



(Re)narrating Equity: Creating Equitable Structures of Entry and Exit in Santa Fe Public Schools

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(Re)narrating Equity:
Creating Equitable Structures of Entry and
Exit in Santa Fe Public Schools

Doctor of Education Leadership (Ed.L.D.)
Capstone

Submitted by

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To the Harvard Graduate School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Education Leadership.

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(RE)NARRATING EQUITY

CREATING EQUITABLE STRUCTURES OF ENTRY AND EXIT IN SANTA FE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This capstone outlines my strategic project around increasing equity in Santa Fe Public Schools (SFPS) during the 2015-16 school year. I sought to test the theory of action that effecting technical changes and solutions around inequity the district would pave the way to effect critical adaptive changes in the future, with the hypothesis that one type of change is not possible without the other.

My strategic project consisted of two work streams. First, I led a Discipline Task Force comprised of district administrators and school staff to examine the equitable implementation of discipline practices across schools. We sought to answer three questions: Who is getting in trouble? What are they getting in trouble? Why are they getting in trouble? We found that students who are English Learners (EL), low-income, or special needs disproportionately incur disciplinary infractions. From a series of 50 follow-up interviews, we discovered that a significant negative bias toward newer immigrants exists among students, teachers and principals at many school sites.

Second, I led a Registration Study Committee and subsequently participated on a Registration Implementation Team charged with increasing the efficacy of the Registration, Scheduling and Transfers (RST) process. We sought to answer these three key questions: Who is not getting a seat on the first day of school? Who is not getting a seat in the school of their choice? Why are they not getting seats? We discovered that low-income students are disproportionately both unable to register by the first day of school and excluded from the transfers process, due to a variety of individual circumstances.

Beyond our findings around equity, I also sought to examine the conditions under which a working group is successful or unsuccessful in SFPS. I discovered that, due to an unclear hierarchy, a culture of trust and collaboration is especially important in order for teams to be functional. As a result, the district needs to implement technical changes and structures around team-building and norm-setting in order to begin the adaptive shift toward a trusting culture.

INTRODUCTION

“Everyone knows that the politically correct thing to say in Montgomery County is that ‘every child can learn.’ The difference is between those who know the party line and those who believe it. I would say about one-third believe it in action, one third aren’t sure, and another third don’t believe it.”

— Jerry Weast, Montgomery County Public Schools Superintendent

When I was asked to create and lead an Equity Task Force at Santa Fe Public Schools (SFPS), it was the second time such an initiative would be launched under the current superintendent, Dr. Joel Boyd. Both the 2013 Task Force and the one I would be leading were charged with the same mission: to identify areas of inequity in the district and to make recommendations for eradicating them (Santa Fe Public Schools, 2013). I was told that the recommendations of the 2013 Task Force, which had formed and culminated two years prior, had been only tenuously rooted in data. I was to ensure that the work of this second Equity Task Force would be in close dialogue with district trends.

In the first couple months of leading the Equity Task Force, however, I came to two important realizations. First, our discussions and recommendations as a Task Force often relegated the issue of equity chiefly to an issue of personal bias. As a Task Force, we searched for areas of potential unconscious and conscious prejudice on the part of teachers and administrators—chiefly along lines of race, ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic status. By relegating our lens of equity to personal bias, were we ignoring institutional prejudice, systemic racism, or an attachment to the status quo? Any narrative about public education in this country must encompass a narrative about race and ethnicity, and any narrative about race and ethnicity has multitudinous layers ranging from the institutional to the personal; to pretend otherwise would lead to an inauthentic exploration of equity in the district.

It became more apparent to me that both members of the Task Force and myself had come to the work with a preconceived narrative around the challenges facing the district and the community. I had come to Santa Fe specifically because I was drawn by its unique ethnic, cultural and historical context—and more, by the story I had built around that context. As one of three states where the majority of the population is both minority and rural (the other two states being Hawaii and Alaska), as well as a state of mountainous deserts dotted with Native American tribes and pueblos, New Mexico is imbued with a historical narrative of conquered peoples holding onto the remnants of their languages and culture (Shortall, 2008). I—like several other members of the Task Force—was ready to dive into an equity conversation centered around the prejudices of a dominant white group intent upon putting or keeping down non-white others, simply because I had decided that the historical narrative of conquistadors in the southwest was the dominant SFPS narrative.

Coming to a project and into a place with a narrative already in mind is familiar to me. When I moved to the Mississippi Delta to teach high school English several years ago, it was with a sense of romanticism that I would bring literacy and hope to the descendants of share croppers and enslaved peoples still stuck in a Reconstructionist culture. I came into the teaching profession searching for the lost souls, the defeatism and ignorance, and the bigotry that, in my mind, had become synonymous with the Delta. It was my own students and the community who enlightened me unto the condescension and misguidedness of that narrative, which had prompted me to pursue “fixes” to problems that may not have been as pervasive as I believed.

To guard against my predilection to narrate and exoticize places, I facilitated the 2016 Task Force in devising its own definition of equity in the district. The Task Force members produced this: *Equity in Santa Fe Public Schools will be evident in the distribution of*

opportunities, funding, resources and supports that result in every student graduating ready for college or career, without correlation to his or her race, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, disability, gender or sexual orientation. It is a standard definition that encompasses both equal outcomes as well as equal opportunities, and it evoked familiar conversations that have been heard around conference tables in school districts, government agencies, and not-for-profits around the country. Are non-white kids suffering discrimination in schools? Still, the thoughtful discussion that preceded the Task Force's definition of equity opened ensuing conversations beyond personal bias.

The process of defining—or re-defining equity—in the Task Force was a critical foundational task to our work, because in this country, the word “equity” has become imbued with such a broad and loaded narrative that its meaning is not quite clear anymore. When Jerry Weast became Superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools, he mourned that though they were very present in district rhetoric, true equity and cultural proficiency were absent. As he explained: “Everyone knows that the politically correct thing to say in Montgomery County is ‘every child can learn.’ The difference is between those who know the party line and those who believe it. I would say that about one-third believe it in action, one-third aren’t sure, and another third don’t believe it” (Childress, Doyle, and Thomas, 2009, p. 112). Americans bandy the word “equity” about without constraint. Almost every school district in the country claims it seeks equity for students. Every education reformist speaks about equity. Yet equity has lost its power because when we talk about equitable outcomes and equitable opportunities, we talk about *people* and *fairness* rather than about *systems* and *reparations*. In the post Civil War era, Americans spoke about Reconstructing the South with the implied acknowledgment that its former construction was wrong. Before zeroing in on bias and prejudice—which more often than not places blame at

the feet of individuals within an organization—one must acknowledge that inequity arises equally or more so from systemic and institutional failures. Whenever an organization serves some students and fails others, it is not equitable and its entire structure needs to be re-imagined. Indeed, personal bias in this day and age is more often about defaulting to the status quo and accepting systemic and institutional failures as an individual, rather than about wishing harm or less upon others.

Which brings us back to my second realization: If the first task force didn't work, why should the one I was leading work any better? Many of our recommendations were already headed in the same direction as those of the original task force. The trends that emerged from the data were unsurprising: low-income, minority students made up the majority of special needs enrollment, discipline referrals and dropout rates, whereas they made up the minority of gifted and advanced course enrollment and graduation rates. Whether they had tied their recommendations to the data or not, the 2013 Task Force had created a plan that—though never carried out—spoke to these trends. Included in the plan were recommendations to:

- increase the number of qualified bilingual and TESOL certified teachers;
- improve cultural awareness and sensitivity among staff;
- improve cultural awareness and sensitivity among supervisors;
- maximize effective teacher and student scheduling;
- ensure adopted and implemented curricula meet the needs of our diverse population;
- ensure that issues of equity and access are considered in program design;
- increase access to quality Pre-K programs for all children;
- ensure that student discipline is consistent and equitable;
- ensure that hiring practices are equitable and maximize diversity across job categories;
- ensure that retention, promotion, summer school and graduation policies and practices are free from bias;
- work to decrease stressors for educators, students and families;
- increase school ability to connect students to community-based services;

- maximize the incorporation of social-emotional learning into the instructional day;
- provide equitable funding resources across our diverse communities;
- engage all families with courtesy, respect and cultural understanding;
- increase the training for parents through the Parent Academy;
- and maximize the welcoming environment in the district and at schools both in terms of human and physical presence (Santa Fe Public Schools, 2013).

These recommendations from the original Task Force's Action Plan resonated with me; but as I began to delve into district data, I realized that—with the exception of Pre-K expansion, which had been a significant area of the administration's focus in the past couple years—very few steps had been taken to intentionally and meaningfully carry out the action plan.

I was prompted to question the purpose of structures as such as task forces as instruments for change in governmental organizations. What was the impetus for the creation of the first task force? I don't know. I do know that its recommendations did not encompass a strategic plan that accounted for its authorizing environment and operational capacity. I also know that its recommendations were attached to rather broad outcomes, with an absence of accountability in the form of specific milestones, deliverables, deadlines or project ownership embedded within the action plan. Last, I know that the administration's stated reason for why the recommendations were ultimately not adopted was that they were not rooted in data. Still, even if the task force did not succeed in creating tangible outcomes for district's *children*, it did produce two positive outcomes for the district's *leadership*.

Ronald Heifetz, the seminal leadership expert, argues that task forces are often used to silence certain issues by relegating those issues to something separate from the day-to-day mainstream work of an organization; thus, they can actually perpetuate marginalization and work avoidance (2002). Through this lens, it could be said that the first Equity Task Force accomplished the outcome it was meant to produce. At its conception, district leadership

had the satisfaction of claiming credit for taking a bold step toward equity. At its conclusion, district leadership had a set of recommendations and a sheaf of meeting minutes as proof of months dedicated to solving the problem. Whether or not district leadership intended these to be the primary two outcomes, both were good for the district's image—and exonerated leadership from thinking about equity as an essential part of their day-to-day-work—even though their direct impact upon students was nearly nonexistent.

Indeed, one possible answer to why governmental organizations so often deviate toward structures such as task forces when addressing vast and complicated issues such as inequity might be that task forces can stand in for solutions until real ones can be found—or, until the problem is temporarily forgotten or silenced. For example, at a board meeting halfway through the fall semester, one SFPS board member—the only African American member—insisted that equity could not be an item on the agenda or any agenda; it deserved a dedicated board study session all its own. The superintendent and other board members agreed, and charged me—as the leader of the Equity Task Force—to prepare a study session for the following month. The board member who had raised the issue was appeased. The study session was put off, then put off again, and since then there has been no attempt to reschedule it, despite the several times I broached the subject.

An immediate assumption might be that, by de-prioritizing a board study session around equity, the district does not prioritize equity. Or, if we look closely at the broader work agenda of the district, another assumption might be that the district is already considers itself to be tackling the work of equity through more meaningful channels, and thus unconsciously or consciously recognizes the study session and task force as token efforts by comparison. Whether they are called task forces, working groups or subcommittees, such structures are implemented to tackle a wide range of problems in

public organizations ranging from school districts and municipal governments to state and federal agencies. While some successfully lead to implementation and change, many do not. Especially when it comes to an issue as sensitive and significant as equity—which most governmental organizations are eager to claim they are tackling—it is key to distinguish between efforts that are token and political and efforts that are purposeful and lead to real systemic change.

The recommendations of the 2013 Equity Task Force reflect a national pattern of ineffective measures to ensure equity in public schools. At its root, equity is and has always been a difficult problem to address both because it is so expansive yet nebulous, and because it is so deeply ingrained in our society and in our rhetoric as a value. When organizations tackle the mission of achieving equity, how do they know if they have been successful? How do they know if they are making progress? Is the concept of equity even measurable? Whereas some might argue that equity is indeed measurable—with success being equal outcomes for everybody, regardless of their identity—I argue that there are certain outcomes that are unidentifiable at the surface. Do people equally feel that they belong, that they have a voice, that they are worth as much as anybody else? In the context of schools, do students equally feel that they are capable, that they are deserving, that they have a place in the world waiting for them? These outcomes, in turn, are tied to inputs that are as difficult to identify—what biases do we as a society hold? Do we approach differences from an asset-based or deficit-based lens? What biases dominate school culture? What expectations do teachers and education leaders hold for different students? These outcomes around self-determination, self-esteem and self-perception—which boil down to how we view ourselves and how others view us—have enormous implications embedded in but also separate from academic outcomes, graduation rates, and matriculation rates (Hardre and Reeve, 2003).

Inequity in its truest form, then, is a behemoth challenge to tackle. While educators might be able to devise a strategic plan to increase test scores for underprivileged students, they are at a loss as to how to begin shifting the mindsets and biases of their organizations, their colleagues, and themselves. Heifetz identifies two types of responses to organizational challenges. Technical changes attempt to fix ordinary or symptomatic problems within the system, while maintaining the system as is (1994). This is not to say that technical changes are not important and necessary—they are. Indeed, technical changes bring about the tangible outcomes. Rather, technical changes can only occur within the constraints of their adaptive realms. For example, *Brown vs. Board* dramatically altered the rules of what could be—and came about because an adaptive change had slowly come about in the culture of the judicial system. At the same time, we have tried integration time and again, and it has not worked—why? Because integration is a technical fix to an adaptive problem; rich white people don't want to live next door to poor people of color, and they certainly don't want to send their children to schools with poor children of color. Until American society examines its own attachment to the status quo and its beliefs about equity, the impact of legal change is limited. Today, half a century after *Brown vs. Board*, schools are still largely segregated.

Heifetz argues that adaptive changes attempt to fix the root problems, thus altering the system itself. Because people like things to fundamentally stay the same, adaptive change is more difficult to effect. Indeed, adaptive solutions speak to changing the hearts and minds of people opposed to change (1994). An adaptive solution to school segregation would be to instill in parents the belief that their children should share a school with other children who are poorer than them, look different from them, or who speak different languages at home. Imagine assigning that task as an education leader! Adaptive solutions are frightening by nature, then, because they guarantee neither success nor “fixes” in the way that technical

changes can. Yet a problem like inequity requires organizations to make adaptive *and* technical changes.

I began to examine other Task Forces and committees in the district that had been successful in implementing real change for students. For example, the Truancy Task Force, which had spent the past year closely examining student attendance data, made concrete recommendations including a detailed system of parent communication as well as the creation of a Truancy Coach position at each middle school. I noticed first that, because the recommendations were concrete, specific and technical in nature, they were easily implemented. After the first few months of implementation in the beginning of SY2016, student data showed a clear improvement in absenteeism from the beginning of SY2015. I also noticed that the Truancy Task Force was established with the real intent to create change—an intent made evident in the measurable outcomes, milestones and ownership embedded in the language of both its charge and its recommendations. Given these observations about the success of the Truancy Task Force, I suspected that the failure of the original Equity Task Force to generate tangible outcomes for students was in part due to either an absence of intent or a *weak* intent to create meaningful change through the Task Force.

I knew that Santa Fe Public Schools could not achieve equity without both technical and adaptive solutions. I needed both to persuade leadership to adopt and implement whatever deliverables and recommendations the Task Force produced regardless of mindset as well as to create urgency among leadership to address equity head-on as a daily priority. But having just spent a difficult two years intentionally undertaking the adaptive work of identifying my own biases, I felt unprepared as an incoming resident to prompt similar work among colleagues with whom I had as of yet no relationships. In addition, I had always

gauged my worth around what I accomplished and prided myself as someone who got the job done. As such, I was determined to leave my residency with tangible proof of systemic improvement that impacted children. Acknowledging that I was setting aside the adaptive work that I knew to be critical, I focused on creating a technical strategic plan that would bring the district measurably closer to equity. Afterward, I would then turn my attention to the adaptive work. I told myself that, by building relationships with colleagues and effecting some of the tough technical changes, I would be laying the groundwork for addressing the more adaptive solutions necessary to bring about true equity.

Taking a lesson from the Truancy Task Force, I then reoriented the Equity Task Force to ensure successful technical changes. Instead of tackling the whole breadth of equity, inclusive of everything from personal biases to student outcomes, I began with the assumption that the system was inequitable simply because some students were failing. I then began to identify some key structural components of an equitable system, and examined the district to see which components it was already addressing with existing work so that I could focus my efforts on components which were currently neglected. I fixated on two components that would become my strategic project—the registration and enrollment process, and the discipline system—and chose the latter piece as the new area of focus for the Task Force. In this way, the Task Force reoriented its focus from the real but abstract theme of inequity to the more concrete problem of school discipline. By narrowing our focus, I hoped that the Task Force could impact students in a meaningful, visible and measurable way. I also hoped that we would create deliverables that school leaders could be persuaded to adopt individually at their respective school sites, preempting the possibility that district leadership did not intend to change district policy. At the same time, I

acknowledged that I had essentially exchanged leadership of the District Equity Task Force for leadership of a School Discipline Task Force and a Registration Study Committee.

At first, I questioned whether I was limiting my scope to render the task easier for myself. Was I scaling back from a big goal to two small ones? As someone who prided herself on “getting the work done,” was I simply ensuring that I could deliver concrete deliverables and clear outcomes at the end of my residency? Perhaps. But when I reflected upon the rest of the work that the district was doing, I could point to other groups were conducting work around other single pieces of “equity.” The Truancy Task Force, by way of decreasing absenteeism in the district, was one of those groups. The Early Modified College Planning Committee, of which I was a member, created a new alternative education campus targeting the lowest quartile of students with the hopes of renewing their engagement in school. Another group was expanding preschool seats across the district with the goal of providing every child with a preschool education before entering kindergarten. All of these groups were working deliberately on concrete components of equity, that all together, made no small impact.

The following pages will outline the work of the Equity/ Discipline Task Force and the Registration Study Committee, the two key components of equity in which I played a leadership role as a doctoral resident without formal authority. In the process of reflecting upon the construction and work of these two groups, I seek chiefly to examine what made them effective or ineffective as agents of equity in the larger context of the organization. My hope is that beyond the scope of my work in Santa Fe Public Schools, this paper will be applicable to shifting the nation’s equity conversation from token to actionable across governmental organizations. More, I hope that it will provide a transferable framework that can be applied to important conversations around other moral and justice issues so that

“doing something” becomes equated with real and pervasive outcomes rather than marginalized exercises in conversation.

CHAPTER ONE: REVIEW OF KNOWLEDGE FOR ACTION

“Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance-wheel of the social machinery.”

-Horace Mann, 1848

DEMOGRAPHY IS DESTINY

A few years ago, I knew a 19-year-old boy I'll call Damien. Damien lived in the sparsely populated Arkansas Delta, where he had been born and baptized. I knew him to be a sweet and earnest young man in my eleventh grade English class, whose student profile was riddled with Individual Education Plans (IEPs), failed classes, and disciplinary infractions. In spite of his academic struggles, Damien begged me to allow him to enroll in my pre-AP English class rather than in the regular English class, where—he argued—the other kids were more likely to distract him. He was right; in the entire year that he was in my pre-AP class, he was a model student, paid attention and made marked improvements in his reading skills. But at the end of the year, his improvements had only brought him to a third grade reading level and I failed him in 11th grade English yet again. Damien did not return to school the following year. Six years later, a colleague sent me a newspaper article in which I discovered that Damien had been imprisoned on charges of first degree murder and that, at age 25, he had committed suicide in prison.

Damien was not the first student from the Arkansas Delta to end up in prison. Sadly, I am more surprised when some students “make it” than when they do not. Some might be quick to dismiss Damien's case—he was a high school dropout, he incurred a slew of disciplinary infractions as a public school student, he got in fights; of course he would get himself in trouble with the law. But having known Damien to be a model student in an environment where he felt safe, I wonder which structures in his school and community had set him up to fail? And *when* had they begun to fail him?

THE LAST IN LINE

The antiquated “one best system” that American educators sought to create in the nineteenth century, improve in the twentieth century, and preserve in the twenty-first century, has proven far from the “best” for many children. After all, the American education system was designed to keep black children ignorant, to assimilate white foreigners and Latino children, and to “track” children with special needs and disabilities out of mainstream society (Tyack, 1974). Indeed, the failures of the “one best system” can be categorized into three temporal points: the time when the student enters the school system, the time during which the student is enrolled in the school system, and the time(s) during which a student leaves the school system.

When I searched through the academic body of work surrounding educational equity in K-12, most of what I found addressed inequities *during* a student’s enrollment in the school system, via disparities in curriculum, programs, teacher quality, funding, etc. Education researcher Linda Darling-Hammond argues that poor children and children of color are usually relegated to a “transmission-oriented curriculum” in which the teacher delivers a set of information to students, whereas more affluent children are given access to a more “thinking-oriented curriculum” (2010). The economist Ronald Ferguson argues that lower expectations for students of color perpetuate lower performance and the black-white achievement gap; if schools hold higher expectations and offer more rigorous curriculum for students of color, and if society provides the necessary resources to support those students, only then will we see increased educational equity (2010). In her analysis of the relationship between funding gaps and opportunity gaps in Nevada, Deborah Verstegen found that student achievement is often linked to the wealth and resources of the district (2015).

Similarly, in his study of funding structures in Pennsylvania, Steinberg and Quinn found that spending disparities between districts led to inequitable student outcomes (2015).

Rather than looking at the curriculum, programs, and resources to which students have access during their enrollment in Santa Fe Public Schools, I was interested in examining the other two temporal points of their journey through the public school system: entry and exit. Which structures in the school system lead to inequity even before students set foot in a school? An obvious structural inequity is that, if students face disparities in curriculum, programs, teacher quality, funding and other resources once they are in school, then zoning students to a certain school is inequitable. Indeed, this is the whole logic behind integration (Kahlenberg, 2002).

Kahlenberg argues that rather than policies that force the equitable redistribution of resources within a school, socio-economic integration policies not only allow for the natural evening out of resources, but they also create an improved peer learning environment (2002). While an individual student's socio-economic disadvantages are associated with lower academic achievement, concentrating disadvantaged students in schools further exacerbates low achievement (Rothstein, 2008; Rothstein, 2013; Rumberger, 2007). In addition, stresses of highly concentrated poverty inordinately affect students of color, who comprise the vast majority of low-income students. In contrast, Rothstein (2013) notes that even in urban areas, "low-income white students are more likely to be integrated into middle-class neighborhoods and are less likely to attend school predominantly with other disadvantaged students" (p.51).

By alleviating the inequity between learning environments from school to school, socio-economic integration naturally alleviates the academic achievement gap. Although low-income students typically fall behind middle-income students academically, low-income

students enrolled in low-poverty schools perform better than middle-income students in high-poverty schools. Indeed, low-income fourth graders enrolled in low-poverty schools scored an average eight points higher on the 2005 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) than their middle-income peers who were enrolled in high-poverty schools. (Kahlenberg, 2006).

Beyond academics, a socio-economically integrated school also increases the cultural awareness and facility of all students. A study of voluntary desegregation—in the form of school choice—prepared for the Supreme Court found that real diversity in schools not only improves all students' chances for life success in our nation's pluralistic society, but also “reinforce[s] democratic values, promote[s] understanding, reduce[s] prejudice, improve[s] critical academic skills” and creates a workforce that is “better prepared for a global economy” (Hawley, 2007). In fact, psychological studies have shown that when children are exposed at an early age to other children from different backgrounds, they are significantly less likely to engage in stereotyping and prejudice as adults (Orfield et al., 2010). Moreover, socio-economic integration has significant positive implications for English language learners. Consistent exposure to fluent English-speaking peers would facilitate these students' English acquisition (Orfield et al., 2010).

In recent decades, the idea that inequity begins with which school a student enters led to reforms around school choice, which has chiefly taken the form of open enrollment within a district, vouchers where public dollars follow the student to whichever school she chooses, and charter schools (McShane, 2015). Consider the case of North Carolina's Wake County Public School System (WPS), whose integration plan forbade any school's population to exceed 40% of students eligible for free and reduced lunch or 25% of students

performing below grade level. This policy forced many WPS schools to promote actual school choice among their students, leading to academic gains (Kahlenberg, 2006).

SFPS already implements a policy of school choice, where students and families can enter a lottery for the school that best fits their needs and interests if it lies outside of their neighborhood zone. Unfortunately, a district policy of school choice does not necessarily translate to *de facto* school choice. For example, some families do not know how to navigate the transfer process. Others have no internet access to enter the online lottery pool. Some families do not understand that they have a choice in the first place. For these families, school choice exists only on paper and not in actuality. Although I could find no literature on the registration processes of schools, I realized from my own experiences that students often face a multitude of disadvantages upon entering a school. Some students are last in line to choose courses and enroll in special programs such as preschool. Others are unable to access bus transportation to school because of their highly transient living situations. Worst, some students are unable to officially register within the school system because of medical and documentation requirements.

SCHOOL DISCIPLINE AND THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE

If the school system fails some students even before they enter it, it fails others by prematurely exiting them. Some students drop out; others are formally forced out. Students like Damien, who are forced out of school through the discipline system, often end up in the justice system. Legal scholar Michelle Alexander compellingly argues that the American justice system was designed to maintain a post-civil rights caste system by putting people of color, primarily black men, behind bars (2012). It is the collision of this justice system with the “one best system” of education that leads to the school to prison pipeline—or the

formal and informal tracks that propel poor students, students with disabilities, and students of color into certain courses, out of school, and into jail (Heitzeg, 2009).

The school-to-prison pipeline is marked by high suspension and expulsion rates for the aforementioned subpopulations of students, despite similar rates of infractions (Heitzeg, 2009). The cycle is vicious. After leaving the juvenile justice system, children face innumerable impediments to transitioning back into their neighborhood public schools. Some of these barriers are imposed by authority; schools might exclude these children to “protect” the other children from disruptive or “dangerous” classmates, or to prevent their scores from lowering the district average on state standardized tests. These schools often encourage students to enroll in alternative schools. Other barriers are more social in nature; students might feel stigmatized by their peers and teachers in an environment where perhaps they had already experienced exclusion. Consequently, juvenile recidivism rates are high (Freierman, Levick & Mody, 2009).

With 2.2 million people behind bars, Americans make up only five percent of the world’s population, but 25% percent of its inmates (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2015). Of this increasing incarcerated population, there exists a growing disproportionate racial composition with especially high rates of black and Latino incarceration. Black Americans have historically faced high odds of adjudication, with a third of black males likely to spend time in prison. The odds for Latinos are quickly catching up, with one in six Latino men and one in 45 Latina women expected to spend time in prison (Mauer & King, 2007). What are the driving forces behind this inequitable and burgeoning American prison population?

Sadly, if the United States is distinct for its high rates of adult incarceration, its youth incarceration rates are even more distinctive. In 2005 alone, police arrested 60,000 youth for violent crimes and 260,000 youth for property crimes (Hjalmarsson, 2008). The demographic

trends of the adult prison population are mirrored in the adjudicated youth population, with youth of color making up over 60% of those who enter the juvenile justice system. In fact, minority children are eight times more likely than their white peers to spend time in a juvenile corrections facility (Rubin, 2014). In a study of 45 juvenile detainees, Nisar et al. discovered not only that the majority of respondents were illiterate but also that most of them came from a low-income background (2015).

