GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR THE CREATION OF AN EQUITABLE DISTRICT/SCHOOL/CLASSROOM

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*Most of these categories and some of these questions are drawn from the work of scholars who have written on this topic over the years, including <u>Making Choices for Multicultural Education</u> (2007) by Carl A. Grant, Ph.D. & Christine Sleeter, Ph.D., and Raymond Rose, Frances Kolb, and Nancy Barra-Zuman from The Network in Andover, MA (1991).

Note: These questions are not exhaustive and are intended to serve as guides to addressing the complex issues involved in creating equitable educational environments and academic/social/emotional experiences for all students. District, school and student outcome data provide evidence that the system is ensuring a safe, healthy, and productive educational experience for all students.

CATEGORY	QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER
MISSION/VISION/VALUES STATEMENT and STRATEGIC PLAN	Do the foundational documents of the district and school reflect a commitment to: • The district as one community? • Equitable educational outcomes for each student and all subgroups in the district? • The importance of parents, families, and care-givers as partners in the success of the students? • All populations in the community? • College and career readiness for all students? Social & Emotional well-being for all students? • Equitable distribution of district resources? • Policies, procedures and practices that are explicitly equity -based and adhere to local, state, and federal laws related to abuse, bias, discrimination, and harassment? • Transparency in key decision-making areas such as budget, leadership selection, curriculum? • Is there consistent and agreed-upon use of data (disaggregated and aggregated) for making key decisions? Are these transparent? • Is there individual and shared responsibility for ensuring that all aspects of the educational enterprise (e.g., hiring, purchasing) adhere to principles of equity.

BUDGET ALLOCATION/RESOURCE DISTRIBUTION	Are the processes for creating and allocating the budget and other district resources transparent, collaborative, inclusive, and equitable? • Do constituencies understand how resources and expenditures occur at the district and school levels? • Are there opportunities for constituencies to have input into the allocation of district and school-level resources? • Does the district advocate at the federal and state level for resources? Does it train constituencies to advocate for the district? • Are there adequate resources available to support expected student outcomes (i.e., nurses, social workers, school psychologists, school counselors, libraries with librarians, the arts, physical education)? • Does the district and/or individual schools apply for federal, state, and local grants to support district goals? • Are there class size guidelines that support student learning? Are they enforced? • Does the district have adequate resource allocations to support all employees? • Does the district solicit input from persons in all employment categories related to pay, benefits, working conditions, and professional development opportunities? • Are there outside sources of income for schools that lead to imbalance or inequity in access to or allocation of resources across the district?
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT and FACILITIES	Is it immediately evident that all students, families, and members of the community are welcome? • Is the district/school/and classroom environment welcoming to all? Indicative of respect for all? • Are students and families involved in the design and creation of the school and district environment? • Are all spaces (e.g., library, cafeteria, gym, principal's office) welcoming? As you enter and walk through a district building, what do the walls, the halls, and the general environment say to you? • Is the environment of all district building fully accessible to students, parents, and community members? If a portion of a district/building is not, are arrangements made for accessibility during events, programs, etc.? Are universal design principles used? Are green building principles followed? • Are classroom student centered (i.e., flexible furniture for a wide variety of instructional activities and social interactions, spaced to encourage collaboration)? • Are their adequate and equitable learning and social/emotional development spaces throughout all schools? If not, does the district prioritize based on equity?
STAFFING PATTERNS	How is the district ensuring that hiring practices and the distribution of effective leaders and teachers throughout the district/schools is equitable and representative of the community it serves? • How are hiring practices monitored to ensure that all legal guidelines are followed? • Are there goals and benchmarks for ensuring diversity in all hiring areas (administration, professional staff, support staff, etc.)?

	• Where is the district advertising for personnel to ensure a diverse candidate pool? • How do the interview questions account for a candidate's commitment to educational excellence for all students, diversity, and equity? For example, are candidates required to provide evidence of high expectations for all students? • Is every classroom staffed by a fully certified teacher? Is the distribution of experienced teachers equitable? Do excellent teachers serve as mentors for beginning teachers? • Is professional development available for all staff where needed, including on district priorities? For example, research indicates that science is the subject least taught at the elementary level because elementary teachers feel least confident in their ability to teach science. To what degree are these patterns analyzed and addressed by the district? • Does the administrator and teacher evaluation system include categories related to diversity? • Is evidence of a commitment to equity part of the annual assessment of all employees? • Are data on staffing patterns monitored on a regular basis to ensure equitable staffing?
CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS	How are the curriculum and other instructional materials ensuring that students will college and career ready? • Is the curriculum grade-level appropriate, experiential, and culturally relevant (e.g., anti-racist)? • Do the grade spans map the curriculum to avoid redundancy and ensure equitable content and perspectives across the curriculum? • Is the curriculum accessible and rigorous for all? • Does the curriculum allow for differentiation so that students who learn differently have opportunities to learn (and equal outcomes) with appropriate materials? • Is the curriculum taught using a multiple-perspectives approach? • Does the curriculum and the teacher encourage students to think critically about important topics, to analyze and to act in democratically responsible ways? • Are students' real-life experiences built into the curriculum? Are the strengths that students bring to school used as the basis for lessons? • Is subject matter (e.g., literacy, numeracy, artistic expression) conceptualized broadly to account for how learning occurs in and outside of the classroom? • Are diverse images and voices included across the curriculum? • Is teacher expertise integral to creating, adopting, or adapting curriculum and materials? • Is curriculum built around the community at each grade level? • Are technology resources (hardware and software) equitably available? Is there a plan to assist families who may not have access to wi-fi or other applications needed for expected e-learning? • Is NJ State mandated curriculum (e.g., Amistad) is woven throughout the grades?

