

Elements of a Strategic Action Plan To Promote Equity in the Ithaca City School District

The following are elements of a holistic, workable strategy to achieve equity in Ithaca's schools. This plan is in support of the Ithaca Board of Education's goal to "eliminate race and class as predictors of student success."

These elements outline both manageable action steps to achieve tangible results in the short term, and a meaningful, integrated long-term strategy. The strategy involves the school district, families, community organizations, and higher education in a collaborative effort. The component parts, taken together, form a comprehensive strategy, but they should not be seen as a linear, sequential plan. Rather, all elements can be pursued concurrently, with different work groups focusing their efforts on different parts of the plan at the same time.

Developing Capacity to Achieve Equity

- **Data Analysis**
Examine data on student academic performance, discipline, attendance, dropout and graduation rates, involvement in extracurricular activities, special education classification, and access to student services. Identify areas of inequity in student success and participation, disaggregating data by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, disability, and English language proficiency. Develop statistical measures to assess equity in these areas.
- **Assess Causes of Inequity**
Review relevant literature on institutional racism and class bias in public schools. Analyze programs and institutional practices in the Ithaca schools, as well as staff, student, and family behaviors, to identify factors that contribute to disproportionate rates of student success and participation, lack of diversity, and an unsafe environment. Specifically identify problems with our current strategies and practices, but also identify and highlight strategies and practices that successfully promote equity, diversity, and a safe environment for all students in our district.
- **Research and implement "best practices" regarding equity and diversity management utilized by other districts and organizations**
Identify programs that other districts and organizations have used with success and that are supported by evaluative research. Where applicable, introduce into Ithaca schools.
- **Leadership Development**
Work with the leadership team (executive team, directors, principals, associate principals, department heads, curriculum chairs, and staff developers) to develop leadership skills, understanding, and strategies in support of equity, diversity, and a safe environment. Each member of the leadership team should have specific personal and professional goals (with specified means and evidence of accomplishment) designed to implement the district's equity and diversity strategies in every school and classroom.

- **Staff Development**

Provide a systematic program of staff development related to equity, to diversity, and to creating a school environment free of bias, prejudice, discrimination, and any form of intimidation or violence. Help staff develop better understanding of the causes of inequities, of disproportionate rates of school success, and of biases. Offer training and support to develop strategies and action steps to overcome these problems effectively.

- **Recruitment and Retention of Diverse Staff**

Continue efforts to recruit and retain a staff that is ethnically and culturally diverse. Ensure that all search committees see this as a key district goal, and enlist the support of the community in attracting and retaining staff of color at all levels. Train supervisors to insure that the workplace is free of bias, harassment, prejudice, or discrimination and is a safe and welcoming place for all employees.

- **Teacher Preparation**

Work with area teacher education programs to assure that new teachers and administrators have a thorough understanding of issues of equity in education and a commitment to diversity and multiculturalism in curriculum, instructional strategies, and school programs. Help new educators develop strategies to combat bias, prejudice, and discrimination and to teach children mutual respect and appreciation for diversity and difference.

Services to Students to Achieve Equity

- **Targeted Academic Support**

Assure that every child has the specific academic support necessary to be successful in school. This may include a variety of academic intervention services and strategies in foundational areas (e.g., literacy, mathematics) or broader skill sets necessary for academic success (e.g., study skills, time management, computer skills, library usage).

- **Supplemental Programs (Academic and Non-Academic)**

Make available programs to supplement regular classroom instruction to assist students who are struggling with their schoolwork or are not making a productive connection with their school. Mentors, tutors, homework clubs, after school programs, summer readiness programs, and Saturday programs (e.g. the Saturday Academy for Math and Sciences) will assure all students an equal footing as they progress through school.

- **Clinical Support For Students**

Our students' ability to learn and participate in school is directly related to their physical, emotional, and mental health. Education, screening, diagnosis, and treatment are all key preconditions for equitable access to other school services. Help school staff (nurses, health educators, psychologists, counselors, social

workers) work with families, professionals, and agencies in the community to ensure the physical, dental, nutritional, emotional, and mental health of all students, particularly those who traditionally have had less access to these services. Healthy families are also an important component of a child's well-being – school staff and community service agencies need to collaborate to help assure that all children come to school from safe, healthy, supportive families.

- **Curriculum**

Ensure that the curriculum is consistent, cohesive, well articulated and differentiated by skill level, learning style, and modality, and is fully representative of diverse perspectives and cultures.