Not all students who exit school prematurely end up entangled with the justice system. However, it is clear that any district that exits students before graduation faces a problem of equity. There are three broad camps of thought into which we can sort reasons why some students might prematurely exit a school system. The first camp of thought lies with the students, their family background, their environment, and their corresponding conduct. Economist Randi Hjalmarsson identified four risky behaviors in youth that he believed led to premature exit out of the school system and into the justice system: suspension, sexual activity, substance abuse and criminal activity, youth incarceration and adult incarceration (2008). Even without his statistical regressions, his argument seems intuitive. When asked to identify their “at-risk students,” the teachers and principals interviewed in this paper can often point to the children whom they believe have lesser chances at graduation. One principal, whose interview appears in Chapter Four, designated these at-risk students as the “cats” of his school. Damien was an informally designated “bad kid” when I taught him in the eleventh grade, regularly written up for truancy and suspended for fighting. I was grieved but unsurprised when he had ended up in the justice system. Just glancing at the discipline reports for Santa Fe Public Schools, I would venture a guess that the low-income Latino boy who was suspended four times *in the first grade* is at higher risk of becoming adjudicated during his lifetime (Santa Fe Public Schools, Office of Strategy &

Accountability, 2015). He is already an example of high recidivism in the public school discipline system.

Education scholars and reformists in this camp examine opportunities to disrupt premature exit through early interventions such as socio-emotional counseling and remedial tutoring. A study by the National Bureau of Economic Research concluded that academic and behavioral interventions for disadvantaged youth, including one-on-one tutoring and social-emotional interventions, decreases the likelihood of arrest or incarceration for these students (Cook et al., 2014). Although the research is clear that these interventions have some effect, I choose not to pursue this camp of thought because it too easily places deficit on disadvantaged children themselves rather than on a education system built to alienate and traumatize them through exclusive curriculum and harsh discipline policies (Lynn & Dixson, 2013).

Which brings me to the second camp of reasons behind premature exit: an exclusive classroom environment. The cultural inclusiveness of what is taught in classrooms is an area of research that has often been tied to student achievement and drop-out rates. Education researcher Daniel Rubin (2014) argues that the best means of preventing students from prematurely exiting the school system is for teachers to better engage their students inside the classroom. Specifically, he contests that if English classrooms incorporate a critically and racially conscious curriculum, low-income minority students will develop the interest, self-esteem and power to avoid the pipeline. Beyond the curriculum, the role of the teacher is essential to creating an inclusive classroom environment. A teacher's mindset, beliefs, cultural competence and self-awareness around issues of class and race hold the power to include or alienate a student. Teachers who are culturally proficient are less likely to engage in negative behaviors, such as stereotyping and differential treatment, that impact students'

self-esteem, self-image, and performance, (Coates, 1972; Feldman & Orchowsky, 1979; Rubovits & Maehr, 1973). Instead, they will effectively draw upon the diversity of cultural context and knowledge in the classroom to facilitate learning (Gollnick, 2008; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Allen and White-Smith (2014) also argued that the alienation and exclusion of children in the classroom is tied to higher premature exit rates. In particular, the classroom holds great potential to destroy or build up a student's self-determination, which Hardre and Reeve (2003) define as "an interest in learning, a valuing of education, and a confidence in personal abilities" (p. 347). In their study, they discovered that students who report low self-determination are 10% more likely to drop out of school. In turn, there is a significant correlation between drop-out and high school graduation rates, and arrest and incarceration rates. Students who are suspended are more likely to be arrested. Students who are arrested at least once before they are 17 years old are 27 percent less likely to graduate on time. Students who are incarcerated at least once before they are 17 years old are 23 percent less likely to graduate on time (Hjalmarsson, 2008).

The third camp of reasons behind premature exit focuses on the *forced* premature exit of students from the school system through a harsh discipline system. Scholars test the theory that discipline policies are currently designed to push students out of the school system. Nancy Heitzeg argues that zero tolerance policies designed to increase school safety, actually increase the risk of students being suspended, expelled and/or arrested at school and disproportionately affect children of color (2009). As educator Harry Wilson (2014) concludes, "The very policies that schools adopted to manage behavior and increase achievement are fostering failure and feeding the school to prison pipeline" (p.49). Moreover, once a student is caught in the pipeline, discipline policies lower the likelihood

that they will be able to successfully re-enter their neighborhood schools (Feierman et al., 2009).

NARROWING THE FOCUS

If I were working in a theoretical vacuum, my theory of action to achieve equity in SFPS would have been this:

If SFPS identifies the disparities in opportunities and outcomes between different student demographics and leverages its resources to eliminate those disparities; and if SFPS builds a diverse and inclusive organizational climate that trickles down into the classroom; then SFPS will achieve equity for students.

But because SFPS is not a theoretical vacuum, this theory of action immediately felt overwhelming, intangible and vague. I tried it out on Mark Moore's Strategic Triangle which speaks to the viability of organizational change. *See Figure 1.* Moore argues that the creation of public value for any organization is inextricably linked to the organization's authorizing environment and operational capacity (1995). Any viable strategy to effect organizational change must be rooted in three questions: What is the public value that the organization seeks to create? Which sources of legitimacy and support are necessary to authorize the organization to create that public value? And last of all, what resources are necessary for the organization to deliver that public value?

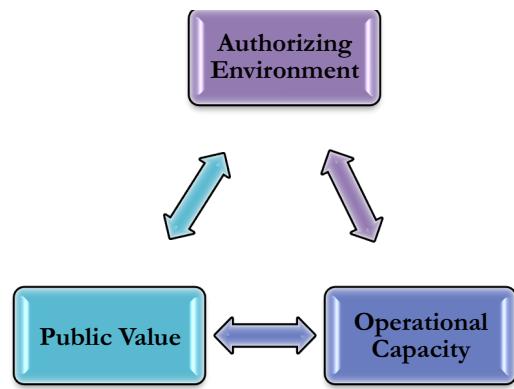
Public Value is the greater good that an organizational change is supposed to produce. In the theory of action above, the public value is clearly to achieve equity for SFPS students; but "achieving equity" is as nebulous a public value as achieving Zen. How would the SFPS know when it had successfully achieved equity for students? One might point to certain measurable outcomes among students, such as graduation or reading proficiency rates. But how would one monitor whether culturally inclusive curriculum is being properly

implemented? How would one measure a diverse and inclusive organizational climate? And how would one measure the self-esteem or self-determination of students? Is real equity measurable? It was a question I was not yet ready to tackle.

The Authorizing Environment refers to the legitimacy and support that allows or galvanizes organizational change to happen. As a doctoral resident with no formal authority, I needed the buy-in of both my colleagues on the Task Force, the Superintendent's Cabinet, and the School Board if I hoped for the Task Force to have any real impact. The hidden assumption in the second *if* in my theory of action is that SFPS currently does *not* have a diverse and inclusive organizational climate—an assumption that could immediately alienate the aforementioned stakeholders. Having just spent a difficult two years intentionally undertaking the adaptive work of identifying my own biases, I also felt unprepared as an incoming resident to prompt similar work among colleagues with whom I had as of yet no relationships.

Operational Capacity involves the resources and wherewithal that an organization possesses to carry out the change. I was aware that the district was strapped for cash; was it realistic to expect that SFPS would be able to leverage resources for any disparities we might find? What was the district's operational capacity to plug in holes? Where, if any place, could inequitable outcomes be attributed to scarcity rather than inequitable investments in children? Beyond capital considerations, what were the resources necessary to create a diverse and inclusive environment? After all, what is the capacity of any organization to shift

Figure 1. Mark Moore's Strategic Triangle (1995)



personal mindsets? The challenge of adaptive work is to change the hearts and minds of people opposed to change (Heifetz, 1994). But one can only undertake adaptive work with a team willing to engage in difficult conversations and sincere self-reflection—even if they believe that they have already arrived at the place where they wish to be or where other people wish them to be. Were district leaders in a place where they were ready to undertake adaptive work? And as a leader who has always relied on her ability to create genial relationships with colleagues and stakeholders, was I ready to lead that work?

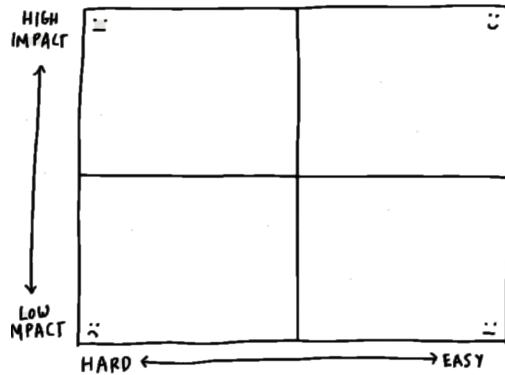
Because all three prongs of the Strategic Triangle raised doubts about the viability of my initial theory of action, I surrendered it. I began to despair whether *any* viable theory of action around something as complex as equity was possible. Then, I began to look at other task forces and planning committees in the district that had successfully effected organizational change: the committee that had erected an International Magnet program within less than a year; the Early College Planning Committee, which was already moving into the implementation phase after only a few months of planning; and the Truancy Task Force that had increased attendance rates within a year of implementing a system of robocalls, letters and truancy coaches. What did these groups have in common? They had all set out to achieve specific, measurable outcomes. For example, truancy could be measured as an increase or decrease in student attendance.

I also realized that these groups focused solely on technical changes because they were addressing largely technical problems. In fact, those technical problems were symptoms that arose from the larger root problem of inequity. In contrast to truancy, inequity is a systemic, cultural, historical, social, and psychological problem. In addition, truancy is an easily salable problem; one has only to point to the data to realize that some

students miss significantly more school days than others. Whereas decreasing truancy rates is a technical problem, eliminating inequity is an adaptive one.

I began to think about equity in terms of symptoms and components. What were all the smaller, specific inequities that hindered SFPS from achieving equity? For example, could I choose just one component of entry and one component of exit upon which to focus? But did focusing on symptomatic problems mean that any solutions we derived would be vulnerable to changes in political climate or a change in who was Superintendent? Would focusing on structural or “technical” fixes be taking the easy way out? Was I choosing ease over impact? See Figure 2. Was I prioritizing my own need for tangible proof that I had accomplished something at the end of my residency over the greater needs of the district?

Figure 2. Ease Impact Relationship



A NEW THEORY OF ACTION

I felt drawn between two poles; I could either tackle equity as the abstract, overarching, systemic beast that it is, without the certainty of achieving tangible outcomes, or I could fix a narrow problem of practice that would not nearly solve the problem of inequity as a whole. Around which question should I structure the task force around so that we generated strategies aimed at achieving real measurable outcomes rather than the rote conclusion that racial and ethnic disparities exist among student opportunities and outcomes?

Sociologist Barry Johnson theorizes that organizations often move to extreme strategies because people are inclined to think in terms of polarities (1992). See Figure 3. For example, the leader of an organization wants to create a culture of teamwork and idea-sharing. Because he thinks that individuality is the opposite pole of teamwork, he begins to promote group dynamics that encourage group consensus in making decisions and discourages working in isolation. In the process, he increases the organization's efficiency in decision-making. He also inadvertently stamps out individual initiative and creativity. What the leader does not realize is that the team and the individual are not polar opposites. Rather, it is possible to create a collaborative team culture in which people work together and share ideas, but in which they also feel free to disagree with one another and pursue their own ideas.

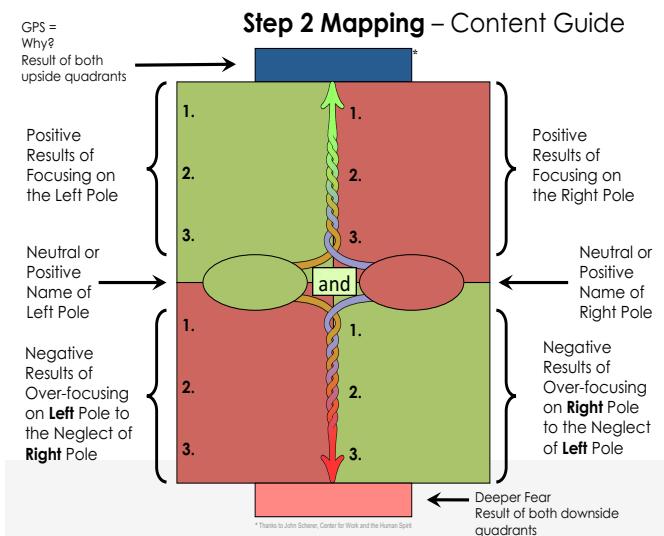


Figure 3. Barry Johnson's Polarities' Model (1992)

Similarly, I suspected that I was thinking about equity work in terms of false polarities. See Figure 4. Ron Heifetz identifies two types of responses to organizational challenges. Technical changes attempt to fix ordinary problems within the system, or the symptomatic problems within a system, while maintaining the system as is. Because the system does not fundamentally change, the changes result in minimal impact. In contrast, adaptive changes attempt to fix the root problems, thus altering the system itself. Because

people like things to fundamentally stay the same, adaptive change is more difficult to effect (1994).

Figure 4. My View of Adaptive and Technical Work as Polarities

	Adaptive	Technical
Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses root problem (e.g. institutionalized racism, inequity) • Acknowledges challenge of addressing personal biases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measurable goals • Easy to align to action and strategy • Easy to hold organization accountable for real impact • Does not alienate stakeholders
Negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not measurable goal • Difficult to align to action and strategy • Difficult to hold organization accountable for real impact • Alienates stakeholders who do not want to “lose” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses symptomatic problems (e.g. inconsistent disciplinary practices, ineffective registration process) • Skirts challenge of addressing personal bias

But could some technical changes effect lasting and meaningful impact? And could some adaptive changes be measurable, qualitatively if not quantitatively? Did the success of adaptive changes rely upon the success of technical changes and vice versa? Heifetz argues that change leadership involves two steps: diagnosis and action (1994). I imagined the adaptive challenge of getting stakeholders around a table to do diagnose inequity problems in the district, and then propelling them to take action on some structural and technical changes before addressing the adaptive challenge of generating community buy-in and

understanding. In fact, the technical and adaptive challenges of achieving equity seemed cyclical and inseparable.

Rather than thinking in terms of *either/or*, could I think about the district's strategic plan for equity as an *and*? Was it possible to approach equity in the district from a technical standpoint, in which the organization first tackled “ordinary” structural problems for an immediate fix, and then tackled the adaptive challenge of addressing personal biases and institutionalized racism? If we removed the structural barriers to equity, would we then force people to examine their own biases? In other words, was it a promising course of action to fire first and aim after? I decided to focus on creating a technical strategic plan that would bring the district measurably closer to equity. After laying this groundwork, I would then turn my attention to the adaptive work necessary to bring about real equity. Thus, I came to this new theory of action:

If SFPS defines equity both in terms of structural failures as well as systemic bias that lead to disparities in student outcomes; and *if* SFPS focuses on redesigning those structural failures; *then* SFPS will make efficient and measurable gains toward serving all its students equitably, while paving the way for leadership and staff to examine their personal biases and attachment to the status quo.

The unwritten assumption to follow would be that *if* leadership and staff examine their individual biases and attachment to the status quo, *then* the district will build real and thoughtful intent to disrupt systemic bias, both ensuring the maintenance of existing technical changes as well as the pursuit of new technical changes to achieve equity. Although this assumption is the natural extension of my theory of action, I do not include it in the written statement because I will not have the time or capacity to test it in the course of my strategic project.

In the following chapters, I will test my theory of action through my work in Santa Fe Public Schools. Chapter Two, “Defining Equity,” will begin by exploring my position as a

resident in relation to authority in the district's organizational structure, and implications for my potential to lead meaningful change. I will then examine the context of the public education system in New Mexico and of Santa Fe Public Schools—whom does it serve, and what are its specific challenges and assets? What does equity mean in SFPS, and what initiatives are currently being undertaken in SFPS to foster this vision? How do the Equity Task Force and Registration Study Committee advance the district toward achieving this vision? I will then explain the foundation of both working groups.

Chapter Three, “Equitable Entry,” will examine the registration process in SFPS. How can something as technical as registration and enrollment become ridden with inequity? Whom does the registration process alienate and whom does it allow easy access? How does the current registration process affect the impact of open enrollment and school choice in SFPS? How does which school a student attends in the district affect her academic performance? What, if anything, does the registration process have to do with institutionalized bias? How can we redesign the process so that all students and families can successfully enter the SFPS education system? I will follow the Registration Study Committee and subsequent Implementation Team as each group sought to answer and then act upon these questions. I will conclude by analyzing the impact of their work upon equity for students in the district.

Chapter Four, “Equitable Exit,” will look at the discipline system within SFPS. Who is being excluded from learning, either because they are being pushed out of their classroom or out of their school? Which school-based practices and district policies increase the likelihood of disciplinary infractions? In contrast, which practices and policies improve school climate and student behavior? Is the discipline system fair? Are the adults in charge of discipline fair? Is fairness the goal? How can we redesign the discipline system so that we

achieve more equitable exit? I describe the structure, processes and work of the Equity/Discipline Task Force as we sought to answer these questions, and upon my own capability as the leader of the group to move the Task Force past discussion and toward meaningful action.

Chapter Five, “Re(narrating) Equity,” will use Heifetz’s adaptive leadership and Kegan & Lahey’s Immunity to Change frameworks to examine the adaptive challenges facing SFPS and myself as we engage in continued equity work. I ask, which values and beliefs systems held me back from being an optimum leader of equity work? Which values and belief systems are holding SFPS back from making meaningful steps toward equity? What assumptions underlie these values and belief systems? I will conclude a re-examination of my Theory of Action.

CHAPTER TWO: DEFINING EQUITY

Esteban: "They call me a beaner because I'm Mexican."

Wang: "Who's they?"

Esteban: "The Hispanic kids."

Wang: "What's the difference between Mexican and Hispanic?"

Esteban: "Hispanos are from Spain a long time ago. I'm from Mexico."

-SFPS 5th Grade Student, 2015¹

PLACING SELF IN SANTA FE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Tackling inequity within a sizeable school district is a heavy charge in any circumstance; tackling it within a ten month residency without any formal positional authority is even more daunting. Before designing my strategic project, I first needed to examine my own role and relationship to authority within the organizational structure of Santa Fe Public Schools.

In my residency role, I was under the mentorship and direct supervision of Dr. Almudena Abeyta, the Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning. From the beginning, Dr. Abeyta emphasized that her priority for me was to engage in a rich learning experience. Besides my strategic project around equity, she established that I would participate in many other district operations and projects, including preschool evaluations and instructional walkthroughs of schools. In addition, she invited me to write “second-guess memos,” in which I could communicate my observations, analyses and critiques of current district policies and decisions. At the beginning of my residency, we set up weekly check-ins, during which I could raise points of confusion and ask questions. Midway through the residency, we no longer had a need for these formally scheduled meetings.

¹ All student names have been changed to protect their identities.

Prior to my entering the district, Dr. Abeyta and I also agreed that my title would be Special Assistant to the Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning—not only so that my residency was clearly established as a year of work rather than a year of classes on my resume, but also because I felt that the combination of my youth, stature and “resident” title would prompt colleagues to discount me as a real member of the staff. In truth, being both a Special Assistant and a resident offered me a uniquely privileged position within the district. As a Special Assistant, I had some delegated authority from Dr. Abeyta and access to most district databases and resources. As a ten-month resident expected to return to the northeast, I was a threat to neither any individual’s job nor any group’s political balance. I saw myself and was seen as a learner. As such, I found that most people in the district, ranging from school staff to central office leadership, were eager to help me in whatever capacity I needed. After a few months in which I proved my discretion, I also found that colleagues began to share openly with me their perspectives on the district.

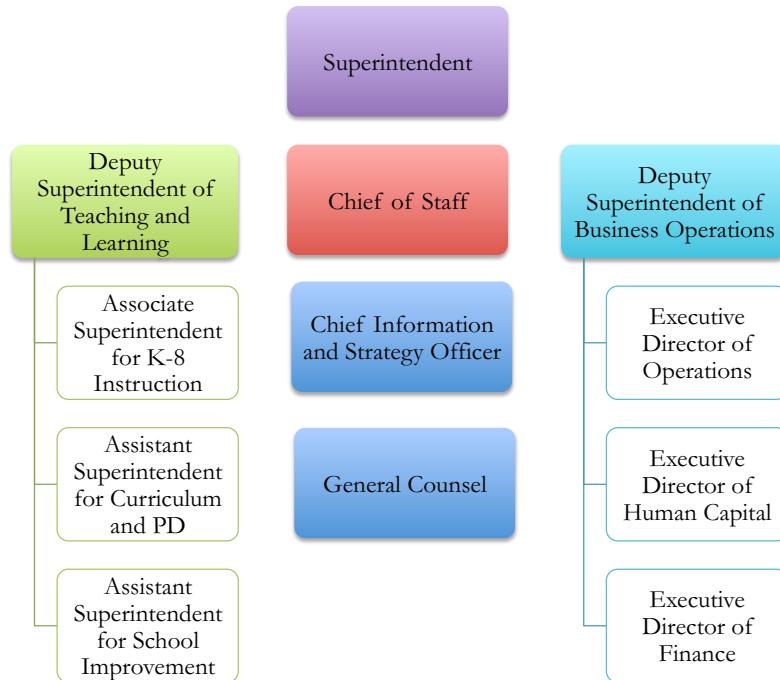
Besides my relationship as a direct report to Dr. Abeyta, I was unclear where my position stood in relationship to authority, in part because the distribution of authority in the district leadership was so unclear. See *Figure 5*. There are two Deputy Superintendents, whose positional authority land at about the same level as the Chief of Staff. Each Deputy Superintendent oversees a clear hierarchy of direct reports within their own department. The Chief of Staff is a direct report to the Superintendent only, but—beyond direct orders that she passes on from the Superintendent—seems to hold authority over neither the two Deputies nor other members of the Superintendent’s Cabinet. The Cabinet, which is the district’s executive leadership and decision-making team, consists of members who all directly report to the Superintendent. Besides the two Deputies and the Chief of Staff, the Cabinet also includes the Chief Information Strategy Officer (CISO), the Executive Director

of Operations (ED), and the General Counsel (GC). It is unclear where the latter three stand in the hierarchy of the organization. When I informally surveyed several staff members, for example, some believed that the CISO was on the same authoritative level as the two Deputies and the Chief of Staff, and only accountable to the Superintendent. Others believed that the CISO, GC and ED were technically under the purview of the Superintendent and the Deputies. Some believed that the Chief of Staff had authority over all district staff, including all members of the Cabinet, whereas others saw her as a non-decision-making extension of the Superintendent, or—as a handful of people explained to me—“a glorified administrative assistant.”

Behind the structural hierarchy—or lack thereof—of the leadership team, there also seemed to be an informal hierarchy associated with tenure in the district.² The people who occupied the roles of Chief of Staff and General Counsel at the beginning of my residency were different than the people who occupied those roles three months later. The former Chief of Staff had come to the district with the Superintendent from Philadelphia, had built over the course of three years a reputation of being capable and intelligent if sometimes abrasive, and because she knew Dr. Boyd so well, had generally been seen as the Superintendent’s right arm. The new Chief of Staff, Tanya, had previously been a direct report to Dr. Abeyta and had had little direct relationship with the Superintendent or the leadership team before. Similarly, the new General Counsel came from outside of the district and replaced Gerald, who had been with the district leadership team for the bulk of its tenure. In addition, Gerald still consulted with the district as an outside contractor, and I often heard district leaders reference him as though he were still the district’s legal expert.

² With the exception of Superintendent Boyd and Deputy Superintendent Abeyta, all names of district and school staff have been changed.

Figure 5. SFPS Leadership Organizational Chart



As I began my residency, the unclear distribution of formal authority did not concern me. In fact, I took the lack of clarity as a promising lack of rigidity that would mean more lateral leadership, cooperation and collaboration between the different leaders and their departments. It initially seemed that this would be the case. Several of the Cabinet members, aware that I was a resident under Dr. Abeyta, were eager to help and mentor me. The CISO granted me executive-level access to district databases so that I would not have to go through the hurdles of his department to obtain any information that I needed; the Chief of Staff asked me to assist her on a number of principal-related projects; and both the Executive Director of Operations and Legal Counsel participated in a couple of my Equity Task Force meetings. As I dove into my work, however, I began to identify some

inefficiencies and ineptitudes that could be traced back to a disharmony between perceived lines of authority.

GETTING “OUT OF THE BOX” WITH EQUITY

Santa Fe Public Schools (SFPS), for which I led a 2015-16 Equity Task Force charged with examining equity in the district, is a unique district that serves a largely Latino student population as well as students hailing from 22 (largely remote) Native American pueblos and 2 tribes (Santa Fe Public Schools, Native American Student Services, 2015). The majority of students in the district belong to minority racial and ethnic groups.

The 2015 Equity Task Force was comprised of a number of administrators, principals and teachers. While protecting the identities of the task force members, it will be useful to understand the demographic composition of the group: two white males, five white females, two Hispanic³ males, three Hispanic females, one Native American female, and one Asian female (myself). Partly because we were a group of folks all passionate about the topic, the Task Force focused its initial discussions around ethnicity. Specifically, we focused our discussions around the divide between white students and Hispanic students.

Our inclination to start with the white-Hispanic divide arose from a number of reasons. First, it reflected the trend in national equity conversations to focus on white and non-white. Second, it reflected the trend in many district leadership conversations in SFPS. At monthly comparative statistics meetings, in which district leadership reviewed student

³ Although I previously used the term Latino as a personal preference for demographic designations, I switch to the term Hispanic in the context of Santa Fe Public Schools because it is a community preference.

data with principals, data was always disaggregated by Hispanic and white, with an eye towards inequitable outcomes (a misleading disaggregation, given the difference between ethnicity and race, which I will describe later). Third, because the majority of the Task Force was either white or Hispanic, its membership seemed to naturally incline us toward this discussion. It soon became clear, however, that the district as a whole had to shake this propensity to look at equity along lines of white versus Hispanic and reflect instead upon the unique demographic and cultural context of Santa Fe Public Schools.

Demographic data in New Mexico, like demographic data in most places with large Hispanic populations, can be tricky given the federal distinction between ethnicity and race. Whereas the Census identifies Hispanic/Latino as an ethnicity, it does not consider Hispanic/Latino to be a race. This poses some complications when making standard equity comparisons between white people and people of color. For example, in 2014, 82.8% of New Mexico residents self-identified as “white alone” whereas 47.7% of New Mexico residents self-identified as “Hispanic or Latino.” The math only adds up when one considers that the majority of those who self-identified their *ethnicity* as Hispanic/Latino also self-identified their *race* as white, rather than other options: Black or African American, American Indian and Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and Two or More Races (United States Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, 2014). These confusing disparities are illustrated in *Figures 6 and 7*. Whereas at first glance it appears that the vast majority of students in each school is white, it is also apparent that the majority of white students also self-identifies as Hispanic. For the purposes of this paper, I will identify white as *not belonging to any other racial or ethnic group*.

