support rather than two different contents to try to learn.” This advocacy for equity dismantled the inadvertent segregation that had occurred at Perkins. For example, while the class was engaged in collaborative learning, the Title I teacher invited four qualified students to meet with him for an additional reading lesson, which was based on the lesson that the classroom teacher had previously taught. In the first year of implementation, the scores for students who qualified for Title I services increased by 18 percent, and the teachers attributed this to the increased amount of instructional time that students experienced, as they no longer had to travel to another room or miss out on core content. In addition, they noted that “the Title I interventions were directly connected to what students were supposed to be learning and students could catch up faster when the Title I teacher based his lessons on areas of student need from those lessons.”

Another form of within-school segregation that merits careful examination is the practice of single-sex, or gender-separated, education. We saw this at Westfield Middle School, where, to combat chronically low science achievement, the teachers decided to create optional “girls only” science classes that girls could enroll in with parental permission. For us, this kind of gender-based segregation is problematic. We recognize that this is a controversial stance and that there are individual studies that demonstrate some positive effect on learning for some students in classes set up this way. Still, Hattie (2009, 2012) reports no supporting research-based evidence for the benefits of gender-segregated education. In other words, there is a lack

of compelling evidence to suggest that gender-based classes significantly improve long-term learning.

Students with disabilities are another group that is often segregated within a school. We have lost count of the number of times we have been told that segregating students with disabilities in self-contained classrooms was “for their own good.” Again, if there were data demonstrating that segregating special education students and teaching them separately led to significant improvements in learning, we’d stop talking about this. But that is not the case. Even a cursory review of outcome data from special education classrooms clearly indicates that students with disabilities have a long way to go to learn at reasonable levels. The least dangerous assumption we can make is that students with disabilities can and should learn alongside their peers without disabilities, and that specialized supports can be provided within the context of the regular school day.

There is still a significant bias in the teaching profession about responsibility for students with disabilities, whether the disabilities are intellectual, behavioral, emotional, or physical. Some special educators have the mindset that they, and only they, are qualified to teach students with disabilities. Some general educators believe that they don’t have the skills to meet the complex needs of students with disabilities, and that the result will be a bad educational experience for all students in the class. The reality is that there is no secret knowledge that special educators are keeping hidden from general educators. Good teaching is good teaching; it’s just that some students might need extra support and time to learn.

Laurel Academy High School had maintained segregated special education classes for many years. Students with disabilities were routinely educated with peers who also had disabilities. As one teacher noted, “That’s just how it always was. We never even thought to ask about this until we started working on our Building Equity Audit. Suddenly we realized that there was a group of students who had been left out of our discussions. It was a wake-up call for us to realize that all of our previous efforts had neglected an entire group of students.”

As we have noted before, recognizing the problem is important, but it's figuring out what to do in response that's critical. Given that each of Laurel Academy's students with disabilities had an individualized educational plan (IEP) that indicated his or her placement, the staff could not make unilateral or rapid changes in this area. Instead, they focused on talking with parents and teachers about designing systems of support so that these students would be successful.

When we talk about the changes at Laurel Academy, people tend to wonder about the "appropriateness" of the students with disabilities being educated in regular classrooms. As one person said, "After all, at the IEP team meeting, all the stakeholders decided that the separate learning environment was the best placement." There is a surface logic to that argument, until you realize that placement decisions are typically based on recommendations of what is known rather than what can be realized. If type or severity of disability were a good predictor of who could, or could not, be educated in a regular classroom, there would not be significant disparity in rates of integration and inclusive education. But there is. District to district and state to state, the percentage of students who are educated 80 percent or more of the school day in the general education classroom varies widely, which suggests that the sophistication of the system, rather than the student himself or herself, is the variable that facilitates (or blocks) access to a quality education in the regular classroom.

As with getting students into a diverse school, simply getting students with disabilities into regular classrooms is a necessary but singularly insufficient step to achieving equity. From there, the work becomes more focused on ensuring the proper systems of support, which we'll look at in this book's remaining chapters. A student with a disability who is educated by a special educator is not receiving the same education as a student who has access to a general educator. The knowledge base is different. Similarly, a student with a disability who has accommodations and modifications designed by a special educator is more likely to achieve equitable outcomes than a student who does not receive accommodations and modifications or whose accommodations and modifications are designed by someone without formal training.

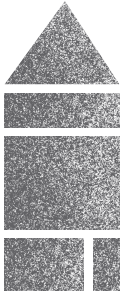
First Steps: It Starts with You

Knowledge is power. Isn't that what we tell our students? But what is your level of knowledge about the place where you work and teach? You can become better acquainted with district decision making by attending at least one school board meeting this year to learn about the critical choices facing your community. You can ask a student and his or her family to lead you on a walk through their neighborhood. The view from the sidewalk is much richer than the one we see through the windshield. Try attending a community festival, meeting, or religious celebration that you wouldn't otherwise attend. Take your own personal action to become better informed about life outside of your classroom or school.