- **Co-Curricular and Extra-Curricular Programs**

Assure that student participation in co-curricular and extra-curricular programs and activities is equitable, and that low income students and students of color not only participate fully but have the opportunity and experience of leadership in these activities. Programs should be attractive to the many diverse segments of our student body and reflective of the wide range of interests in our community.

Partnerships to Achieve Equity

- **Communication**

Clearly communicate the district's strategies and efforts to promote equity, diversity and a safe environment. Acknowledge problems where they exist and use effective communication strategies to quell rumors and elicit community support to address problems. Celebrate successes and accomplishments of all students and staff, particularly those who don't often share the spotlight.

- **Community Involvement**

Engage the community in support of the district's equity and diversity goals and strategies. Form partnerships with The Village, GIAC, Southside Community Center, civic associations, Family and Children's Services, local law enforcement, Cornell, and Ithaca College (among others) to bring the resources, people, experience, and talents of the whole community to bear on these issues.

- **Family and Community Advocacy and Involvement**

Support programs designed to help parents and other caregivers become effective advocates for their children in schools. Focus specifically on programs for parents/caregivers of children who are struggling in school, or who are experiencing lower rates of success and participation in school. Work with staff to make sure these parents/caregivers are welcome in school and see the school as working in their children's best interests. Promote parent/caregiver involvement as the cornerstone of students' success in all facets of school life. Involve

parents/caregivers from all backgrounds to enhance the diversity of the school community and to help ensure a safe, welcoming environment.

- **Cultural and Educational Events**

Take advantage of the rich diversity of cultural and educational resources in our community and school district to showcase a multicultural array of offerings for children and families. All students and families in our district should find cultural and educational events that reflect their own cultural background and also help them gain an understanding and appreciation for cultures and ideas outside their traditional realm of experience.

Develop Capacity

Data Analysis

Achieving educational equity requires a careful identification and analysis of areas of inequity in student success and participation. Data analysis can target areas of greatest need, and highlight areas of relative success. It can also establish benchmarks against which we can measure progress toward our goal.

Statement of Need

The district lacks the ability to systematically analyze student data to identify areas of equity/inequity

Need to be able to disaggregate data by race, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, and English language proficiency

Need to examine data on:

- ✓ Student Academic Performance
 - NY State assessments (English Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Science, Foreign Language, Regents)
 - District assessments
 - AP and SAT achievement tests
 - Grades and GPA
 - Class Rank
- ✓ Student Course Selection
 - Tracks (enriched, accelerated, basic, Regents, honors)
 - Vocational programs
 - AP courses (number & subject)
 - Credits earned
 - Study halls
- ✓ Pre-K Enrollment
- ✓ School Enrollment
- ✓ Graduation
- ✓ GED Program
- ✓ Dropouts
- ✓ Post-graduation Plans (college, work, military, other)
- ✓ Discipline
 - Referrals
 - Level of response (teacher, school administration, district)
 - Consequences (type, severity)
- ✓ Attendance (tardies, class cuts, absences)
- ✓ Extracurricular Activities
 - Fine and performing arts (music, drama, visual arts)
 - Athletics (varsity, JV, modified, intramural)
 - Student government
 - Clubs (officers, members)
 - Travel and field trips

- ✓ Special Education
 - Classification rate
 - Classification type
- ✓ Student Services
 - Guidance counselor, social worker, psychologist
 - Physical, occupational, and speech/language therapy
 - Regular education/compensatory (reading, math, writing, science, social studies)
 - ESL instruction
 - Tutoring, homework assistance
 - Medical services

Strategic Design

- Develop capacity to:
 - Assure accurate, updated, and complete data (current and historic)
 - Apply statistical measures of inequity
 - Generate routine, standardized reports
- Identify most significant areas of inequity
- Identify areas where we have achieved greatest equity
- Create benchmarks against which to measure progress toward equity

Development – (Action Plan and Resources)

- Develop capacity
 - Data
 - Identify required data sets and appropriate level of specificity
 - Build integrated databases of student information, special education information, and student assessments
 - Develop data quality assurance protocols
 - Statistical measures
 - Select statistical measures for simplicity, elegance, and ease of use and understanding
 - Reports
 - Determine needs of teachers, principals, district administrators, Board of Education, community, state and federal government
 - Agree on common reporting format
 - Make reports easy to generate using widely available technology
- Identify inequities
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- Identify areas of equity
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- Create equity benchmarks
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- Resources and Training
 - Data analyst
 - Training and supervision of data entry and data quality assurance
 - Training in understanding and using data, statistics, and reports
 - Data communication strategy
 - Identifying barriers to understanding data in various communities (deconstruct the myths)
 - Developing effective media to communicate data
 - Differentiated presentation for different audiences
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Evaluation

