EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE

A Guide to Educational Equity in Maryland

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

EQUITY AND **EXCELLENCE**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dear Maryland Leaders:

I believe that educational equity is a critical priority for Maryland, as well as a cornerstone in my work as Maryland State Superintendent of Schools. Although we have seen some progress in our State indicators, achievement and opportunity gaps still persist at all levels of our education system.   I believe very strongly that all students deserve an education that prepares them for life long learning, success when they enter the workforce and participation in our representative government. There are many students who are not receiving the high-quality educational experiences that are needed to reach these goals. Yes, we have admired the problem very frequently, but now it is time to work actively towards resolving it.

We must approach equity with urgency so that all children can realize the promise of public education. The importance of educational equity and its relationship to educational excellence is highlighted in the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) logo, but more importantly, it is, and must continue to be, evident in our work.

The work of MSDE staff and the State Board over the last three years has focused on greater understanding of our diverse students' needs. What we have not grappled with is recognizing the importance of diversity and viewing it as an asset. Through MSDE's Network for Equity and Excellence in Education, we invited representatives from all 24 local school systems (LSSs) to work with us to develop focus areas and strategies to improve the achievement of all students in the State.

This *Guide to Equity and Excellence in Maryland* will serve as a road map to educators on how to apply an equity lens to all aspects of their work and will be a valuable resource as LSSs develop and implement their own educational equity policies. The *Guide* should be used as a practical tool for developing goals in each school system's Local Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Consolidated Strategic Plan. Those goals and strategies are intended to increase equitable opportunities for all of our students.
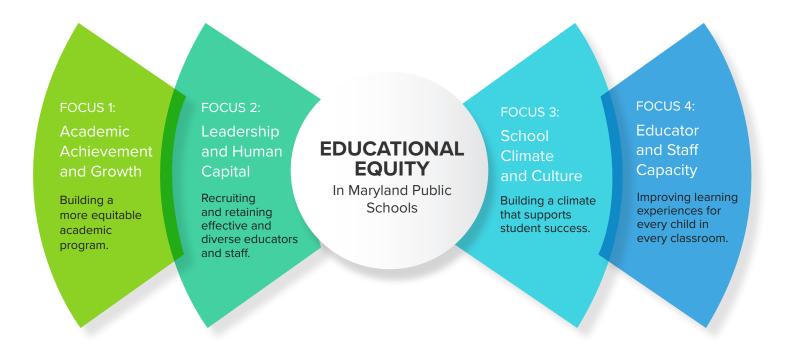
Best regards,

Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

What are Maryland's equity focus areas?

Four focus areas will guide the creation of a more equitable education system in Maryland.

FOCUS 1:

Academic Achievement and Growth

Building a more equitable academic program.

FOCUS 2:

Leadership and Human Capital

Recruiting and retaining effective and diverse educators and staff.

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

In Maryland Public Schools

FOCUS 3:

School Climate and Culture

Building a climate that supports student success.

FOCUS 4:

Educator and Staff Capacity

Improving learning experiences for every child in every classroom.

How to use the Equity Guide

This Guide was developed to assist Local School Systems (LSSs) and schools in strategic planning and implementation of equitable practices and structures for all students.

For each of the equity focus areas, the Guide includes:

Why?

A snapshot of Maryland data that illustrates the need to improve educational equity in the focus area.

How?

Guidance on examining the focus area through an equity lens.

What?

A menu of actions for LSSs and schools to implement based upon local needs assessments and data.

Why does Maryland focus on equity in education?

One of the fundamental requisites of Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.01.06, Educational Equity, is that local school systems (LSSs) develop policies and regulations that reflect the requirements laid out in the State Board regulations. This Guide includes educational equity focus areas and actions that will assist in creating or revising local policies and regulations. Stakeholder input is critical during the development and implementation of the policies and regulations. LSSs should use their local policy format to develop a policy that is customized for their communities. Policies may include purpose statement(s), definitions, goals and outcomes, and procedures for evaluation and reporting. Tools for policy development include the needs assessment aligned to the Local ESSA Consolidated Strategic Plan and disaggregated state and local data. COMAR requires review of the LSS policy every three years.