Conclusion

Court decisions and legislative actions resulted in efforts to physically move historically marginalized students into school communities that offered greater opportunities. These efforts continue today in programs such as magnet schools that integrate schools racially and ethnically, and in inclusive school practices where students with disabilities are educated alongside students without. The rationale behind these practices is a concern for the benefit of the individual student combined with an appreciation of the transformative effect that his or her inclusion can have on the culture of whole school and the individual classroom. The statement "Separate is not equal" does not imply that physical integration alone will increase student achievement and empowerment. Instead, your equity audit may identify practices that need to be changed so that children will learn effectively together. Engaging in such practices will give students access not only to the stairway but also to other ramps they need to reach their goals. This perspective is further embodied in the guidelines of how a school should run and what supports should be in place to make the environment one of learning and safety for all.

When we focus on school reform, we cannot limit our attention to the day-to-day procedures and policies of the school; we must broaden our vision to include understanding how outside factors play a part within school life. We need to start to focus on how students are affected by outside influences and how those influences affect the inside culture of the school.



CHAPTER 6

From Acquisition to Action

The Review, the Audit, and Beyond

We have presented a lot of information in the previous five chapters. And you may be saying to yourself, “Where do I start?” For many, the task of improving equity is daunting, even paralyzing. We recommend you start with the Building Equity Review, focusing on the 25 statements we’ve explored in this book. Identify strengths that you can build on and areas for growth. There are any number of ways, and places, to start. But nothing will be gained by waiting another day to take the next step in the equity journey.

We’ll highlight the plan, and the journey, at our school, emphasizing that it is but one example of the process you could use.

The equity plan we created at our school was grounded in Instructional Excellence, which is Level 4 of the Building Equity Taxonomy. We made the decision to start there for several reasons. First of all, instructional excellence has long been a foundational focus of our school. We have common language and expectations for instruction that were created around staff development and guided by the Framework for Intentional and Targeted Teaching (Fisher, Frey, & Hite, 2016). We wanted our equity plan to evolve from our focus on instruction rather than compete with it. In other words, because we already shared an approach to instructional improvement, we believed many of the needs that were identified and the actions that were proposed through our

equity audit could be addressed via our plans for excellent curriculum and instruction. Of course, other schools might start in other places.

The second reason we embedded our equity plan within instructional excellence is because we have spent several years coming to agreements about school culture and academic intent. Notably, we understand as a staff that while agreements about high-quality instruction are necessary, they are also insufficient for actually building a culture of achievement or ensuring equity for all students. To complement high-quality instruction, we have engaged in considerable social-emotional learning, including a focus on establishing and maintaining healthy, growth-producing relationships between staff and students. As a result, we have structured our professional learning to link our social-emotional learning efforts with instructional excellence. We believed that our equity plan could be embedded nicely into that existing structure.

Finally, engaging in the full Building Equity Audit allowed us to identify our areas of greatest need and propose activities in two different levels of the Building Equity Taxonomy. Interestingly, neither of the two targeted levels were instructional excellence.

Now you must be confused! Let us explain. When we analyzed our survey evidence, we saw that most of our equity issues were at Level 3: Opportunities to Learn, and at Level 5: Engaged and Inspired Learners. This suggested that there was a group of students who were still lacking the supports they needed to more fully engage as active school citizens and learners. It also suggested that there was a second group of students who were engaged but whom we needed to advance as empowered learners. We felt that by reexamining our instructional practices, we could incorporate additional actions to more effectively meet both the social-emotional needs of students and advance student voice, aspirations, and empowerment.

We share our experience here to emphasize that the best way to introduce new schoolwide initiatives is to build them upon the strengths and structures that are already present. It is important to look at the foundations you have—what agreements, norms, and structures are currently in place to manage schoolwide initiatives. If those are effective, use them to conduct

your Building Equity Review and to construct and execute your equity plan. If your school site is lacking an effective school improvement infrastructure, then the review may help you simultaneously build your equity plan and your school improvement infrastructure. Of course, you can also use the full Building Equity Audit, especially if you have already begun the focus on equity within your classroom, school, or district.