Criteria for Success –

- Data files are complete, accurate, and up-to-date
- Problem areas are easily identifiable and well known
- Successes are well-documented and highlighted
- Benchmarks and statistical analysis provide ready tools to measure progress
- Reports are timely, informative, easy to produce

Assess Causes of Inequity

A sound strategy to promote educational equity requires a clear understanding of the causes of inequity, as identified in the research literature and through a systematic analysis of our own practice.

Statement of Need

- District staff, parents, and community members do not share a common understanding of current research findings about educational inequity
- The district's programs and practices have not been subjected to a methodical analysis to see whether they perpetuate inequity or encourage greater equity
- There is lack of clarity about the relationship between school factors and societal factors in understanding and overcoming educational inequity

Strategic Design

- Review relevant literature on institutional racism and class bias in public schools
- Analyze structural features, programs and institutional practices in the Ithaca schools to identify factors that contribute to disproportionate rates of student success and participation, a lack of a sense of belonging, and concerns about a safe environment.
- Analyze staff, student, and family behaviors in the Ithaca schools to identify factors that contribute to problems of inequity
- Identify specific problems with our current strategies and practices that are barriers to equity
- Identify and highlight our current strategies and practices that successfully promote equity
- Widely disseminate results of literature review and analysis of local practices to foster common understanding of the causes of inequity, while clearly communicating successful efforts to promote equity for all students.

Development (Action Steps and Resources)

- Present to the whole community a literature review that identifies the causes of educational inequities
 - Make sure people from local community have easy access to this work and can readily contribute to it
 - Help Ithaca reflect on the causes of our own inequities
 - Identify causes so we can develop solutions to promote equity
 - Update review periodically
- Compare ICSD to organizations that are making progress in the areas of institutional and interpersonal racism, class and gender bias.
- Identify issues that can directly inform and improve teaching practice
 - Avoid focusing too globally
 - Get to the root of our lack of understanding, defensiveness, and fear
- Examine causes and outcomes of (mis)educational practice (not just why some students are lagging in achievement) – make sure this is part of leadership, supervision, and goal setting
- Assess the level of preparation of new staff with regard to equity issues

- Identify structures that could create shared decision-making regarding issues that impact equity – class size, funding, data analysis, access, materials and resources
- Examine supervision and accountability systems to see whether individuals and institutions are asked to build and demonstrate cultural competence
 - Look especially to models that support modeling, coaching, mentoring, and collaboration, all focused on equity

Implementation

Evaluation

Criteria for Success -

Literature review and analysis of local factors summarized in report(s) that identify problems, highlight successful local strategies, and communicate effectively to a variety of audiences

Analysis of local factors is methodologically sound, well-supported with evidence, and clearly articulated

Research and Implement "Best Practices" to Promote Equity

Many other districts, institutions, and organizations around the country have developed effective strategies to overcome educational inequities. We can learn from their success, and implement new practices in Ithaca.

Statement of Need

- Our staff and community are insufficiently familiar with successful equity strategies employed elsewhere
- Our “local” orientation conceals creative strategies employed elsewhere that might help us meet our equity goal

Strategic Design

- Identify “best practices” to promote equity & diversity that other districts and organizations have used with success. Focus especially on those that are supported by evaluative research that demonstrates a methodology for documenting continuous progress.
- Develop effective strategies to introduce new practices to achieve equity & promote diversity in Ithaca schools. Integrate an evaluative component into all implementation plans.

Development

Implementation

Evaluation

Criteria for Success -

- District research teams have conducted site visits and program analyses, reporting findings on “best practices” that achieve equity & promote diversity.
- New “best practices” to promote equity are consistently implemented and integrated into the structure, policy, and practice of the district.
- Review stakeholder feedback on improvement efforts. Equitable outcomes should improve measurably, and programs and practices should be sustainable.

Leadership Development

Sustained, long-term, systemic change in our district requires knowledgeable leadership committed to effective strategies to promote equity.