The following are additional requirements included in COMAR for local educational equity policies:

1. Be designed to create and maintain environments that are fair, safe, diverse, and inclusive.

2. Be based on the goal of providing educational equity for all students.

3. Direct the identification and utilization of resources to provide equitable access to educational opportunities and services by, among other steps, the use of disaggregated student data to analyze and identify gaps and equitable solutions.

4. Identify partnerships with the Maryland State Department of Education, local government agencies, and stakeholders to support educational equity.

5. Provide tailored and differentiated professional learning to build capacity for cultural responsiveness to address areas of inequity identified by the school system.

6. Ensure equitable access to effective teachers for all students.

7. Require that an equity lens be used in all staff recruiting, hiring, retention, and promotion decisions.

8. Require that an equity lens be used in reviews of all staff, curriculum, pedagogy, professional learning, instructional materials, and assessment design.

9. Provide the access and opportunity for all students to successfully read on-level by the end of Grade 2.

10. Direct that equity be addressed in the Local Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Consolidated Strategic Plan.

11. Identify the school system's process for analyzing data to develop goals, objectives, strategies, and timelines for the implementation of equitable and culturally competent practices in each school.

12. Identify the method of evaluation to measure the effect of equitable practices in the school system and schools.

13. Designate an individual responsible for the facilitation, monitoring, and implementation of the system equity initiatives within the Local ESSA Consolidated Strategic Plan.

Focus 1 : Academic Achievement and Growth

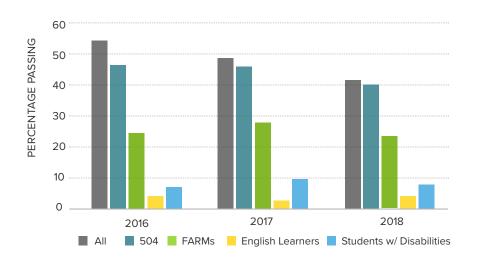Building a more equitable academic program.

Why Academic Achievement and Growth?

Review of two assessments required for graduation shows that when looking at student groups, English Learners and Students with Disabilities perform at a lower rate than other student groups on Algebra I and ELA 10 state assessments. When disaggregating by race/ethnicity, African American and Hispanic students perform lowest on the same state assessments.
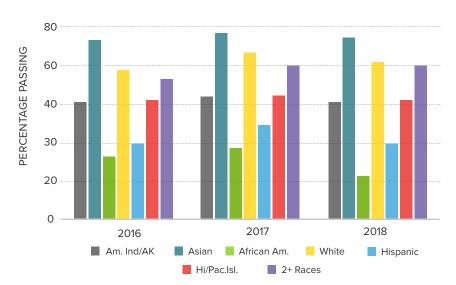
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA) ASSESSMENT

ELA 10 BY STUDENT GROUPS

The performance of English language learners and students with disabilities is lower than other student categories on the ELA 10 assessment. Students with 504 designation and FARMs (Free and Reduced Meals) students perform higher.
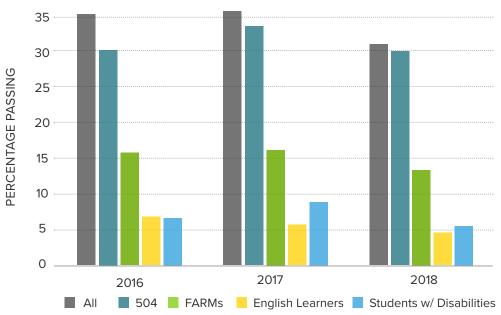
ELA 10 BY RACE/ETHNICITY