Figure 6. Percent of Students in Each Race in SFPS

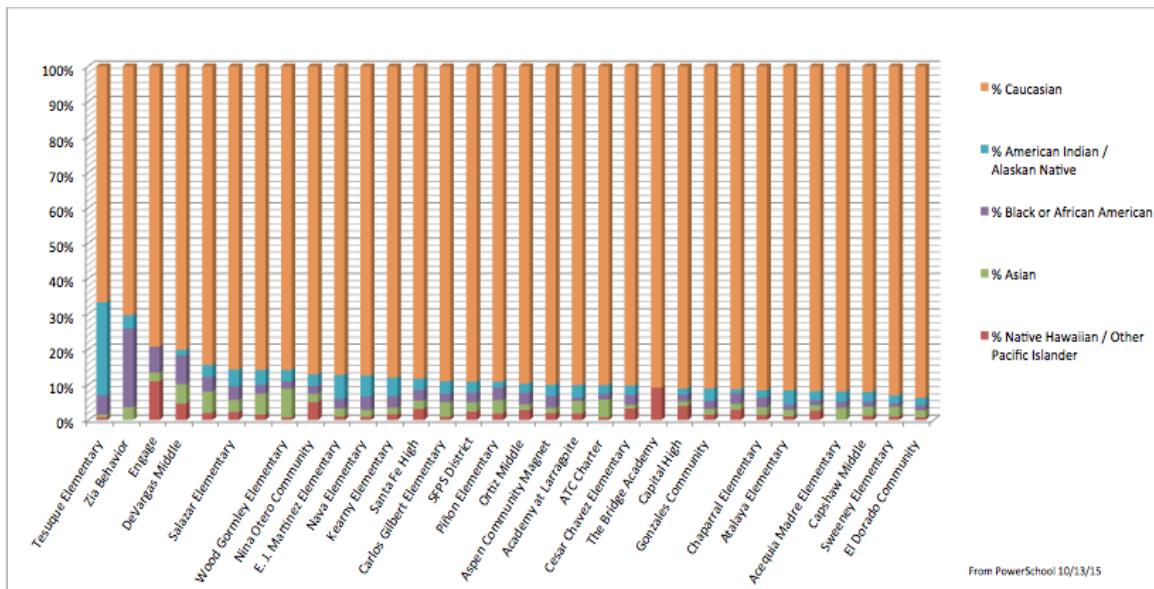
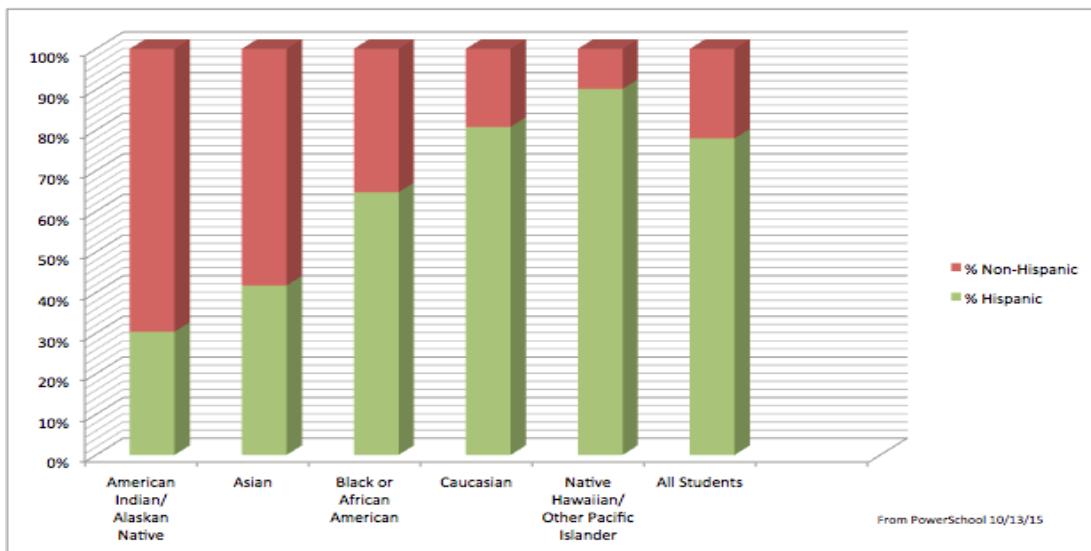


Figure 7. Percent of Hispanic Students by Race in SFPS



Santa Fe Public Schools is the major school district for Santa Fe, New Mexico. There is, however, a startling disconnect between the demographic makeup of SFPS and of the city itself. Whereas Santa Fe the city has a large white and relatively high-income population,

SFPS is largely non-white and poor. See *Figure 8*. By the above definition, 46.2% of Santa Fe residents are white while only 18% of Santa Fe Public School students are white. Then, whereas only 17.9% of Santa Fe residents live below the poverty line, 74.8% of students in SFPS qualify for free or reduced lunch (United States Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, 2014; Santa Fe Public Schools, 2015).⁴ This disconnect is largely due to a large community of higher-income, white retirees moving to Santa Fe from out-of-state. Indeed, Santa Fe's retirement population (17.6%) is significantly higher than other metropolises in the region like Albuquerque (12.1%) and Denver (10.4%).

Figure 8. City of Santa Fe and SFPS Demographics

	City of Santa Fe (United States Census Bureau, 2014)	Santa Fe Public Schools (Santa Fe Public Schools, 2015)
% low SES	17.9% (below federal poverty level)	74.8% (qualify for free or reduced lunch)
% white	46.2%	17.9%

Another important contextual piece about Santa Fe and SFPS is the connotation of the designation “Hispanic.” Although “Hispanic” is the federal term for ethnicity, many communities across the United States prefer the term “Latino” because it is more encompassing of countries and cultures south of the border and less evocative of the colonialist references that “Hispanic” or “from Spain” necessarily connotes (Hooker, 2014). Yet, many Santa Feans (and New Mexicans) are determined to make the distinction that among the Hispanic population, there are “true” Hispanics with lineages traceable to Spain,

⁴ It is important to note that, while both the federal poverty line (FPL) and free and reduced lunch status (F&R) are indicators of low socioeconomic status, they are not interchangeable, with the annual income cutoff for F&R slightly higher than the cutoff for the FPL.

who have lived in New Mexico for generations, and then there are Mexicans and Latinos, who are newer immigrants to the country and to the state. They emphasize that the culture, language, and status of each group vary significantly. In the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter, a fifth grader in SFPS explains the difference as a teacher had explained it to him. Although I have not been able to find data that differentiates between these two groups, I have found through interviewing students and community members that, in Santa Fe, self-declared “Hispanos” are often more settled, of higher socioeconomic status, and English speaking, whereas “Mexicans” are more transient, of lower socioeconomic status, and more likely to be English Language Learners (EL). It is important to acknowledge that this self-imposed differentiation between Hispanics and Mexicans is a differentiation of whiteness. By emphasizing their European roots, the Hispanics make the statement that they are white, in contrast to the unspoken designation that Mexicans are “non-white”—although one might argue that, at one point, most Mexicans also came from Spain.

I will explore further in Chapter Three how segregation in the community occurs between “Hispanos” and “Mexicans” and in Chapter Four how the relationships between the two subgroups are reflected in interactions between teachers and students, as well as between students.

DEFINING EQUITY IN SANTA FE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Developing a definition of equity specific to SFPS helped to reorient the discussions of the Task Force:

Equity in Santa Fe Public Schools will be evident in the distribution of opportunities, funding, resources and supports that result in every student graduating ready for college or career, without correlation with his or her race, ethnicity, culture, socioeconomic status, disability, gender or sexual orientation.

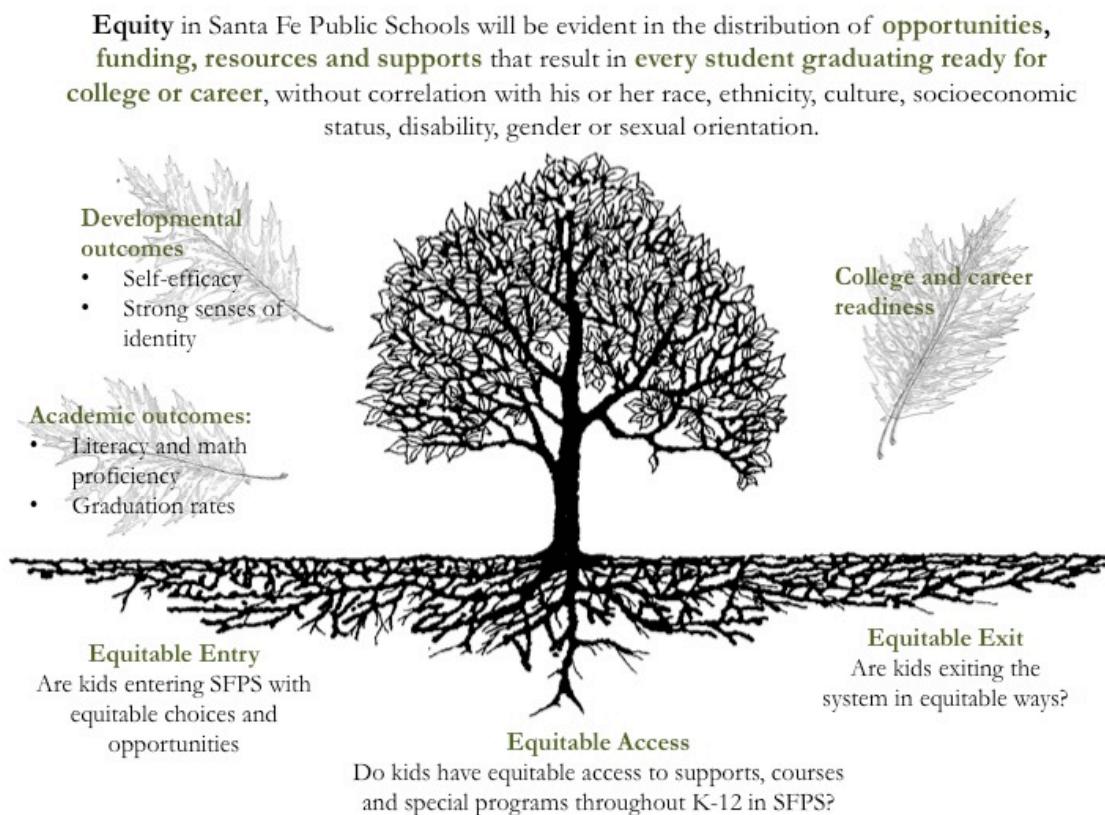
The Task Force noted that its definition included two components: inputs and outcomes. See *Figure 9*. Equitable outcomes could be grouped into academic outcomes, developmental outcomes, and college and career readiness. Equitable inputs could be grouped into equitable entry into, access in, and exit out of school.

The Task Force already knew outcomes were inequitable; after all, the system was failing some kids. Thus, it decided to focus on inputs, or the question of: how is the structure of the system—its processes, funding structures, resources and supports—failing those kids? Having narrowed its mission to increase equitable inputs across the district, the Task Force then defined what equity in each of those inputs might look like. Equitable entry would occur when all students began school with as equal footing and as equal a number of choices as possible. In the scope of the Task Force’s definition, equitable entry meant that all students would have access to early learning, for example through public preschool programs. It also meant that all students and families would be able to register for school, transportation to school, and district programs with similar facility, regardless of their living situation or the language they speak. Finally, it meant that all students would have equitable access to good schools, no matter where they live—perhaps through school choice or systemic integration.

Necessarily, a large piece of the Task Force’s definition of equitable entry was focused around the assumption that different schools offered varying levels of supports, services and special courses, as well as varying qualities of instruction. Equitable access meant that all students in need would have access to special needs services, language supports, and differentiated modes of instruction that fit their individual learning styles. It also meant that any child could enroll in special programs such as Advanced Placement or honors courses, gifted programs, or vocational technology, without being “tracked.” In

addition, equitable access meant the equal distribution of quality teachers across the district. Finally, equitable access meant that all students would equally be able to access information and learning, both in terms of language and cultural relevance.

Figure 9. Equity in Santa Fe Public Schools



Last, Equitable Exit would occur when no children were inequitably disengaged from school either because they were forced out through the discipline system or because they felt alienated within their school. It meant that no students would be more likely to drop out of school than another; no students would be more likely to be removed from their classroom than another; and no students would feel less welcome in their school than another. Study questions that the Task Force decided to examine included: Were some

students more likely to get in trouble than others? Where in the district's discipline processes were there heightened risks of subjectivity and bias? What might contribute to these heightened risks of subjectivity and bias, and what might disrupt them? Was existing bias unconscious or conscious? How did different students respond to school climate, and where were there opportunities to improve it?

To be clear, the components of equitable entry, access and exit outlined above do not encompass all of what it means to be an equitable school district. Nor are they necessarily the "right" or the most important components. Rather, they are the components that arose out of one of the Task Force's brainstorming sessions.

PLANNING FOR ACTION

I wanted to identify two problems of practice that I believed to be both actionable and impactful in terms of equity. But first, I had to examine the areas around which the district already had initiatives. See *Figure 10*. Given that the district was already heavily invested in a lot of equity work—though not explicitly labeled as equity work—I needed to identify which equity issues were *not* being addressed by an existing strategic initiative. Under the umbrella of equitable entry, initiatives to address school readiness, zoning and school choice were already underway. I myself was involved with Preschool Expansion, the Truancy Task Force and the Early College. But the district had no strategy to address equitable access to the registration, transfers and enrollment process. Under the umbrella of equitable exit, the district was already deeply embedded in the work of decreasing truancy and drop-out rates and of increasing high school graduation and higher education matriculation rates. I both helped plan the Early Modified College as well as facilitated college preparation workshops at the Santa Fe High School College Plaza. There were no initiatives in place, however, to address discipline rates or exclusion from the registration and transfers process.

Figure 10. Equity Issues around Exit and Entry and Current Initiatives in SFPS SY2016

Entry		Exit	
<i>Equity Issue</i>	<i>Current Initiatives</i>	<i>Equity Issue</i>	<i>Current Initiatives</i>
School readiness	Preschool Expansion Committee	Truancy	Truancy Task Force
Zoning	Atlantic Research Partners Equity Report Proposal to merge two junior high schools	Drop-outs	Engage Academy Teen parent daycare
School choice	Open enrollment and lottery process Atlantic Research Partners Equity Report	Alternative education	Academy at Larragoite
Access to registration and transfers process for K-12 school	?	Matriculation to higher education	Early Modified College College Plaza Gear-Up
Access to enrollment for summer school, special programs, and courses	?	Suspension, Expulsion	?
Access to district transportation services	?	Exclusionary discipline	?

First: how could SFPS redesign its registration process so that all students and families are able to access the services, programs and courses that they need? I was drawn to this question because of my own experience staffing the registration and scheduling process at one of the high schools at the beginning of the year, in which I encountered an astonishing number of technical and operational barriers that prevented families from getting a seat in any classroom—much less a classroom of choice—for their children. A revised registration and scheduling process would be hugely impactful in terms of serving

students more equitably. Because registration is largely handled at the central office—with the Superintendent adamant that it remain so—I did not believe the first question was one that the Task Force, with its large number of school site staff, could most effectively take on. Instead, I wrote a second-guess memo to Dr. Abeyta, outlining the context and problems of the registration process as well as recommendations for revision. She passed the memo onto the Superintendent, who asked her department to take the work of planning a redesign. Dr. Abeyta then assigned me to co-lead the registration redesign process.

The second problem of practice I identified was: How can SFPS redesign its discipline policy so that fewer students are excluded from learning? The district sets the student code of conduct, principals set the behavioral practices and culture of their schools, and there is large variation from site to site. The Task Force would begin by examining data to determine who was being forcibly excluded from learning and why they were being excluded, then devise a plan to combat that exclusion. The fewer students who were excluded from the classroom or the school because of discipline practices, the more students who would be engaged in learning. This problem of practice became especially compelling when I discovered that children as young as kindergarteners were being suspended in SFPS. The following chapters will illustrate the processes and outcomes as SFPS tackled each of these problems.

CHAPTER THREE: EQUITABLE ENTRY

"The beginning is the most important part of any work, especially in the case of a young and tender thing; for that is the time at which the character is being formed and the desired impression is more readily taken."

-Plato, 380 B.C.

UNEVEN BEGINNINGS

During the two weeks leading up to the start of school, the Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning dispatched a majority of her staff to school sites to assist in the registration and scheduling process. I was sent to Santa Fe High School, where I found lines of parents and students in the hallways, waiting for access to a counselor and a computer. Some of them had been there for hours. Others had come the day before, but had left after a long wait because they had to go to work. I was baffled at the inefficiency of the registration process. Surely it was a simple matter of getting students' information into a database. By the end of the day, I thought I had found several culprits: a slow and overlogged internet database, a slow web connection, counselors who had not calculated students' credits and graduation status the preceding spring, and a lack of Spanish-speaking staff to assist those parents and students who did not speak English.

Appalled at how difficult it was for some parents to acquire a seat in school for their children, I wrote a memo to the Deputy Superintendent, outlining the problems I'd seen with the registration, scheduling and transfers (RST) process and offering tentative solutions. Dr. Abeyta then charged me with leading a committee to redesign the process. Despite being blessed with this semi-formal authority, I knew that, having only been in the district for four months, not only was my knowledge limited but also district and school staff had no reason to trust my recommendations. I invited Tina, the coordinator of Student Assistance Team and Responses to Intervention, to co-lead the committee with me. A longtime employee of the district as both a teacher and an administrator, Tina had a deep knowledge of how the

district worked as well as close relationships with many of the people whose input we needed. Tina was also someone whose expertise and capability folks across the district trusted, and I knew her name as co-lead on our redesign proposal would lend it weight.

For the past several years, one central office contingent or another had sought to improve the RST process. But, after speaking to several people across the district, I quickly realized that these contingents had been working in isolation at the central office, drawing upon their own conjectures and experiences to redesign the process. Partly as a result, the RST process had seen little improvement. Tina and I wanted to ensure that we included multiple voices and expertise of people who were involved in the RST process. We began by making a list of key players whom we would interview at length. As we discussed all the factors that affected the RST process, the list grew rapidly and came to include some surprising people: the CISO, whose department ran the technical side of RST; the International Baccalaureate Magnet School Director, who insisted on a RST process that was separate from the rest of the district; the Head Nurse, whose department cleared students to step foot on campus based on immunization records; the Adelante Director, who decided whether students fit the homeless designation according to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act; the Exceptional Student Services Director, whose department supported the inter-zone transfer of students to schools with specific programs that catered to special needs; the Transportation Director, who assigned bus passes to students and drew the bus routes based on addresses in the registration database; the Early Learning Coordinator, who was charged with expanding access to preschool programs across the district; and the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Professional Development, who was trying to achieve demographically balanced enrollment in the district's bilingual programs. Of these

eight important stakeholders, six stated that this was the first time they had been consulted about the registration process.

In addition to interviewing each of these stakeholders, Tina and I then conducted a district-wide principal survey via Google Analytics, to which we had an 81% response rate within two weeks, to gather common problems concerning the RST process encountered at individual school sites. As a point of comparison, during my collaboration with her on certain projects, the Chief of Staff sent out three principal surveys, each of which had less than five responses within a month span despite several e-mailed reminders. The alacrity with which principals responded to my and Tina's registration survey indicated both a deep trust in Tina as an administrator as well as a high interest in changing the RST process.

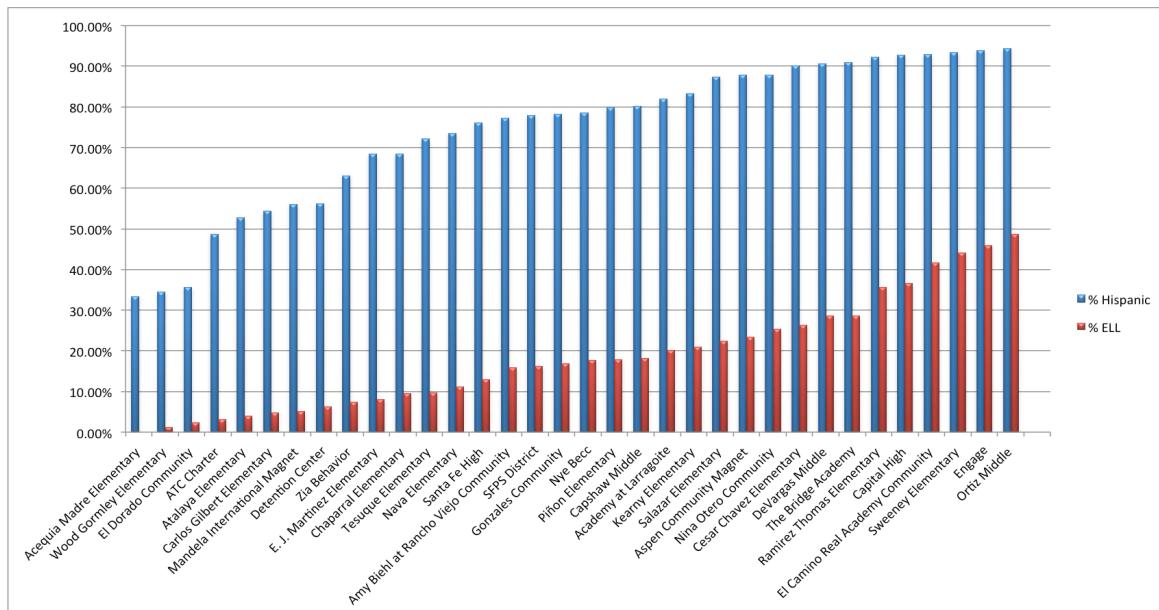
Registration, scheduling and transfers are seemingly the *least* sexy and evocative education topics. Unsurprisingly, entering "school registration" and "equity" into the Google Scholar or ERIC search engine returned no relevant results. But as it turned out, the RST process wasn't simply the process of entering a student's information into the computer, but an entangled web of procedures, accommodations and requirements that involved almost every single person in the district. More critically, the RST process was the portal and entry point into *effective* school choice, socio-economic integration, and racial integration. I had assumed—reflecting the assumptions of many of the stakeholders we interviewed—that the disparity between which students were enrolled in special programs and which were not, which students faced no problems registering for the district and accessing transportation and which faced many, and which students attended which schools across the district was a disparity between white and non-white. As it turns out, the greater disparity would appear between Hispanics and other minorities (chiefly Mexican and Native American), as differentiated in the earlier section. Our findings follow.

WHO IS ENTERING WHICH SCHOOL?

Like most urban school districts, Santa Fe Public Schools' zones tend to segregate schools based on a student's residential neighborhood, which is often associated with other demographic characteristics including race and income. Superintendent Boyd established an open enrollment policy, which allows any student and family to lottery for a transfer to another school within the district, and theoretically should alleviate the severity of segregation. As I began the process of interviewing stakeholders and collecting qualitative data about district, student and parent experiences in the RST process, I was curious to understand the actual demographic distribution of students across the district.

Unsurprisingly, since the majority of students in the district were minorities, the ethnic distribution across schools is quite even, with the exception of three elementary schools, whose Hispanic populations drop below 50%. In contrast, the distribution of students who are English learners (EL) or low-income, as identified by free and reduced

Figure 11. SY2015-16 Distribution of Hispanic and EL students across SFPS



lunch (F&RL status), varies dramatically from school to school. See *Figure 11*. Whereas the student populations at Acequia Madre, Wood Gormley, and El Dorado are less than 5% EL and less than 30% low-income, the student populations at Cesar Chavez, El Camino Real, Ramirez Thomas, and Sweeney Elementary are over 40% EL and over 60% low-income, with 94% of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch at Ramirez Thomas (Santa Fe Public Schools, 2015).

As mentioned in Chapter Two, there is no identifiable means of determining whether a student is a relatively recent immigrant or a multi-generational New Mexican—or, in the words of the Santa Feans, whether a student is Mexican or Hispano. If one adopted the community's social identifiers, however, the guess would be that the students who are EL and low-income are mostly Mexican, whereas the students who are neither EL nor low-income are Hispano. We might assume that the small gap between EL students and EL students who speak Spanish at home include the Native American students who speak their own indigenous language, an assumption that matches district data for the distribution of Native American students across schools previously shown in *Figure 6*. By this rough process of demographic identification—which is admittedly flawed—*de facto* segregation in the district still occurs along lines of whiteness. Although both groups self-identify as “Hispanic” on the census and in the school registration database, Hispanos emphasize their Spanish (European) ancestry, or whiteness, while emphasizing the Mexican and indigenous ancestry, or brownness, of others. The ramifications of such *de facto* segregation are clear. As Kahlenberg argues, all students regardless of income perform better in middle-income environments, partly due to an increased access to instructional supports and resources (2006).

In SFPS, instructional quality varies greatly from school to school, with a correlation between the number of low-income students and the number of high quality teachers. In SY2015-16, Wood Gormley, whose student population is 27% low-income, employs a staff of no Level 1 (beginner) teachers and 62% Level 3 teachers. In addition, it employs five teachers with Gifted endorsements. Similarly, Atalaya, whose student population is 39% low-income, employs a staff of no Level 1 teachers and 44% Level 3 teachers. In contrast, Ramirez Thomas, whose student population is 94% low-income, employs a staff of 28% Level 1 and 21% Level 3 teachers. Sweeney, whose student population is 63% low-income, employs no teachers with Gifted endorsements (Santa Fe Public Schools, 2015; Santa Fe Public Schools, Human Resources Department, 2016). See *Appendices C* and *E*.

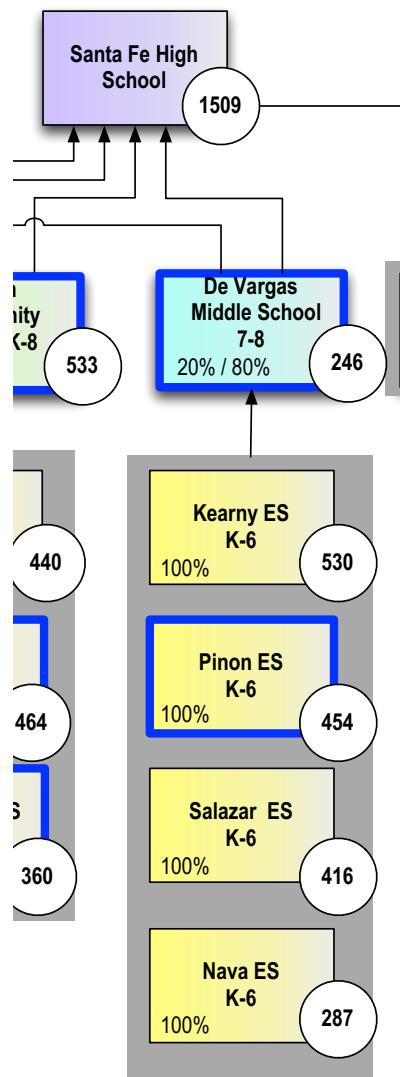
In addition, the distribution of instructional supports and expertise across the district do not match the needs of students at each school. For example, Wood Gormley—whose student body of 400 is only three percent EL—employs four teachers with TESOL endorsements, meaning that EL students at Wood Gormley enjoy a 1:3 student-to-teacher ratio for staff who specialize in their support. In contrast, Sweeney—whose student body of 500 is 49% EL—employs only nine TESOL endorsed teachers, meaning that EL students at Sweeney have a 1:27 student-to-teacher ratio for staff who specialize in their support. (Santa Fe Public Schools, 2015; Santa Fe Public Schools, Human Resources Department, 2016). The ramifications are clear. In 2015, 76% of Wood Gormley students scored proficient in third grade literacy on the PARCC exam. Only 11% of Sweeney students scored proficient in third grade literacy on the PARCC exam (New Mexico State Department of Education, 2015). See *Appendices B, D* and *E*.

Part of the equity work that might be done would be to attempt to forcibly redistribute the quality instruction and resources to different schools based on student need.

Another piece of the work might be to redesign teacher placement practices in the human resources department. All of this equity work belongs in the middle temporal point of student *access* during his K-12 school career. This work is also particularly challenging, because it involves involuntary movement of human capital. When I asked the Director of Multiculturalism why the district hadn't made efforts to move teachers with bilingual endorsements, for example, from schools with low EL populations to schools with high EL populations, she said that the teachers refused and threatened to quit the district. One principal told me that when she had tried to move one of her teachers from a mainstream classroom to an EL English classroom to ensure that the school was in compliance with serving EL student needs, the teacher went to the State Department of Education and had his TESOL endorsement removed from his teaching license.