INSTUCTIONAL STRATEGIES	Are the district and school-level leaders ensuring that the instructional strategies being used meet the needs of a diversity of learners: • Are the instructional strategies student-centered? • Are the instructional strategies culturally appropriate? • Do the instructional strategies encourage "hands on" and real-life learning (e.g., mock trials, projects, plays, problem solving)? • Do the instructional strategies foster critical thinking and student independence? • How is the teacher ensuring that each student is understanding the material? • Does the district promote and do the teachers use flexible grouping strategies? • Is there an emphasis on creating learning communities? • Are there multiple opportunities for students to learn from and with each other? • What resources are available for students who struggle in a particular curricular area? How does the district/school ensure that there is no stigma attached to receiving extra help or special instructional services? • Do teachers examine their patterns of interaction in formal lessons and informal interactions? • Is there a mixture/balance of instructional strategies (e.g, lecture, small-group, large-group, independent, creative, experimentation)? • Is the community used as a resource?
ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES	Do assessment strategies allow students and staff to display their talents and commitment to the students and the community? • Is authentic assessment balanced with standardized assessments? • Are students a part of the assessment process? • Is curriculum aligned with assessments? How often? By who? • Do parents and other caregivers understand the assessment and reporting process? • Are assessments examined on a regular basis for bias? • Do assessors do regular review of their ability to analyze student work in a fair and unbiased manner?
STUDENT INVOLVENT AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES	Does the district/school/classroom promote a sense of community? How does it analyze who is involved and how students are involved in curricular and extra-curricular activities? • Are incidents of bias, bullying, racism, sexism, homophobia investigated/addressed and handled in a timely and appropriate manner? • Are activities that require additional financial contributions from students and families conducted in a way that allows students of limited financial means to participate? • Are clubs, honor societies, band, choir and all activities monitored for equity and diversity? If a particular club or activity is found to have limited involvement, is that analyzed and addressed? For

	example, if robotics or math club draws a primarily male membership, how are females encouraged to consider these options?
MODES OF COMMUNICATION	Does the district/school/classroom ensure that the modes of communication used in the district meet the needs of all students and families? • Are communications sent in multiple languages? • Can the district website be translated to the languages spoken in the district? • Is there sign language interpretation and translation at all events? • Do teachers and other school personnel do home visit to solicit the opinions of parents and caregivers? To understand the modes of communication operational at home? • Are home modes and patterns of communication respected?
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS (TEACHER/ PRINCIPAL/DISTRICT)	How are families and the community involved in the district/school/classroom? • Is there a clear and obvious recognition of the different ways that parents/caregivers are involved in the district/school/classroom? Are the "power" positions usually held by only one group? • Does the district require and provide the opportunity for the principals and teachers to learn about the history of and the current issues facing the community (e.g, immigration patterns, political history) The current demographics? The businesses and non-profits that are in the community? • Are buildings utilized in times and ways that allow a wide range of family and community participation? • Are parent involvement activities structured in a way that allows participation by all parents/caregivers (e.g., no fees expected, tiered levels of participation, varied activities that appeal to multiple audiences, varied activities that encourage diverse participation)? • Are parent events scheduled so that all parents can attend (e.g., weekend, evening, child care provided, snacks provided)? • Do all parents have access to the principal and district leaders? • Do district and school leaders solicit parent and community input in multiple ways? • Does the principal have multiple ways of communicating with parents and other caregivers to ensure that their perspectives and questions are known (e.g. coffees, virtual town halls, informal gatherings)? • Does the principal and do the teachers to outreach to students and families (e.g., home visits, weekly newsletters or web posts)? • Is there an annual parent/caregiver survey on involvement and satisfaction? Are the results used by the district and the school leaders to set goals? • Are there opportunities for parents, caregivers, and community members to learn from and with each other? • Are students able to participate in community events? Internships? Apprenticeship? Volunteer

	activities?
STUDENT SOCIAL ORGANIZATION/BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT	How are students supported in their social/emotional growth inside and outside of the classroom/school? • Is there an ethos of cooperation, inclusion, and collaborative problem solving in the district and within individual schools and classrooms (i.e., do the adults models of what is expected of students?)? • Are classrooms, playgrounds, the gym, and schools in general organized to foster student independence and responsibility for self and others? • Does the district use a restorative justice model? • Are student social structures analyzed to determine isolates? Cliques? • Do activities provide opportunities to
SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY	How does the district ensure the safety and security of all members of the district community? • Are health and wellness resources equitably available throughout the district? Is the budget for health and wellness sufficient to ensure students' need for physical, mental, and emotional health are met? • Are student-led (adult facilitated) solutions to issues of safety and security integral to the district and school processes? • Are administrators, faculty, and staff trained to address bullying, harassment, name-calling, etc.? • Is there a zero tolerance policy for comments and/or actions that are racist, sexist, homophobic, ableist, based on stereotypes, etc.? • Are faculty and staff trained in restorative practices? Are those practices used throughout the buildings? • Do those staff with primarily responsibility for health, wellness, safety, and security hold appropriate credentials in their disciplines and in child/youth development? • If punitive systems of discipline (i.e, assertive discipline techniques) are in place, are they examined for equity (e.g., differential impact, incident escalation, impact on self-esteem and efficacy) and regularly assessed? Are alternatives available? • Are suspension and expulsion policies and practices monitored and assessed on a regular basis? • Do buildings contain spaces where students and faculty can take a health break? If local police officers or school resource officers are used, do they meet all of the criteria in this section (i.e., trained in child & youth psychological, physical, and cognitive development, incident de- • escalation, restorative practices, health & wellness, zero-tolerance policies, anti-racist & implicit bias training, student-centered problem solving)?