Data on race/ethnicity shows that African American and Hispanic students have the lowest scores; Asian students, followed by white students, have the highest scores. The Guide provides recommendations for reviewing student data, root cause analysis, and goal setting to address these discrepancies.
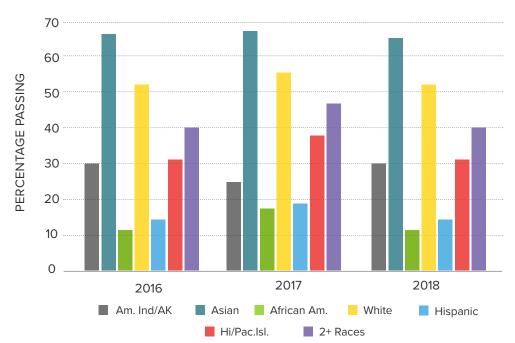
ALGEBRA I ASSESSMENT
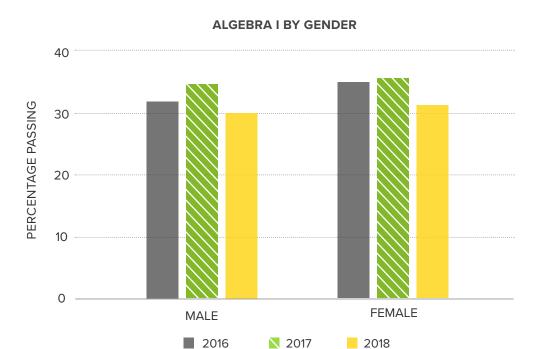
ALGEBRA I BY STUDENT GROUPS

When examining the performance of student groups, English learners and students with disabilities have the lowest performance. Overall, there is a significant gap between low-performing students and high-performing students that has persisted over the three years highlighted on the graphs. The Equity Guide provides systematic steps to analyze and identify goals to reduce these inequities.
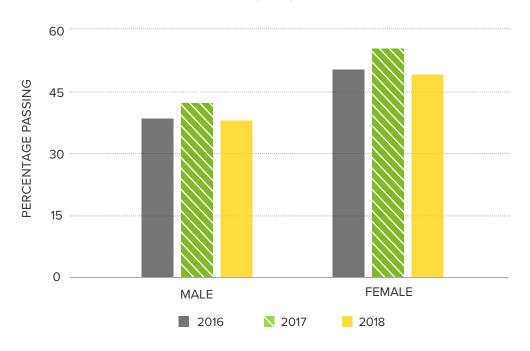
ALGEBRA I BY RACE/ETHNICITY

The assessment outcomes of African American students and Hispanic students are lower than students of other races/ethnicities on the Algebra I assessment. White students' outcomes show higher scores than other racial/ethnic groups, with the exception of Asian students. Native American and Hawaii/Pacific Islander students perform higher than African American students and Hispanic students but significantly lower than Asian and white students on the Algebra I assessment.

ASSESSMENTS BY GENDER

ALGEBRA I BY GENDER

Female students have consistently performed higher than male students during the testing cycles of 2016-2018. Disaggregating this data by race/ethnicity and student groups will allow LSSs and schools to develop goals and action steps to addressing the academic needs of students.

ELA 10 BY GENDER

Female students perform more than 10 points higher than male students. Using tools such as root-cause analysis can assist in revealing solutions that can be translated into action steps to support equitable instructional practices.

How to apply the Equity Lens

In Maryland, we believe that all students are capable of reaching their full potential and succeeding in school, regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status, or other individual characteristics. As such, when there are gaps in achievement and growth based on these characteristics, we must take a close and critical look at the systems that govern schools and LSSs. Next we must make the changes necessary so that all students are able to reach their potential at the schools that they attend. We will continue to look critically at every aspect of our educational system until all academic and growth gaps are closed.

Actions

Identify and address structural and institutional barriers that prevent students from equitably accessing educational opportunities in all schools.

LSS Level :

- Develop educational equity policy and regulations as required in COMAR 13A.01.06 Educational Equity.
- Clearly articulate goals in the Local Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Consolidated Strategic Plan.
- Determine where the gaps are in academic achievement in your LSS, e.g.:
    - Race/ethnicity
    - School-based
    - Socioeconomic status
    - Student-level
    - Disability status
    - Gender
- Evaluate curriculum for alignment to standards.
- Determine the programming that is offered at each school in academic and non-academic areas and who has access to/is enrolled in these programs, e.g.:
    - Early literacy programming
    - Rigorous standards-based English, math, social studies, and science pathways
    - Postsecondary opportunities, e.g., dual-enrollment college tours/programming, AP, and IB courses
    - Career and Technical Education programs of study
    - Extracurricular activities
    - College/career counselor
    - Well-rounded coursework
    - STEM
    - Other instructional supports
- Determine funding gaps:
    - By school
    - Per-pupil expenditures (e.g., staffing, books, technology, buildings)
- Determine the schools and classrooms that have the smallest gaps in achievement and resource allocation and find trends and best practices to emulate and share widely.