A third piece of this equity work moves away from redistribution of resources and instead toward how to redesign student entry—which school a student enrolls in, or his entry point into the school system. Zoning in SFPS currently feeds students from one school building into another school building, often with similar characteristics. A complete flow chart that shows which elementary schools feed which middle schools feed which high schools in the district is included in *Appendix A*. But take a look at the example strand in *Figure 12*. Kearny, Piñon, Salazar, and

Figure 12. Santa Fe Public Schools School Feeder Flow Chart (2015)



Nava are all elementary schools with over 60% low-income students and PARCC exam third grade reading proficiency rates under 20% (in the bottom fifth of all elementary schools). They feed DeVargas Middle School, whose student population is 80% low-income and whose eighth grade reading proficiency rate is five percent (the lowest rate of the three middle schools). DeVargas then feeds Capital High School, whose student population is 82% low-income and whose tenth grade proficiency rate is 19%, the lower rate of the two high schools (Santa Fe Public Schools, 2015; New Mexico Public Education Department, 2015).

If a large impetus behind school choice is to disrupt the segregation of entry points into the school system, and if socio-economic integration leads to the natural leveling of resources as Kahlenberg argues (2006), then why has not SFPS's open enrollment policy led to both more integrated schools and more fairly distributed resources? As I delved into the data, I realized that it was because the open enrollment policy—by virtue of a flawed RST process—was skewed heavily in favor of higher-income, English speaking students, or the white and Hispano students.

First, there was a gap in communication. Parents and students either did not receive information about the transfers process or they did not understand it. Many low-income families were perpetually transient; letters about the transfers timeline and application process sent in the mail did not reach them. Many families lacked email addresses or Internet access; they did not receive district emails. In the Google Analytics principal survey, 32% of principals reported that families without email addresses posed a primary challenge at their school site during the RST process. Many families had intermittent phone service; they did not receive district robo-calls. Consequently, families who won the lottery for a preschool slot or for a transfer to another school often did not receive their official notification and

could not register. Similarly, families who did not receive information about RST timelines and requirements were unsure about what paperwork they needed, where they needed to bring it, and when the deadlines were.

Second, even if a student was accepted to a school outside of her zone, her family was responsible for providing transportation to school—a policy which immediately excluded several low-income students from real school choice.

Third, often characteristics of “desirable” schools—as gauged by the number of transfers to each school—rendered them out of the question for low-income families. For working parents who needed to enroll their children in afterschool programs, the \$245 monthly program fee at Wood Gormley and the \$225 monthly fees at Atalaya, Carlos Gilbert, and EJ Martinez—higher performing schools in wealthier zones—were out of the question. Instead, they would stay within their zones, where schools like Kearny, Ramirez Thomas and Cesar Chavez offered free afterschool programs, and schools like Salazar or Sweeney offered afterschool programs for a more affordable \$25 weekly fee (Santa Fe Public Schools, Academic Office, 2016). See *Appendix G*. As a result, even though the open enrollment and lottery system were meant to equalize access, higher-income students and families who had easy access to the Internet, means of transportation, and the resources to pay for afterschool programs, attained *de facto* preferential opportunity to transfer into the schools of their choice.

The data around transfer students supported the observations above, as well as the testimonies of the district staff and families with whom Tina and I spoke. For example, the student population at Acequia Madre—a beautiful old school building in the wealthy Canyon neighborhood with less than 10% Level 1 teachers—consists of 65% students who transferred in from other zones. Of those transfer students, only 28% are low-income and

three percent EL. As a result, Atalaya's student population is only 39% low-income and five percent EL, whereas two primary feeder schools from which students transferred were EJ Martinez (11% EL, 67% low-income) and Salazar (37% EL, 64% low-income). The student population at Carlos Gilbert—another brand new elementary school building in the expensive historic Plaza, with only one Level 1 teacher—also consists of 65% students who transferred in from other zones. Of those transfer students, only 31% are low-income and one percent EL. As a result, Carlos Gilbert's student population is only 36% low-income and two percent EL. In comparison, the two largest feeder schools for transfers are Gonzales (5% EL, 56% low-income) and Nina Otero (23% EL, 78% low-income). See *Appendix F*. The data certainly suggests that open enrollment is an instrument for advantaged students and families to flee their neighborhood schools and the company of more disadvantaged classmates (Santa Fe Public Schools, Human Resources Department, 2016; Santa Fe Public Schools, Office of Strategy and Accountability, 2016).

Those benefiting from the district's open enrollment policy were not only higher-income and English speaking, but they also chose the schools in the wealthiest parts of town and whose student population matched themselves as much as possible. Interestingly, in Santa Fe, this behavior meant that the schools receiving large numbers of transfers were and are in some ways the most integrated schools in the district, despite being hubs for English-speaking Hispano flight. With their respective 39% and 36% low-income students, Acequia Madre and Carlos Gilbert are right in the realm of Wake County Public School's goals for socio-economic integration, when it sought to cap the enrollment of low-income students at each school in the district at 40% (Kahlenberg, 2006). However, this wave of higher-income and English speaking transfers in the Santa Fe context left two large problems in its wake. First, in a district where 75% of students are low-income, 82% are minority, and 21% are

EL, a school like Carlos Gilbert that becomes 65% higher-income and 97% English speaking necessarily *increases* socio-economic segregation at *other* schools in the district. Second, low-income and EL students and families miss out on the limited opportunities to transfer school zones.

WHO ISN'T ENTERING ANY SCHOOL?

But school choice was a problem farther down the road. Far from worrying about open enrollment, many students and families first had to tackle the challenge of getting their foot in any door, even a door for which they were zoned. It was unnecessarily difficult for some students—especially those who were most at risk—to get a seat in any school, much less a school of choice. Families who were strapped for time because of work or childcare obligations were forced to make multiple trips between school sites and the central office. At least a few students and families left the district at the beginning of the 2015-16 school year because they were exhausted by attempts to enroll at a school or in the district.

Families who did not receive information because of aforementioned communication problems were unsure about what paperwork they needed, where they needed to bring it, and when the deadlines were. Some families who found their way to school sites to register did not speak English and found that there were little to no Spanish-speaking staff on hand to assist them. In addition, much of the information distributed by the district was only in English. In addition, many students and families simply could not meet requirements or provide the documentation necessary to register for schools. The district policy that students could only register if accompanied by their legal guardians excluded the many students who did not live with their legal guardians. Take this case that Adelante logged in the 2014-15 school year:

Student lives in Amy Biehl or Turquoise Trail zone. But mother fleeing severe domestic violence. Moved in with aunt whose children go to Atalaya (Santa Fe Public Schools, Adelante, 2015).

Time and again, students living with aunts or uncles explained that their parents were still living in Mexico. Other students living with grandparents in Santa Fe explained that their parents worked and lived in Albuquerque and retained legal guardianship. Then, 77% of principals reported that the primary challenge with registration at their site was that many parents struggled to provide the requisite two proofs of address. Most low-income families in Santa Fe sign month-to-month rental agreements and receive EBT statements, whereas the district accepted only annual leases and bank statements as proofs of address. Other families could not produce electric or utility bills because they lived in motels or at shelters.

Take this case, also from the 2014-15 Adelante log:

Was refused registration at Capshaw. Dad and daughter are living in a motel which is not in the Capshaw district. They are living in a motel because their electricity is turned off at home in Tesuque. Dad is working on getting utilities reconnected (Santa Fe Public Schools, Adelante, 2015).

When examining the list of acceptable proofs of address, I realized that, even I would have had difficulty registering in the district; I also signed a month-to-month rental agreement, I had no utility or Internet bills in my name since my landlady covered all bills, and my car was registered in my home state of Ohio. I could not imagine how much more difficult it would be for families facing additional challenges to register. Moreover, the 11% of students in the district who qualified as homeless were often turned away from school sites until Adelante would intervene (Santa Fe Public Schools, Adelante, 2015). For instance:

St. Elizabeth Emergency transitional shelter pays clients' bills so they do not receive bills. Dad took paperwork stating they were living in shelter. They were still being denied registration.

or

Started school at Wood Gormley. Had to move to Gonzalez zone because she could not afford a place of her own. At that point she qualified for Adelante.

In addition, several families could not produce immunization records, transcripts, or birth certificates and felt they had no recourse to do so. 50% of principals cited missing health documents, and 32% cited missing birth certificates as a primary barrier to registration at their sites. At one of the high schools, I spoke to several students who had left transcripts and birth certificates behind in Mexico, and were waiting for family members to locate and mail them.

Finally, students and families with high mobility rates or unusual living circumstances had to figure out how to get to school. The transportation department used the single address on record in a student's registration file to map out its routes for the school year, then distributed passes that would allow students to access their assigned bus route. Families who moved from one living situation to another, whether it be a motel or a rental unit, this restriction meant that they had to find their own means of getting their child to school. Similarly, homeless students who regularly changed shelters, were left without a means to get to school for part of the year. Often, this meant they simply didn't go. In the 2014-15 school year, the Adelante program requested for 124 homeless students to receive flexible transportation so that they could access whichever bus routes were closest to them at the time (Adelante, 2015). Adelante provided gas cards to those students who were denied flexible access—but unfortunately, most of them did not have cars to fuel. In the survey, a couple principals summed up the RST process succinctly:

There is a minimal belief in students and families as clients. [Our approach to transportation is] it's just a service; take it or leave it.

Responding to unique situations is not a forte of our system. Sometimes when a school knows that the family is in a challenging situation (i.e. with a Children Youth and Families Department custody situation where the grandparent is having to take care of kids temporarily—and we knew absolutely that was where the kids were going and needed a bus pass) and is then told by student data that we had to have that grandma bring in two proofs of address, that seemed a bit excessive and insensitive to the family.

THE WIDE DIVIDE BETWEEN PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

At the end of November, Tina and I completed the strategic plan for RST redesign and presented it to members of the Cabinet. Among our chief recommendations, we first recommended that the RST process needed to occur in the spring rather than in the fall so that families had ample time to navigate glitches in the system, obtain documents, and secure vaccinations before the beginning of school. Second, we recommended a deliberate, clear, and extensive communication strategy both so that students and families understood their options as well as what was asked of them. Third, we recommended cutting the red tape that crisscrossed the registration system to make it easier rather than harder for students and families to obtain a seat in a classroom. Fourth, we recommended providing free district transportation and afterschool programs for all district students, regardless of which school they attended, in order to make open enrollment a real choice for all students and families.

Early in November, the Cabinet had formed an Implementation Team to execute changes in the RST process. This team was led by Tanya, the Chief of Staff and consisted of the Chief Strategy Officer, the Chief Executive Officer, the General Counsel, and a recent hire, the Communications Director. Dr. Abeyta distributed copies of Tina and my redesign plan to the Cabinet and then called a meeting for Tina and I to present the plan to the Implementation Team. After this “hand-off” presentation, Tina and I would then join the Implementation Team as representatives of the Teaching and Learning department. On the

day of the hand-off, Tanya called both Tina and me to inform us that the meeting had been cancelled. Later that afternoon, almost halfway through the block of time that had been scheduled for the meeting, Dr. Abeyta called me and demanded to know where Tina and I were, and that she and four other Cabinet members—including Tanya—were waiting for our presentation. Shaken, Tina and I rushed to deliver a presentation of our recommendations.

I was astonished that Tanya had told me that my presentation was cancelled when she was one of the Cabinet members waiting for my arrival. Although I knew that there was some discord between the Tanya and Dr. Abeyta, Tanya and I had previously worked on a couple other projects together, and I had believed that our working relationship was fine. Because she offered me no explanation at the meeting and because I would continue to work with her on the Implementation Team, I decided not to ask her for an explanation unless a similar situation happened again. I wanted to preserve a genial working relationship. Upon joining the Implementation Team, Tina and I then realized that the team had already been meeting for almost a month. Although their own recommendations were meager and rooted in no data, and they were eager to adopt our recommendations, it was still baffling that there had been two working groups duplicating efforts around the same goal for at least a month.

It was key that Cabinet members and the Chief of Staff led the Implementation Team to execute the redesign plan. Whereas the four Cabinet members lacked the expertise that Tina and I had built over the past several months, they possessed the formal authority and operational capacity that we lacked. At the same time, the structure of the Implementation Team was unclear. Although Tanya was technically the leader of the team and reported our progress to the Superintendent and the Board, Robert, the CISO,

convened and led all the meetings. I was hopeful that this distributed leadership promised collaboration, but while all four Cabinet members on the team were eager to assign deliverables to one another; yet it became clear that none of them felt accountable to one another. As a result, although the Implementation Team had been ready to adopt most of our recommendations in December, they were only able to deliver about a third of the recommendations by April.

The Implementation Team did succeed on several fronts. First, it tackled a RST timeline that would occur in the spring rather than in the summer and fall. Because this was a matter of simply moving logistics earlier in the calendar year, the Implementation Team succeeded in implementing a process that would have the vast majority of students registered for school by April. Second, it cut much of the red tape that prevented students and families from registering. For example, we eased requirements for documentation, especially proofs of address. All schools would now be allowed to accept month-to-month rental agreements and EBT statements in lieu of yearlong leases and bank statements. We would also allow copies and scans of documents such as birth certificates, which would help students who needed original documents to be sent by family members in Mexico.

The Implementation Team also successfully drafted and implemented the two forms Tina and I had recommended creating: a form for Adelante to provide to homeless students in lieu of proofs of address, and a form that would allow principals to change student addresses in the database throughout the year to accommodate transportation needs. We also asked school nurses to scan state databases for student immunizations, so that we would not have to require all students and families to acquire documentation of their immunization statuses. Initially, the Implementation Team did not seem to heed Tina and my recommendations to specifically address homeless students or immunizations. Consequently,

Tina and I invited both the Adelante director and the Head Nurse to subsequent meetings to present in-person the concerns they had already expressed in our recommendation report. The Implementation Team officially adopted those recommendations only when the Adelante director offered to draft the form, and the Head Nurse volunteered for her nurses to scan the databases before the start of registration.

The Implementation Team also set out but failed to create a deliberate, clear and extensive communication strategy. A month before applications for preschool, summer programs and transfers opened, the district needed to blast families and students with information and reminders through diversified channels that would increase our probability of reaching even the most off-the-grid families. As such, we designed a communication campaign that included robo calls, emails *and* mailed letters to triple our chances of reaching students and families, as well as public announcements via English and Spanish television channels, radio stations and newspapers to reach a diverse audience. In January, we launched a Parent Choice week, emphasizing the district's open enrollment policy and offering families the opportunity to "shop" for the school that best meet their needs. Unfortunately, because various team members failed to complete their tasks, the campaign failed. The robo calls, emails and letters never went out before Parent Week. Nothing was ever announced in the media. As a result, most schools had very low attendance at their Parent Choice nights—with less than thirty parents attending one of the high school events billeted for almost five hundred incoming freshmen. By the time we closed the transfers application window, about 2,000 families had applied for transfers, showing no increase from the year before. Although the data would not be available until the end of April, I suspected that the transfers data would mirror that of previous years—with white and Hispano families fleeing schools with higher low-income and ELL populations.

When I asked Tanya and Robert why the communication campaign had not happened, even after we had spent two months planning its implementation, neither responded. When I examined the spreadsheet of principals who had responded to Tanya's survey for when each principal would be holding his or her Parent Choice night, I realized that only 5 had responded to her ask. I was reminded of a similar situation in October, when Tanya had requested an ask from principals and only three had responded within her timeframe. I suspected that the reason the communication campaign had not happened was because principals had not supplied the information that the district needed to communicate. Although I remembered Robert asking Tanya to send reminders to principals several times during meetings, she always seemed not to hear him. I suspected that, just as principals did not feel accountable to Tanya, each Cabinet member felt that he or she was not accountable to another Cabinet member for completing a task. In any other team, I would have requested an After Action Review (AAR) to debrief how the group and leadership dynamics affected our capacity to achieve work. Yet, given the amount of negative gossiping to which I was privy from many Implementation Team members, I doubted that there was a sufficient culture of trust and respect to allow for the candor necessary to make an AAR useful.

WHERE THE STATUS QUO BARS THE WAY

The two significant recommendations the Registration Study Committee had made that the implementation team did not adopt was to offer free transportation and afterschool programming to all families and students, even those who transferred outside of their zones. Whenever I raised the idea of transportation during implementation team meetings, a Cabinet member always told me that it was not possible at that time. School choice would remain, for most students and families, a policy that did not apply to them. Worse, it would

largely remain a means of English-speaking, middle-income Hispanic flight. From offline conversations, I surmised that free transportation and afterschool programs were “not possible” due mainly to budgetary concerns. One might believe, then, that the problem of a transfers process skewed in favor of higher-income families was not a problem of inequity but of district scarcity. Yet I would argue that district resources were skewed in favor of serving higher-income families and thus were certainly a problem of inequity. For example, the most expensive teachers—or the teachers with the highest licensure levels were congregated at the schools with the highest numbers of transfers.

In reflection, the Implementation Team had been eager only to make operational changes because the charge from the Cabinet had been to fix the efficiencies rather than the inequities of the RST process. Yet the team also seemed ready to make technical changes that improved conditions for disadvantaged families so long as they did not take away the advantages of other families. When discussing disadvantaged families, the following phrases came up repeatedly in team conversations: “They want to game the system,” “They will do anything for a seat in that school,” and “I know they lie.” Members of the Cabinet implementation team seemed to distrust the integrity of low-income families and to suspect them of gaming the system so they could get into the schools of their choice. At the same time, they disregarded the obvious truth: if they were indeed trying to game the system, that system was already “rigged” against them in favor of higher-income families. It was not that my colleagues on the implementation team felt any malice toward or wanted to make the RST process more difficult for low-income and Spanish-speaking families—indeed, they sincerely wanted to improve it. Instead, they feared the consequences of making the RST process more difficult for families who were accustomed to successfully navigating it. As Ron Heifetz says, people do not necessarily fear change so much as they fear loss of the

status quo (2002). Until district leadership was ready to confront the frustration of middle-income families who might not obtain seats in a school of their choice because the lottery pool had vastly increased, the transfers process would not change. But beyond repeatedly reiterating that the transfers process was unfair in the implementation meetings, I did not know how to spur my colleagues to take action.

CHAPTER FOUR: EQUITABLE EXIT

"I've been struck by the upside-down priorities of the juvenile justice system. We are willing to spend the least amount of money to keep a kid at home, more to put him in a foster home and the most to institutionalize him."

-Marian Wright Edelman, 1975

DANGEROUS VAGARIES

In the 2014-15 school year, a third grade student was suspended for one day for being “disruptive in the classroom, making noises, talking, not listening or following directions.” A sixth grade student was “immediately removed” from the classroom for “making constant disruption and being insubordinate in the classroom.” A seventh grader was suspended for one day “for classroom disruption.” A ninth grader was referred to law enforcement because he “exhibited a pattern of insubordination and defiance.” A fifth grader was assigned one day of in-school suspension (ISS) for being “extremely disrespectful and defiant toward the librarian today” (Santa Fe Public Schools, Office of Strategy and Accountability, 2015).

Disruption, insubordination, disrespect, defiance and other such words appear frequently in the district’s disciplinary log. Some entries explain the nature of the disruptive or defiant event—the student would not stop talking, or the student cussed at the teacher—but many entries do not explain further. Such vague descriptions of behavioral infractions raise the question of whether children are being unconsciously targeted because of their demographic characteristics. Are more black and brown children being written up for disciplinary infractions than their white counterparts? Are more black and brown children being suspended as a result? Are Native American children more likely to be seen as disruptive, children with special needs as defiant, Hispanic children as disrespectful? Citing such vagaries as the reasons for taking disciplinary measures is risky because they widen the

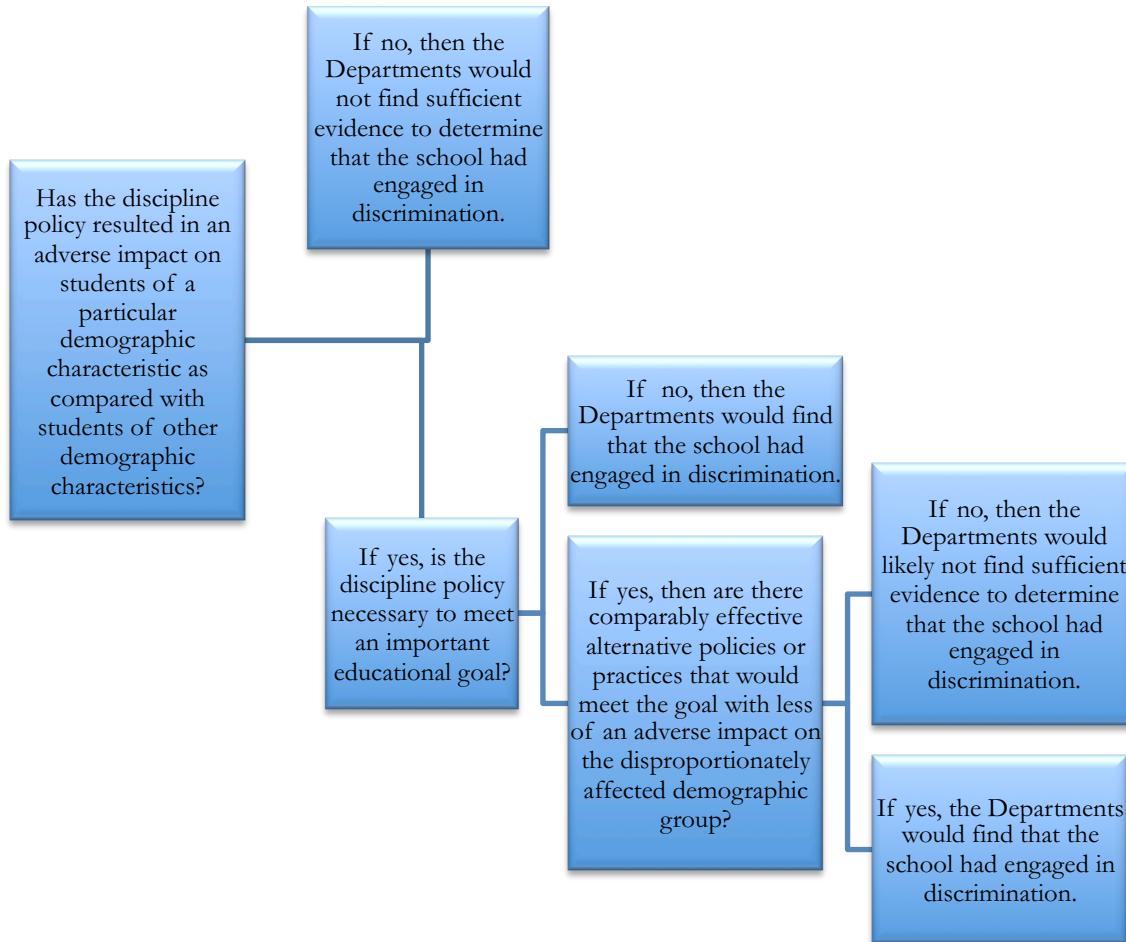
possibility of subjectivity, increase the likelihood of writing up students without appropriate justification, and increase the inequitable feed into the school-to-prison pipeline, so much so that in 2013 Los Angeles Unified School District banned “willful defiance” as grounds to suspend a child (Watanabe, 2013).

In January of 2014, the federal Departments of Education and Justice issued a “Dear Colleague” letter to public school leaders, exhorting them to “administer student discipline without discriminating on the basis of race, color or national origin,” as dictated by the federal law under the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If there was reason to suspect that the discipline practices of any public school district were discriminatory, the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) within the Department of Education would promptly initiate investigations in that district. Having issued this warning, the Departments then proceeded to offer guidance for public schools to equitably administer student discipline (Lhamon & Samuels, 2014).

Though simplistic—it focuses on racial discrimination, rather than discrimination based on “personal characteristics” such as disability, gender and socioeconomic status—the letter is momentous in that it is the first time that the federal government has turned its attention to school discipline as a key equity issue with such deliberation and specificity. While national data reflects racial disparities in discipline rates, the Departments concluded that there was no research to substantiate why students of color are more frequently disciplined. In addition to the disparities, the Departments expressed concern of the national shift toward exclusionary disciplinary policies, such as in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to law enforcement. When students are excluded from the classroom, the letter states, they are also excluded from instruction and from the school community. They fall farther behind, experience alienation, and become more at risk of

entering the “school-to-prison pipeline.” The letter draws the bottom line that student discipline is a matter of educational equity and civil rights (Lhamon & Samuels, 2014).

Figure 13. Office of Civil Rights Disparate Impact Flowchart (2014)



Following the original logic used in the Introduction, I would conclude that the discipline system in SFPS is not equitable so long as it forces any students out of the school system just as the RST process is unfair if it bars any students from accessing learning. But in comparing the problem of registration with the problem of discipline, it seems that equitable registration had more to do with a fair *process* whereas equitable discipline seems intuitively to

be more concerned with whether *adults* and *implementation* are fair. After all, there is no research to substantiate that any group of students should misbehave more than another (Lhamon & Samuels, 2014). According to a sequence of questioning that the OCR proposed, outlined in *Figure 13*, a district must first identify whether its discipline policy causes disparate impact for students of different demographic characteristics. Having identified disparate impact, the district must then reflect upon the necessity of that policy in relationship to educational outcomes. If the policy is necessary in order to produce desired educational outcomes, the district must then determine whether alternative policies lead to the same educational goals. If alternative policies exist, then the district has engaged in discrimination.

What is particularly fascinating about this flow of reasoning is that it equates disparate impact with inequity, while differentiating between an unfair policy (a structural inequity) and people who implement the policy unfairly (human bias, discrimination, racism). Of course, human bias might also originally be found among the authors of the unfair policy. With these frameworks from the OCR in mind, I designed a scope of work around three broad questions: Who was getting in trouble? What they were getting in trouble for? And why were they getting in trouble?

CONSTRUCTING THE DISCIPLINE TASK FORCE

Before plunging into its examinations and findings, I will first illustrate the group and leadership dynamics of the Task Force. Both Dr. Abeyta and the Superintendent had charged me with leading the Task Force, and Dr. Abeyta had given me a list of the 2013 Task Force members. I reviewed the list and decided upon two key changes. First, as advised by Dr. Abeyta, I did not invite outside stakeholders such as the School Board member or

City Hall representative. I feared that the presence of outsiders were curtail the candor of conversation in the Task Force. In addition, I worried that, by virtue of her formal authority, a School Board member would become the default leader of the conversation, with other Task Force members hesitant to voice disagreement once she shared her opinion. Second, I decided to expand the Task Force by including several additional school-based staff. Because principals and teachers are responsible for writing up students, their perspective was especially important. In addition, in the case where formal district wide action might not be taken, I believed that the principals and teachers could at least implement our recommendations in their respective schools and classrooms. See *Figure 14* for membership lists of the current and previous Task Forces.

Figure 14. Membership of the 2013 and 2016 Equity/ Discipline Task Forces

2012-13 Equity Task Force	2015-16 Discipline Task Force
<p><i>Outside Voices</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Board Member • City Hall Representative <p><i>Central Office Staff</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy Superintendent • Federal Grants Coordinator • Multicultural Director • Native American Student Services Director • Special Education Director • Student Services Director <p><i>School-Based Staff</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary Principal 1 • Elementary Principal 2 	<p><i>Central Office Staff</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistant Superintendent • Deputy Superintendent • Federal Grants Coordinator • Interventions Coordinator • Multicultural Director • Native American Student Services Director • Special Education Specialist <p><i>School-Based Staff</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital High Assistant Principal • Capshaw Middle Principal • Kearny Elementary Principal • Santa Fe High School Principal • Santa Fe High School Teacher 1 • Santa Fe High School Teacher 2

Upon convening the Task Force, I immediately established that I was a facilitator rather than a leader. I guessed that the Task Force members would probably view me in one

of two ways—either as a young graduate student, outsider, and someone with much less district and life experience than themselves, or as an extension of and a direct report to Dr. Abeyta. I was afraid if they continued to view me as an extension of Dr. Abeyta, or as someone who would report everything they said to district leadership, they might not feel comfortable being open in our discussions. At the same time, I did not want them to doubt that I—and by extension, the Task Force—had any power to effect change. I decided that I wanted the Task Force to view me as a hybrid of both roles. I spent the first month of my residency establishing that I came to the work of the Task Force as both a learner and a facilitator, that I had invited them because I valued their experiential expertise, and that although I would set the scope of work and agendas for the Task Force, all the members should feel free to question and shift that scope as they saw fit.

