



# **Livingston School District**

**Equity Audit Report**  
**12/05/2023**

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# Our Team



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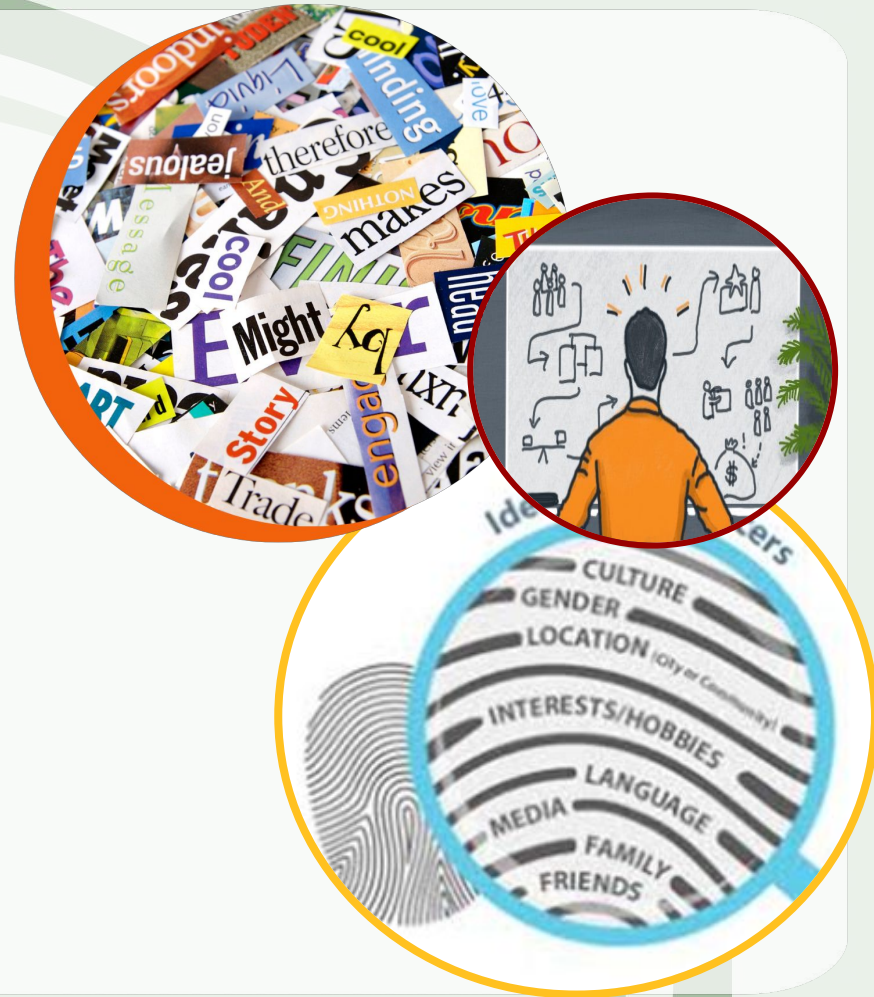
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# Our Charge:

**Livingston Public Schools RFP:** After several years of focused work in diversity, equity, and inclusion we must now try to get a comprehensive globalview as to how that work is paying off,and areas that need more attention. We need to know what is working well,where there are gaps,and what our priorities should be as we work to move forward as quickly and effectively as possible.

## Our Guiding Questions:

- What is the impact of DEI work to-date?
- Is the district DEI work program rich, but impact poor?
- Is the work we are doing making a difference?
- Is it implemented with fidelity?
- How do we best communicate and engage with the community to articulate the work we are doing and make it more visible?
- Are we doing enough to share what's happening in the DEI area?



# Our Process

## ***The Data***

- ❑ *Review of extant data, provided by district*
- ❑ *Review of publicly available data: media, news, website, facebook*
- ❑ *Administration and analysis of climate survey: students, families, educators*
- ❑ *Site visits: every school*
- ❑ *Focus groups & Interviews*

## ***The Analysis***

- ❑ *Iterative process*
- ❑ *Reaching saturation*
- ❑ *Triangulation*

## ***The Recommendations***

*What's in the report*

*How to read the back-up data*

- *Appendix A: the Qualitative Summary*
- *Appendix B: the Extant Data Analysis*
- *Appendix C: Climate Surveys*





# What's next?

While the audit is done, and the final report shared, **your work is just beginning.**

Now the district, via administrative teams, district departments, individual school teams, equity councils, parent groups, and board committees will have to **engage with the findings, ask more questions, and come up with strategies to respond to the recommendations.**

So.... as I go through our recommendations, you might be thinking about the **who needs to be involved**, and how you might imagine taking on the **challenge of each recommendation.**



