

Work Session - Experiences of  
Administrators of Color  
Tuesday, October 11, 2022 5:00 PM

Dr. Matthew Prophet Education Center -  
Windows Cafeteria / Conference Room (Floor  
2)  
501 N. Dixon St.  
Portland, OR 97227

## **Agenda**

1. Experiences of Administrators of Color



# Experiences & Needs of Administrators of Color

School Board Work Session

October 11, 2022



# FORWARD TOGETHER



Destination



Roadmap



Compass





**“To create the conditions for students to thrive, we must foster an environment of belonging, trust, and shared ownership for the success of every student, each other, and the entire school system.”**

**Forward Together Strategic Plan Outcome**

# AOC Current Steering Committee Members & Team Objective

- ★ Chris Frazier
- ★ Chrysanthius Lathan
- ★ Cynthia Velasquez
- ★ Dani Ledezma
- ★ Supt. Guadalupe Guerrero
- ★ Dr. Aisha Hollands
- ★ Dr. Karmin Williams
- ★ Margarita Wilson
- ★ Robbie Davis
- ★ Sharon Reese
- ★ Dr. Cheryl Proctor
- ★ Jonathan Garcia
- ★ Karl Logan

The AOC Steering Committee's goal is to better understand the lived experiences of administrators and leaders of color in PPS. In order to accomplish this, we must establish a school system, where we are collectively supporting AOCs' leadership, retention, ensuring they feel safe, thrive and have a successful career in Portland Public School District.

With support from The Leadership Academy:

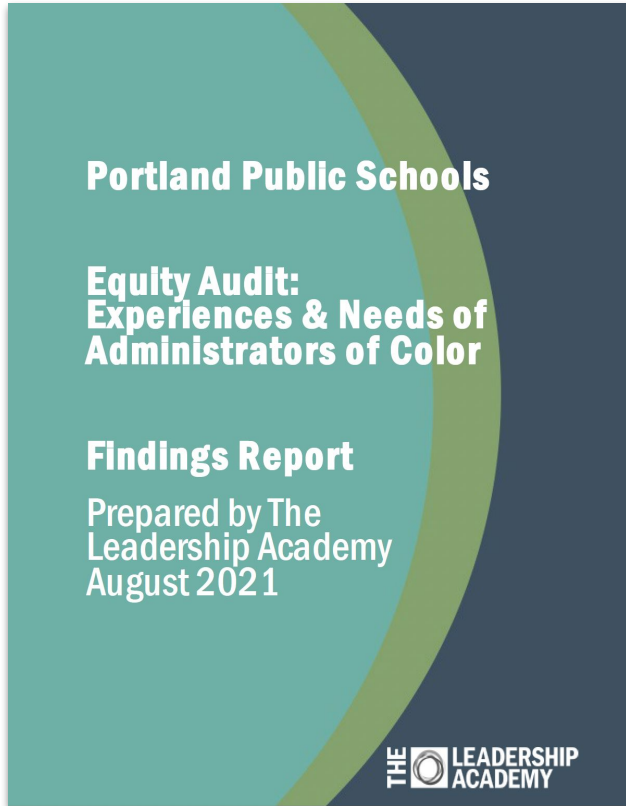
Dr. Michele Shannon, Dr. Mariana Fischer, Rachel Scott, Lindsey Brown

# Context For PPS Equity Audit

## Why the need for an Equity Audit?

- PAPSA bucket of work
- Response to retention and recruitment of Leaders of Color
- Opportunity to collaborate with Superintendent's Cabinet
- Opportunity to listen to and hear from *authentic* voices of Administrators & Leaders of Color experiences and needs
- Monthly AOC Steering Committee (since 11.21- present)

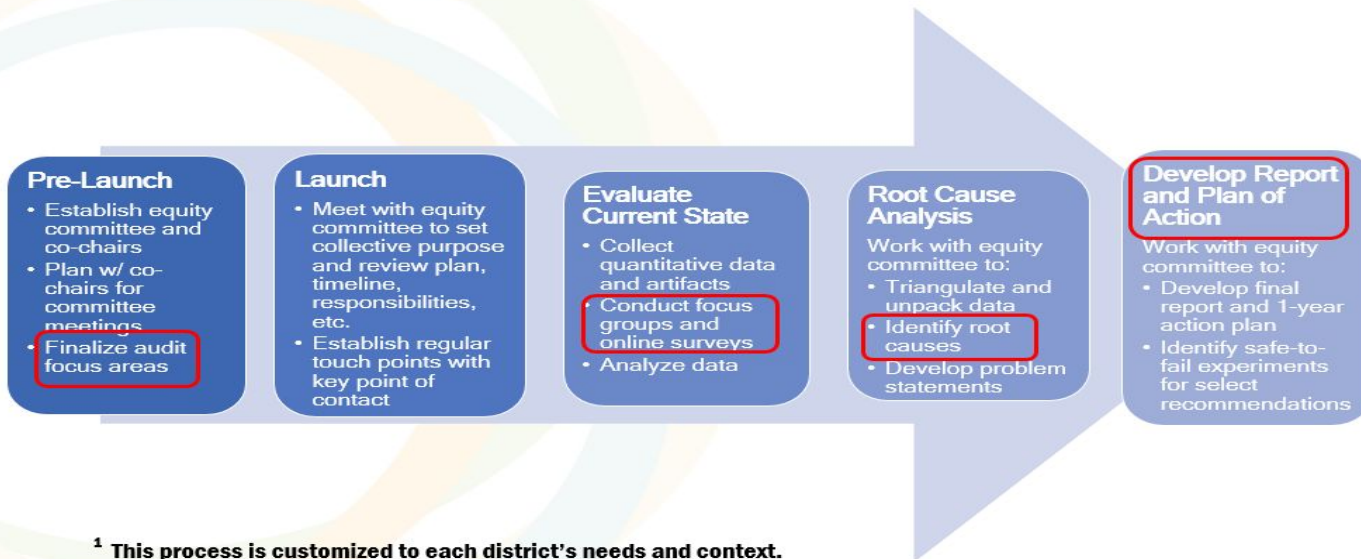
# About the Study



- This report provides us a better understanding of the lived experiences and needs of many of our leaders and administrators of color, and importantly, what we need to thrive in our school system.
- The Study:
  - The study was conducted between May and July of 2021.
  - Of the 123 Administrators of Color invited, 44%, participated in either a survey or a focus group.
    - Focus Group: 33 participants
    - Survey: 21 participants
    - 73% identified as current staff; 23% former staff