Before the Task Force began officially meeting, I emailed each member individually, requesting them to look over the Scope of Work I had outlined for the year, asking them for suggestions and feedback, and assuring them that continued suggestions would be welcome even after the Task Force began. After sending out a revised Scope of Work that took into account any suggestions and feedback I received, I then asked each member of the Task Force to accept the invitation and commit to the work via a written statement in email. We then spent the first meeting creating norms with the aim of establishing open and free discussion. I concluded the first meeting by establishing my commitment and responsibilities to them as a facilitator. I promised that my key responsibilities would entail three things: 1) preparing an agenda and materials for the Task Force a week before each convening, so that each member would have time to send me any feedback or adjustments before the actual meeting; 2) concluding each meeting with a quick debrief of what had gone well and what needed improvement, both in terms of group dynamics and my own facilitation; and 3)

sending any written proposals, recommendations, or deliverables for approval to the group before I submitted them to district leadership.

By spending a month of legwork before our first meeting, I hoped to establish the tone that the Task Force members were as much in charge of the work as myself. I also wanted them to know that although I would be regularly reporting our progress and findings to Dr. Abeyta so that district leadership could properly take action, the Task Force would have final say about which findings and recommendations I passed along. As the Task Force progressed and I continued to honor my three commitments to my colleagues, I found that conversation became increasingly open. In our debriefs at the end of each meeting, members reported that they felt comfortable opining with candor and began to contribute more suggestions. One suggestion became instrumental in shifting the course of our Scope of Work; the principals and teachers on the Task Force argued that we needed to hear many more school-based and student voices. As a result, we supplemented our quantitative data with fifty one-to-one face-to-face interviews with students, counselors, and secretaries at schools across the district, about their experiences of school climate and discipline in the district. Without this important suggestion, the Task Force would not have been sufficiently informed to answer the last of our three guiding questions: What were they getting in trouble for? And why were they getting in trouble? The findings of the Task Force follow.

WHO IS GETTING IN TROUBLE?

Because the district is majority minority, the Discipline Task Force decided to study a variety of demographic factors in addition to race and ethnicity, including socioeconomic (F&RL), EL, and IEP status. Rather than look at percentages of disciplinary incidences for each different demographic group within the discipline system, I decided that it would be

more useful for the Task Force to look at risk ratios, or the probability that a student of a certain demographic has of incurring a disciplinary infraction relative to the general population (Katz, 1978).

$$\text{Risk ratio} = (\text{disciplinary incidences in demographic group } x / \text{total disciplinary incidences})$$

$$(\text{individuals in demographic group } x / \text{total student population})$$

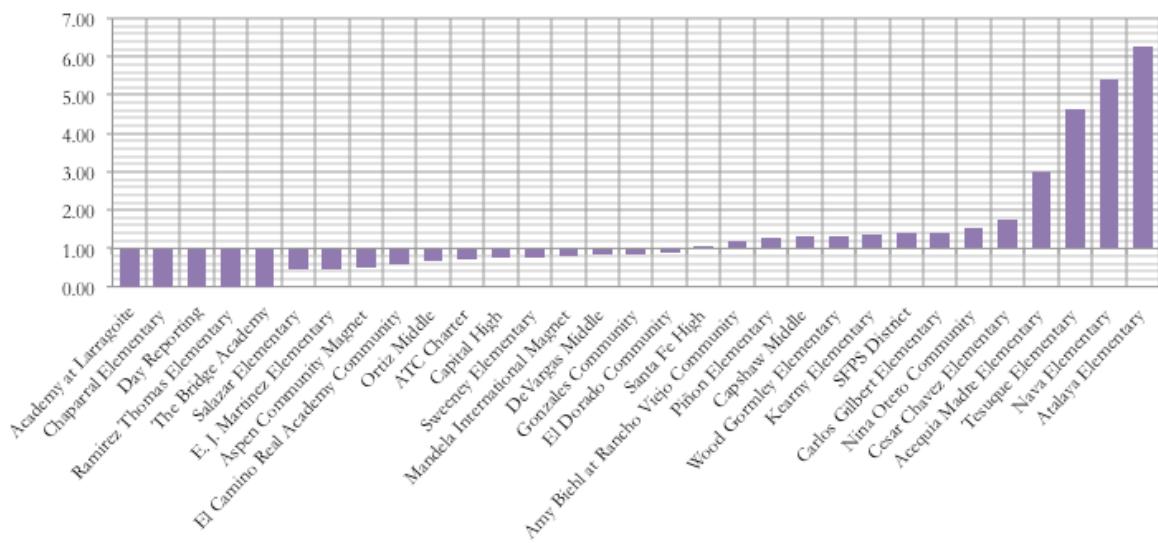
For the purposes of this work, Task Force drew upon two primary sets of data, from which the statistical analyses and charts in this chapter are drawn: Disciplinary Infractions from SY2014-15, provided by the Santa Fe Public Schools, Office of Strategy and Accountability (2015), and SY2014-15 Student Demographics, drawn from the district's PowerSchool database (2015).

For example, black students have a risk ratio of 1.5 of incurring a disciplinary infraction relative to all other races in the district, according to official documentation. That means that black students in SFPS are 1.5 times more likely to get in trouble than any other student. Risk ratios below 1 indicate a lack of inequitable risk, whereas risk ratios above 1 suggest inequity. Statisticians consider risk ratios above 3.0 as significant; for the purposes of this paper, we look at risk ratios at or above 2.0 (Katz, 1978). Finally, I decided that the Task Force should look at which students had recurring write-ups; in other words, which students had high rates of recidivism in the school discipline system. This last set of data was particularly important because I wanted the principals to consider not only the implementation of the discipline system, but also the surrounding systems that could support a student in succeeding in the classroom.

Having established these guidelines in examining the data, we were surprised by a few findings. First, there is little inequity in terms of ethnicity when looking at disciplinary incidences at most schools as shown in *Figure 14*. In fact, at most schools, Hispanics students

have risk ratios below 1.0, which means that they are *less* likely to get in trouble than non-Hispanic students. Of the four schools where risk ratios register above 2.0, three schools (Atalaya, Tesuque, and Acequia Madre) had sample sizes below ten, which renders their risk ratios statistically insignificant. Each of those schools had reported so few disciplinary infractions that the data was naturally skewed. Nava Elementary was an outlier; not only did it have a statistically significant sample size, but its Hispanic students had a risk ratio of 5.3. That means Hispanic students are over five times as likely to get in trouble as non-Hispanic students at Nava Elementary.

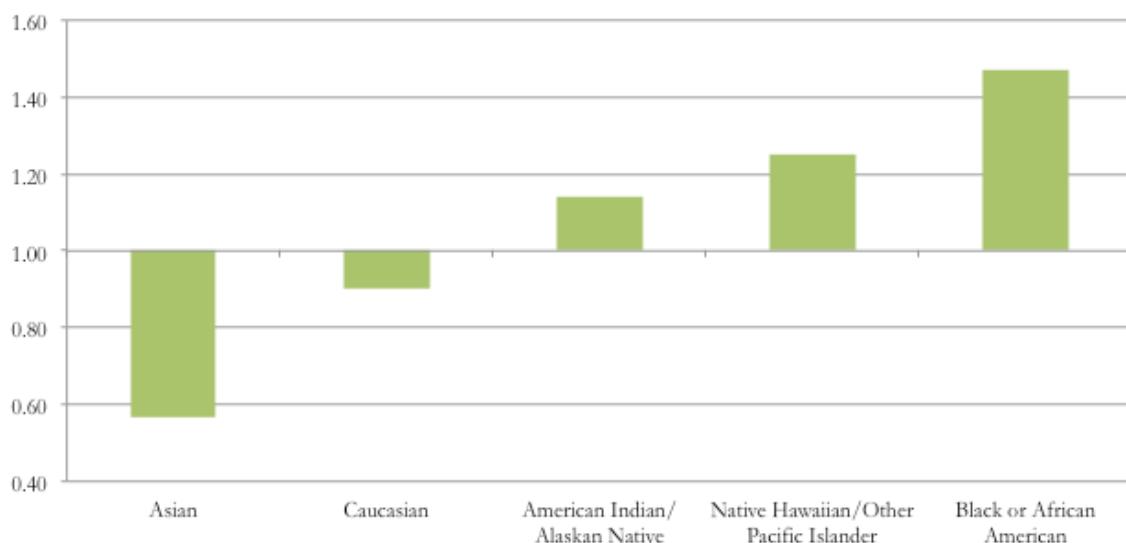
Figure 14. Risk Ratio of Hispanic Students Relative to Non-Hispanic Students in SY2014-15 Disciplinary Incidences



Whereas the district does not seem to inequitably report disciplinary incidences for Hispanic students, the risk ratios for race show a different story. As can be seen in *Figure 15*, Caucasians and Asians have risk ratios below 1.0, meaning they are less likely to incur disciplinary infractions. But remember, most white students also self-report as Hispanic, which is consistent with the ethnicity risk ratios shown in *Figure 14*. But the three other racial groups, have risk ratios above 1.0. Native Americans and Native Hawaiians (which I will

group together due to reporting inaccuracies) are slightly more likely to incur disciplinary infractions than all other races.⁵ Black students are 1.5 times as likely to get in trouble. From this data, the major inequities seem not to lie along the line of white students versus non-white students but along the line of Hispanic students versus other students of color.

Figure 15. Risk Ratio of Each Race Relative to All Other Races in SY2014-15 Disciplinary Incidences



Keeping in mind the cultural context of Santa Fe and New Mexico, I wanted to make sure that we kept in mind the nuances within the Hispanic student population, which included both self-professed Hispanics or “Hispanos” and newer first and second-generation immigrants from New Mexico and South America. Because there was no official disaggregation of the data, we looked at other indicators that might distinguish the newer

⁵ At first I was surprised to see a significant population of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in the landlocked mountainous desert of Santa Fe, but upon examining the registration and enrollment process in the schools, I realized that many parents and students who are American Indian click on Native Hawaiian when self-identifying their race, simply because they read the word “Native.” Because all demographic data in this report is self-reported, I take the liberty of looking at American Indian/ Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander as one racial group, understanding that this precludes some inaccuracies.

immigrants from the established majority: English learner and low-income status. As a whole, the district's discipline practices regarding EL students did not raise alarm. As we can observe in *Appendix H*, risk ratios rise for EL students rise above 2.0 at four schools—three of which (Tesuque, Mandela and ATC) have insignificant sample sizes. But at Sweeney Elementary, EL students are twice as likely as non-EL students to incur disciplinary infractions.

In contrast, the risk ratios for low-income students (as determined by those receiving free-or-reduced lunch) approach or rise above 2.0 for all but four schools (Chaparral, E.J. Martinez, Acequia Madre and Capshaw). See *Appendix H*. Some of the risk ratios are exceedingly high. At Carlos Gilbert, Kearny and Amy Biehl, El Dorado and Nina Otero, low-income students are over four times as likely as their higher-income peers to incur disciplinary infractions. At Piñon Elementary School, low-income students are almost *eight times as likely* to get in trouble. Of the schools with high risk ratios, only Atalaya Elementary had too small a sample size to be statistically significant.

Last, we looked at the rates of discipline incidences among students with special needs, and found trends that reflected the rates of discipline incidences among low-income students. About two-thirds of the schools had risk ratios at or above 2.0 for students with special needs. Three of the six schools with risk ratios above 4.0 for low-income students also had risk ratios above 2.0 for students with special needs (Carlos Gilbert, El Dorado, and Piñon). Students with special needs at Ramirez Thomas, Sweeney, E.J. Martinez, and Carlos Gilbert had risk ratios above 4.0 with students with special needs at Carlos Gilbert *11 times more likely* to get in trouble than students without special needs.

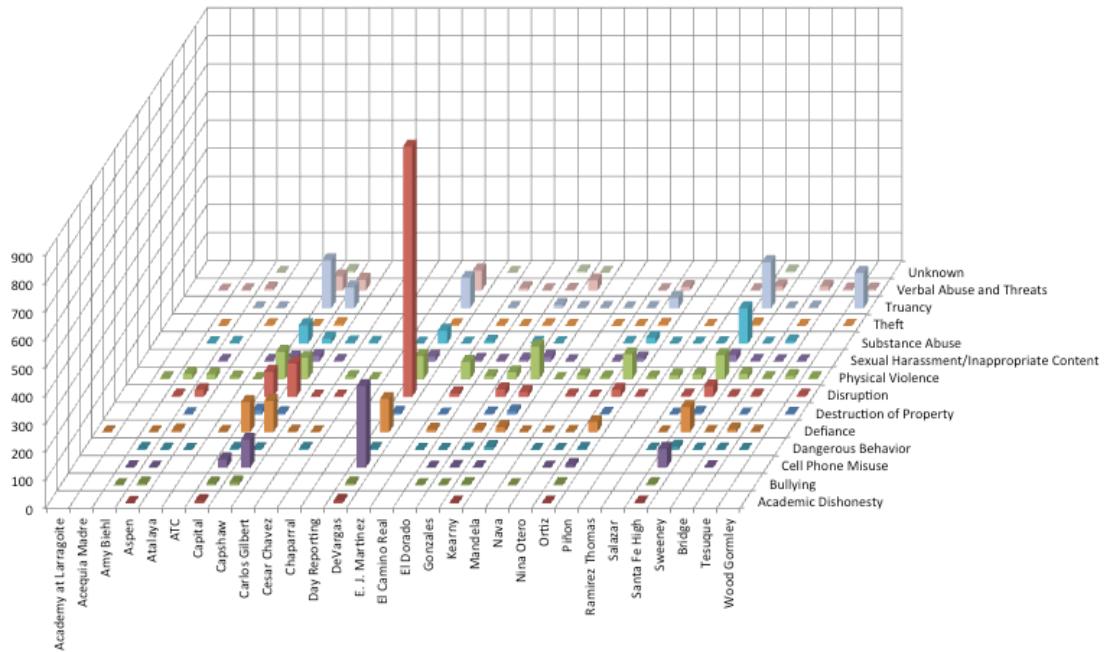
WHAT ARE THEY GETTING IN TROUBLE FOR?

Examining and discussing the risk ratios debunked many of the preconceived notions that the Task Force held around which students were more at risk of getting in trouble. Most significantly, we realized that, as a group, the majority minority—the Hispanic students—seemed to have adopted many of the characteristics of any dominant majority. They were *less likely* to experience discipline overall, whereas students belonging to other demographic minorities were more likely to be targeted by the discipline system.

Having discovered which students were more likely to get in trouble than others, I then directed the Task Force to determine why they were getting in trouble. Distrustful that the current categorization of disciplinary infractions was consistent across the district, several members of the Task Force proposed creating its own categories. Propelled by the expertise of the teachers and principals in the room, we brainstormed thirteen categories into which all disciplinary incidences could belong, and included clear guidelines for what each of those categories entailed. For example, we assigned physical violence as a category only to those incidences in which clear harm was inflicted upon another person. We assigned other physical infractions such as horseplay to the category of disruption. We then read each of the 6,270 disciplinary records from the 2014-15 school year, and coded them according to one of the thirteen categories. The distribution of disciplinary incidences by type is illustrated in *Figure 16*. Across the board, the most frequent incident types (those that protrude from the graph) include: disruption, defiance, cell phone use, physical violence, and truancy. For the two high schools, there were also high incidences of substance abuse/possession.

Immediately, several people pointed to disruption and defiance as the two behavioral incidence categories about which they were uneasy. In several of the disciplinary reports that we categorized as defiance or disruption, the reporting adult simply wrote that the student “was being defiant” or “disruptive,” without further explanation. As a Task Force, we had

Figure 16. Numbers of SY2014-15 Disciplinary Incidences by Category by School



categorized a variety of discipline reports as disruptive, because they both seemed minor and because they did not fit in any other category. Most commonly: horseplay, not listening to directions, not doing the assigned task, talking in class, and distracting other students. Defiance was often associated with “disrespect” or blatantly disregarding instructions. Because these categories are both broad and vague, they naturally increase risk of subjectivity or bias. Neither category provides a satisfactory answer to “why” a student incurred a disciplinary infraction. Indeed, since Los Angeles Unified School District banned “willful defiance” as a reason for suspension, many educators and social justice advocates have turned their attention to the danger of subjectivity in school discipline (Watanabe, 2013).

As such, the Task Force zeroed in on a new question: was the discipline equity issue not just a structural issue but also an issue of human bias in implementation? Were some of our students facing personal discrimination when it came to disruption and defiance? In examining schools with high frequencies of disciplinary reports for disruption, we discovered

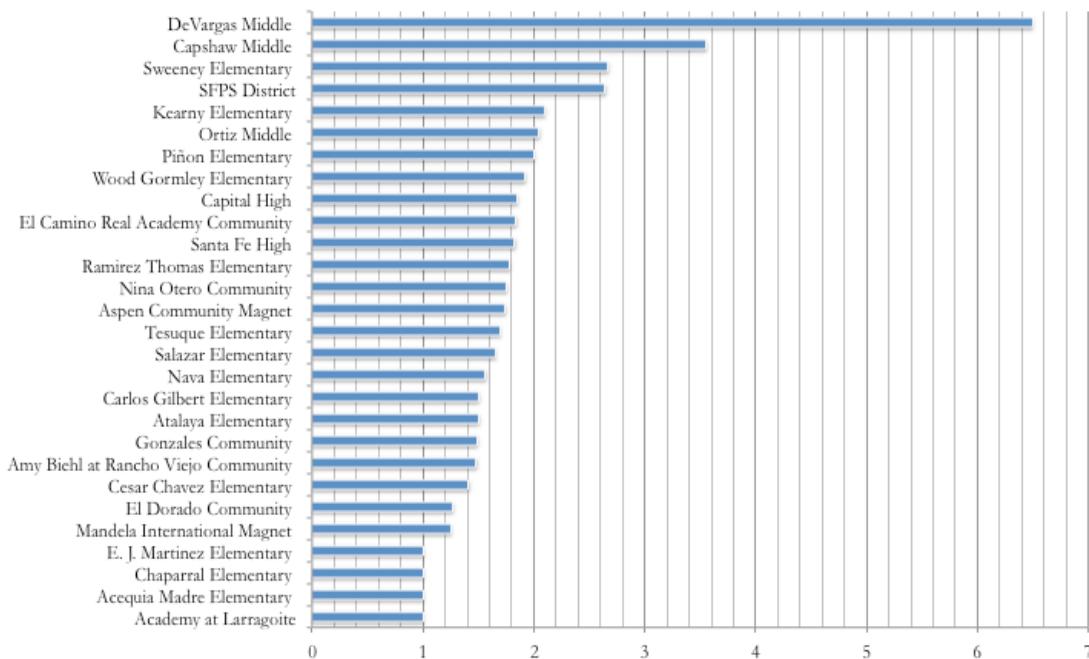
that at a majority of schools, both ELL and special needs students were more likely to get written up than non-ELL and non-special needs students, although most risk ratios were below 2.0. In addition, these higher risk ratios were distributed quite evenly across elementary, middle and high schools. At one elementary school (Amy Biehl), ELL-students were more than twice as likely to get in trouble for disruption as non-ELL students. At one elementary, one middle, and one high school, low-income students were more at risk of getting in trouble for disruption than higher-income students. Risk ratios for Hispanic to non-Hispanic students were quite low, except at Santa Fe High School. See *Appendix I*.

This data evoked lively discussion among the Task Group, especially around elementary school incidences. From as far as we could tell, disruption at the elementary level often meant “off task” or “not listening to directions.” It was difficult to believe that an elementary child who struggles with English warranted discipline for “not listening to directions.” It was also difficult to believe that an elementary child with special needs warranted discipline for “not being on task.”

SFPS showed similar patterns for defiance. Two schools that exhibited higher risk ratios for disruption also exhibited higher risk ratios for defiance (Capshaw Middle and Santa Fe High). But at three elementary schools, the risk ratios of special needs students to non-special needs students rose above 2.0 (Aspen, Gonzales, and Kearney). The most striking observation was that, while no risk ratios rose above 1.50, the data suggests that Hispanic students are slightly more likely to get in trouble for defiance than non-Hispanic students at four schools. This added an interesting nuance to our earlier observations that, overall, Hispanic students are less likely than non-Hispanic students to get in trouble.

Whereas recidivism in the justice system indicates a high rate of repeating offenders—those who return to prison after having already left it before—a similar pattern can be found in the school discipline system among students who get in trouble repeatedly (Freierman, Levick & Mody, 2009). A good state system can decrease recidivism rates by ensuring the success of inmates once they leave prison, through prison education programs, job or apprenticeship matches, or other supports. Similarly, a good school or district system can decrease recidivism rates by ensuring the success of students after the first time they have gotten in trouble, through behavioral plans, counseling and positive behavior reinforcements

Figure 17. Incidences per Student Named in SY2014-15 Discipline Reports



(Muscott, Mann, & LeBrun, 2008).

The majority of schools in SFPS have low recidivism rates, with about two-thirds of schools logging less than two incidences on average for each student in the disciplinary report. This is true even of the two high schools, where one might expect recidivism rates to be higher. The Academy at Larragoite demonstrates no recidivism, with only one discipline

incident per student. This is unsurprising; the Academy is an alternative school where students struggling with major behavior problems in other schools are placed. The Academy's goals are structured around behavioral improvements and supports as much as academic improvements and supports. Three other schools (Aequia Madre, Chaparral and E.J. Martinez), all elementary, also demonstrate no recidivism. See *Figure 17*. Yet the district overall experiences an average of almost three incidences per student named. The two junior high schools see the highest recidivism rates, with DeVargas Middle School logging over six incidents per student in the disciplinary report.

SO NOW WHAT?

So how does the current discipline policy affect students of different demographic characteristics? Or in the words of the Department of Justice and the Office of Civil Rights, does the current discipline system in SFPS produce disparate impact? From these first few months of data analysis, the Task Force was able to agree that the discipline policy does in fact create disparate impact. First, students of color who are *not Hispanic* are more likely to get in trouble than students of other races. Second, students who are low-income, special needs, or ELL are more likely to get in trouble than those who are not. Third, of the six reasons that district adults cite to justify disciplining a student, two of them—defiance and disruption—are sufficiently vague so as to encourage bias. Fourth, students who are special needs or ELL are more likely to get in trouble for these two reasons than students who are not. Fifth, many of the same students get into trouble repeatedly, especially at the two junior high schools. In short, SFPS is inequitably exiting its students.

Having established that there is disparate impact according to the flow chart represented earlier in *Figure 13*, the Discipline Task Force then needed to answer the ensuing

two questions. First, was there an educational goal behind the discipline policy? We knew what students were getting in trouble for, but what we still lacked was information about why children with different demographic characteristics were getting in trouble at different rates. The difference between *what for* and *why* is enormous. Second, was there an alternative to the current discipline policy? What was the school climate at campuses with high risk ratios? What was the school climate at campuses with low disciplinary incidences? What were the relationships between students like? What were the relationships between teachers and students like? What was the district climate that led to overall inequities in risk ratios? Which were the policies and practices that were working *for* kids, and which were the policies and practices that seemed to work against them?

The Discipline Task Force also needed to seek potential alternatives to current discipline practices. What was a behavioral response that could redirect a student and alleviate the distraction she caused other students without interrupting that student's own learning? How might a teacher build trust with students? What were the behavioral responses that only served to punish and exclude and that we needed to eradicate from the system? How might a teacher build distrust or fear with students? If we believed that cultural inclusion, discipline practices and academic success were inextricably interlinked (Horsford, Grosland & Gunn, 2011), then what did the behavior of a high-quality teacher and the climate of a high-quality classroom or school look like? What did classroom management look like in a high-quality teacher? What did school management look like in a high-quality school? To answer these questions, we identified the outlier schools—schools with high risk ratios and schools with low overall counts of disciplinary incidences—and embarked upon a series of 50 in-depth, one-to-one interviews with principals, teachers and students.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN “WHAT FOR” AND “WHY”

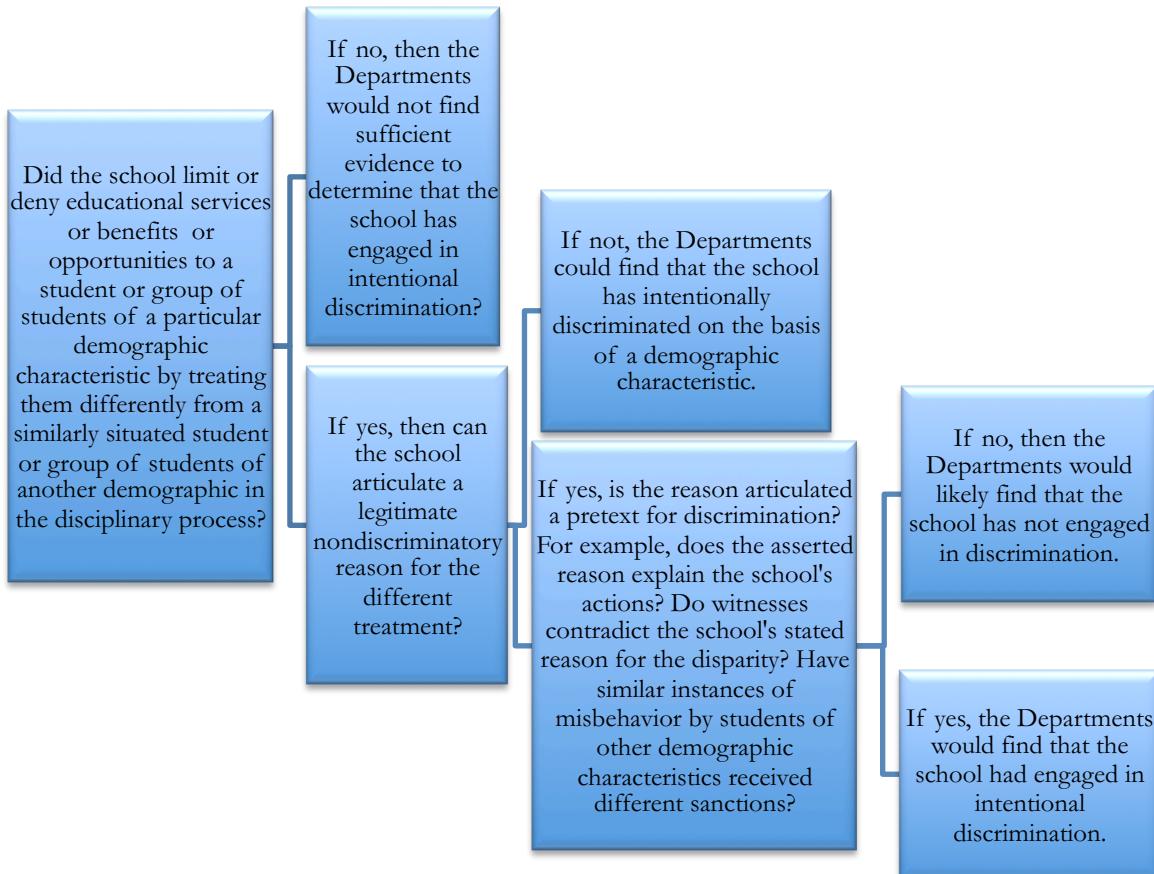
Numbers can only tell so much of a story. More accurately, numbers tell only a *version* of a story based upon the parameters of the data collection—which, more often than not, are drawn by people in positions of authority with personal biases. The Equity Task Force was limited in its discipline study, because the parameters set for data collection explained *what* kids were getting in trouble *for*—or what authority figures established as reasons for writing them up. When the “what for” is as vague as disruption or defiance, it is completely unclear *why* kids were getting in trouble. But even when the “what for” is more cut-and-dry, such as physical violence, the deeper root causes remain a mystery. Assuming objective disciplinary practices, why would one demographic group of students fight more than another? Why would one demographic group of students mouth off more than another?

