

PROBLEM

There is a growing interest in creating and supporting diverse-by-design charter schools. Recent studies indicate that state authorizing bodies are approving diverse-by-design charter school proposals at a higher rate - 64% - than any other school model. (NACSA, March 2019) Research about traditional integrated schools and diverse-by-design charter schools references increase in academic outcomes for youth (Potter, 2019) but there are no valid and reliable tools that exist to help us investigate how these schools are evaluating themselves against key non-academic outcomes that it is assumed this model will achieve: diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Beloved Community has developed an Equity Audit that could help the sector provide that kind of benchmarking. While facilitating equity assessments with organizations, we conducted a landscape analysis of available equity assessment tools to understand what resources our capacity-building clients had available to them. When we realized that we were referring organizations to different tools for school equity, culturally relevant pedagogies, cultural competency curricula, supplier diversity, and talent practices, we decided to build a set of comprehensive indicators where schools could assess their equity capacity in governance, operations, finance, pedagogy, adult culture and youth culture. We developed and tested the indicators with our pilot organizations and then refined them with our advisory council. In December 2018, Beloved Community released the Equity Audit as a free online tool for schools, nonprofits, and for-profit businesses to conduct self-studies of their diversity, equity, and inclusion capacity.

This study will use the Equity Audit to help the field understand how diverse-by-design schools define and identify success indicators for diversity, equity and inclusion. This study will have three key outcomes

- examples of diverse-by-design schools and school networks at different stages in the equity development process, which can serve as a model for authorizing and authorizing and accountability bodies, start-up school incubators, start-up school fellowship programs, and higher education bodies who are supporting the development and sustainability of diverse-by-design schools.
- codified standards for performance in diversity, equity, and inclusion indicators for schools
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- a suite of knowledge products for the field to inform authorizing and accountability bodies, policy advocates, technical assistance providers, and community organizing groups about the development implications for diverse-by-design schools.

PROJECT PURPOSE

This project has two discrete research purposes: 1) validate the Equity Audit tool for use with different types of diverse-by-design schools and school networks; and 2) identify the ways that school communities respond to, and prioritize change based on their Equity Audit results. As a result, this research process will provide clarity on the utilization of the Equity Audit tool and/or changes (and/or additions) to the tool for school use. A secondary result of this research project, will be that federal, state, and local agencies would be able to adopt research-based tools and standards to audit the diversity, equity, and inclusion practice and progress of diverse-by-design charter schools in their portfolios.

Key research questions that this study poses include:

1. What practices do intentionally diverse schools implement to hold themselves accountable to their own measures/standards of success in inclusion and equity?
2. What challenges do intentionally diverse schools face in holding themselves accountable to their own measures/standards of success in inclusion and equity?
3. What trends do we identify in diversity, equity, or inclusion indicator performance for diverse-by-design schools?
4. What priorities do school communities set for improving diversity, equity, and inclusion within their campuses?
5. What relationships exist between performance on the Equity Audit and student performance for different subgroups?

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

This three-year research study will provide validation of the Beloved Community's Equity Audit tool and establish the impact of this tool on organizational change processes for sustainable diversity, equity, and inclusion in schools. Moreover, this study will attempt to understand the qualitative impact of the tool on school culture. Given that organizational cultures reside in how people think, understand and act upon concepts of equity, we recognize that "the high failure rate of school reform [is linked] to a lack of understanding of school culture and advocate for increased descriptive studies of the process of change in school culture" (Henstrand, 2006, p. 2).

The research study will conduct research activities involving

- a psychometric validation of the Equity Audit tool
- an exploratory cross-case study with schools/school networks as units of measure; and
- a standards-setting process to establish performance levels and criteria for adoption

We are using a mixed methods design which includes survey administration, interviews, focus groups and document analysis for data triangulation purposes. School respondents will be identified in partnership with national and local partners. We will draw on the research briefs of diverse-by-design schools and voluntary school district integration conducted by The Century Foundation¹ and Center for Education and Civil Rights² to identify schools for the validation study. From that group of <300 school respondents, we will identify a sampling of **up to 16** for further qualitative study.

