PART 3:

CAPTURE THE OPPORTUNITY

Steps to Redesign School-Level Systems for Equity

ABOUT THE SERIES

This series was created in response to the radical transformation and change that our educational systems were forced to undergo in a short amount of time because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We see this as an opportunity to further redesign our systems that have historically uplifted only some students, not all. The inequity within our educational systems has only been exacerbated during this time of crisis. We are at a pivotal point and have the space to intentionally change the narrative around universal student achievement and design new systems aimed at creating opportunities for achievement for all.

PART 1:

We began with "[Forging the Path Forward: How to Design a Responsive Return Plan](#)" that allowed school districts to determine all the possible paths for SY20-21, with an explicit intent to address the needs of all students. In this first part of the series, we guided districts through using the best practices in cycles of crisis management and by following the four steps of responsive return planning. Leaders left this part of the series with actions for possible scenarios this fall and focus areas, or "big rocks," for which to plan for moving forward. Big rocks included areas such as Health & Safety, Culture, Instruction, Operations, Staffing, and Finances.

PART 2:

In part two of the series, "[Boldly Reimagining What Is Possible](#)," we guided leaders through protocols for designing prototypes for these big rocks with an explicit lens on, and alignment to, the core values of equity, safety, and agility. Using the framework of "Connect, Include, and Create," leaders were pushed to reimagine more equitable district level systems, designed with the needs of key stakeholders at the forefront.

PART 3:

In this final installment of the series, we focus on redesign and change at the school-level – equitable redesign within our locus of control and influence. This guide and digital workbook provides school leaders with a tactical process to revamp systems, whether virtual or in person, within their control, embracing the lens of equity. We call on leaders to start with their own beliefs and biases that uphold oppressive systems and then guide them through redesigning for marginalized groups within their schools, as we follow the framework of "Connect, Include, Create" introduced in part two. We want to support school leaders to redesign school-level systems for equity and create communities in which all students are empowered and uplifted to reach their full potential.

CAPTURE THE OPPORTUNITY

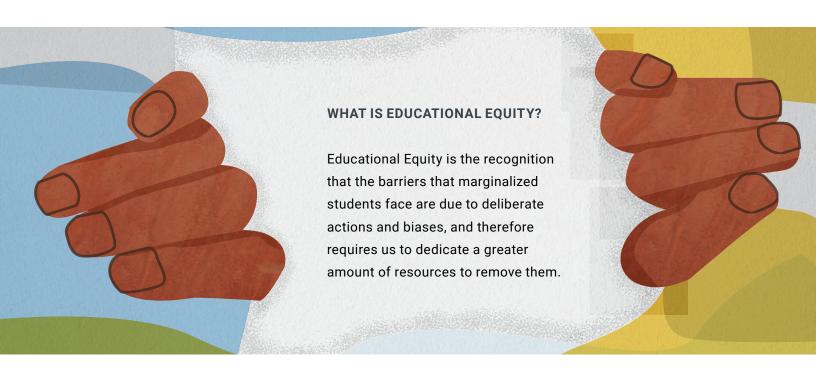*Steps to Redesign School-Level Systems for Equity*

WHY NOW?

With districts and schools in the process of planning for fall return, now is a time when schools are able to substantially change systems. **Whether you are returning to school in person, virtual, or in a hybrid model, we believe that as you make changes and design new systems, you must explicitly design with equity at the center.** Use this guide to redefine your systems for an equitable learning environment for all your students returning to school this fall.

"Any return to normal is a return to the normality of racism"

- IBRAM X. KENDI

Our country was founded on the oppression of Black people, women, and Indigenous people, among others. This created social norms and beliefs that are ingrained into the fabric of our society and subconsciously affect how we all think. There are many systems of power that routinely produce racially inequitable outcomes for people of color while reinforcing advantages for white people. School systems are complex ecosystems designed within this context of structural racism.

WHAT IS EDUCATIONAL EQUITY?

Educational Equity is the recognition that the barriers that marginalized students face are due to deliberate actions and biases, and therefore requires us to dedicate a greater amount of resources to remove them.