Statement of Need

- Many people in leadership have insufficient training or experience in dealing with equity issues.
- Leadership skills (facilitation, communication, implementation) are especially challenging when applied to issues of race and class, which are often sensitive topics.

Strategic Design

- Promote Understanding for Leadership
 - Data on Equity (local/national)
 - Causes of Inequity
 - Mutual benefits of promoting equity
 - Best practices to promote equity
- Develop Leadership Skills
 - Communication (listening; understanding diverse points of view; articulation of problems, analyses, and solutions to diverse audiences)
 - Facilitation (consensus-building; collaboration; conflict resolution; mediation)
 - Implementation (translating theory into practice)
- Devise Leadership Strategies to Promote Equity
 - Consistently formulate equity goals
 - District support for leadership development
 - Engage in public, transparent, collaborative dialogue on issues and approaches
 - Reform/enhance institutional structures and policies to promote equity
 - Build coalitions with other like-minded individuals, initiatives and organizations

Development

Implementation

Evaluation

Criteria for Success -

- Leadership team will be able to effectively:
 - understand, analyze, and convey pertinent information from data about equity;
 - recognize and understand individual and institutional bias and inequities in education, and the common benefit derived from overcoming them;
 - document effectiveness of research-based best practices to promote equity;
 - demonstrate the use of communication and facilitation skills to promote equity goals and strategies;
 - walk the walk (not just talk the talk)
- Leadership team will:

- commit to clear, consistent, public goals around equity
- utilize substantive resources and support for its own development
- help foster community dialogue on equity
- make sustained changes in institutional policy and practice
- commit to active engagement with other equity initiative

Staff Development Component of Equity Strategic Plan (final)

An effective strategy to promote equity and eliminate barriers of race and class requires training and development for all staff. Skills and commitment must be informed by knowledge, understanding, analysis, and reflection.

Statement of Need

- Sufficient understanding of how race and class influences school success cannot be assumed among all staff members
- Educators need a diverse array of strategies to teach children from widely varying backgrounds effectively

Strategic Design

Integrate in the staff development plan specific initiatives that:

1. Promote understanding of the causes of bias, inequity, and disproportionate rates of school success;
2. Integrate strategies effective with diverse learners designed to promote school success of poor students and students of color while challenging all students.
3. Conduct ongoing assessment of the plan's implementation and effectiveness.
4. Revise and adapt the plan on the basis of the results of the ongoing assessment.

Development

Develop specific staff development initiatives that:

1. Promote understanding of the causes of inequity and commitment to eliminate race and class as predictors of student success while reaching and teaching all students)
 - a. The causes and impact of racial bias and inequality in education
 - i. Quarterly articles, study groups, equity coaches
 - b. Commitment to eliminate race and class as predictors of student success while reaching and teaching all students
 - i. Motivational workshops, students, family partnerships
2. Provide training, practice, and support for strategies and structures to promote equity. These include best practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
 - a. Differentiated instruction strategies
 - b. Integration of critical thinking and multicultural content into an anti-bias curriculum
 - c. Development of a positive, welcoming, strength-based, and culturally sensitive school climate
 - d. Peer coaching and peer mentoring in best practices for equity
 - e. Alignment of initiatives across buildings through whole faculty study groups
 - f. Engagement—collection of examples of successful practices, look-fors for equity, which are readily available for staffs
3. Conduct ongoing assessment to promote a culture of reflection and assessment
 - a. Implementation
 - i. Monitor offerings

- ii. Support participants in their efforts to connect new learning with equity through mid-point assessments related to equity goals
- iii. Monitor participation
- iv. Assess thematic coherence and consistency
- v. Innovation in the use of time and technology
- b. Effectiveness
 - i. Ongoing needs assessments
 - ii. Regular evaluation
 - 1. Content
 - 2. Process
 - 2. Context
- c. Analysis of ongoing assessment data

Evaluation

Criteria for Success -

1. Staff development will have systematically and consistently addressed an understanding of the causes of inequity, disproportionate rates of school success, and bias; and developed strategies designed to promote equity in our district.
2. The relationship of this staff development program to equity will have been widely communicated and understood.
3. Staff members are using their understanding, strategies, and techniques learned through the staff development program to promote equity.

Recruitment and Retention of Diverse Staff

Our community has a remarkable diversity of students and families. Our staff should reflect that diversity so that all students have role models they can learn from and emulate. A diverse staff will allow our students grow into adulthood with an outlook of familiarity and respect for others in an increasingly diverse society.