This distinction between the existence of inequity and the existence of advertent discrimination is key, especially given federal law. Any policy that causes disparate impact is inequitable. Where an alternative policy could take its place, a policy causing disparate impact is discriminatory. But when an organization engages in different treatment of students of different demographic characteristics, then the question becomes whether the organization and its people, rather than its policies, are discriminatory. Revisiting the charge from the OCR and DOJ, violations under the Civil Rights Act occur not only when policies lead to disparate impact, but also when schools either engage in different treatment of students of a certain demographic characteristic, without a *legitimate nondiscriminatory reason* for the different treatment (Lhamon & Samuels, 2014).

Like its flowchart for disparate impact, the flow of questioning that the OCR prescribed to determine different treatment acknowledges that a school might engage in

different treatment without *intentional* discrimination. See *Figure 18*. One question particularly stands out: if a school does exhibit different treatment of students of different demographic characteristics, “is the reason articulated a pretext for discrimination? For example, does the asserted reason explain the school’s actions? Do witnesses contradict the school’s stated reason for the disparity? Have similar instances of misbehavior by students of other demographic characteristics received different sanctions?” If the answer to this question was yes, then the OCR concluded it was likely the school had engaged in intentional discrimination. If the answer was no, it was likely the school had not engaged in discrimination.

Figure 18. Office of Civil Rights Different Treatment Flowchart (adapted)



This line of questioning disturbed me for two reasons. First, the OCR approached different treatment as a solely negative phenomenon. If the goal was equity rather than equality in discipline, then could different treatment work in favor of students who were most at risk? In order to produce equitable outcomes, in some instances should students of certain demographic characteristics receive different sanctions for similar instances of misbehavior? For example, should a school district consider environmental factors surrounding a student's misbehavior—for example, family background, income, social-emotional status—when deciding upon a behavioral response?

Second, I find the dichotomy between “intentional discrimination” and “non-discrimination” to be problematic. The natural dichotomy ought to be between “intentional discrimination” and “nonintentional discrimination,” and regardless of intent, discrimination in any form causes harm. Educators enter the field in order because they want to help children learn, and few harbor ill intent toward any children. Indeed, they are often unaware of the biases behind their actions that may cause harm to certain groups of children. After all, microaggressions are the verbal, nonverbal and environmental slights that, though often unintentional, communicate hostile, derogatory or negative messages to their targets (Sue, 2010). Instead of determining whether or not a school engages in intentional discrimination, therefore, I believe it is more useful to determine whether or not a school and its staff engages in any form of discrimination.

Since the Task Force could not rely on quantitative data to determine the reasons a school or an adult might discipline a child, a few of the principals and teachers in the group proposed that we developed a means of collecting rich qualitative data. We discussed what each person in the Task Force hoped to get out of the qualitative data and decided that we ultimately needed to understand how each school’s climate promoted or detracted from

students' psychological safety—which is the “perceived freedom in the expression of true self, that is, whether an individual feels confident in expressing his/her ideas and beliefs without fear of negative consequences to self-image” (Singh, Winkel & Selvarajan, 2013).

Drawing upon the Southern Poverty Law Center’s work in creating relevant surveys, we conducted fifty in-depth interviews of students, counselors, secretaries, teachers and principals at outlier schools to get a sense of staff values and school climate (personal communication, 2015). We began by each interview by asking the students to answer five basic True or False questions, before transitioning to open-ended questions around inter-student relationships, student-teacher relationships and school experiences. The five True/False questions included:

Students:

1. I look forward to coming to school every day.
2. I get along with other students at my school.
3. I have heard someone at this school say a racial epithet (list of examples included), or say something negative about my or another person’s race.
4. I have heard a student say something negative about me or another student.
5. I have heard a teacher or another adult on staff say something negative about me or another student.

Adults at School:

1. I look forward to coming to school every day.
2. I have heard someone at this school make a racial remark about another person.
3. I have heard a student say something negative about another student.
4. I have heard an adult on staff say something negative about a student.
5. I have had discussions with my principal about school climate and discipline data.

All the students interviewed—even those who frequently got in trouble—reported that they got along with other students at their schools. All the elementary and middle school students I interviewed also reported that they looked forward to coming to school every day,

if only to hang out with their friends. When I inquired whether they felt cliques existed at their school, most students also said that, while they spent time with the same small groups of friends, they did not feel deliberate exclusion from other groups. Most of the conflicts that students reported experiencing with peers did not seem alarming for their age group: elementary school girls who were annoyed by groups of elementary school boys, middle school girls who had “ex-best friends,” and teasing.

Only one negative aspect of student-to-student relationships stood out: the presence of racial aggressions and microaggressions among the student body. I was alarmed, both because of the frequency with which this theme recurred in my interviews with children, and because none of the students seemed to regard it as a big deal. One hundred percent of the students whom I interviewed reported getting along with other students; yet seventy-five percent of those students also answered “true” to this statement: “I have heard someone at this school say a racial epithet, or say something negative about my or another person’s race.” At a third school, a second grade student reported that her classmates teased a boy in her class who was Muslim. At the same school, a fourth grade student reported that her classmates teased that boy’s older brother. At a fourth school, a fourth grade student who was often written up for physical altercations with other students reported that other students teased him for his long blond hair, calling him a girl or Goldilocks, and commenting on his whiteness.

Take this conversation, quoted in an earlier epigraph, with the fifth grade student I called Esteban. Esteban lives with his grandmother in Santa Fe, though his mother and two of his sisters live in Albuquerque. His father and other three siblings still live in Mexico.

ESTEBAN: Some kids make fun of other kids, like racism sometimes or how they look. Like I have a friend here named Jay and people make fun of him because he’s black.

WANG: What does he do?

ESTEBAN: It just makes him feel bad but some of the kids who make fun are bigger than us so we don't do anything. Because I'm a Mexican, they call me racist names like a wetback or a beaner. This girl in my class calls me a beaner, but she's a Mexican, too.

WANG: What do you do when someone calls you that?

ESTEBAN: I don't really listen to them.

WANG: Do you feel comfortable talking to your teachers about this?

ESTEBAN: Yes. No. Not really.

WANG: What is the difference between a Mexican and a Hispanic, anyway?

ESTEBAN: Hispanos are from Spain a long time ago. I'm from Mexico.

WANG: Who explained that to you?

ESTEBAN: A teacher told me.

A couple things stand out in this interview with Esteban. Both, he and his friend Jay have experienced perpetual racial aggressions at his elementary school. Then, neither he nor Jay feel that they can do anything about it, both because they are afraid of their aggressors and because—for some reason or another—they do not feel that telling the teacher is a recourse. Finally, a teacher—an adult authority figure in the school—explained Esteban's race and identity to him in a way that is problematic on multiple levels, even if we assume no negative intent on the part of the teacher. It is overly simplistic and relegates Esteban to “an other” while stripping him of an opportunity to define his own racial identity. It also draws from the dominant cultural narrative in Santa Fe, discussed in an earlier chapter, that distinguishes between Latinos based on their closeness to European roots. In other words, the teacher perpetuates a familiar story about racial hierarchy based on whiteness.

The striking common factor in these conversations is that *all* of the students I interviewed reported that they felt safe at school and that there were no significant conflicts or tensions among the student body. Why would students who have witnessed and even experienced racial aggressions and microaggressions characterize their schools as safe environments? As critical race theorist bell hooks would argue, when students live in a

society in which they are bombarded with positive narratives about the dominant majority and negative narratives about their own culture, they internalize racist thinking (Florence, 1998). They no longer see bullies as malicious, so much as routine and even right (Burrow & Hill, 2012). I began to wonder whether the routine survey questions with which I began each interview—the routine survey questions I had drawn from the Southern Poverty Law Center, used by hundreds of schools across the country—held any weight. What was the value of asking a student how safe he felt and whether he got along with his peers, when his answer—likely, yes—would be contradicted by his revelations in a personal follow-up conversation?

Now, take this interview with a fifth grader I will call Lucia. Lucia is a New Mexican native, a Hispano, meaning that her family has lived in the state for multiple generations. Her parent is a school administrator in the district.

WANG: Do you ever get in trouble?

LUCIA: No.

WANG: Who gets in trouble in your class?

LUCIA: We have troublemakers who are mean and call names. They speak Spanish and if you don't speak Spanish you don't know what they're saying.

WANG: What happens when they start doing this?

LUCIA: The teacher usually tells them to stop or gives them a citation.

Lucia unwittingly shares another familiar story of race in this country: suspicion of the other. Although she does not understand what her Spanish-speaking classmates are really saying, she assumes that they are being mean and calling names. Of course, this assumption might be reasonably drawn from nonverbal cues from the Spanish-speaking students, such as body language or tone of voice. But it also probably draws from unconscious cultural cues in the classroom and community to see herself as separate from the Spanish-speaking—probably Mexican—students. Then, Lucia also takes cues from her teacher, whose default—

because she does not understand them herself—is essentially to punish students for speaking Spanish in class. This default reflects a typical resistance toward including multicultural awareness in the classroom for fear that the introduction of “other” cultures will spark classroom conflict and disrupt classroom management (Florence, 1998).

Both Lucia and Esteban echo discriminatory narratives about racial identity from teachers. Similar microaggressions emerged in my interviews with various school-site adults. A principal defended the high rate of suspensions at her school, saying that it was necessary to kick out the disruptive few to protect the learning of the many. A school counselor reported that students often came into her office crying because their teacher had yelled at them; minutes later, teachers would come into her office and complain that they had never worked with a class that was so disrespectful. A fifth grade teacher explained that he had recurring discipline referrals in his classroom because:

Discipline is harder to carry out here, and sometimes we call the parents at home but sometimes it's very hard because my feeling with the family situation is that they don't spend enough time with kids at home.

It seems that this teacher seeks to understand the context around which his students might misbehave, but in doing so, he leaps to negative assumptions about his students' families. He assumes, perhaps because his students are poor or because they are EL, that their parents are unsupportive. This microaggression not only emerges in the teacher's deficit approach to thinking about his students' backgrounds but in his own surrendering of responsibility in the classroom. He uses the assumption that nothing is being done at home to justify that there is nothing he can do; rather than redirecting students' behavior, he sends them out of the classroom.

The principal at Esteban’s school, whom I will call Mr. A, explained that he categorized his students as “dogs or cats,” a terminology which he encouraged his whole instructional staff to use. Dogs, he explained, were the easy students that listened to directions and did as they were expected. Cats were the difficult students who were more disruptive—because of their backgrounds or dispositions. Esteban, he said, was a cat.

WANG: How is this a useful designation?

PRINCIPAL: I find the cats in the school and I relate with them outside of the classroom, strategically on weekends and during afterschool things. We play basketball and go eat. I relate to them.

Again, Mr. A was clearly well-intentioned. Simply walking through the hallways, he seemed to have a positive relationship with all the students whom we passed. He was jovial and personable and knew all of them by name. At the end of the day, three boys came to his office and he exclaimed, “Here are my cats!” The boys’ guardians were not able to pick them up after their extracurricular activities, so Mr. A was going to give them rides home. Before dropping them off, however, he was going to take them to McDonalds to get a hot meal in case it would be the day’s last. Esteban was one of those three students. Yet the bottom line stands: regardless of intention, designating students as “easy kids” and “difficult kids” is insidious and inimical. Coding the language does not make such designations okay—not to mention that comparing children to animals is never okay.

If the schools with the highest risk ratios for disciplinary infractions are those in which students encounter microaggressions, what are the characteristics of schools with either low risk ratios or low numbers of disciplinary infractions overall? At the schools with low numbers of disciplinary incidents overall, I heard two themes in my interviews, encapsulated in this interview with a second grade teacher:

WANG: What is your discipline system like in the classroom?

TEACHER: I mostly use positive reinforcement so everything is based on rewarding behavior rather than punishing. We have class rewards. Every time they are doing what they are supposed to do, they get a token. After ten tokens they get a fish for the fish tank. They also work in teams and each team can earn marbles for working hard, and at the end of the week, the team that has the most marbles gets a reward—extra time on the computer or they get to eat in the classroom with me.

WANG: What if a kid acts out?

TEACHER: The biggest problem is kids talking, and I just warn them about being responsible with class time. If a kid hits another kid, the school has a discipline ticket system. But most of the time I make them write a letter of apology so they own their behavior. For kids who have a little more difficulty, I do more individual positive reinforcement. Like, some of the kids have index cards that I give them check marks or stamps on, and [they can win prizes].

WANG: Are there any conflicts among the students?

TEACHER: We honor differences in the classroom so there is not a lot of racial tension. We read Ferdinand the Bull. I try to foster that being different is totally fine, and that in fact we should embrace it. We do units on celebrations from around the world and we try to pick cultures from the classroom. We always do a unit on Las Posadas.⁶ We studied Ramadan when we had a Muslim student. It is important for kids to understand and embrace each other's cultures.

Teachers with low discipline referrals had robust classroom behavior systems in place, which deliberately created class culture and expectations, redirected students from negative behaviors and rewarded them for positive behaviors. Students were never surprised by the teacher's responses to their behaviors, because the systems were so clearly explained. In addition, students kept track of their own progress—through collecting token or stamps or, on the flipside, through collecting discipline tickets. On a deeper psychological level, these systems disassociated the student from their behavior. In contrast to the principal who categorized students as “cats” or “dogs,” this teacher praised good behavior rather than

⁶ Las Posadas is a nine-day festival representing the nine months of Mary’s pregnancy with baby Jesus, most commonly celebrated in Mexico and parts of the American southwest. Santa Fe is known for its historic Las Posadas celebration, which includes a ritual re-enactment of Mary and Joseph’s search for lodging in Bethlehem.

good students and redirected negative behaviors rather than punishing a bad student. In fact, the teacher even provided individualized systems for students who were struggling with appropriate behavior in the classroom. The same student could be asked to write an apology note one day, and earn three stamps for positive behaviors the next.

In addition, rather than tying classroom management to exclusionary disciplinary practices, this teacher tied classroom management to a culture of classroom citizenship. One of the rewards for positive behavior was to eat lunch with the teacher rather than in the cafeteria—essentially, to spend additional time in the classroom. Students were encouraged to take ownership of their own behavior. Not only did they keep track of their own progress through stamps and tokens, but they also decided on the prize for which they wished to strive (the fish). They kept each other accountable through competing for class prizes as teams. Finally, when they engaged in behaviors that hurt another person, they took responsibility for that action by writing reflective apology notes. Instead of excluding a student from the classroom for bad citizenship, the teacher implemented systems to help the students learn good citizenship.

The third theme that emerged from my interviews at these schools was a deliberate strategy for embracing diversity, both through multicultural curriculum and lessons about acceptance. A few schools have implemented conflict mediation teams, in which the teacher, counselor or principal mediates conflicts between students. In implementing this strategy, not only do students engage in powerful learning about including one another, but the facilitating adults are also propelled to reflect upon the social, racial, and cultural power structures at play in their classrooms and schools. For example, Esteban and the classmate who had called him a “beaner” might not only explore the root of her antagonism toward him but also the racism that had infiltrated their school culture and dialogue. In a truly

powerful mediation, the facilitating adult might be forced to acknowledge that white supremacy—or in this case, Hispanic supremacy—is real.

Most importantly, at all the schools where these themes emerged from interviews, it was clear that positive classroom environments were rooted in the strong leadership of a principal dedicated to building a positive school climate, from establishing conflict mediation teams and student wellness teams to creating a culture of communication and collaboration. One principal built intentional staff development around how to communicate with kids, as well as how to solicit parent perspectives about working with individual children. At another school, which has experienced a drop in disciplinary incidences between the SY2015 and SY2016 school years with the hiring of a new principal, one teacher said: “We are so lucky to have our administrator this year. Her demeanor is positive, she is fair, kind, and compassionate, she supports the teachers and the kids. We have a cooperative environment and we all love the kids.” Both adults sang a vastly different tune from the one sung by the fifth grade teacher who blamed discipline problems on “bad family situations.”

CONSISTENCY AND POSITIVITY

Given our findings, the Discipline Task Force decided that we needed a four-pronged approach to discipline. We needed to revise the district policy to decrease the number of students who were being pushed out of classrooms and schools; create alternatives to exclusionary discipline; establish structures to improve the fairness of implementation across schools and teachers; and design a plan to begin the adaptive work of creating bias awareness among instructional staff. We began by looking at the greatest areas of need for revision in our policy. By October of the 2015-16 school year, SFPS had already suspended two kindergarteners, four first graders, and three third graders. One first grader

had been suspended three times. The district had also assigned in-school suspension (ISS) to two kindergarteners, two first graders, four second graders, and three third graders. We needed to ensure that all of our students, especially those in the younger grades, were in the classroom every day. When students do not hit the proficiency benchmark of third grade literacy, their further education may be inhibited. In fact, children who do not read on grade level by third grade are four times less likely to graduate from high school and more likely to remain in poverty (Hernandez, 2011). In addition, the early years set the behavioral patterns for the rest of the students' public school careers. Elementary school students with ongoing discipline records are proven to be 12 times as likely to be suspended in middle school, their behavior patterns propelled by discipline policies that reinforce the notion that they are not "good" students anyway (Vanderhaar et al., 2015).

It became clear in the course of the Discipline Task Force that SFPS needed a strategic plan for restorative justice (RJ), or consequences for offenses that focused on repairing both the offending student as well as any social harm she might have caused to peers or her school community (Ward et al., 2015). Among other recommendations, the Task Force recommended that school leaders create a community service program at each campus, either through partnering with organizations within the community or creating in-house communities. Community service serves as a disciplinary consequence as well as a learning experience, while requiring students to make reparations to the community they offended. Especially at the elementary level, community service also reinforces students' sense of self-worth—they have something to offer (May et al., 2015). As a last recourse, we recommended that schools redesign ISS programs to become behavioral classrooms aimed toward student learning and self-reflection. Rather than a counterproductive measure that simply halts the students' opportunity to learn, the behavioral classroom remove students

from the classroom without giving them a vacation from school or causing them to feel further alienated (May et al., 2015). In addition, it propels them to work on the behaviors that will help them become good members of their school community—which in turn helps them become good students.

We also encouraged schools that had not already done so to implement Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) systems. Rather than focusing on negative behavior, PBIS focuses on acknowledging and rewarding appropriate behavior in the classroom. It also emphasizes the use of data in tracking behavior, which helps lower recidivism (Gregor, 2008).

In order to combat both different treatment as well as the inconsistency across schools and adult staff in disciplining students, the Task Force then created a standardized district behavior response matrix modeled after the one created by Montgomery County Public Schools (2015). This matrix clearly articulated the parameters of disciplinary responses in which a school or adult would be able to engage given a certain student behavior. For example, a teacher would not be allowed to suspend a student for simply using a cell phone during class, no matter how many times the student engaged in this behavior.

See Figure 19. Her response to cell phone usage can only be escalated beyond a level three if the student uses the phone during a test with intent to cheat (for example, the student is using a web browser to search for an answer). Similarly, a principal cannot expel a student for more than two days for possessing or consuming alcohol; they can only expel the student for selling or distributing alcohol. The entirety of the matrix is included in *Appendix J*.

Figure 19. SFPS Proposed Behavior Response Matrix

Inappropriate or Disruptive Behavior	LEVEL 1 Classroom	LEVEL 2 Teacher-led	LEVEL 3 Administrative	LEVEL 4 Administrative	LEVEL 5 Long-Term
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(Identified by state suspension code)	and Teacher-led Responses (e.g. written apology, talk with school counselor, classroom detention)	and/or Administrative Supported Responses (e.g. community service, peer mediation, temporary removal from class)	Supported and Removal Responses (e.g. restorative practices, in-school suspension, in-school intervention)	Supported and Short-Term Out-of-School Exclusionary Responses (e.g. restorative practices, mentoring programs, short-term suspension)	Administrative Supported, Out-of-School Exclusionary, and Referral Responses (e.g. long-term suspension, expulsion, refer to alternative ed.)
ALCOHOL	consumption or possession				
	distributing/ selling alcohol				
CELL PHONE USAGE	usage during class				
	usage during test				
			usage during test with intent to cheat		

Last, we strategized how to begin the adaptive work of alleviating bias among instructional staff. As with the Discipline Task Force, we agreed that the first step toward creating real impact and real change was providing people with the real information and data—both statistical and qualitative—so that they could generate their own awareness about the challenges we faced as a district. One principal, Bernie, suggested that the first step was to create Equity Task Forces comprised of school leadership and teachers, modeled after our Discipline Task Force. After all, school leadership teams already regularly examined data with their staff to identify instructional areas for growth and devise plans for improvement. Why not make a regular practice of examining disciplinary and behavioral outcomes as well? The central data office could provide each school principal with quarterly discipline data disaggregated by demographics, risk ratios, and recidivism rates.

Lauren, another principal, suggested that we offer training in conflict mediation for staff at each site. A former member of the military, she often utilized conflict mediation in

resolving issues between students. Rather than simply relying on school wide assemblies to foster diversity and cultural inclusion among the students, the intimate process of facilitating conversations between students at odds with one another would provide a powerful learning experience not only for the students but for the facilitating adult. Conflict mediation would propel students to speak their own truths, to hear each other, and gradually to understand one another. The hope was to develop a more empathetic and inclusive student body.

OUR IMPACT UPON THE DISTRICT

Halfway through the tenure of the Discipline Task Force, I wrote a memo on behalf of Dr. Abeyta, revising the district discipline policy to eliminate suspensions and expulsions of students in third grade and younger. She dispersed the memo to all principals and school staff, and within one day, the suspension rates of students kindergarten through third grade went to zero. I believe the alacrity and ease with which the policy was adopted and implemented came down to two key reasons. First, the policy came from Dr. Abeyta who had established a strong relationship of trust with her principals over the tenure of her four years as Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning. Whenever she implemented changes, principals knew they could count on her for support. They were also aware of her own experience as a principal and a teacher, and trusted that her policies were informed. Second, while the policy improved outcomes for certain students it did not diminish outcomes for other students, nor did it remove the power of the teachers to discipline young students in other ways, ranging from detention to being sent to the principals' office. Thus, the policy did not evoke a sense of that "loss" which Heifetz argues people are so opposed to (2002). In that light, the change in policy was also slight.

At the same time, I believe that the policy was momentous because it established the rationale that when students are not in the classroom, they are not learning. Even though the policy only applied to expulsions and suspensions in the earlier grades, the foundational message it built in the district was that teachers and principals must be creative problem-solvers and do everything in their power to avoid sending a student outside of the classroom. It also established the foundational message that, as a district, we needed to view discipline as a means of punishing and correcting student *behavior* rather than punishing the *student*, perhaps with permanent consequences. While a technical change, the policy lay the adaptive groundwork for thinking about school discipline in a new light.

Indeed, I believe that the adaptive groundwork began to bear fruit. A few months later, the Strategy and Accountability approached me with the proposal of incorporating discipline data as a standard part of the district's data dashboard—the set of data that district and school leadership would routinely reference, discuss, and take action upon. I collaborated with them to create a set of data points that would be included on the dashboard, including: risk ratios by demographics, incidence categories by demographics, recidivism rates and student surveys. Discussion about risk and bias would necessarily become a part of district wide data conversations.

THE POWER OF OWNERSHIP

As of yet, our other recommendations have not been adopted as district wide policies, including the discipline matrix, PBIS, and restorative justice practices. In part, I believe that the discipline matrix is too dramatic a change for most school leaders because it prohibits suspensions for several behaviors even in the upper grades. Principals and teachers might feel the loss of a vital tool to their school and classroom management. In my

interviews with principals, I heard several say that suspending disruptive students was crucial to preserving the educational experiences of other students in the classroom. The matrix might evoke the sense that, by helping one student's outcomes, we are diminishing from several other students' learning experience. I believe that the district has not applied PBIS and restorative justice as a district-wide practice simply because the amount of investment and training such programs require are simply too overwhelming to tackle midway through a school year, when professional development hours and dollars are already accounted for.

At the same time, these recommendations *were* implemented at a few schools, largely because the Task Force was made up of members with their own authority, who felt ownership over the work. All four school leaders on the Task Force who took part in creating the discipline matrix decided they wanted to adopt the matrix as a means of reducing bias and standardizing discipline practices at their own campuses. One of the principals volunteered to pilot school-based Equity Task Forces at his own campuses and share outcomes with other principals. He believed that, once his staff became aware of the inequitable discipline outcomes, they would become more mindful of their own unconscious biases and implementation practices. Although the other three school leaders did not commit to creating school-based Task Forces at their own schools, they brought the data back to their leadership teams for discussion. The principal who had been trained in conflict mediation proposed working with me to create a support toolkit for training other principals, teachers and counselors in the district to become conflict mediators.

Most importantly, the members of the Task Force felt such ownership over the work of the Discipline Task Force that they had become invested in the adaptive work of examining their own mindsets and attachment to the status quo. When I concluded the Discipline Task Force in December, I told the members that I would be reconvening a new

Task Force focused on equity of instructional quality across schools in the spring. I told them that the data might evoke narratives that were difficult for various individuals to hear. I also voiced my suspicion that our recommendations might involve shifting resources from one school to another, or from one set of students to another. I then asked them to send written commitments, dedicating their time and open minds, if they were interested in participating in this new Task Force. All but one member sent me commitments within the week.

THE TECHNICAL IS NOT ENOUGH

I was elated by what I considered to be the success of the Discipline Task Force. As individuals, members of the Task Force were taking back new ideas and new awareness of bias that would make them more conscious leaders at their school sites and in their departments. As a district, we had effected two structural changes that would pave the way for more adaptive work around race in the district. Yet, paved though it might be, the road to equitable discipline practices still needed a lot of work.

If anything is clear from the comparisons of interviews at schools with high risk ratios for disciplinary incidences and schools with low risk ratios or low frequencies of incidences, it is that positive mindsets matter. They allow the adults in a school building to improve school climate by identifying assets in their small community and in their students rather than honing in on deficits. At the root of the structures and systems aimed at increasing equal outcomes for children, equity is a mindset. Until the adults in Santa Fe Public Schools believe that inequity is the result of a broken system that they perpetuate or maintain, rather than of broken students, equity will never come to pass.

CONCLUSION: (RE)NARRATING EQUITY

"The struggle is inner: Chicano, indio, American Indian, mojado, mexicano, immigrant Latino, Anglo in power, working class Anglo, Black, Asian--our psyches resemble the bordertowns and are populated by the same people. The struggle has always been inner, and is played out in outer terrains. Awareness of our situation must come before inner changes, which in turn come before changes in society. Nothing happens in the "real" world unless it first happens in the images in our heads."

-Gloria E. Anzaldúa, 1999

EQUITY IS A MINDSET

A mentor once asked me: if educational inequity was a systemic issue, then did what goes on in the individual hearts and minds of educators really matter? At the time, I could not respond because my answer sounded so naïve in my own ears. But I have come to believe, firmly and fervently, that the personal belief systems and biases of individuals either drive systemic change or maintain the status quo. As Chicana writer and theorist Gloria Anzaldúa says, “Nothing happens in the real world unless it first happens in the images in our heads” (1999).