School Level :

- Clearly articulate the school's commitment to provide equity for all students, regardless of individual characteristics.
- Using the data from the LSS analysis, identify existing gaps and determine a plan for how to address those gaps (use root cause analysis to identify barriers).
- Assess implementation of vetted/standards-aligned curriculum for bias, inadequate examination of perspectives, e.g. social justice standards or anti-bias framework.
- Ensure access to a vetted/standards-aligned curriculum for all students, including English learners and students with disabilities.
- Use formative assessment to adjust teaching and learning practices based on the progress of individual students.
- Identify the key community partners that can support students and families and engage with those partners to develop a school-level strategic vision and planning efforts.
- Offer training to develop parent knowledge and leadership skills that enable them to become integral partners and advocates for their children's education.

Strengthen students' readiness for postsecondary entry and success.

LSS Level :

- Provide data systems and/or dashboards to school leaders that are clear and inform them of student potential and current gaps in access to postsecondary opportunities in their schools.

- Allocate resources and provide professional learning to school leaders and staff to ensure proper student coursework and advisement aligned to specific postsecondary programming.

- Work with local postsecondary institutions to establish articulation agreements for programming for students.

- Expand Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs of study offerings in high-needs schools.

- Provide incentives and access to opportunities for school staff to acquire proper credentials to lead Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate (AP/IB) and dual-enrollment programming.

School Level :

- Use data from the earlier analyses, determine where gaps are found, and create a plan for how to fill gaps.

- Ensure that all students have access to course sequences aligned to postsecondary preparation and are properly advised on postsecondary opportunities and how to access them.

- Ensure that the school curriculum includes opportunities for AP/IB and dual-credit courses that fulfill graduation requirements.

Increase access to early learning opportunities. Provide access and opportunities for all students to successfully read on grade level by the end of Grade 2.

LSS Level :

- Communicate to schools and families about the importance of early reading and the programming available to support achievement from Birth–Grade 12.

- Develop a plan for comprehensive literacy instruction that includes foundational reading skills.

- Ensure that all students have access to high-quality early learning opportunities regardless of disability, race, or socioeconomic status, and create a plan for ways to address those gaps where they exist.

- Provide data systems and training for school leaders that clearly inform them of current gaps in achievement, programming, supports, or interventions, as well as evidence-based interventions that are available at their schools.

- Prioritize access to high-quality early learning opportunities aligned to standards.

- Provide incentives and access to opportunities for school staff to acquire proper credentials to lead early reading strategies and interventions.

School Level :

- Determine where gaps exist in achievement, access to programming, supports, and funding, and create a plan for how to address them.

- Set high expectations and provide supports for educators and staff in the explicit and systematic instruction of foundational reading skills in order for teachers to successfully teach early reading and track student progress and growth towards goals.

- Adjust curriculum and available programming to ensure that students have multiple opportunities to read and get feedback about their progress towards goals.

- Provide opportunities for support and interventions as needed to ensure academic achievement for all students.
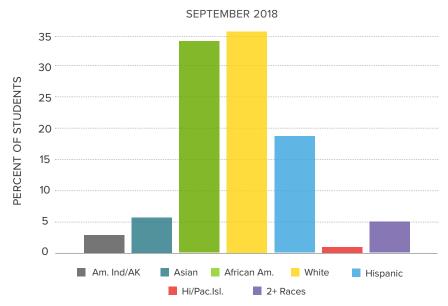
Focus 2 : Leadership and Human Capital

Recruiting and retaining effective and diverse educators and staff.

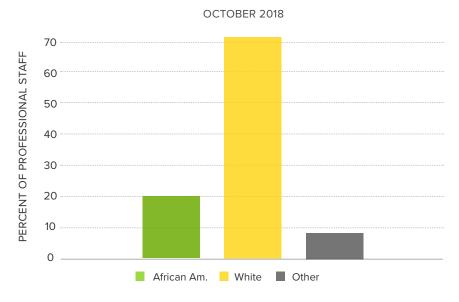## Why Leadership and Human Capital?