One aspect of our equity plan was to create a “dream team” of teacher leaders. Every member of the team was a National Board–certified teacher. They were charged with identifying ways to build and infuse student voice, student agency, and student aspiration throughout our integrated college- and career-prep curriculum. One of the structural features they proposed was an eight-month rotation through specific discussion prompts. They recommended that the prompts be used schoolwide, the same way we use our essential questions. Specifically, grade levels would make decisions about creating lessons and activities that would feature reading and writing, and present prompt-specific reflections. Staff would then highlight and feature prompt-related products through our social media, in our morning circles, on our walls, and in our classrooms. The prompts included the following:

September: *I am...*

October: *I aspire to be...*

November: *My well-being, physical, emotional...*

December/January: *I contributed... I am challenged by...*

February: *My heart beats for... I wake up in the morning for... I am motivated by...*

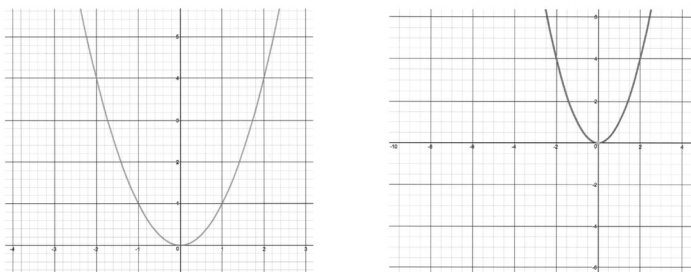
March: *I want to explore...*

April: *I will know I am successful when...*

May: *I have grown—I have accomplished...*

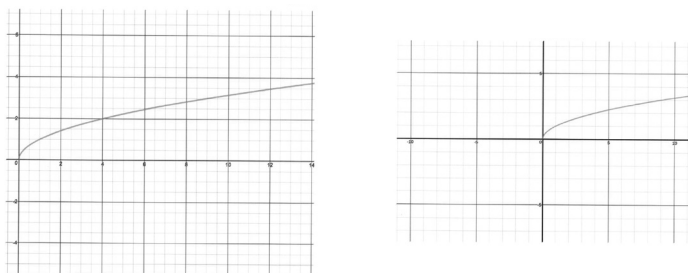
Our mathematics department leader, Joseph Assof, challenged his Math 3 class to use the September *I am...* prompt to describe themselves through a mathematical function. Figure 6.1 shows three of the many wonderful products the students completed.

FIGURE 6.1
Mathematical Responses to “I Am...”



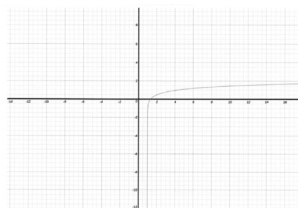
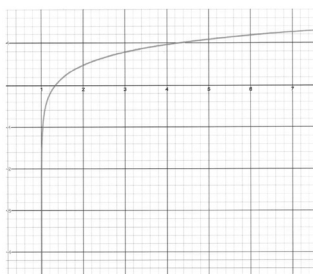
Alyza Crucena

I am a quadratic function. The left-end behavior reflects the right-end behavior, similar to how my decisions affect my future. When I'm negative, my attitude is upside down, just like the parabola $y = -x^2$. When I'm positive, my attitude makes me smile in the shape of the parabola $y = x^2$. I always try to do my best to be happy, even when I hit rock bottom of $(0,0)$. The negative people in my life try to drag me down to feel as little as negative infinity. So I surround myself with only positive, boosting me to infinity. No one can restrict me from what I want to be. All real numbers? More like all real dreams. I am Alyza Crucena.



Isela Gutierrez

I am a square root function. Like the square root, I too have another half. I am like its increases: as the roots grow, so does my knowledge. Like its origin, I too started at zero on September 4, 1999. I am like its range because I have infinite potential. Like the square root, you should not plug in anything negative because I blow up. I only surround myself with positivity. As I get further in life, I feel like I work more for less success. I may never reach the end, but I stay positive with each step closer. I am Isela Gutierrez.



Andrea Marquez

I am a logarithmic function. Feeling down and knowing it would never come to an end. Slowly changing my mind and coming up. I finally crossed the line, and knew I wanted to go up. Nothing will bring me down again after I cross the line. I keep moving forward, but I stay consistent in the same direction. Just like my right-end behavior, I'm always approaching infinite positivity. I am Andrea Marquez.

Using This Book

The Building Equity Taxonomy and Building Equity Review presented in this book are intended to provoke schoolwide conversations and, we hope, lead to further inquiry via the Building Equity Audit and to schoolwide agreements, commitments, and actions. Ultimately, we would like to see these agreements, commitments, and actions become part of every school's goals and vision to become a more effective and equitable school. Here's what we have done to facilitate this process.

1. We introduced the Building Equity Taxonomy as a means of categorizing and organizing various types of equity needs and initiatives.
2. We aligned the chapters of this book to the levels of the BET and presented 25 foundational statements to call attention to first steps of equity inquiry. The inputs and practices discussed in each chapter are intended to spark ideas responsive to the needs identified by your review.
3. We created two versions (teacher and student) of the full Building Equity Audit, which are available for download online (see Appendixes

A and B). The audit involves using surveys to collect evidence of a school's equity accomplishments and shortcomings. We constructed the audit surveys in alignment with the levels of the taxonomy so that the taxonomy is a means of organizing the data in order to generate a functional audit and to focus resulting schoolwide agreements, commitments, and actions.