Consider the Cabinet registration implementation team. During months of meetings and work, I heard the word equity pass lips only about a dozen times—and those lips were mostly if not always my own. Because the leaders in the room viewed equity work as separate from what they believed to be the operational work of the RST process, they approached their improvements to the system with the aim of improving efficiency rather than of increasing equity. Because there was a lack of belief and of urgency that white supremacy and institutionalized bias characterized both Santa Fe Public Schools and the greater society in which we lived, leaders were satisfied with opening the district to school choice while neglecting to invest in the hard work of ensuring its feasibility for all students and families.

Or, consider the adults whom I interviewed at schools across the districts. Their mindsets, biases and belief systems shaped the climate of each classroom and school building—a climate that would promote or inhibit a child’s learning experience. Allen, Scott and Lewis argue that teacher-to-student microaggressions emerge chiefly in the form of deficit thinking, which occurs when teachers interpret students’ individual or cultural differences as disadvantageous or dysfunctional (2013). For example, Lucia’s teacher considered speaking Spanish at school dysfunctional behavior and would discipline children for doing so. The fifth grade teacher who believed that his low-income students’ had uninvolved parents regarded those students with pity. A principal defended her decision to suspend a kindergarten student because “it was the only way we could get the mom’s attention,” without considering the various reasons the mother might have been unable to make parent conferences.

In contrast, consider the teacher who assigned herself the enormous task of creating an inclusive curriculum and classroom environment that both honored students’ cultures and rewarded them for their behavior. Rather than viewing students’ individual and cultural differences as deficits, she viewed them as assets to the entire classroom learning experience (Allen, Scott & Lewis, 2013).

Then, consider the principals on the Discipline Task Force. Initially, conversations were stilted and careful, becoming more open and candid with time. In part, the progression was natural, as we practiced honoring our norms and commitments and the members of the Task Force began to build trust with one another and with me. The data told stories that were very difficult for some of the individuals in the room to hear. One middle school principal, Lauren, realized that twice as many students were removed from the classroom for disciplinary infractions at her school as the other two middle schools. An elementary school

principal, Bernie, was embarrassed to see that, at his school, low-income students were five times as likely to be written up for an infraction as their higher-income peers. Both principals believed themselves to be committed to the success of *all* their students—and they were—so it was startling and upsetting for them to witness this type of disproportionality at their schools. Lauren initially defended her data with such comments as, “We have to remove the disruptive children for the good of the other students.” Bernie would question the data, “Are you sure that data’s right? That doesn’t seem right, based on my experience.” But midway through the Task Force, both had accepted the data and eagerly suggested diving deeper into the schools with high risk ratios, including their own. Indeed, it was Lauren and Bernie who proposed that we collect qualitative data about school climate, leading me to conduct school-based student and staff interviews. By the conclusion of the Task Force, Lauren took the lead on revising the discipline matrix, sending me continued edits and suggestions via email after our last meeting. It was Bernie who volunteered to pilot a school-based Discipline Task Force among his own staff.

I have reflected often about the differences in outcome and approach between leaders on the Registration implementation team and on the Discipline Task Force. What made the tenor of the conversations so different? What made one group of leaders eager to tackle the difficult conversations and adaptive work, and the other group satisfied with surface-level conversations and technical work? Adult development experts Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey offer the Immunity to Change framework, which suggests that an individual might be committed to both an explicit goal and hidden goals, of which he might not be aware, which compete with one another for success. An organization’s immunity map is the inextricable relationship between a system that seeks change, a system in equilibrium, and a system of countervailing forces that resists change. Similarly, an individual’s immunity map is

the inextricable relationship between a behavioral goal to improve ourselves, behaviors that stay in equilibrium, and the counteractive behaviors in which we engage that hinders us from reaching our goals (2009).

Figure 20 outlines an immunity map that examines the progress of the Registration implementation team and the Discipline Task Force toward achieving the district goal of equity for all students. Although the Registration Implementation Team never stated that its goal was to achieve equity (whereas the Registration Study Committee did), I believe all the Cabinet members would agree with the statement that equity is a district goal that should encompass all work. I drafted *Figure 20* based on my own estimations of the hidden fears, competing commitments and underlying assumptions of people in both working groups, drawn from what I heard them say or saw them do. The first obvious difference is that the Discipline Task Force was committed to equity as its big goal, which necessarily evoked deeper conversations and more adaptive work, whereas the Registration implementation team was more committed to efficiency rather than equity as its big goal. The second obvious difference is that individuals in the Discipline Task Force overcame their hidden fears and overrode their competing commitments, whereas individuals in the implementation team succumbed to them.

Figure 20. Immunity Map for Registration Implementation Team and Discipline Task Force

Big Goal/ visible commitment	Doing/ not doing instead	Hidden fears/ competing commitments	Underlying assumptions
<i>Registration Implementation Team</i>			
Effect real, lasting impactful progress toward achieving equity in Santa Fe Public Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tackled the technical changes outlined in the redesign plan that did not require additional resources -Made changes that would improve outcomes for some students without effecting outcomes for others -Avoided changes that would increase options for some students while decreasing the probability of winning the lottery for other students -Ignored suggestions by April for considering equity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Group commitment to showing the implementation team had succeeded in making improvements -Individual commitments to establishing authority and leadership in the group -Individual commitments to getting credit for the work/ fear of being left out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Conversations about racial biases will be ineffectual/ will not lead to concrete outcomes that can be shown to the Superintendent and Board -Difficult conversations about equity will make me look fluffy and non-authoritative -Other people will take the credit for the work if I don't focus on establishing my authority
<i>Discipline Task Force</i>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Group observed a wide breadth of data from risk ratios to interviews, even when the data made members of the group uncomfortable -Individuals questioned and defended the data in initial conversations -Group engaged in difficult conversations around "why" certain data looked like it did -Group created a toolkit including a behavioral response matrix and guidelines on restorative justice for use in schools -Group did not ensure district wide implementation of recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Group and leader did not want to overstep its boundaries and seem pushy and presumptuous -Individuals wanted to see themselves and be seen as leaders of equitable schools -Individuals wanted to be seen as competent school leaders by their colleagues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -We do not have the authority or right to push leadership to accept changes -If data suggests our schools are not equitable, then people will see me as not committed to equity -If I am surprised by the data, my colleagues will think I do not know what goes on in my own school

ADAPTIVE WORK HAPPENS WITH TRUST

In reflection, it is unsurprising to me that the Discipline Task Force was able to stay focused upon its big goal and that its members were able to put aside their individual fears and commitments. As a leader, I invested a month to laying the foundation for a culture of collaboration and trust, by inviting Task Force members to collaborate in designing the work and agendas, talking offline with each member one-on-one before the Task Force convened, and spending the first two-hour meeting setting norms and establishing protocols. I believed that trust in the group would come with group ownership of the work, so I continuously reviewed norms, solicited and incorporated feedback, and ended meetings with debriefs. I ensured that I always assigned credit where credit was due—whether it was to the Special Education specialist who had compiled several data analyses, the Native American Student Services Director who shared important readings as the pre-work to meetings, or the Multicultural Director who connected the Task Force with parents. Although I began and ended each meeting, I shared facilitation responsibilities with various members and ensured that every voice was heard. I could measure the growing trust of the group on a variety of metrics. From a 20% completion rate of the prework I sent prior to the first meeting, I had a 90% completion rate of the last prework I requested of the Task Force. Our debriefs about things that went well and things that we wanted to improve as a group grew from about a quarter of a page at the beginning of the Task Force to two pages by its conclusion. Last, all but one Task Force member stated their commitment to join my subsequent Equity Task Force focused on instructional quality. I believe the strong culture of collaboration and trust was instrumental in allowing individual members to overcome their fears of being seen as

ineffectual or inequitable leaders, sharing their fears and underlying assumptions, and engaging wholly in the real work.

In contrast, the Registration Implementation Team did not invest in the work of culture-building. Indeed, my own experience upon joining the team was one of distrust. After Tanya told me that the meeting handing off the registration redesign plan to the implementation team was cancelled, even though she was one of the Cabinet members waiting to hear my presentation, Tina and I no longer felt that we could trust her to have either our best interests or the best interest of the work at heart. I was further dismayed to see that whereas Cabinet members felt comfortable assigning tasks, some never completed the tasks that were assigned to them. For example, our communication campaign to families about Parent Choice week was supposed to launch on the third week of January. That week, I was in Cambridge for a return-to-campus visit. While in class, I kept an eye out for press releases on the district website and in the newspapers. I saw none. Principals began calling me, saying that they had not seen a word of publicity and that they were worried nobody would attend Parent Choice night at their schools. I called various Cabinet members on the Implementation Team, none of whom took any responsibility for the roll-out of the communication campaign. Unsurprisingly, when the Chief-of-Staff sent out subsequent surveys to and requests from principals, fewer than five principals would respond within the deadline.

The culture that was established was one of distrust and passing the work from one person to another rather than one of trust and collaboration. By the end of February, four months after the Implementation Team had started meeting, very little work had been done. The Implementation Team then made a Herculean effort to deliver a few tangible outcomes—including an earlier registration timeline, waivers for students who qualified for

Adelante, and a more efficient immunization database—that increased the efficiency the RST process without increasing its equity. Astoundingly, when the Chief-of-Staff presented the changes we had accomplished to the school board, she expressed extreme satisfaction in the work. When I spoke to other Cabinet members on the team, they also felt that extreme improvements had been made to the RST process. In contrast, several of the principals whom I had surveyed in the original Redesign plan, along with other stakeholders on the Implementation Team, felt disappointed that we had only accomplished a third of what we could have done.

What are the lessons for the district? First, that because adults—like students—will achieve what they believe is possible, the district must set high expectations for what is possible. Second, to set high expectations for what is possible the district must build a culture of collaboration and trust. How would the district set about building that culture? I began my strategic project with this theory of action:

If SFPS defines equity both in terms of structural failures as well as systemic bias that lead to disparities in student outcomes; and *if* SFPS focuses on redesigning those structural failures; *then* SFPS will make efficient and measurable gains toward serving all its students equitably, while paving the way for leadership and staff to examine their personal biases and attachment to the status quo.

Culture building is adaptive work, in that it asks individuals to overcome both their own fears in order to trust others as well as their own commitments to engage in collaboration. In an organization where the culture has not been one of trust and collaboration, building trust also means a detachment from the status quo. At the same time, the district can lay the groundwork by identifying and rectifying structural failures in the culture. Are there mechanisms for feedback, and are they used regularly and with sincerity? Are there norms around safety and honoring individual voices? Is there an established practice of giving credit

where credit is due? Does the district invest time in regular After Action Reviews, during which it can reflect upon what it is doing well as an organization and what it needs to improve? By first erecting these technical changes, the district can begin to improve its culture.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SELF: WHEN WHAT I FEAR IS LOSS

While I can hear myself getting self-righteous, I am also aware of several lapses in my own leadership as a resident that inhibited the work of equity from going forward. In both the Registration implementation team and the Discipline Task Force, I expected more courage from my colleagues than I demanded of myself. First, consider my deliberate design of a Discipline Task Force in lieu of an Equity Task Force. I believed that by focusing on discipline, I could effect various technical changes that would pave the way for adaptive work. Indeed, I did so—first by creating technical structures that would allow for a culture of trust and collaboration in the group, then by delivering a set of tools and policies that might nudge district views of equitable discipline practices in another direction. Having laid the groundwork, however, I attempted neither to convince Dr. Abeyta to adopt restorative justice or PBIS practices as district wide policies nor to create an adaptive plan for improving the inclusiveness of school climates as a whole.

In chapter one, I referred to my working assumption that equity work was necessarily drawn between two polarities: the adaptive and the technical. *See Figure 4.* At the end of the day, the characteristics listed in the negative quadrant of the adaptive column seemed more terrible than those listed in the negative quadrant of the technical column. They seemed more terrible because they threatened the personal and professional identity I had built for myself. First, I prided myself on deliberately planning for and delivering systematic results. I made daily checklists so that I could prove to myself all that I had

accomplished by the end of the day. As a high school English teacher, I obsessively created rubrics to track my students' growth as readers and writers. Second, I loved building and finishing things. I dove into projects where I could monitor the progress of implementation. Third, I had an unshakable attachment to *knowing*. The prospect of launching myself headlong into an endeavor for which I had no clear vision of outcome or success and no system of real measurement terrified me.

Figure 4. My View of Adaptive and Technical Work as Polarities

	Adaptive	Technical
Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses root problem (inequity) • Acknowledges challenge of addressing personal biases • Effects lasting, large impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measurable goals • Easy to align to action and strategy • Easy to hold organization accountable for real impact • Does not alienate stakeholders
Negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals difficult to measure • Difficult to align to action and strategy • Difficult to hold organization accountable for real impact • Alienates stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses symptoms of the problem (e.g. inconsistent disciplinary practices) • Skirts challenge of addressing personal bias • Impact may be fleeting, small

Similarly, although I felt that the culture of the Implementation Team was a negative one that inhibited our work, I was fearful of approaching Robert or Tanya with suggestions for stepping back, wiping the slate clean, and deliberately building a positive culture. In part, I was afraid of being rebuffed or seen as a naïve young woman who valued the fluffy activities of norm-setting and culture-building over getting the work done. I was also afraid that, in the process of modeling my desire for an honest culture, I would have to engage Tanya in a difficult conversation about how much her behavior had hurt and disillusioned

me. I also feared that Robert would take my suggestions for re-building culture as a criticism of his leadership. Having relied on my widespread network of genial relationships to accomplish my work thus far, I did not want to disrupt those relationships.

Much like the immunity map I drafted for SFPS, my own map outlines my goal to improve equity in the district in relation to my counteractive behaviors that hindered me from reaching that goal (2009). My goal coming into Santa Fe Public Schools was to effect real, lasting, impactful steps toward equity. My behaviors that supported this goal included identifying, prescribing and implementing solutions to technical problem areas, as well as identifying adaptive problem areas. My behaviors that counteracted this goal included avoiding both creating solutions to the adaptive problem areas and engaging in difficult conversations with colleagues. In turn, my counteractive behaviors were rooted in the fear of being unable to produce concrete products of my work and measurable outcomes at the end of my residency, commitment to being seen as a capable and efficient social justice leader, and commitment to maintain genial relationships with my colleagues. Following Kegan & Lahey (2009), the next question would be: What assumptions lay beneath my hidden fears and competing commitments? *See Figure 21.*

Without meaning to, I did test the first three assumptions and found them to be false. Throughout the Discipline Task Force, I prompted conversations about racial biases which I felt were instrumental in shifting the mindsets of individuals within the Task Force. Many of those conversations prompted school leaders to make concrete changes at their own schools, from establishing a school-based Discipline Task Force to implementing the behavioral response matrix. Setting norms and deliberately building culture was enormously successful and appreciated in the Task Force, and could have been similarly successful and appreciated in the Registration implementation team.

Figure 21. Adapted from Kegan & Laby's Immunity to Change Map

Visible commitment	Doing/ not doing instead	Hidden fears/ competing commitments	Underlying assumptions
Effect real, lasting impactful progress toward achieving equity in Santa Fe Public Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Identified technical (inconsistent risk ratios) and adaptive (biases, lack of cultural understanding) problems with equity in the district -Developed and implemented technical solutions (cut red tape, discipline matrix) -Identified adaptive problems (biases and lack of cultural understanding among staff) -Avoided a focus on developing solutions for adaptive problems -Avoided difficult conversations with Tanya and Robert about the culture of the Registration implementation team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fear of being seen as a fluffy and ineffectual -Commitment to being seen as capable and efficient -Commitment to maintaining genial relationships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Conversations about racial biases will be ineffectual/ will not lead to action -Difficult conversations about race and bias without action will make me look fluffy. -Advocating for norm-setting and culture building will make me seem fluffy. -Difficult conversations will ruin my relationship with Tanya and Robert. -Genial relationships are essential to getting work done.

The assumptions I never gained the courage to test were around my relationships. I believed that the difficult conversation of questioning the way in which Robert had set up the implementation team, or of asking Tanya why she had sabotaged my presentation, would ruin our thus-far genial relationships past repair. Even though I am aware that a genial relationship is not worth much when one party is afraid to voice her concerns and is in fact an inimical relationship when one party hurts the other, I wanted to avoid engaging in personal conflict. I also realized that whereas I am comfortable in lateral leadership positions such as the facilitator of the Discipline Task Force, and whereas I was comfortable managing

up as Dr. Abeyta's direct report, I do not manage well in a team where I am at the bottom of a hierarchy that is otherwise unclear.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EDUCATION SECTOR

In the education sector, the notion of adaptive leadership, adaptive challenges, and adaptive changes has become quite popular. Moreover, adaptiveness has become imbued—whether intentionally or not—with a positive connotation, in contrast with technical leadership, technical challenges, and technical changes. Because of this connotation, it is easy to search for the big questions (What is equity? Are we equitable?) rather than for the day-to-day ones (Who is not getting a seat in school? Who is getting kicked out of school?). But rather than speaking and acting as though adaptiveness is at one end of the pole, educators must acknowledge that every problem has important technical elements and underlying adaptive ones, too. Take the work that I described in this capstone. Some are more technical and others are more adaptive, but they all possess both characteristics. One can imagine them as spread across a spectrum.

Or, one can think about adaptive and technical challenges as inextricable from one another, as cyclical. I argued in my theory of action that addressing concrete structural barriers, or technical challenges, to equity would remove the distractions and pave the way for the district to examine its personal biases, or adaptive challenges. I think that theory holds true but is incomplete. After all, the what other value lies in recognizing our biases than to take concrete action, or make further technical changes, as a result? The only way for the sector to achieve strong, lasting and impactful equity work is for it to tackle both types of challenges simultaneously.

Beyond a reframing of the way in which we view equity work, my work in SFPS has also convinced me that we need to reexamine the methods through which we collect

qualitative data. For example, I began to corroborate and create the narrative behind the quantitative discipline data with a survey of students, teachers and principals—only to find, in follow-up one-on-one interviews that some of the survey data was significantly skewed. Whereas one hundred percent of students said that they felt safe in their school and that they had experienced no conflict with their peers, one hundred percent also revealed details to the contrary in their one-on-one interview. Esteban, who reported in his survey that he had never experienced or witnessed racism from teachers, told me in his interview that his teacher had told him that he was Mexican because he was not from Spain. Lucia, who also reported that she had never experienced or witnessed racism from teachers, told me in her interview that her teacher reprimanded students for speaking in Spanish. When we measure school climate, or district or organizational culture, we need to consider whether the methodology caters to socialized answers. Do students feel pressure to answer a certain way on surveys? Do people of color in an organization feel pressure to answer a certain way?

Last, the education sector must acknowledge that white supremacy is real in America—even in a district like SFPS, in a state like New Mexico, which is overwhelmingly non-white. When one subgroup of Hispanic students differentiate themselves from another by virtue of European ties, or emphasis on their whiteness, that is also white supremacy in action. In both the Registration Implementation Team and the Discipline Task Force, as well as in other conversations in the district, people spoke about equity in terms of low-income, minority and at-risk students. They spoke about equity in terms of what disadvantaged students needed in order to succeed, what challenges they faced, and what we needed to do to serve them equitably. These were important conversations to have.

But rarely did we speak about the reality of white supremacy, about our own roles in propagating inequity, about what was at stake for us if we were to actually achieve equity.

Once, in the Discipline Task Force, we confronted this issue when we discussed the notion that Hispanos had adopted all the characteristics of the dominant majority. In order to talk about equity fully and wholly, and in order to address it completely and effectively, we must speak about *why* inequity still exists, what our motives have been in unconsciously holding on to pieces of inequity, and what *reparations* we must make.

The education sector must re-narrate equity. Equity is not a challenge of the present and future that our generation has been charged with championing. Inequity is a bequest from the past that was deliberately and systemically created, and it is an ongoing phenomenon that we have all had a role in maintaining. Children are not the cause. We are. Equity, then, is about paying a debt to those we have historically wronged and continue to wrong, as much as it is about making things better. Indeed, our adaptive challenge as a sector is to acknowledge equity work as work in justice and reparations rather than as work in heroism and advocacy.

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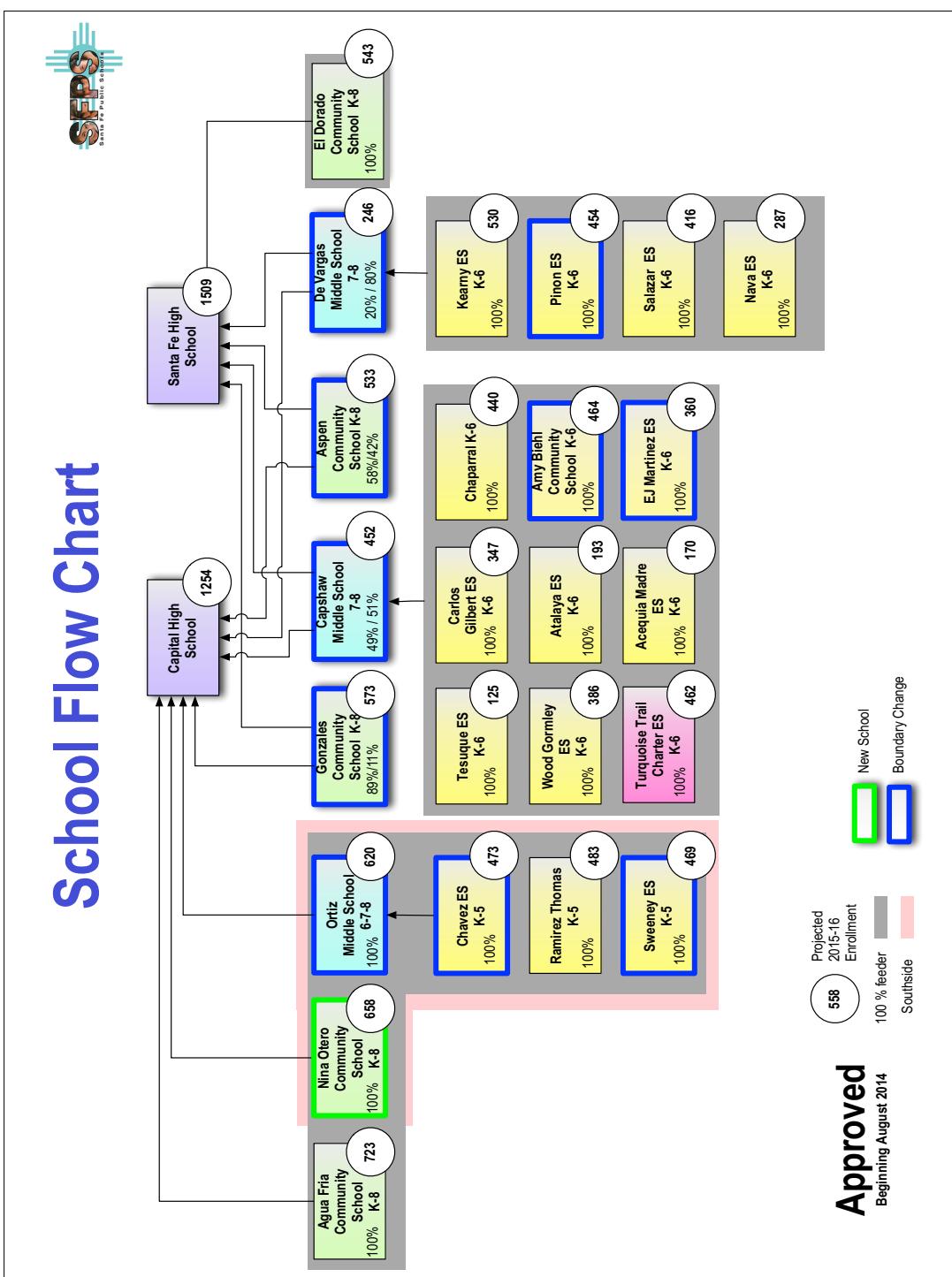
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. SY2015-16 FEEDER FLOW CHART



APPENDIX B. SY2015-16 SCHOOL GRADES & PARCC SCORES

Elementary and K-8 Schools

School Name	School Grade 2015	PARCC ELA 3 Levels 1&2 2015	PARCC ELA 3 Levels 4&5 2015	PARCC Math 5 Levels 1&2 2015	PARCC Math 5 Levels 4&5 2015
Acequia Madre	B	13%	62%	36%	32%
Amy Biehl	C	55%	24%	47%	25%
Aspen*	D	70%	9%	73%	0%
Atalaya	A	32%	46%	38%	35%
Carlos Gilbert	A	30%	56%	25%	33%
Cesar Chavez*	B	69%	15%	52%	15%
Chaparral	F	67%	18%	81%	4%
E. J. Martinez	D	52%	18%	62%	8%
El Camino Real *	D	78%	7%	72%	7%
El Dorado	B	74%	46%	45%	26%
Gonzales	C	64%	15%	37%	19%
Kearny	F	75%	11%	93%	0%
Navia*	B	74%	17%	68%	10%
Nina Otero	C	63%	9%	31%	17%
Pinon	B	48%	18%	30%	26%
Ramirez Thomas*	D	65%	11%	53%	19%
Salazar*	F	85%	93%	85%	4%
Sweeney*	B	72%	11%	53%	10%
Tesque*	C	too few	too few	38%	31%
Wood Gormley	A	12%	76%	11%	69%

Figure 4 Middle Schools

School Name	School Grade 2015	PARCC ELA 8 Levels 1&2 2015	PARCC ELA 8 Levels 4&5 2015	PARCC Math 8 Levels 1&2 2015	PARCC Math 8 Levels 3&4 2015
Capshaw	C	53%	24%	92%	0%
De Vargas	F	73%	5%	90%	0%
Ortiz	F	77%	8%	93%	0%

Figure 5 High Schools

School Name	School Grade 2015	PARCC ELA 10 Levels 1&2 2015	PARCC ELA 10 Levels 4&5 2015	PARCC Geometry Levels 1&2 2015	PARCC Geometry Levels 4&5 2015
Academy at Larragoite	D	too few	too few	100%	0%
Capital High	C	52%	19%	70%	2%
Santa Fe High	F	49%	31%	69%	5%

**APPENDIX C. SY2015-16 DISTRIBUTION OF LOW-INCOME STUDENTS & LEVEL 1, 2, 3
LICENSED TEACHERS**

Elementary and K-8 Schools

School Name	% Students F&R Lunch	Level 1 Teachers 2015-16	Level 2 Teachers 2015-16	Level 3 Teachers 2015-16	Level 3A Teachers 2015-16
Acequia Madre	29%	9%	64%	9%	18%
Amy Biehl	65%	20%	53%	17%	10%
Aspen*	81%	12%	59%	12%	18%
Atalaya	39%	0%	56%	22%	22%
Carlos Gilbert	36%	5%	60%	25%	10%
Cesar Chavez*	60%	4%	39%	32%	25%
Chaparral	61%	10%	55%	30%	5%
E. J. Martinez	67%	11%	53%	16%	21%
El Camino Real *	87%	21%	32%	35%	12%
El Dorado	25%	0%	28%	30%	20%
Gonzales	56%	21%	55%	14%	10%
Kearny	82%	26%	33%	14%	26%
Nava*	59%	11%	72%	11%	6%
Nina Otero	78%	26%	33%	14%	26%
Pinon	66%	11%	63%	11%	15%
Ramirez Thomas*	94%	28%	52%	7%	14%
Salazar*	64%	18%	55%	14%	14%
Sweeney*	63%	23%	61%	16%	0%
Tesuque*	83%	0%	56%	33%	11%
Wood Gormley	27%	0%	38%	35%	27%