Students who interact with a culturally diverse population of teachers and leaders in a school are more likely to build strong relationships with adults, feel safe in the school environment, and be engaged in learning that sets the conditions for higher outcomes. The charts below show a significant difference between the diversity in professional staff and the diversity of Maryland's student body.

ENROLLMENT IN MD PUBLIC SCHOOLS BY RACE/ETHNICITY

SEPTEMBER 2018

This chart shows that Maryland schools are diverse. The largest number of students are White (36.5%) and African American (33.6%), and Hispanic (18%). All other racial/ethnic groups represent an additional 10.6% of the student population. Research makes a strong correlation between the race/ethnicity of the student and that of the teacher. Use of an equity lens will assist school systems and schools to disaggregate the data on student enrollment and professional staff and develop long-term plans to bring these groups into better alignment.

PERCENT OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF BY RACE/ETHNICITY

OCTOBER 2018

The graph shows that professional staff falls in two major categories, White at 70% and African American at 20%. All other race/ethnic categories of professional staff combined are 8.6%. These percentages do not represent an equitable professional staff. Suggested actions provided in the Guide will assist local school systems and schools in developing strategies to overcome barriers to hiring and retaining a more diverse faculty and staff.

How to apply the Equity Lens

As leaders in Maryland, we know that based on our history and current societal dynamics, we have a responsibility to work often outside of our comfort zones to ensure that all students have access to a quality education and feel safe and included in their school environments. Part of that work is to ensure that all students, particularly students of color, students with disabilities, and students who have been traditionally underrepresented and not afforded equal opportunities, have access to effective, diverse, and supportive teachers and leaders throughout their school experiences.

Actions

Provide equitable access to effective teachers.

LSS Level :

- Using the data provided at the state level through the ESSA accountability system, ensure that the students with the lowest performance outcomes have equitable access to highly effective teachers.
- Identify the barriers to attracting and retaining a diverse workforce of highly effective teachers and develop a plan to address those barriers.
- Train those involved in the hiring process to recruit and identify staff that will be successful working in high-needs schools.
- Engage with institutes of higher education (IHEs) to support retention of teachers.

School Level :

- Using data compiled and analyzed at the LSS level, develop school-based strategies to recruit and place highly effective teachers in high-need areas.
- Create professional learning experiences for all staff to increase culturally responsive practices.
- Develop supports (i.e. teacher-mentor or coaching) and programming to provide induction and incentives to prepare and retain teachers in high-needs schools and classrooms.
- Create school clubs and Grow Your Own initiatives to develop a self-sustaining pipeline of diverse pool teaching candidates.

Recruit, hire, and retain a diverse and effective staff of highly qualified educators.

LSS Level :

- Set system-wide goals related to closing equity gaps, i.e., ensuring that all students are taught by at least one teacher of color and all students of color are taught by a teacher of color.
- Analyze hiring, recruitment, and retention efforts and determine where teachers of color are being lost in the pipeline.
- Provide training support for school leaders and hiring staff in their selection and hiring processes to reduce implicit biases and prioritize hiring to close racial gaps.
- Engage with IHEs and preparation programs that have diverse student populations and work to build a pipeline to schools that need more teachers of color.
- Create a rigorous and innovative retention plan for teachers of color.

School Level :

- Determine gaps by race at the school level.
- Collect information on staff satisfaction from teachers each year and review data to determine strengths and weaknesses in the professional, instructional, and social climate of the school in order to promote strengths and remedy weaknesses.
- Analyze data from teachers who leave the school, along with their reasons for exiting.
- Identify potential teacher candidates of color outside of the traditional routes to recruit into educator preparation programs.
- Provide induction, mentoring support, and access to school leadership opportunities for new and current teachers of color.