Statement of Need

- ICSD staff is predominantly white
- Few black, Latino, Asian, or Native American people work for the district
- English is often the only language spoken or understood by most staff
- Many students of color will go through most years of school without ever having a teacher who looks like them or who comes from a similar background; many white students will never encounter teachers with backgrounds different from their own

Strategic Design

- Aggressively recruit staff of color at all levels, with particular emphasis on teachers and administrators; arm recruiters with incentives to attract top candidates
- Seek out partnerships with teacher preparation programs that produce a higher proportion of teachers of color, with particular emphasis on student teacher placement and supervision in Ithaca
- Involve the community in recruitment efforts, emphasizing the diversity and quality of life of our community, and the support of the community for the schools
- Provide careful mentoring and support for new staff, particularly during probationary period
- Involve the community in helping new recruits make a personal and social transition and connection to Ithaca
- Actively work to keep successful staff of color in Ithaca

Development

Implementation

Evaluation

Criteria for Success –

- All schools and district staff are increasingly diverse
- New staff of color feel supported and demonstrate professional success
- Community is involved in recruitment and retention efforts
- Successful staff of color commit to staying in Ithaca

Teacher Preparation

Issues of equity and diversity need to be central in the preparation of new teachers and administrators. Their coursework, their practicum experiences, their student teaching, and their mentoring all must contribute to a thorough understanding and commitment to the goal of equitable education for all students.

Statement of Need

- Many prospective teachers have little experience of people, communities, and cultures different from their own.
- Many teacher preparation programs have insufficient room in their curriculum for equity issues, and insufficient opportunity to allow their students to gain practical experience working with diverse populations of students.
- Many teachers come to the district ill-prepared to work effectively with low-income or minority children and families

Strategic Design

- Collaborate with area teacher education programs to assure that new teachers and administrators:
 - have a thorough understanding of issues of equity in education
 - have a commitment to diversity and multiculturalism in curriculum, instructional strategies, and school programs
- Recruit and support well-prepared student teachers from diverse backgrounds
- Recruit, train, and support high-quality supervising teachers and mentor teachers with keen awareness of equity issues
- Help pre-service teachers develop strategies to combat bias, prejudice, and discrimination and to teach children mutual respect and appreciation for diversity and difference
- Help student teachers and new teachers develop strategies and skills to:
 - understand the needs and competencies of individual children from all backgrounds
 - provide instruction to meet individual needs and strengths, focusing on core academic foundations (e.g. reading, writing, math)
 - employ culturally-responsive teaching and management techniques that respond to the diverse strengths and needs of students from different backgrounds
 - continuously reflect on and adjust teaching practice in response to student learning
 - reach out to and involve all families in their children's education and school

Development (Action Steps and Resources)

- Develop a larger cadre of cooperating teachers to work with student teachers; assure that cooperating teachers are well-trained on equity matters

- All cooperating teachers will focus on equity in working with prospective teachers, including as part of their evaluation
- Colleges will set expectations that supervising teachers be knowledgeable about equity and take equity issues into account as they supervise student teachers
- Encourage ongoing collaboration between school teachers and teacher educators around equity issues
- College faculty should be involved in training regarding equity that is provided to teachers (e.g., TESA, Frameworks for Understanding Poverty, Responsive Classroom, Second Steps, Circle of Courage)
- Student teachers should be invited and encouraged to participate in equity-related staff development
- Work with colleges to recruit students of color into teacher preparation programs, with specific encouragement to work in Ithaca

Implementation

Evaluation

Criteria for Success -

- Teachers graduating from area teacher preparation program apply to the Ithaca district with solid understanding of the issues of equity, diversity and multiculturalism
- New teachers feel equipped and demonstrate growing competence in successfully teaching diverse students
- We have an increasingly diverse pool of well prepared student teachers
- We have a pool of well qualified supervising teachers and mentors

Services to Students to Achieve Equity

Targeted Academic Support

All children can be successful when they are provided with the specific forms of educational support and intervention that meet their particular needs and learning styles.