Middle Schools

School Name	% Students F&R Lunch	Level 1 Teachers 2015-16	Level 2 Teachers 2015-16	Level 3 Teachers 2015-16	Level 3A Teachers 2015-16
Capshaw	66%	27%	40%	20%	13%
De Vargas*	80%	10%	45%	15%	30%
Ortiz*	84%	26%	40%	21%	12%

High Schools

School Name	% Students F&R Lunch	Level 1 Teachers 2015-16	Level 2 Teachers 2015-16	Level 3 Teachers 2015-16	Level 3A Teachers 2015-16
Academy at Larragoite*	99%	100%	0%	0%	0%
Capital High*	82%	17%	35%	33%	15%
Engage	37%	50%	25%	0%	25%
Santa Fe High	54%	13%	49%	27%	11%

APPENDIX D. SY2015-16 DISTRIBUTION OF EL STUDENTS IN RELATION TO BILINGUAL AND TESOL ENDORSED TEACHERS

Figure 6 Elementary and K-8 Schools

School Name	School Grade 2015	% EL Students	% EL Students who speak Spanish at home	# EL Students	# Bilingual Endorsed Teachers	Bilingual Teacher: EL Student Ratio	# TESOL Endorsed Teachers	Bilingual & TESOL Teacher: EL Student Ratio
Acequia Madre	B	1%	1%	2	0	0%	1	50%
Amy Biehl	C	20%	19%	104	4	4%	9	13%
Aspen*	D	17%	16%	77	6	8%	9	19%
Atalaya	A	5%	4%	14	1	7%	8	64%
Carlos Gilbert	A	2%	1%	8	0	0%	7	88%
Cesar Chavez*	B	42%	37%	195	12	6%	15	14%
Chaparral	F	10%	8%	42	1	2%	4	12%
E. J. Martinez	D	11%	9%	35	3	9%	4	20%
El Camino Real *	D	44%	43%	388	32	8%	26	15%
El Dorado	B	4%	3%	21	0	0%	6	29%
Gonzales	C	5%	4%	21	0	0%	6	29%
Kearny	F	26%	24%	131	8	6%	11	15%
Navar*	B	29%	23%	68	5	7%	7	18%
Nina Otero	C	23%	22%	185	5	3%	12	9%
Pinon	B	18%	15%	94	3	3%	12	16%
Ramirez Thomas*	D	46%	45%	231	10	4%	13	10%
Salazar*	F	37%	35%	115	6	5%	10	14%
Sweeney*	B	49%	46%	244	13	5%	9	9%
Tesuque*	C	18%	13%	23	1	4%	2	13%
Wood Gormley	A	3%	2%	12	1	8%	4	42%

Middle Schools

School Name	School Grade 2015	% EL Students	% EL Students who speak Spanish at home	# EL Students	# Bilingual Endorsed Teachers	Bilingual Teacher: EL Student Ratio	# TESOL Endorsed Teachers	Bilingual & TESOL Teacher: EL Student Ratio
Capshaw	C	10%	7%	41	1	2%	2	7%
De Vargas*	F	22%	19%	53	1	2%	1	4%
Ortiz*	F	36%	34%	193	12	6%	13	13%

High Schools

School Name	School Grade 2015	% EL Students	% EL Students who speak Spanish at home	# EL Students	# Bilingual Endorsed Teachers	Bilingual Teacher: EL Student Ratio	# TESOL Endorsed Teachers	Bilingual & TESOL Teacher: EL Student Ratio
Academy at Larragoite*	D	16%	12%	18	0	0%	0	0%
Capital High*	C	25%	24%	358	6	2%	14	6%
Engage	F	16%	15%	13	0	0%	1	8%
Santa Fe High	F	13%	10%	208	8	4%	15	11%

APPENDIX E. SY2015-16 DISTRIBUTION OF GIFTED STUDENTS IN RELATION TO GIFTED ENDORSED TEACHERS

Elementary and K-8 Schools

School Name	School Grade 2015	% Gifted Students	# Gifted Students	# Gifted Endorsed Teachers	Gifted Student: Teacher Ratio
Acequia Madre	B	5%	9	1	11%
Amy Biehl	C	2%	12	0	0%
Aspen*	D	0%	2	1	50%
Atalaya	A	9%	24	2	8%
Carlos Gilbert	A	6%	19	7	37%
Cesar Chavez*	B	1%	5	0	0%
Chaparral	F	3%	14	1	7%
E. J. Martinez	D	3%	8	1	13%
El Camino Real *	D	1%	7	3	43%
El Dorado	B	11%	57	3	5%
Gonzales	C	4%	16	2	13%
Kearny	F	0%	1	0	0%
Nava*	B	2%	4	2	50%
Nina Otero	C	1%	11	0	0%
Pinon	B	1%	8	1	13%
Ramirez Thomas*	D	1%	5	0	0%
Salazar*	F	1%	2	3	150%
Sweeney*	B	0%	2	0	0%
Tesuque*	C	4%	5	0	0%
Wood Gormley	A	10%	40	5	13%

Middle Schools

School Name	School Grade 2015	% Gifted Students	# Gifted Students	# Gifted Endorsed Teachers	Gifted Student: Teacher Ratio
Capshaw	C	4%	18	2	11%
De Vargas*	F	4%	9	1	11%
Ortiz*	F	2%	11	3	27%

High Schools

School Name	School Grade 2015	% Gifted Students	# Gifted Students	# Gifted Endorsed Teachers	Gifted Student: Teacher Ratio
Academy at Larragoite*	D	0%	0	0	100%
Capital High*	C	0%	6	2	33%
Engage	F	0%	0	0	100%
Santa Fe High	F	2%	40	0	0%

APPENDIX F. SY2015-16 DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENT TRANSFERS

SY2015-16 Transfers between Schools

Grade K-6		10/14/15		Reading across, figures show number of students living in assignment area.		Grade 7-8		10/14/15		Reading down, figures show number of students attending school.	
Aequita Madre	77		2	1							2
Amy Biehl	2	342		8	3	2		6	7	1	2
Aspen	17	302	25	30	1	2	5	8	23	1	5
Atalaya	14	5	90	4		2	2	2			18
Carlos Gilbert	5	1	3	118		2	1				1
Cesar Chavez	5	3	3	6	396	6	4	8	4	5	5
Chaparral	3	2	5	9	17	342	4	3	1	4	12
El Martinez	11	3	16	7	2	241	3	3	4	1	4
El Camino Real	1	1	4	8	8	3	3	592	3	8	15
El Dorado	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	396	1	3	11
Gonzales	7	12	10	40	3	1	6	3	226	1	4
Kearny	4	1	24	6	5	1	8	12	418	11	6
Nava	3	2	3	4	1	5	2	1	140	4	5
Nina Otero	2	8	2	11	34	21	6	11	3	14	7
Pinon	4	2	9	9	1	9	6	2	555	13	2
Ramirez Thomas	3	2	7	3	17	5	10	5	4	145	2
Salazar	8	9	17	11	1	3	3	6	1	9	415
Sweeney	1	3	5	1	5	3	2	5	1	4	11
Tesque	3	1	1	3	2	1			2	10	4
TICES, Amy Biehl	1	152	7	1	6	4	2	5	1	1	3
Wood Gormley	2	1				1	4	2			1
Not Located						1		1			1
Outside	3	5	10	5	1	4	9	1	12	8	1
										1	3
										12	3
											2

SY2015-16 Transfers by ELL and F \circ RL Status

School of Attendance (Transfers Into School)	Total ELL Transfers In	Percent ELL	Total Low-Income Transfers In	Percent Free/Reduced
Acequia Madre Elementary School	97	3%	97	28%
Amy Biehl at Rancho Viejo Community Sch	21	5%	21	33%
Aspen Community Magnet School	93	9%	93	100%
Atalaya Elementary School	165	7%	165	41%
Capital High School	21	14%	21	95%
Capshaw Middle School	66	8%	66	53%
Carlos Gilbert Elementary School	220	1%	220	31%
Cesar Chavez Elementary School	50	30%	50	100%
Chaparral Elementary School	69	6%	69	64%
DeVargas Middle School	35	23%	35	100%
E. J. Martinez Elementary School	83	8%	83	76%
El Camino Real Academy Community School	100	18%	100	100%
El Dorado Community School	44	7%	44	48%
Gonzales Community School	173	6%	173	60%
Kearny Elementary School	57	37%	57	81%
Mandela International Magnet School	145	10%	145	31%
Nava Elementary School	79	22%	79	100%
Nina Otero Community School	32	44%	32	94%
Ortiz Middle School	31	19%	31	100%
Pinon Elementary School	68	12%	68	68%
Private School	25	8%	25	8%
Ramirez Thomas Elementary School	40	45%	40	100%
Salazar Elementary School	47	49%	47	100%
Santa Fe High School	384	17%	384	61%
Santa Fe School for the Arts	1	0%	1	0%
Sweeney Elementary School	35	29%	35	94%
Tesuque Elementary School	23	4%	23	91%
Wood Gormley Elementary School	135	7%	135	35%
Total Transfers Out	2981	13%	2981	57%

APPENDIX G. SY2015-16 DISTRIBUTION AND COSTS OF AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

School	% Students F&R Lunch	Full-time Afterschool Program	Fee
Acequia Madre	29%	Rio Grande Education Collaborative	\$64/ week
Amy Biehl	65%	Aspire	\$225/month
Aspen*	81%	Aspire	\$225/month
Atalaya	39%	Aspire	\$225/month
Carlos Gilbert	36%	Aspire	\$225/month
Cesar Chavez*	60%	21 st Century	free
Chaparral	61%	YMCA School Programs	\$45/ week
E. J. Martinez	67%	Aspire	\$225/month
El Camino Real *	87%	City Funded	\$25/week
El Dorado	25%	School Program	\$60/week
Gonzales	56%	<i>No full-time afterschool program</i>	
Kearny	82%	Tutoring	free
Navarre*	59%	21 st Century	free
Nina Otero	78%	Aspire	\$225/month
Piñon	66%	YMCA School Programs	\$55/ week
Ramirez Thomas*	94%	21 st Century	free
Salazar*	64%	City Funded	\$25/week
Sweeney*	63%	City Funded	\$25/week
Tesuque*	83%	Aspire	\$225/month
Wood Gormley	27%	School Program	\$245/month
Capshaw	66%	Tutoring	free
De Vargas*	80%	21 st Century	free
Ortiz*	84%	21 st Century	free

APPENDIX H. RISK RATIOS IN SY2014-15 OVERALL DISCIPLINARY INCIDENCES

Risk Ratios of EL to Non-EL Students

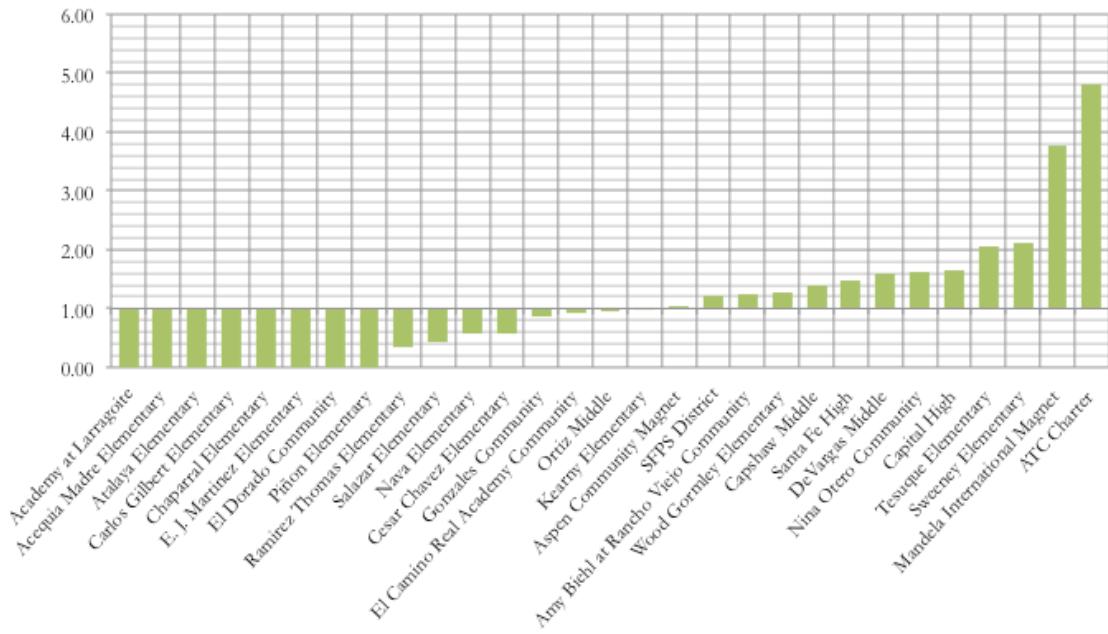


Figure 7 Risk Ratios of FRL to Non-FRL Students

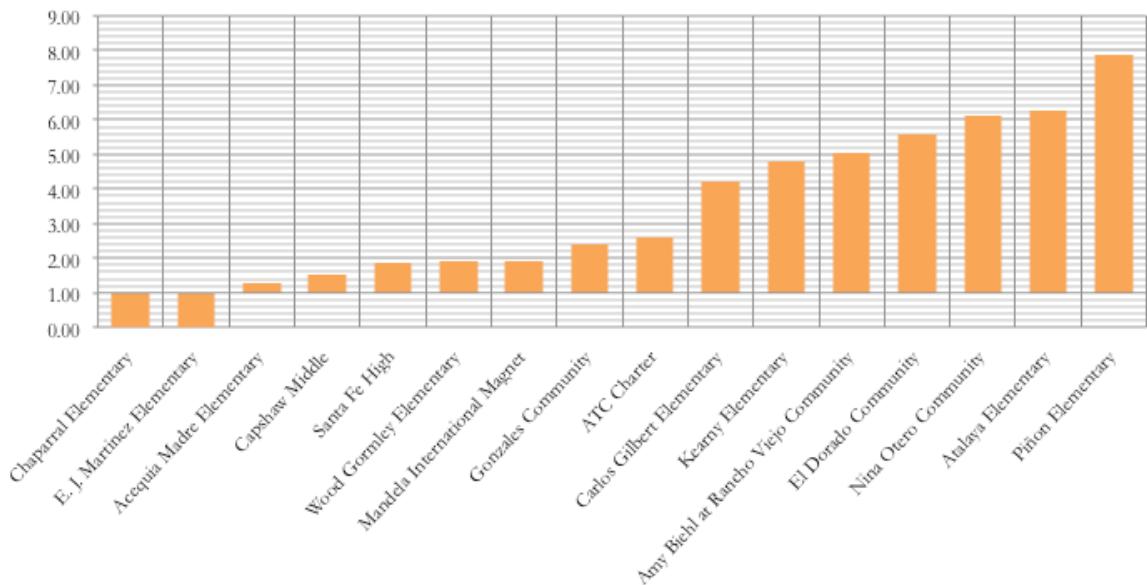
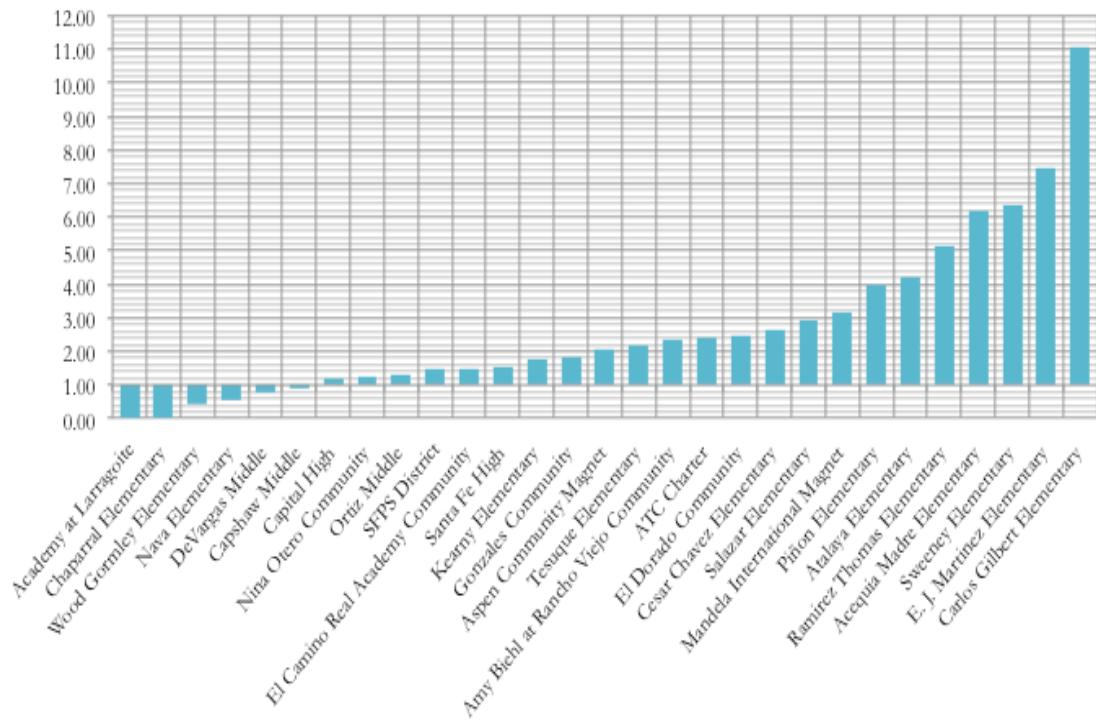


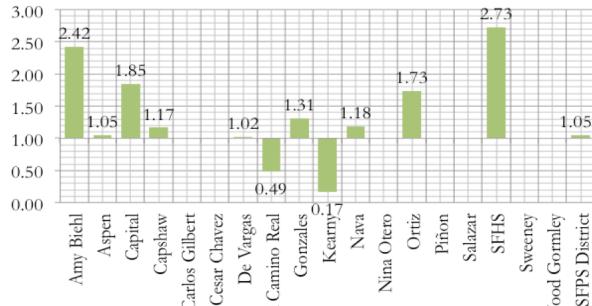
Figure 8 Risk Ratios of Special Needs to Non-Special Needs Students



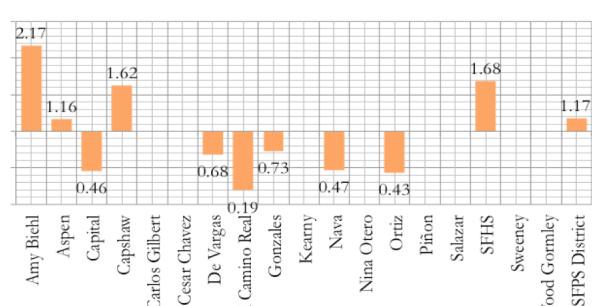
APPENDIX I. RISK RATIOS IN SY2014-15 REPORTS OF DISRUPTION & DEFIANCE

Disruption

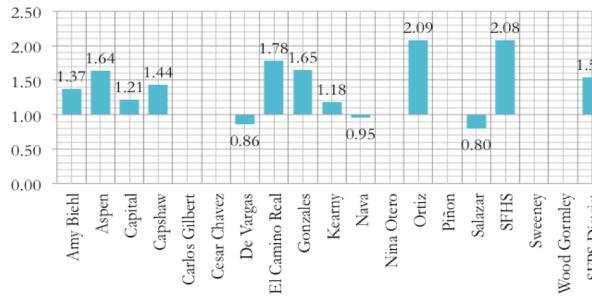
ELL Students to Non-ELL Students



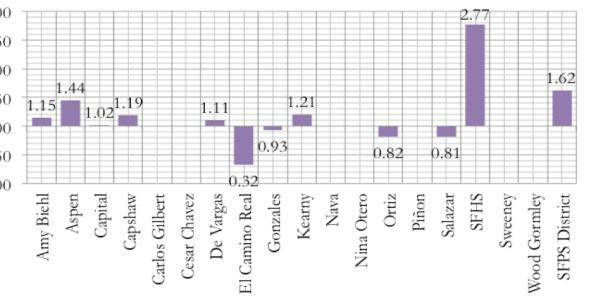
FRL Students to Non-FRL Students



Special-Needs Students to Non-Special Needs Students

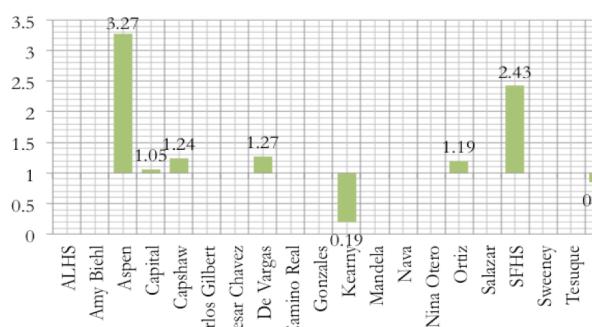


Hispanic Students to Non-Hispanic Students

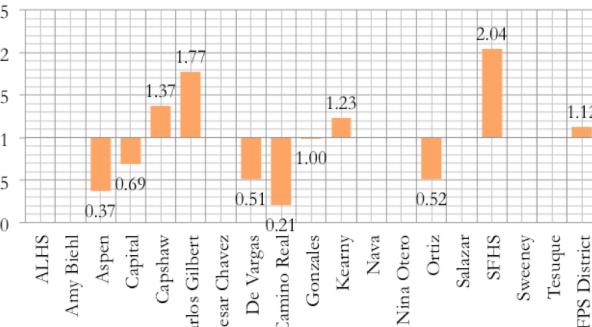


Defiance

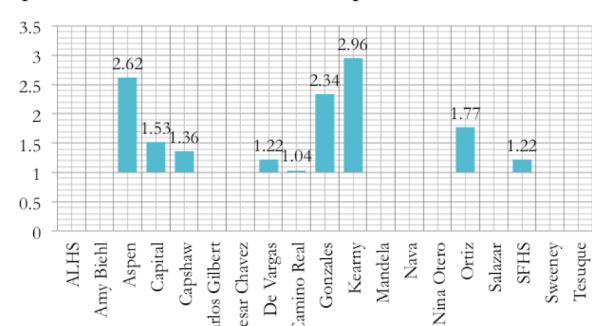
ELL Students to Non-ELL Students



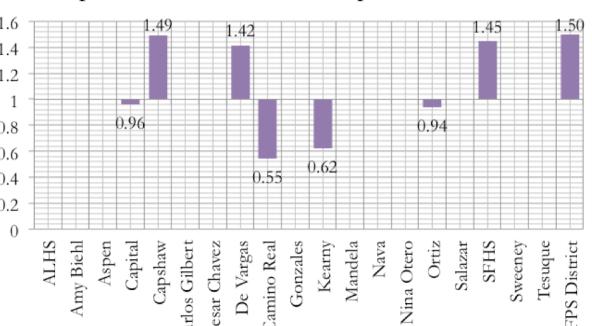
FRL Students to Non-FRL Students



Special Needs Students to Non-Special Needs Students



Hispanic Students to Non-Hispanic Students



APPENDIX J. SFPS PROPOSED BEHAVIOR RESPONSE MATRIX

Inappropriate or Disruptive Behavior (Identified by state suspension code)	LEVEL 1 Classroom and Teacher-led Responses (e.g. written apology, talk with school counselor, classroom detention)	LEVEL 2 Teacher-led and/or Administrative Supported Responses (e.g. community service, peer mediation, temporary removal from class)	LEVEL 3 Administrative Supported and Removal Responses (e.g. restorative practices, in-school suspension, in-school intervention)	LEVEL 4 Administrative Supported and Short-Term Out-of-School Exclusionary Responses (e.g. restorative practices, mentoring programs, short-term suspension)	LEVEL 5 Long-Term Administrative Supported, Out-of-School Exclusionary, and Referral Responses (e.g. long-term suspension, expulsion, refer to alternative ed.)
ACADEMIC DISHONESTY	Plagiarizing, such as by taking someone else's work or ideas.				
		Tampering with computer network.			
ALCOHOL		consumption or possession			
			distributing/ selling alcohol		
BULLYING (ONGOING)		ongoing conduct that creates a hostile environment for another			
				threatening or seriously intimidating behavior	
CELL PHONE USAGE	usage during class				
		usage during test			
			usage during test with intent to cheat		
DISRESPECT TO PEERS	inappropriate or offensive gestures to others (verbal-put downs, cursing)				
DISRESPECT TO STAFF	inappropriate or offensive gestures to staff (verbal put-downs, cursing, talking back)				
DESTRUCTION OF SCHOOL PROPERTY (schools should consider: monetary value of property damaged; student	causing accidental damage				

knowledge of property value; student's age; whether act was pre-determined; reason for destroying the property)		causing intentional damage, where the level of response is determined based on listed factors			
DISRUPTION	engaging in minor behavior that distracts from learning environment				
	persistently engaging in minor behavior that distracts from the learning environment (talking out of turn, throwing small items, horseplay)				
	engaging in moderate to serious behavior that distracts from teaching and learning and directly affects safety of others (disrupting a fire drill, interrupting an exam, incendiary texts, throwing harmful items)				
HARASSMENT (NON-SEXUAL)	intentional negative actions on part of one students toward another in regard to identity (racial, sexual, etc.)				
		intentional negative actions on part of group of students toward another in regard to identity (racial, sexual, etc.)			
INSUBORDINATION TO STAFF	repeatedly or persistently defying or refusing to follow directions of teachers, staff or administrators				
PHYSICAL VIOLENCE (school administrators should consider multiple factors: (heat of moment, provocation, self-defense, pre-planned, intervening, age)	physical aggression without culmination in a fight				
	engaging in a spontaneous fight out of self-defense				
		attacking another student or employee, preplanning a fight			
SEXUAL ACTIVITY (as part of any disciplinary response, school staff should refer students to appropriate counseling)		engaging in appropriate behavior of a sexual nature (e.g. indecent exposure, texts, sexual activity on campus)			
SEXUAL HARRASSMENT (as part of any disciplinary response, school staff should refer students to appropriate counseling)			engaging in behavior toward another that is physically, sexually aggressive		
SUBSTANCES (schools should consider first time		use or possession of non-illegal drugs			

versus repeated offenses)		use or possession of illegal drugs		
		distribution or sale of non-illegal or illegal drugs		
THEFT (schools should consider: students' age; students' purpose in taking the property; the monetary value of the property; whether the act was pre-determined; whether property was returned or recovered)	taking property without permission/ knowledge of other			
		persistently or habitually taking or obtaining property		
			taking property where the theft is especially serious based on listed factors	
TOBACCO (schools should consider first time versus repeated offenses)	use or possession			
TARDINESS (elementary school students who are late should not be given any punitive consequences, but parents/ guardians should be notified)	arriving late more than once to class or school			
	persistently arriving late to class without an excused absence			
ARSON	setting a fire or helping others to start a fire without intent to endanger others			
		setting a fire or helping others to start a fire with intent to endanger others or destroy property		
FIREARMS				possessing a firearm
OTHER GUNS		possessing, using or threatening to use a non-firearm gun (BB gun)		
	possessing, using or threatening with a look-alike gun or facsimile (water gun)			
KNIVES AND OTHER WEAPONS	possessing a knife or other implement that can cause bodily harm without intent to use as a weapon			
		possessing knife or other implement that can cause bodily harm with intent to use as a weapon		
			using a knife or other implement with intent to cause bodily harm	
EXPLOSIVES	possessing an incendiary or explosive device, material, or any combination of combustible or explosive substances, other than a			

	firearm that can cause harm to people or property but NOT snap pops, which should be treated as a disruption		
			detonating or possessing or threatening to detonate an incendiary or explosive device or material