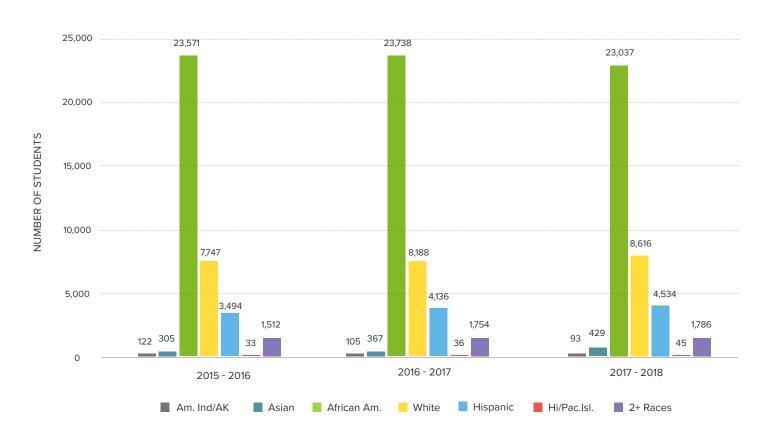# Focus 3 : School Climate and Culture Affecting School Success

Creating a climate that supports student success.

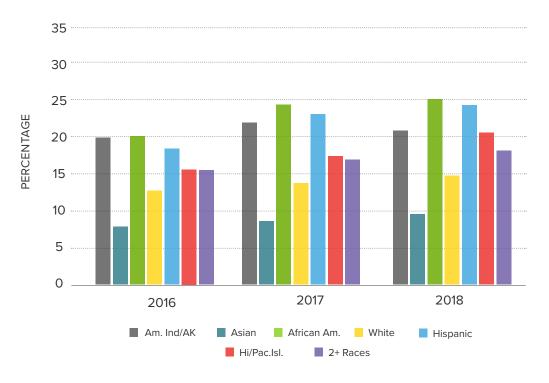## Why School Climate and Culture Affecting School Success?

In Maryland schools, students of color experience higher rates of suspensions and expulsions. This phenomenon has continued over several school years. Even with a greater emphasis placed on suspension/expulsion data starting in 2016, this discrepancy has continued. Students of color and students with disabilities also experience high rates of chronic absenteeism.

Students Suspended or Expelled from Maryland Public Schools by Race/Ethnicity

NUMBER OF STUDENTS

2015 - 2016	2016 - 2017	2017 - 2018
122	105	93
305	367	429
23,571	23,738	23,037
7,747	8,188	8,616
3,494	4,136	4,534
33	36	45
1,512	1,754	1,786

Legend: ■ Am. Ind/AK ■ Asian ■ African Am. ■ White ■ Hispanic ■ Hi/Pac.Isl. ■ 2+ Races
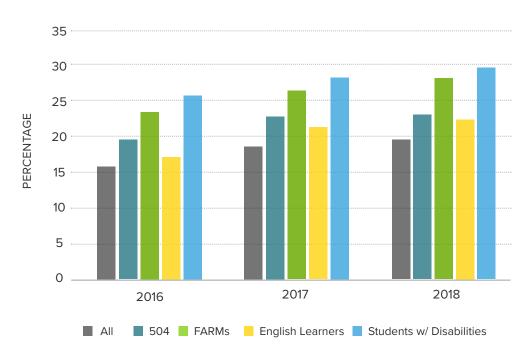
African American students are disproportionately suspended or expelled from Maryland Public Schools than any other student group when suspension//expulsion data is disaggregated by race/ethnicity. White and Hispanic students are the second and third highest groups with Native American students suspended/expelled at the lowest rate.

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM BY RACE/ETHNICITY

Legend: Am. Ind/AK, Asian, African Am., White, Hispanic, Hi/Pac.Isl., 2+ Races

Students of color have higher rates of chronic absenteeism than all students except white and Asian students. Asian Students have the lowest rate of chronic absenteeism. Using this Guide and an equity lens will position local school systems and schools to reduce the rates of chronic absenteeism for students of color.

CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM BY STUDENT GROUPS

Legend: All, 504, FARMs, English Learners, Students w/ Disabilities

Student groups on this chart have higher rates of chronic absenteeism than the All Students category. Maryland's most vulnerable students are experiencing higher rates of chronic absenteeism than their classmates. The Educational Equity regulation and this Guide provide the framework for local school systems and schools to develop plans to address chronic absenteeism and increase student attendance.