As previously mentioned, most schools already have established structures for how schoolwide initiatives like this are organized and implemented. Our own school typically relies on a professional learning community (PLC) process to bring together a diverse group to study, discuss, and develop understanding and expertise. For example, we formed several collaborative planning teams to read drafts of this book, and during the resulting discussions, members became resolute in recommending to the school leadership that we engage in an audit of our own. They proposed a professional learning session to highlight the content and recommended a process for completing the two versions of the Building Equity Audit. When the data were in, we facilitated a second whole-staff session to provide data disaggregated by each level of the taxonomy. Collaborative planning teams then worked to identify evidence that provoked concern and demanded attention. They summarized the results of those discussions and identified areas of common concerns. They then prepared a set of recommendations for a series of follow-up activities and equity-based practices to respond to these common concerns. The proposed plan was shared with staff in order to confirm our agreements, commitments, and planned actions.

Conducting the Building Equity Audit

Of course, we would love to see a universal set of equity audit procedures develop so that student, educator, and parent data could be collected and compared across schools on a large scale. This will probably happen one day, but it is secondary to encouraging each school to use the Building Equity Review and Building Equity Audit to collect and organize data in a way that

is most useful to them. For example, some schools will want to code and disaggregate data by grade level or by credentialed and certified staff, whereas other schools will see value in aggregated schoolwide data. We are aware of an elementary school that chose to cut, edit, and rewrite the items on the student version of the Building Equity Audit. This meant teachers could choose a selected statement for class discussion in order to reach agreement on the statement's meaning before distributing the entire survey.

Finally, we believe schools will find the results of both the teacher and student versions informative, but in our experience, some of the most interesting conversations surface when examining responses across the versions. For example, what does it mean if 80 percent of teachers affirm that they believe students know they care about them, but results of the student version show that only 38 percent of the students believe their teachers care about them? That discrepancy might provide insights about what is working and what isn't and suggest alternative courses of action.

In our school, conducting the audit was pretty straightforward, because our model for continuous program improvement is established and transparent. Our technology team put the student and teacher versions online, and we made a decision to have them completed in each social studies class. We then set aside time and put structures in place to analyze the data, and we set up task teams to implement and manage our agreed-upon actions.

Conclusion

The 25 statements of the Building Equity Review highlight foundational equity-focused policies and practices. They are essential considerations for all school staff who are committed to ensuring every student receives an education that is worthy of his or her boundless possibilities. It makes sense, then, that these 25 statements also appear in the staff version of the full Building Equity Audit. They help generate part of the picture, but not the whole.

Because the vision of our equity work is to foster a more empowered, engaged, and inspired student body, it seems appropriate to now consider items from the student version of the survey related to assessing student

empowerment. Review the list below and ask yourself what percentage of your student body could affirm a majority of these statements:

1. I am proud of myself.
2. I like who I am.
3. I know where I am going.
4. I don't feel lost.
5. I am very positive about my future.
6. School is a place that is helping me dream about my future.
7. School is a place that is helping me plan my future.
8. School is giving me positive power.
9. I like what I am learning.
10. I've got a plan for myself.
11. I am prepared to work hard to reach my dreams.
12. I feel I have lots of chances to ask and answer questions about myself.
13. School is helping me discover what life is all about.
14. School is helping me discover what I am all about.
15. I am a leader.
16. I feel empowered as a student.
17. I am a powerful person.
18. I feel prepared to face the challenges in my life.
19. I can look in the mirror and smile at who I see.
20. I have wonderful dreams about my future.
21. Some of the things I learn in school help me dream bigger.
22. I learn more about myself every year.
23. I don't feel held back.
24. Nothing is going to keep me from reaching my goals.
25. I have aspirations.

Hold in your mind the percentage of your school's students that you believe would respond affirmatively to these statements. Now, here's a set of questions for you to answer:

- Is your guess/estimate comforting or concerning to you?
- Are you interested in finding out what the percentage really is?
- Do you see a more engaged and inspired student body as a reasonable outcome of finding out?
- Are your students' responses to these items important to you?
- Are your goals and vision of your individual and collective work focused on making your school more effective and equitable?
- Would your colleagues answer these questions differently from you?
- What would it take to create a schoolwide conversation about the interest and importance of creating a more engaged and inspired student body?

And so, we ask you: *What are your next steps?* There is no bad place to start. But we do hope that you will take the first step and strive for improved opportunities for all students. Each of them deserves a fair shot, and this requires an education that is both equal and equitable.

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