

## **I. Introduction**

Within the Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS), there is a commitment to the acceleration of student achievement and the elimination of racial disparities. The current state of student achievement within the district, 28% proficiency in math and 42% proficiency in ELA district-wide on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), and racialized achievement gaps across all tested contents and grade levels. This has renewed a sense of urgency to improve teaching and learning to attain better outcomes for students. In the process of striving for improvement, it is necessary to take an honest assessment of the current state of the district in relation to our ideal state. The Office of Equity will support the district in conducting such an assessment by leading an equity audit.

### ***Background***

While it is known that inequities persist within our district, there is still much to be learned regarding the nature, magnitude, and root causes of the inequities that exist. An equity audit can be used as a tool to facilitate this necessary learning and inform strategies to address inequities and foster improvement moving forward. According to Skrla, McKenzie, & Scheurich (2009), an equity audit is a systematic way for leaders to assess the degree of equity or inequity present in key areas of a school or system. Concretely, it is the collection of data relevant to equity, the organization of those data in a clear and comprehensible way to facilitate positive change on the part of stakeholders, and the interpretation of those data to expose areas of both weakness and strength within a district with respect to equity. Within the PPS context, the equity audit will be used to help identify specific goals and recommended actions based on the reviewed data.

Historically, equity audits were mandated to measure compliance with civil rights statutes which made non-discrimination a condition of receipt of federal funding. These mandates often came with specific areas outlined for auditing and specific data requirements. Over time, leaders who recognized the value of equity audits shaped the content and process of the audits to better fit their needs.

### ***Current Context***

PPS is uniquely positioned in that it functions under both a compliance and commitment mandate. A compliance agreement with the Equity Advisory Panel through the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission exists to monitor and address inequities that exist for African American students within the Pittsburgh Public Schools. This formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) requires district monitoring of inequities in specific areas such as student achievement, discipline, access to special programming, and over representation in special education.

At the same time, the leadership and staff of the district are committed to systemic equity beyond the framework provided by the MOU. "Systemic equity is defined as the transformed ways in which systems and individuals habitually operate to ensure that every learner—in whatever learning environment that learner is found—has the greatest opportunity to learn, enhanced by the resources and supports necessary to achieve competence, excellence, independence, responsibility, and self-sufficiency for school and for life" (Scott, 2001). This level of commitment mandates the analysis and on-going monitoring of all aspects of the system that contribute to student achievement even in the absence of legal cause. The equity audit conducted by the Office of Equity will address factors PPS is mandated to monitor and those the district has selected to monitor and will make clear distinction between the two.

Another factor worth highlighting to situate the equity audit in the current context of PPS is the superintendent's strategic plan. The superintendent is currently leading the process of developing a strategic plan that will drive the work of the district for the next 5 years. Various stakeholders across the district are involved in the development of the objectives, initiatives, and strategies that will shape the plan. This equity audit in no way competes with nor undermines the work of the strategic plan. In fact, it does the opposite and helps to provide data to further inform initiative development and target strategies. The Office of Equity will share the responsibility of providing each strategic team assigned to the plan with the gathered data that is relevant to their initiative. Further, the equity audit will serve to provide comprehensive baseline data upon which to benchmark progress made by the initiatives in the strategic plan. Lastly, the equity audit will serve as a resource to district employees charged with working on the strategic plan to offer the modeling of an equity lens and specific equity-focused strategies and language that they can use.

## II. METHODOLOGY

Research on the evolution of equity audits indicates that while there is no clear 'best way' to conduct an audit, it is recommended that audits, mandated or voluntary, address three broad categories: Teacher-quality equity, Programmatic equity, and Achievement equity.

- **Teacher-quality equity:** This focuses on the distribution of high quality teachers across various student populations. Within this category, Skarla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly (2004) recommend the following four variables for analysis- teachers' years of experience, highest level of education, the number teaching outside of their certification area, and average teacher turnover.
- **Programmatic equity:** This refers to the quality of the programs in which students have access to or are excluded from. The recommended areas for analysis include the proportion of students disciplined or assigned to special education, gifted and talented programs, and bilingual education.
- **Achievement equity:** This examines variation in student achievement across numerous achievement indicators. Recommended variables for analysis include state assessment performance, dropout rates, the proportion of students on college-preparatory tracks, and the participation and performance of students on college entrance exams such as the ACT or SAT.

The equity audit within PPS will build upon this research to encompass these three categories with modifications and additions to the variables under each category. This will serve to honor the local and immediate context and better meet the needs of the district. In addition to these three research-based recommended categories, the equity audit within the Pittsburgh Public Schools will address the following categories(s):

- **Resource Equity:** This assesses the distribution of resources across various student populations. Variables for analysis will items such as budgets, facilities, technology access, and student materials.
- **Human Resource Equity:** This examines the variation in how the district recruits, staffs, trains, retains, rewards, and punishes district employees. The variables of interest will include employee demographics, position classifications, compensation plans, grievance outcomes, and dismissals.