How to apply the Equity Lens

In order for all students to be successful academically, schools must be warm, welcoming, and supportive environments. A positive culture gives students the opportunity to take chances and allows them to feel safe to make mistakes and productively learn from them. When leaders create welcoming school environments with the appropriate rigor and support, all students can succeed academically and socially and reach their full potential, regardless of race or socioeconomic background.

Actions

Identify areas of disproportionality, and identify root causes and actionable steps to address them.

LSS Level :

- Articulate a vision and mission to promote a culturally responsive LSS community in the Local ESSA Consolidated Strategic Plan.

- Review data on chronic absenteeism at the school and student level and share annually with school leaders in the LSS.

- Review data related to discipline referral rates for all subgroups at the school and student level and share annually with school leaders in the LSS.

- Develop a strategy on evidence-based methods of positive school discipline and train school leaders on implementing new practices.

- Review the LSS curriculum to ensure that social-emotional learning strategies and culturally relevant instruction are integrated for students and staff to promote positive learning environments.

School Level :

- Articulate a vision and mission to promote a culturally responsive school community that aligns with the LSS's educational equity policy and the Local ESSA Consolidated Strategic Plan.

- Create a plan to share data, policies, and practices with families each year and ensure that faculty and staff understand the school discipline policies.

- Train educators on restorative justice and practices and align school policies to improve school climate.

- Provide support to educators on social-emotional learning models and incorporate them into existing school practices.

Reduce chronic absenteeism at the school and LSS Levels.

LSS Level :

- Create partnerships with educator preparation providers to ensure that teacher candidates learn strategies for reducing truancy and chronic absenteeism and develop skills to engage with families to support student attendance.

- Review LSS-wide attendance data and target support to schools with high rates of absenteeism.

- Provide training to school leaders and staff to develop effective monitoring systems and strategies to intervene where necessary to support attendance for families in the school community.

- Allocate the necessary resources and personnel for wraparound supports at schools where absenteeism is highest over an extended period of time.

School Level :

- Create a plan to partner with families and communities to create solutions to alleviate attendance barriers.

- Train educators and staff on the barriers to attendance and ensure that they are equipped with the tools necessary to support students and families with prolonged absences.

- Ensure that school policies, practices, and environments create an inclusive school culture that supports the attendance of all students and families.

- Identify partners in the community to provide non-instructional supports for families, e.g., access to laundry facilities, clothing, and transportation.
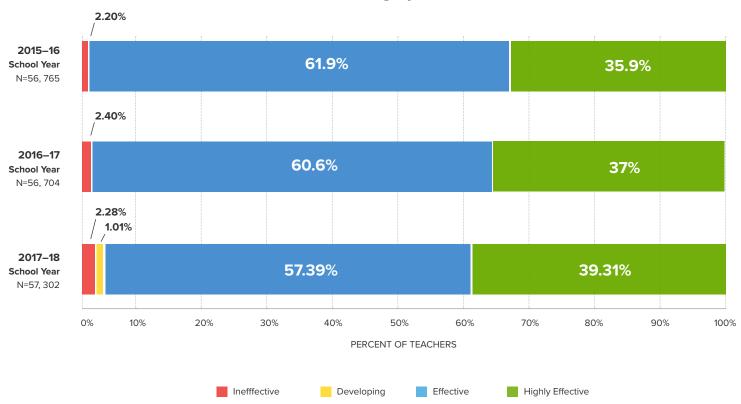
Focus 4 : Educator and Staff Capacity

Improving learning experiences for every child in every classroom.

Why Educator and Staff Capacity?

All Maryland teachers are evaluated annually. Between school years 2015 and 2018, nearly 97 percent of Maryland's teachers were rated as highly effective or effective. Disparities between student groups on performance outcome measures, however, have remained largely unchanged. Focusing on creating more equitable school systems will create an environment in which Maryland students can be successful.

