CULTURE

Big Question: How does the workplace create conditions to ensure that success, engagement, and inclusion are not predictable by race, ethnicity and culture?

Personal

What do I need to know and understand about my own racial and ethnic identity and how it influences teaching, learning, and leading?

How do I learn about others' racial and ethnic identities, perspectives and experiences?

Institutional

What are the structures that allow staff to engage in focused learning related to race, equity, and culture?

How are barriers to success understood, discussed and addressed in the organization?

How does staff reflect on the ways individual racial/cultural background impacts institutional culture?

Professional

How does the workplace create the conditions where every student and adult feels valued, supported, and hopeful?

PRACTICE

Big Question: How does the workplace identify specific strategies, actions, or goals that are designed to eliminate the racial achievement gap?

Personal

How do I intentionally create access and opportunity so that every student and adult is engaged in rigorous, relevant instruction and professional learning?

What students, clients, and families do I extend invitations in order to be inclusive and to offer new opportunities?

Institutional

How does the workplace examine its practice through the SSIF and other data sources to better understand the needs of the students/clients in order to address gaps identified in the data?

Professional

How does the workplace hold its members accountable for implementing strategies that will accelerate achievement/performance, opportunities, and access, to eliminate racial achievement gap?

EQUITY

LEADERSHIP

Big Question: How does the workplace spend time and resources on developing the vision, skills and accountability of its formal and informal leaders to lead for equity?

Personal

How do leaders [formal & informal] develop their understanding of equity based on their own racial and cultural identity and the experiences of others to create a shared vision?

Institutional

How do our beliefs and expectations around equity impact our ability to disrupt the status quo?

Professional

How do we monitor individual (student and adult)/organizational success using multiple measures? What are the knowledge, skills and strategies needed by leaders to operationalize equity?

We **BELIEVE** that each and every student matters, outcomes should not be predictable by race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, equity demands the elimination of all gaps, and creating and maximizing future opportunities for students and staff is necessary.

Three Levels of Addressing

Personal: centering one's self and uncovering one's own biases, stereotypes, and privileges

Institutional: exploring institutionalized factors that promote or limit achievement/performance

Professional: analyzing successful implementation of equitable practices that assure individualized support

THEREFORE, we will hold high expectations for all students and staff; distribute resources as necessary to provide extra supports and intervention so all students can achieve; identify and eliminate any institutional barriers to student success; and ensure that equitable practices are used in all classrooms and workplaces. We will act on the belief that MCPS is positioned to be the first large school district to eliminate the racial achievement gap.

A Framework for Analyzing Efforts to Achieve Equity through an Equity Lens

# What is the MCPS Equity Framework?

"Unless every one of us commits ourselves to pursuing equity for each and every student, no institution can overcome our individual deficiencies."
   -Curtis Linton
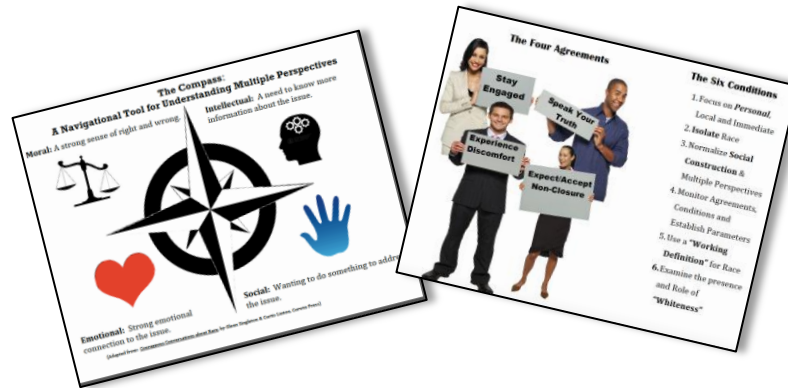
Purpose

For the last ten years, Montgomery County Public Schools has intentionally increased its focus on achieving equity for all students, specifically for those students of color whose learning needs are not being met. We define equity as the quality of being just, impartial, and fair. Equity must be distinguished from "equal." In equitable classrooms students get what they need, not the same as everyone else. While we have done a great deal of groundbreaking work that is still being studied throughout the country however, achievement in MCPS is still predictable by race.
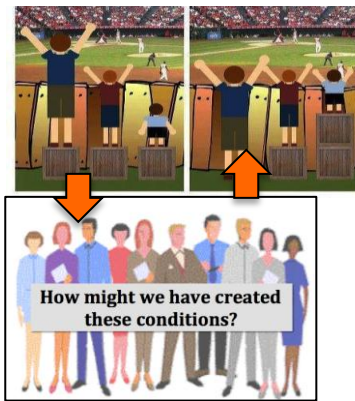
In order to create a school system where success is not determined by race, culture or ethnicity, each of us must look at our work using the lens of equity. What this means is we must move away from seeing equity as a separate and singular event and see it embedded as part of our day-to-day work. The equity lens allows us to examine our practices and ask the critical question—"Who benefits from our services, curriculum, processes and procedures? If we can successfully predict those who benefit by race, then we should be called to look at the conditions that create the inequity and address it so that the outcomes are no longer predictable by race.