- Initiative Equity:** This refers to the review and analysis of all existing equity-focused initiatives. The variables for each initiative under study may vary, however, the data gathered must be suitable to inform recommendations for elimination or appropriate modification of District equity programs and initiatives that are found to be ineffective and/or replication or expansion for those found to be effective as proven in data.

**Essential Questions**

Within each category, work must be done to gather information from multiple perspectives that will help to address the following essential questions:

- Are there inequities that exist in the data being analyzed?
- In what areas? For which students? Why?
- What is helping or hindering goal attainment?
- Where has PPS seen gains or budding successes?
- What equity traps are prevalent within the organization?
- How is Whiteness present and what role is it playing?
- How is the interest convergence principle operating?

**Phases**

A specific emphasis will be placed on examining all data through the lens of race. The data necessary for this audit will be planned for and gathered in four phases. Tools and a template will be provided to guide staff members through each phase of the audit. While each phase has distinct actions and recommended windows, the work required under each may occur on an on-going basis.

Phase	Purpose	Question	Actions	Timeline
<b>Planning</b>	To develop a shared understanding of the equity audit purpose and process.	What is an equity audit?	Planning	
<b>Harvesting</b>	To gather existing data and resources for analysis aligned to each category of the equity audit.	What existing data is available?	Research	
<b>Generating</b>	To engage with stakeholders in ways that produce new data aligned to each category of the equity audit.	What additional data can gathered?	Equity Walks Observations Interviews Focus Groups Surveys	
<b>Requesting</b>	To request new data from partners that may require time, resources, and expertise outside of the Office of Equity to address identified gaps in data.	What further data is still needed?	Formal Inquiry	

**Collaboration & Learning**

To engage in this audit process efficiently and effectively, a member of the Equity Office Staff will serve as lead for each category of the audit. The lead will be responsible for ensuring the process is implemented, necessary information is gathered and organized, and timelines are met. They will also be responsible for completing the audit template for their assigned category.

Category	Lead Responsible
1) Teacher Quality Equity	
2) Programmatic Equity	
3) Achievement Equity	
4) Resource Equity	
5) Human Resource Equity	
6) Initiative Equity	

To ensure clear and consistent communication and shared understanding of the audit process the Office of Equity staff will engage in regular check-ins during the audit. Resources to be utilized during each phase of the audit will be shared during the face to face check-ins.

Date	Time	Location	Focus
			Overview & Planning
			Phase 1
			Phase 2
			Phase 3
			Executive Report

There are aspects of the audit process that will be conducted independently, some will be done in partnerships, while others will require full team participation. For the convenience of the team, the actions requiring full team participation are noted below. (Please note that while data will be utilized to select schools and identify individuals for participation some use of convenience sampling will be employed based on the aggressive timeline of the audit.) As events are booked data will be provided to team members as soon as possible.

Actions	Schools/ Locations	Dates/ Times
Equity Walks	1) Elementary- 2) Middle- 3) High- 4) Special School-	
Student Focus Groups	1) Elementary- 2) Middle- 3) High- 4) Special School-	
Teacher/ Staff Focus	1) Elementary-	

	2) Middle- 3) High- 4) Special School-	
School Leader Focus Group	1) Greenway PD Center 2) Greenway PD Center	
Parent Group		

**III. FINAL EQUITY AUDIT REPORT**

Upon the completion of the audit, the Equity Office will write a thorough report of the findings. This report will be structured to share the following information overall and by each audit category.

- **Key Findings:** What was learned?
- **Data Sources and Methods:** What/How information was gathered?
- **Background:** What contextual information will situate the data for the audience?
- **Analysis:** What does the data say?
- **Conclusion, Goals, and Recommendations:** Based on what was learned, what goals should PPS set to attain higher achievement and eliminate racial disparities, and what are the recommended strategies and steps to achieve the identified goals?

Within the Office of Equity the report will be utilized to drive work toward increasing student achievement and eliminating racial disparities. With superintendent approval, the audit report will be released first to the cabinet, then the board, then the EAP, and all other internal/ external stakeholders. It will be made available on-line and in print. In addition to the formal report, the Office of Equity will present the key findings, goals, and recommendations during the following meeting venues: Education Committee, EAP, Leading and Learning Institute, University Partners, and an Open Community Meeting. The purpose for the public sharing of the audit results is to demonstrate a new level of transparency, awareness, and commitment to co-ownership and collaboration moving forward. The Equity Office will also host meetings with individual departments with whom direct recommendations apply. The purpose of these meetings will be to ensure the content is received and understood within the departments who own the related work. The Office of Equity will be positioned to support the departments in the adoption of the goals and implementation of the recommendations.

**PLANNING**

**Category 1: Teacher/Instructional Quality Equity** - The purpose is to determine how teacher quality is distributed within the district.