Statement of Need

- Children have many different educational needs and learning styles
- To be successful, children require a range of support services and differentiated instructional strategies tailored to their individual needs

Strategic Design

- Assure correct identification of all students who qualify for Academic Intervention Services (AIS), including special education, with particular attention to low income students and students of color
- Address quality of services and whether they meet the needs of identified students
- Support high quality first instruction with supplemental direct instruction
- Provide excellent instruction that allows students to exit programs and to succeed in a regular education setting
- Empower parents and students who have become disenfranchised from the school

Development (Action Steps and Resources)

- Clearly define success by grade level
 - Hold students to that definition and, as necessary, teach to the gaps to accelerate students who have been delayed by life situations or environment
- Maintain high expectations for all students
 - Teach to those expectations and provide support (of all types) to make the expectations achievable
- Ascertain the real dropout rate and the root causes
- Adopt a 90% reading goal, where at least 90% of students can read on or above grade level by the end of third grade
- Establish meaningful and efficient measures of success at Pre-K – 3 to build capacity toward the 90% reading goal
- Expand upon Second Step, Responsive Classroom, and Circle of Courage to develop cultures of belonging for all students and all schools
- Establish clear and consistent protocols across all elementary schools for management of Instructional Support Teams
- Increase interventions Pre-K – 3 to accelerate students who arrive with developmental or environmental delays

Implementation

Evaluation

Criteria for Success -

- Correct identification of students entering & exiting Academic Intervention Services, including special education, placing students in program who fell below the standard on state assessments and Regents exams
- Student performance increases, dependency upon services decreases
- Increased attendance in both the classroom and support services
- Increased sense of belonging and ongoing achievement

Supplemental Programs (Academic and Non-Academic)

Many low-income students and students of color can benefit from supplemental programs offered after school, on evenings and weekends, in school, and in the community.

Statement of Need

- Not all children enjoy the same opportunities to supplement their school experience (e.g., frequent contact with supportive adults, access to role models, support with homework, travel, exposure to academic enrichment, etc.)

Strategic Design

- Take inventory of current supplemental programs and resources that augment district efforts to achieve equity (e.g., mentoring, tutoring, homework clubs, after school programs, Saturday Academy of Math and Sciences, Big Brother/Big Sister, IC/South Hill Partnership, 4H, Learning Web, Academic Plus).
- Assess the success of these programs
- Coordinate existing programs and resources to address current equity needs
- Identify unmet needs and design new supplemental programs to promote equity
- Seek resources (grants, community support, volunteers) to support new supplemental programs

Development (Action Steps and Resources)

- Expand and develop acceleration and enrichment programs
- Develop a genuine study skills program (grade 4 and up)
- Find creative ways to have different supplemental program groups interact with one another (from different communities, elementary schools, cultures, etc.)
- Identify building coordinators for supplemental programs
- Provide real vocational opportunities and exposure in addition to academic assistance

Implementation

Evaluation

Criteria for Success -

- Supplemental programs and resources are well organized, efficient, accessible to all students and closely aligned with identified student needs across the district
- Supplemental programs are well coordinated and broadly known to the community, and students who could benefit from them actively participate
- Resources to support newly designed programs have been acquired

Clinical Support for Students

Students' ability to learn and participate in school is directly related to their physical, emotional, and mental health. Education, screening, diagnosis, and treatment are all key preconditions for equitable access to other school services and to educational success. Healthy families are also an important component of a child's well being.

Statement of Need

- Many students come to school with significant health needs
- Many families have insufficient access to health care and services
- Children with unmet health needs cannot learn as well as those provided proper care

Strategic Design

- Help school staff (nurses, health educators, psychologists, counselors, social workers, occupational therapists) work with families, professionals, and agencies in the community to ensure the physical, dental, nutritional, emotional, and mental health of all students, particularly those who traditionally have had less access to these services.
- Solicit resources from the community to augment those provided by families and the district
- Collaborate with community service agencies to help assure that all children come to school from safe, healthy, supportive families

Development

Implementation

Evaluation

Criteria for Success -

- Students receive services that meet their physical and emotional needs
- Services provided in collaboration with community agencies are comprehensive and well coordinated

Curriculum

Students learn best when their curriculum is consistent, coherent, well-articulated across classrooms, grade levels, and schools, and reflective of state and national standards and research.