- Validate the Equity Audit Instrument with a sample size of $n \geq 300$ of school respondents from our target regions. This validation process includes confirmatory factor analysis of the scales. We will follow the guidelines of Brown (2006³) to justify the fit of the scales. The steps include understanding the database and becoming familiar with the codebook and scales, researching the

¹ National Association of Charter School Authorizers. "Reinvigorating the charter school pipeline" March 2019.

² Potter, H. "The Benefits of Socioeconomically and Racially Integrated Schools and Classrooms" April 29, 2019. The Century Foundation

³ Brown, T. A. (2006). *Confirmatory factor analysis for applied research*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

correlation between scales (in the absence of exploratory factor analyses), data cleaning, recoding of items for directionality (if necessary), confirmatory factor analyses, and interpretation of results. The results will suggest which items to retain and which items to drop. Consultation with Beloved on the results will produce the finalized instrument to use inside schools.

- Use the **standard-setting process** to determine cut scores for the various proficiency levels on the validated Equity in Schools Instrument. Standard-setting will take place over the course of two days and include a ten step procedure to establish the cut scores. The panel will have access to the instrument before they attend the standard-setting convening and will have already familiarized themselves with the instrument and its guidelines. At the convening, the panel of experts will first be trained in the standard setting process. Then, they will review the instrument, and pay keen attention to the established language for the proficiency levels already articulated by the developers of the instrument. The panel of experts will revise the language and agree upon meaning, objectivity, and interpretation. They will then decide upon proficiency levels (standards) for the instrument. Next, they will undergo a series of rounds for inter-rater reliability on the cut-scores. The process culminates with final consensus about standards being made.
- Select sixteen schools/school network sites (four of each type of school/school network) to participate in a **qualitative case study**. Schools included in the qualitative case study will be selected using purposive⁴ sampling in collaboration with Beloved Community staff. Qualitative research activities include: interviews of key stakeholders involved in the assessment and implementation of the Equity Audit action plan; content analysis of school improvement, school governance, and policy documents; content analysis of professional development documents; and review of existing school climate and culture survey data. Each site will be visited twice over the three-year period of the study. The purpose is to use baseline metrics, goals, and measures to develop profiles of different diverse-by-design schools at various stages of their equity journey.
- Conduct longitudinal, statistical analyses of data collected from the Equity Audit tools for schools selected for the qualitative case study. Longitudinal statistical studies employ

⁴ Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research. *Administration and policy in mental health*, 42(5), 533–544. doi:10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y

continuous or repeated measures to follow progress on specific indicators for particular individuals or in the

case of this study, schools, over a period of time. The measurements to be observed across time are the results of the equity audit that will be completed by the same schools at least twice during the study period.

BENEFICIARIES:

The primary beneficiaries of this study will be education administrators who lead diverse-by-design schools. The study will inform the design elements and strategic plan elements to improve their school-based practices. The secondary beneficiaries of the study are education intermediaries -- nonprofit organizations that provide technical assistance to schools. The tertiary beneficiaries are policy advocates in local and federal agencies, including but not limited to education nonprofit organizations and community organizers. The results of this study will inform policy platforms to define specific outcomes for inclusion and equity in diverse-by-design schools.

KEY PARTNERS:

Primary Investigator



Funding Partner



Research Partner Council

National Coalition on School Diversity
Diverse Charter Schools Coalition
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

National Association of Charter School
Authorizers
Education Leaders of Color



Assessing Inclusion and Equity in Diverse-by-Design Schools

Research Brief

National Charter Collaborative

METCO

Magnet Schools of America

Massachusetts Consortium for Innovative

Education Assessment (MCIEA)

The Mind Trust

Indianapolis Public Schools

Office of Education and Innovation (IN)

The Opportunity Trust

Missouri Charter Public School Association

Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation

Missouri Charter Public School Commission

Memphis Education Fund

Tennessee Charter Schools Coalition

Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools

Greater New Orleans Charter Collective

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