<p><b>What are the key variables of interest?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers' years of experience</li> <li>• Highest level of education</li> <li>• The number teaching outside of their certification area</li> <li>• Average teacher turnover</li> <li>• Teacher performance</li> <li>• VAM Scores</li> <li>• Professional Support for Teachers</li> </ul>
<p><b>What additional variables are relevant?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder perception</li> <li>• Substitutes</li> <li>• Vacancies</li> </ul>
<p><b>What data sources will be consulted? What are we mandated to report in the MOU?</b></p>
<p><b>Who are the stakeholders to be consulted? How?</b></p>
<p><b>What policies exist related to this category of focus?</b></p>
<p><b>What trends exist in research? Who are the key researchers on this topic?</b></p>

**PLANNING**

**Category 2: Programmatic Equity** - The purpose is to look at quality of programs and access/exclusion for certain students/groups of students.

<p><b>What are the key variables of interest?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student discipline</li> <li>• Special education</li> <li>• Gifted and talented programs</li> <li>• Magnet programming</li> <li>• Alternative Placement</li> <li>• English as a Second Language</li> <li>• Curriculum</li> <li>• School Climate</li> <li>• Sports</li> <li>• Supports for Struggling Learners</li> </ul>
<p><b>What additional variables are relevant?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder perception</li> </ul>
<p><b>What data sources will be consulted? What are we mandated to report in the MOU?</b></p>
<p><b>Who are the stakeholders to be consulted? How?</b></p>
<p><b>What policies exist related to this category of focus?</b></p>
<p><b>What trends exist in research? Who are the key researchers on this topic?</b></p>

**PLANNING**

**Category 3: Achievement Equity** - The purpose is to look at student achievement across multiple achievement indicators. (Disaggregate the following achievement data by gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status.)

<p><b>What are the key variables of interest? (All MOU achievement indicators)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State achievement tests (PSSA/Keystone)</li> <li>• Dropout rates</li> <li>• High school graduation rates</li> <li>• Course grades</li> <li>• AP Scores</li> <li>• IB Scores</li> <li>• SAT Scores</li> <li>• Third Grade Reading Levels</li> <li>• School Performance Profiles</li> <li>• Grade Retention</li> </ul>
<p><b>What additional variables are relevant?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder perception</li> </ul>
<p><b>What data sources will be consulted? What are we mandated to report in the MOU?</b></p>
<p><b>Who are the stakeholders to be consulted? How?</b></p>
<p><b>What policies exist related to this category of focus?</b></p>
<p><b>What trends exist in research? Who are the key researchers on this topic?</b></p>



**PLANNING**

**Category 4: Resource Equity-** The purpose is to analyze the distribution of resources across the district.

<p><b>What are the key variables of interest?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central Budget</li> <li>• School Budgets</li> <li>• Supplementary Funds /Grants</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Facilities</li> <li>• Feeder Patterns</li> <li>• Community Partnerships</li> <li>• “Pass-Throughs”</li> </ul>
<p><b>What additional variables are relevant?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder perception</li> </ul>
<p><b>What data sources will be consulted? What are we mandated to report in the MOU?</b></p>
<p><b>Who are the stakeholders to be consulted? How?</b></p>
<p><b>What policies exist related to this category of focus?</b></p>
<p><b>What trends exist in research? Who are the key researchers on this topic?</b></p>

**PLANNING**

**Category 5: Employment Equity** - The purpose is to analyze employment practices across the district.

<p><b>What are the key variables of interest?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographics</li> <li>• Recruitment</li> <li>• Placement</li> <li>• Retention</li> <li>• Compensation</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Discipline</li> <li>• Promotions</li> <li>• Exit Interviews</li> </ul>
<p><b>What additional variables are relevant?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder perception</li> </ul>
<p><b>What data sources will be consulted? What are we mandated to report in the MOU?</b></p>
<p><b>Who are the stakeholders to be consulted? How?</b></p>
<p><b>What policies exist related to this category of focus?</b></p>
<p><b>What trends exist in research? Who are the key researchers on this topic?</b></p>

**PLANNING**

**Category 6: Other-** The purpose is to identify any additional areas worthy of analysis that do not align to the above identified categories.

<p><b>What are the key variables of interest?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent survey</li> <li>• Hotline calls</li> <li>• Memorandum of Understanding with Equity Advisory Panel</li> </ul>
<p><b>What additional variables are relevant?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder perception</li> </ul>
<p><b>What data sources will be consulted? What are we mandated to report in the MOU?</b></p>
<p><b>Who are the stakeholders to be consulted? How?</b></p>
<p><b>What policies exist related to this category of focus?</b></p>
<p><b>What trends exist in research? Who are the key researchers on this topic?</b></p>

**Resource Needs**

Phase 1: Tools and Template to be Developed (Check-in 2)

Phase 2: Tools and Template to be Developed (Check-in 3)

Phase 3: Tools and Template to be Developed (Check-in 4)

Tools for interviews, focus groups, observations, and equity walks