Statement of Need

- Student's experience with the curriculum often varies widely from class to class, grade to grade, school to school
- Curriculum materials are not always reflective of a broad range of cultural experience
- The curriculum is not always suited to strategies of differentiated instruction with a heterogeneous group of students

Strategic Design

- Clearly articulate curriculum on a grade-by-grade level that addresses the needs of all students
- Identify research-based curricular programs that:
 - are accessible to all students
 - are supported with equitable resources
 - integrate social skills to foster respect for diversity, tolerance, and appreciation for multiple perspectives
 - empower students and staff to act for social justice
- Support schools in adoption of programs that ensure consistent implementation of the curriculum across the district
- Provide programming and resources to teacher that assist the instruction of diverse learners in heterogeneous settings
- Promote student critical thinking skills and the development of diverse perspectives with materials created and published by teachers

Development

Implementation

Evaluation

Criteria for Success -

- District documents reflect clearly articulated curriculum, grade by grade, PreK-12, in all subject areas
- Principals and department chairs select and implement research-based programs
- District documents and practices clearly define benchmark student outcomes at each grade level that are directly aligned with the core curriculum, PreK-12

- Assessment demonstrates consistent social and academic curriculum implementation across the district
- Student achievement increases in heterogeneous settings
- Analysis of student work discloses wide experience with the multiple perspectives of diverse cultures

Co-Curricular and Extra-Curricular Programs

Students' participation in all aspects of school life increases their sense of belonging, their self-confidence, their friendships, their skills, and their knowledge. All children should have the opportunity to participate fully, as their interests and talents guide them.

Statement of Need

- Many low-income students and students of color do not participate in the full range of activities available, including athletics, fine and performing arts, student clubs, extended field trips, and student government
- Students who are not involved outside the classroom often feel disconnected from their school and their classmates, and lose the opportunity to develop their skills and talents in a holistic way

Strategic Design

- Attract and retain participation of low income students and students of color in the full range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities and programs
- Ensure that offerings and activities are culturally representative and relevant to our diverse student body
- Assure that there are no institutional obstacles to equitable participation (e.g. transportation, fees)

Development (Action Steps and Resources)

- Develop ideas for alternative, consistent, and equitable funding sources and distribution to increase access to all students in all schools
- Develop a communication and support system for families to increase their awareness of program values, access, and opportunities
- Promote understanding of the educational value of these programs, which address our equity/diversity goal, to all teachers and administrators
- Gather data explaining why some students don't participate
- Make sure transportation is available on an equitable basis – (among the most critical problems)
- Support for seeking alternative funding and grant applications – centrally coordinated at District level
- Involve site councils to monitor and assess funding needs
- Address alternative scheduling to integrate more opportunities for extended and supplementary programs
- Establish adequate, consistent funding through district budget (especially for transportation)
- Connect events to the curriculum to help address achievement gap and reach out to various segments of the community

Implementation

Evaluation

Criteria for Success -

- Participation of low income students and students of color increases
- Offerings are diverse and accessible to all

Partnerships to Achieve Equity

Family and Community Advocacy and Involvement

Every child needs an advocate to support his or her success in school. Families and community members can be the most effective advocates for children if they are welcomed and engaged by schools, and if they have effective strategies to support student success.

Statement of Need

- Many families are not certain they are welcome in school, especially when they advocate for their children
- Families are often uncertain about school policy and practice and their children's rights and responsibilities in school
- Many school staff members are uncertain about how to collaborate successfully with families, especially with families from backgrounds different than their own

Strategic Design

- Support programs that promote family and community member involvement and educational advocacy, particularly with families who have been marginalized because of poverty and race
- Provide awareness training for faculty and staff to support family and community involvement and advocacy
- Provide successful programs to help families support student performance and participation

Development

Implementation

Evaluation

Criteria for Success -

- Family and community members participate in programs offered and become effective educational advocates for students
- Staff collaborate with and encourage families and community members to become involved in schools
- Parents gain skills and strategies to help students succeed in school
- Levels of student participation and performance increase when parents or guardians attend family advocacy & skill programs

Cultural and Educational Events

All children will have a greater opportunity to grow and flourish if they can participate in a diverse array of cultural and educational events at school and in the community. Their own development and their appreciation for cultures other than their own, regardless of their race or class background, are key ingredients in achieving educational equity.

Statement of Need

- Schools cannot be equitable if some students have access to cultural and educational opportunities that others do not have
- Cultural and educational programs will not reach a diverse student population if those productions are not themselves reflective of a diversity of cultures

Strategic Design

- Create programs and funding to ensure that all students participate in, and families have opportunities to access, the rich diversity of cultural and educational resources in our community and school district
- Ensure that students see own their cultural backgrounds represented in artistic and educational productions
- Help students gain an understanding and appreciation for cultures and ideas other than those from their own realm of experience

Development

Implementation

Evaluation

Criteria for Success -

- Students have had systematic exposure to the major cultural and educational institutions in our community, integrated as part of the curriculum
- Cultural and educational events are representative of the great diversity of our community
- The district and the community regularly collaborate so that students of color, low income students, and their families have increasing access to the rich array of cultural and educational events in Ithaca

Communication

Progress toward equity requires clear, consistent, thorough communication with staff, families, and the community about problems, strategies, successes, and continuing challenges.