The tools for *Courageous Conversations* and Study Circles are strategies we have used to engage in conversations about racial equity. These are great strategies to frame and engage in the conversations, but we must also challenge ourselves to engage in these conversations as part of our day-to-day work of schools and offices. We cannot close the racial achievement gap if we are unable to talk about race, reflect on our practices, policies and procedures that contribute to the gap and make the necessary changes to eliminate the barriers that perpetuate inequities. This is the work each employee in the system needs to do in order to execute our work through the lens of equity.

The MCPS Equity Framework was created to help staff with the learning and the doing needed to achieve our core value of equity.

Background

Curtis Linton developed the equity framework after visiting schools that had been successful with closing achievement gaps. There are four common characteristics of equitable schools that Linton observed:

> *Expectations* set the bar for high achievement.
> *Rigor* provides the skills and learning the student needs to succeed.
> *Relationships* help the student believe in the teacher's high expectations, engage with the rigorous curriculum, and respond to the
> *Relevancy* of the learning.
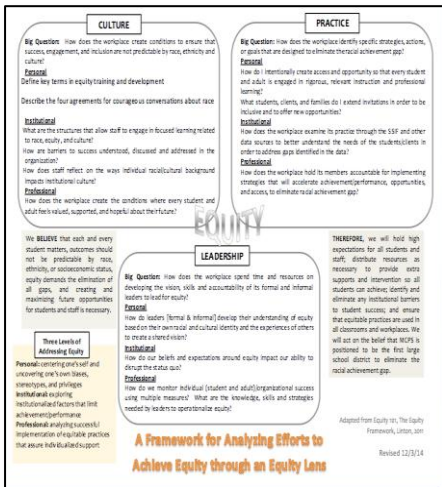
Linton found that these schools focused on three arenas: *culture, practice and leadership*. In order to achieve equity, Linton suggests that you must be doing all three at the same time. We use these lenses to reflect on the individual and the collective needs of the school. Included in the framework are three big questions, which help to focus the work in each of the arenas.

- **Culture:** How does the workplace create conditions to ensure that success, engagement, and inclusion are not predictable by race, ethnicity and culture?
- **Practice:** How does the workplace identify specific strategies, actions, or goals that are designated to eliminate the racial achievement gap?
- **Leadership:** How does the workplace spend time and resources on developing the vision, skills and accountability of its formal and informal leaders to lead for equity?

Within each of the key areas there are three lenses of engagement: *personal, institutional and professional*. Linton suggests using these three "lenses" to examine different roles within the three arenas for equity.

- Using a personal lens means considering the personal responsibilities in enacting equity. This is the lens through which an individual explores their personal experience with race and equity and how it influences their work for and with students.
- Using an institutional lens means considering how our collective work either perpetuates or interrupts patterns of inequity. This is the lens through which the status quo is combatted.

- Using a professional lens means we (the individuals, and the institution) consider teaching practices, culturally proficient teaching, support mechanisms, and environment that actualize equity. This is the lens through which best practices are contextualized.
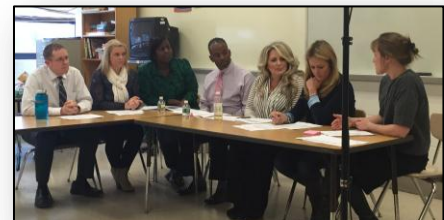
Application

The MCPS Equity framework also serves as a reflection tool for schools and offices to examine the work they are doing or the work that needs to be done to ensure that equity as a lens is being applied to make decisions aligned with our core values. The framework should also be used to identify the equity work each part of the organization needs to do to ensure continuous improvement. In this way, all members of the organization are working collectively to close the racial achievement gap.

As leaders of learning, our role is to lead our staff to examine their practice in order to find adaptive solutions to instructional challenges. There are no easy solutions. Our work around equity is not going to be solved through programs alone. What works in one school will not work at another, as the culture of each school is unique.

In our roles as leaders of high performing teams it is our obligation to challenge-- through courageous conversations and dialogue-- the beliefs, practices, and policies that marginalize groups of students and their families. In the language of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) this would be "disturbing the status quo."

The school improvement process is the ultimate equity strategy and the MCPS Equity Framework provides structure for every member of the organization to engage in the work that will eliminate gaps.