# Points of Clarification & a mea culpa

Before I start with the overview of our recommendations, I want to clarify a few items:

- Some folks assumed there would be an **evaluation of personnel**
- Some thought we'd be making **determinations or reviewing compliance** related to legal elements or individual cases, such as Special Education and HIB
- Both of those are important tasks, but are **beyond our scope**
- Our work is about partnering with districts to identify areas of strength and weakness in overall DEI work, and to provide recommendations to improve that work

The **mea culpa**:

We were remiss in that we did not differentiate the experiences and concerns of parents of special education students - the concerns of those families whose students are in the general education environment are substantially different from those who are in more restrictive placements, and we did not sufficiently address either.

We are reviewing that data, and will submit an addition to the final report.



# What we can, and can't, take away from this data

- *We see you- doing good work, committed to educating all the students- and want our work to assist you in doing even better- our focus is on the system and supports necessary to make that happen*
- *When we do equity work, it's not the 95% that gets our focus, it's the 5 %- The purpose of the equity audit is to find what's happening for the marginalized, not the majority*
- *This report is a snapshot in time- some of the work has been happening for a long time, some is newer, and things have happened since we stopped data collection*
- *We don't claim to have found the "truth", but we do uncover and share perspectives- which gives us a direction to look deeper*
- *Much of what seems like a "negative" is not necessarily so.... It may be a lack of communication- you may have the right stuff, but folks are not taking it up*
- *While we talked to a lot of people, we can only report on those who respond- which often skews towards folks who have a concern to raise*
- *In the survey data, attend to the numbers- if 1000 completed, and 100 responded negatively, and 10 made a comment that we shared, that comment is representative of the 10, not the 1000*

# The Challenge, and the Opportunity

**Livingston Public Schools is a good school system.** Overall, students fare well on academic and co-curricular standards, behave as expected, and succeed in completing their schooling and progressing to college and career. The district does not have any significant areas of disproportionality, and most faculty and staff see it as a good place to live and work, contributing to high levels of staff retention in most instructional and support services areas. Changing demographics have created some tensions, and the district has responded by increasing its attention on matters of diversity, equity and inclusion. There are challenges and occasional incidents that are addressed, but outcomes are good.

**Livingston has the opportunity to be a national model for this work** - leaning into the challenge of how to prepare students at the next level and to address the covert, rather than the overt.

- **How do we support all of our students to be engaged members of a diverse, global community?**
- **How can we be a model space in which everyone can be their whole and complete self, and feel welcomed, included, and valued, as they are?**
- **How do we address, rather than ignore, the global and political conflicts that divide and polarize our communities, leaning into the hard conversations?**







Activity	Frequency	<b>Participants</b> <i>Note that our classification by demographic group is based on either self-identification or our best estimation based on how the individual presented during the session.</i>
<b>Classroom observations</b>	In addition to principal led tours of all schools, we did full observations of <b>44 total classrooms across the 9 schools</b>	<b>454 total students</b> in those classrooms, with an approximate representation of 47% white, 20% East Asian, 16% SE Asian, 8% Black, 3% other
<b>Affinity Focus Groups</b> , including the District Equity Advisory Group	19 groups	<b>258 adult participants</b> , 43% white, 14% East Asian, 19% SE Asian, 19% Black , 2% other, 19% male
<b>Staff teams</b> (Supervisors, Directors, Tech, Secretaries, HR, Building/Grounds)	6 groups	<b>62 adult participants</b> , with the most racial diversity in Building and Grounds, (about half present as white and half as POC). Across the other groups, approximately 83% white and 17% POC. Both grounds and tech are heavily male, secretaries exclusively female, and supervisors/directors/human resources included 11 female, 2 male.
<b>Adults in schools</b>	10 groups	<b>101 participants</b> , 85% white and 94% female
<b>Students (grades 4-12)</b>	21 groups	<b>247 participants</b> , 29% white, 28% SE Asian, 20% East Asian, 9% Black, 4% other, 35% male.  There are 4,561 students in this grade range, so we spoke with over 5% of the student body. Boys are somewhat underrepresented.