Statement of Need

- Our community has not yet achieved a clear, commonly shared understanding of the nature and extent of educational inequity in our school district
- Lack of information leads some to ignore the problems, while others develop a lack of trust that any efforts toward equity are underway and making a difference
- Rumors and misinformation stifle progress and dialogue
- The diversity of our community requires diverse communication strategies

Strategic Design

- Communicate with community on contents of strategic plan for equity, diversity and a safe environment
- Learn from communication with students, staff, families, and community organizations about the nature and extent of problems related to equity
- Acknowledge equity-related problems where they exist and use effective communication strategies to respond to rumors and elicit community support to address problems
- Celebrate success and accomplishments of all students and staff, particularly those who don't often share the spotlight
- Regularly collect information regarding district efforts to promote equity, diversity and a safe environment
- Organize information about the district's efforts in the framework of the 16 elements of the equity strategic plan
- Routinely share information about the district's equity strategies and efforts, highlighting key priorities and initiatives
- Employ a variety of media to reach a variety of audiences
- Use communication strategies to encourage and promote dialogue about equity within the district and broader community

Development (Action Steps and Resources)

- Wherever possible, identify concrete examples of equity issues; tell "real people" stories, in easily accessible language
- Develop communication strategy for each segment of the community
- Use a variety of media
 - School newsletters (that also address district issues)
 - District and school web-sites
 - Face to face interaction
 - Small public forums - Board/staff/community

- Listening tours to community gathering places (GIAC, Southside, churches)
 - Equity presence at school events (table, handouts, fact sheets)
 - Focus groups, especially in rural communities
 - Fact sheets, brochures, PowerPoint presentations
 - Improve regular communication of “good news” to the media
 - Regular series or guest columns on progress toward equity
 - Release lots of “smaller” items to the press, regularly
 - Resist temptation to be encyclopedic; use illustrative examples
 - Pair discussions of problems with discussion of solutions
 - Don’t be Pollyanna
 - Acknowledge limitations of solutions – note they may be partial
 - Generate list of common misunderstandings about equity in the schools; accompany it with verifiable facts and information

Implementation

Evaluation

Criteria for Success -

- The district’s equity strategies and efforts are widely understood by a variety of audiences within the district and broader community
- Effectively and publicly identify problems and celebrate successes
- Information gathering and sharing is routine, systematic, thorough and efficient. Key priorities and initiatives are evident
- A variety of voices contribute to the dialogue about equity

Community Involvement

Achieving educational equity is a goal that requires the support, strategies, and resources of the whole community. A partnership between the school district and the community makes achievement of this goal possible. Success in these efforts will benefit the whole community.

Statement of Need

- Many problems related to educational equity are beyond the scope and resources of the school district
- Schools cannot effect children's lives beyond the school day without an active partnership with the community
- The school district cannot develop and implement an effective equity strategy without the perspective and insights of the broader community
- Many people and organizations in the community are committed to the equity goal, but work in support of it, in partnership with the schools, is not as well coordinated and consistent as it could be

Strategic Design

- Establish Equity Leadership Council to form liaisons between the District and community organizations (The Village, GIAC, Southside Community Center, Latino Civic Association, Asian American Association, city and county agencies, other civic or religious associations, IPEI, Family & Children's Service, law enforcement, Cornell, Ithaca College) in support of the District and community's commitment to educational equity
- Identify concerns and suggestions of community groups related to promoting educational equity in Ithaca
- Identify community resources that can be brought to bear in a collaborative effort in support of equity

Development

Implementation

Evaluation

Criteria for Success -

- Equity Leadership Council flourishes, with regularly scheduled meetings characterized by strong attendance, active engagement, mutual exchange of ideas and strategies, and full representation. The work of the Council is widely communicated across the District and the community.
- Needs and concerns of community groups have been systematically identified. Community suggestions are reflected in the District's Equity Strategic Action Plan.

- Community resources are integrated in the implementation of the District's Equity Strategic Action Plan