97% of Teachers are Rated Highly Effective or Effective

2015–16
School Year
N=56, 765
2.20%
61.9%
35.9%

2016–17
School Year
N=56, 704
2.40%
60.6%
37%

2017–18
School Year
N=57, 302
2.28%
1.01%
57.39%
39.31%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

PERCENT OF TEACHERS

■ Inefffective   ■ Developing   ■ Effective   ■ Highly Effective

The overwhelming majority of Maryland teachers are rated as highly effective or effective. This raises questions when contrasted with the student achievement gap as measured by state assessments. This Guide provides recommended action steps for local school systems and schools to address the discordance between teacher ratings and student performance.

How to apply the Equity Lens

In order to ensure that all students feel welcome and valued at school, educators and staff must work to dismantle the barriers that have traditionally interfered with students' ability to reach their potential. Part of that work includes examining implicit biases that have the potential to harm students, incorporating social-emotional academic development (SEAD) strategies, evidence-based instructional strategies, and professional learning (PL) opportunities to master the skills and strategies that have successfully promoted growth and achievement of students from all backgrounds.

Actions

Promote positive student outcomes through the integration of cultural responsiveness and social, emotional, and academic development (SEAD).

LSS Level :

- Incorporate tenets of social-emotional learning into academic instruction.
  - Create a model for social-emotional implementation that includes trauma-informed/healing-centered strategies.
  - Develop high-quality curriculum that is aligned to standards and inclusive of students' backgrounds and cultures.
- Provide tailored and differentiated Professional Learning (PL) to build capacity for cultural responsiveness and working with diverse student populations.
  - Provide PL on social-emotional learning, mental health, and trauma.
  - Prioritize equity-focused training for all staff that addresses implicit bias and privilege.
- Align inclusive pedagogy and positive behavior support with the evaluation of teachers.
  - Train leaders to provide high-quality feedback and differentiated PL.
  - Coach teachers to evaluate their effectiveness with every student.

School Level :

- Incorporate student voices into PL to support cultural responsiveness of school staff.
  - Use LSS or school climate survey data to examine student perceptions of cultural responsiveness.
  - Create avenues for student input on policy development.
  - Add diverse student representation to leadership and school improvement teams.
- Provide training and support for teachers working with high-needs classrooms.
  - Create structures/systems to support new teachers so that they acculturate to the school's climate.
  - Utilize teacher mentors and communities of practice to support educator development.
  - Incorporate learning walks as a strategy to observe instruction, provide feedback, and support teachers in adjusting practice.
  - Connect family, community and culture into student learning.

Key Terms

Accountability measures

Maryland accountability framework indicators in place to guarantee oversight of opportunities, resources, and educational rigor that will lead to achievement for all students.

Cultural responsiveness

Pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including culture in all aspects of learning through equitable and inclusive practices that promote high expectations.

Educational equity

Granting every student access to the opportunities, resources, and educational rigor they need throughout their educational career to maximize academic success and social and emotional well-being, and viewing each student's individual characteristics as valuable.

Educational opportunities

Those Maryland accountability framework indicators in place to guarantee oversight of opportunities, resources, and educational rigor that will lead to achievement for all students.

Grow Your Own programs

A teacher recruitment program that starts at the secondary level or earlier in order to foster interest in teaching as a profession. These programs may also recruit from professional ranks. Models are varied but are usually a partnership between local school systems, teacher preparation programs, and state education agencies.

Equity Lens

For any program, practice, decision, or action, the impact on all students is addressed, with strategic focus on marginalized student groups. Individual characteristics include:

- Ability (cognitive, social/ emotional, and physical)
- Ethnicity
- Family structure
- Gender identity and expression
- Language
- National origin
- Nationality
- Race
- Religion
- Sexual Orientation
- Socioeconomic Status

Social and emotional well-being

The ability to be resilient and generate the emotions that lead to good feelings including the ability to communicate and develop meaningful relationships with others.

Trauma-informed/healing centered training

Professional learning that equips educators with the skills to be able to identify and support students who are experiencing trauma. Healing centered strategies use a holistic approach to restore and build resilience.

Resources and models for implementation to support each of the focus areas can be found here:

http://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Pages/EEE/index.aspx

Maryland Network for Equity and Excellence in Education 2018-19

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