Get Smart Fast: Using an Equity-Based Mindset to Achieve Better Opportunities and Outcomes for All

Why does this topic matter?

Between-group disparities in educational opportunities and outcomes have been a long-standing challenge for state and local educational agencies (SEAs and LEAs), resulting in widespread inequities for students. Failure to closely examine educational opportunities and outcomes for vulnerable students, such as educational access, quality experiences, and engagement, results in inadequate responses to disparities, which in turn can lead to:

| Misdiagnosis or misinterpretation of high-leverage problems | Misallocation or waste of resources (e.g., human, fiscal, etc.) | Disconnect with key interest holders (e.g., educators, parents, students) |

What does the evidence say?

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's (National Academies) *Monitoring Educational Equity* report explains that systematically collected data on pre-determined indicators is crucial for responding to inequities in educational opportunities and outcomes:

Enacting change can be challenging, but it is nearly impossible if there is no information about existing problems. Systematically collected indicators can allow valid comparisons of schools, districts, and states across a number of important student outcomes. No one indicator by itself can tell the full story, but taken together, a set of indicators can provide a detailed and nuanced picture that can inform and enlighten policy makers, policy implementers, state school boards and superintendents, educators, and researchers (p.1; National Academies, 2019)

What do conditions of success look like?

SEAs and LEAs can respond to inequities in opportunities and outcomes for students by focusing on several important conditions for success.

The tool, *Designing for Equity: A Nationwide Education Policy Scan,* aligns with the National Academies' domains and indicators; identifies patterns of how current policies shape student experiences; and underscores the need to build capacity among policymakers, educators, and technical assistance providers to address policies affecting educational equity. *Designing for Equity* illustrates that having a codified state definition of "equity" can be an influential condition for success. Here are a few more:

Condition for Success	Details
Commitment to understanding and addressing disparities	• Review relevant data to gather evidence and engage in root-cause analyses • Refer to evidence-based research and best practices
Coordination and collaboration with various interest holders	• Gather input from an array of interest holders (policymakers, educators, parents, students) • Think carefully about whose input is represented and whose might be missing • Strengthen interpersonal relationships among all interest holders, including students
Strategic mitigation of disparities	• Plan action steps to address disparities once identified • Agree that different students need different supports • Establish systems of accountability and continuous improvement
Recognition that broad system changes may be required	• Shift from a narrow view of equity activities to an inclusive systemwide integration of equity concepts • Move from focusing on failing schools to considering the effectiveness of the education system in setting conditions for success • Place equal attention on measuring opportunities and outcomes and reporting disparities • Employ measures of growth, development, and learning instead of static measures of outcomes

What innovative models exist?

Reducing Disparities in Exclusionary Discipline Practices in Arkansas

Arkansas

Leveraging Community Schools to Improve Access to Health Services in California

California

Advancing Postsecondary Opportunity Through Dual Enrollment in Louisiana

Louisiana

Developing Infrastructure to Support Equitable Digital Expansion in New Mexico

New Mexico

How are efforts funded?

• Title I funds can be directed toward evidence-based interventions that support vulnerable student groups.

• Many federal funding sources including McKinney-Vento, IDEA, and others can be used to support vulnerable student groups.

For more information and helpful resources, visit https://compcenternetwork.org/