The deeply embedded inequities that exist within our school systems are the result of intentional decisions made by those with power and privilege. People came to those spaces with beliefs, biases, and assumptions that allowed for further marginalization of groups. Over time, they perpetuated deep levels of institutional racism working against marginalized groups. The vastness of these inequities is the primary reason to start now by reexamining systems within our control rather than waiting for change within the larger systems.

We know that to truly dismantle the oppressive systems within our society, change must occur at both micro and macro levels – within a district, throughout a state, and across our nation. People with good intentions, expertise, and actions have attempted to address these problems but have fallen short due to the enormous barriers around power, policies, and practices that have been in place for hundreds of years. Therefore, to achieve systemic changes to the structural racism within our education systems, we must change policies, practices, and the human factors behind power and decision-making.

We challenge you – individual leaders and teams – to start redesigning the school experience for marginalized students within your community as a way to start the eradication of these barriers across all levels. Pre-COVID, leaders would take months to plan and execute a school redesign. However, in this current climate there is a heightened need and urgency to ensure students can enter schools in the fall that have been responsively redesigned to meet their immediate needs. By engaging in the steps below, we hope schools can capture the opportunity to begin redesigning aspects of policies and practices within your buildings in an iterative but urgent manner. If your school is interested in rethinking systems outside of the immediate needs presented by the pandemic, there is also the opportunity to engage in a more complex redesign that will take more time and resources.

"Since we know that disturbance is required for change and there is no doubt that disturbance is happening as we speak, the question is, are we willing to use this opportunity to create the kind of educational system we want?"

- HUGH VASQUEZ, NATIONAL EQUITY PROJECT

DESIGN WITHIN YOUR SCHOOL'S LOCUS OF CONTROL

Some examples of marginalized groups are our Black and brown children, our students with disabilities, our ESL students, among others. While we are not presenting an exhaustive list of marginalized groups, we are acknowledging that **marginalization created by systems** will be determined based on factors of your school community and district. We argue that we can all work to redesign the student learning experience from within our locus of control. That work begins with adopting the mindset that we all have control and influence to dismantle our own internalized racism, the interpersonal racism that occurs between individuals within our school building, and the institution that is our school. We also acknowledge the

1) **size of the district,**
2) **level of autonomy of school leaders, and**
3) **guidance provided by state officials can alter aspects of your redesign.**

EXAMPLES OF MARGINALIZATIONS BASED ON

RACE:
Achievement gap between white students and all other races

LGBTQIA+:
Lack of access to spaces and opportunities that align with their identity

DISABILITY:
Gaps in instructional and curriculum materials for Special Education students

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS:
Gaps in achievement for economically disadvantaged students

GENDER:
Achievement & opportunity gaps between gender identity groups in schools, such as access to math and science classes

The protocols within this paper are to support our call to action of all leaders within schools. We designed this process to:

- **be completed within your role or team's locus of control**

- **act as a starting point for responsive equity work in schools**

- **shift power in creating prototypes to address inequity**

We engage in dismantling systemic education inequities at Education Elements through a three-part methodology: **Connect, Include, Create**.

We also know and believe that any work around addressing inequity must start with oneself and a willingness to cede power depending on the privileges one holds. The steps below present strategies a school leader, or teams can use to *Start with Yourself and Cede Power*[1], in order to **Connect, Include, Create.**

CONNECT

INCLUDE

CREATE

Step 0:

Start With Yourself & Cede Power

- Identify your own bias, power, and privilege in how you make decisions

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Step 1:

Connect

- Define what system to address, the scope of change you are making, and for whom you are making the change

- Empathize with the identified school level challenge

- Determine if you are designing for impact, urgency, or ease

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Step 2:

Include

- Bring voices to the table

- Empathize with the marginalized group

- Outline the success criteria for truly changing the system for equity

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Step 3:

Create

- Create opportunities for voices at the margin to be included in the design process

- Design 2-3 prototypes with the marginalized group at the center

- Clear communication of the what (decision trade-offs), how (process used), and why (your reason for selecting the system for redesign)