Activity	Frequency	Participants
		<i>Note that our classification by demographic group is based on either self-identification or our best estimation based on how the individual presented during the session.</i>
<b>Survey: Students 4-6</b>	<b>1,323 responses</b>	1,482 was the total number of possible participants, our <b>response rate is 89%</b> . Specific demographic information is available in Appendix C
<b>Survey: Students 7-12</b>	2,582 responses <b>2,404</b> after removing suspect ones	3,079 was the total number of possible participants, our <b>response rate is 78%</b> . Specific demographic information is available in Appendix C
<b>Survey: Family/Community</b>	<b>572 responses</b> collected	8,240 emails were sent, and 7,596 were delivered. Specific demographic information is available in Appendix C
<b>Survey: Staff</b>	<b>761 responses</b> collected	1,053 was the total number of possible participants, our <b>response rate is 72%</b> . Specific demographic information is available in Appendix C



# Recommendations:

## District Level

The single biggest challenge for the district is to create the organizational structures and supports that allow the students, faculty and staff, and community members to engage with and implement the recommendations in their interpersonal interactions, classroom, building, and team settings.



- ❑ *Theory of action*
- ❑ *Ongoing evaluation of the impact of DEI*
- ❑ *Balance individual school autonomy with district vision*
- ❑ *Expand the district level DEI team*
- ❑ *Continue curricular changes*
- ❑ *Partner with community/cultural organizations*
- ❑ *Share power and voice with students*

# By domain: General DEI

- Continue to **define roles, responsibilities, and expectations for the adults involved in the DEI work**- while the equity coach position is new, it is important for them to spend time figuring out their roles, how they can have impact, how they work with their building administrators, and what time is dedicated to their work.
- Develop a set of **clearly defined goals for each equity team** to help the district measure its progress over time and begin to break down the perception that the work being done is performative in nature.
- Develop a **clear plan for rolling out DEI work in a structured, somewhat uniform manner** across the district, beginning with foundational equity work focused on developing equity literacy.
- **Begin DEI work with the adults**, expanding the work to include much deeper levels of reflection that should, over time, aid in the development of an “equity mindset,” a mindset through which all decisions can be made.
- Be sure to **include non-certificated staff** in this work.



# By domain: Climate and Culture

## Students

- Commit to **increasing transparency** behind the decision-making process and **elevating student voice**.
- Increase staff comfort with and **confidence in discussing issues of diversity and social justice**, leading to more meaningful conversations in classrooms, particularly *Community*.
- Attention should be paid to **adult responses to student behavior issues**, with intentional focus on bullying or perceived bullying, an issue raised by both students and parents. This should help restore trust between students and adults in the district.
- Work should be put into **ensuring that students understand that their words have weight and words can hurt others**.





# By domain: Climate and Culture

## Staff

- Intentional work must be done to **overcome the “retaliatory culture” and “favoritism”** that staff perceives is present in the district. Whether real or imagined, this culture inhibits risk-taking, silences important student-teacher conversations, and decreases staff retention. There is no greater threat to the potential to grow and improve in pedagogy, curriculum, or DEI work than a compromised professional culture.
- Aligned with the student recommendation above, increase **consistency of response to student misbehavior**. While confidentiality plays a significant role in matters of student discipline, it is also important for staff to understand the administrative philosophy behind student discipline and see that philosophy applied consistently.



# By domain: Academics

- **Review guidelines** for how and when new and returning students can enroll in honors, AP, or other advanced level classes and programs. **Include staff, students, and families in this process.**
- **Make use of those educators who are committed to and passionate about DEI** work to lead the way in the area of professional learning, curriculum development, and data review and analysis.
- **Increase representation of the student body** in textbooks, media centers, and other classroom and school materials and resources.



- **Close the gap** between the reality that the district has developed a comprehensive, age-appropriate multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) with the resources necessary to provide students with three tiers of intervention, and the fact that **many of the family and staff didn't know it, couldn't articulate it, and aren't sure what to do with it.** Clarity about who is responsible, what is the criteria for each level, how to determine curriculum gaps or gaps in learning vs learning disabilities were noted concerns from staff. Many families have the perception that you are either in or out of special education, and don't seem to have an understanding of the levels of intervention.

# By domain:

## Communication and Family/Community Collaboration

- Be intentional when building teams to address school or district concerns; include participants from different backgrounds to **ensure diversity of voice**.
- Provide **time and space for building leaders** to better understand DEI concepts and mindsets and collaborate about strategies they are using in their buildings to advance DEI efforts.
- Closely **monitor responses to incidents targeting any minority group** in the district to ensure a consistent level of response.
- Develop systems to **share appropriate information** with students and families when serious incidents impact the school or community.
- Provide **parent associations and the PT Council with development work** to ensure the engagement of diversity within their group.
- **Reach out to community partners** representing residents from diverse backgrounds to encourage their involvement in school activities. In the absence of a staff that is representative of student demographics, this helps to provide a more diverse group of role models with whom students can interact.
- Investigate or develop a mechanism to **track family involvement** in school activities.



# Questions & Comments





# Thank you Livingston!

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