# The Leadership Academy's Equity Audit Process

## Our "Typical" Equity Audit Process <sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> This process is customized to each district's needs and context.

Opportunities for district-specific customization



# Experiences & Needs of Admin of Color - Themes

Themes	<b>Summary</b> Eight Focus Groups (33 Participants); Survey Total Responses = 22
<b>Administrators of color are on their own for support</b>	Administrators of color shared that they are often without the support and resources they need to be successful. This includes a lack of formal resources that are relevant to leaders of color, the burden on leaders of color to secure their own support, the usefulness of having a mentor of color, the limited capacity of leaders of color to help support others, and the universal and impersonal nature of the support provided to leaders within the district. (100% Focus Groups; n=8)
<b>The invisibility &amp; isolation of people of color</b>	Leaders of color shared feeling minoritized and marginalized within the district, often feeling isolated, excluded from decisions and information, and brought into support or decisions in inauthentic or ineffective ways. (Focus Groups 88%; n=7)
<b>Differing acceptance and accountability</b>	Leaders of color described an environment in which they feel accepted to a lesser degree and reprimanded to a more significant degree. They described an environment with different or shifting standards for them, in which their behaviors are interpreted differently from their colleagues. (100% Focus Groups; n=8)
<b>Unsupportive leadership</b>	Leaders of color commented on an absence of support or consistent support from the leaders above them in the district. (100% Focus Groups; n=8)
<b>Variable or limited empowerment</b>	In addition to shifting standards and greater acceptance of white peers, administrators of color in most focus groups reported additional detriments to their empowerment as decision-makers and leaders. (75% Focus Groups; n=6)

# Experiences & Needs of Admin of Color - Themes

Themes	<b>Summary</b> Eight Focus Groups (33 Participants); Survey Total Respondents = 22
<b>Environment unsupportive of people of color self- and humanity</b>	Leaders of color commented about the overall drain on their humanity and sense of self that comes from working in the Portland Public Schools culture as a person of color. (50% Focus Groups; n=4)
<b>Feedback not productively received</b>	A large proportion of focus groups indicated their feedback is not welcomed within the district, and they have experienced patterns of having feedback discounted, ignored, or commandeered by white colleagues. There is a hesitation in giving feedback, for fear of retribution or negative attributions. (88% Focus Groups; n=7)
<b>Characteristics of White Dominant Culture</b>	Interviewees were presented with a list of characteristics of white dominant culture and were asked which <b>characteristics</b> are most prominent in Portland Public Schools. Three-fourths of focus groups indicated that all characteristics presented on the list were present in the district. (75% Focus Groups; n=6)
<b>Factors Influencing Whether Leaders of Color Stay or Leave District</b>	<p>Three-fourths of the focus groups shared factors that entice them to leave the district (75% Focus Groups; n=6), while 63% shared what makes them stay within Portland Public Schools. (63% Focus Groups; n=5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay: Work to be done here - Leaders shared their commitment to improving the district and the educational system. By staying in the district there are opportunities to be part of a solution.</li> <li>• Leave: Not valued - Some leaders think of leaving the district because they do not feel appreciated or they do not feel that they can bring their full, authentic self to work. (Reported by 50% (n=4 of focus groups.)</li> </ul>

# Retention of Admin of Color & Student Impact

## When there is a reflection of Educators of Color in a School Building

- Attendance rates for Students of Color increase
- Students of Color have higher student achievement in math
- Referrals to gifted programs for Black and Latinx students increase
- There is a decrease in discipline gaps between Black and White students and discipline referrals decrease for Black students
- GPA's increase, retention goes up, feelings of belonging increases
- When students are paired with race congruent educators, this yields positive effects in reading and higher academic achievement overall
- There is a real impact on student outcomes, socially, emotionally, and academically

# Retention of Admin of Color & Student Impact

## Retention Data for Administrators of Color

- Principal racial and ethnic diversity matters for teacher hiring, retention, and job attitudes. Evidence suggests that assignment to a Black teacher increases the math achievement of Black students, and the presence of a Black principal has positive impacts on Black students' math achievement as well.
- Students of color and teachers benefit from having Black women as principals. Research has shown that Black principals lead to higher student achievement, Black women principals specifically foster higher “collective responsibility” among teachers.
- Two important factors drive student achievement outcomes (a) Quality of the teacher and (b) Quality of the principal. The principal sets the vision, creates the culture and helps to identify, develop, support and inspire great teachers.
- Researchers found that students of color yield higher math achievement when they have administrators of color in buildings.

# Safe to Fail Experiment

Following the release of the report, The Leadership Academy proposed to use the tool, “safe to fail experiment.”

A safe-to-fail experiment allows to try out a wide variety of possible approaches, all with the intention on learning as much as we can while also nudging the system in a desired direction.

Good safe to fail experiments have an asymmetric pay-off: their costs are limited, quite a few will fail, but a few will bring large benefits.

<b>Theme 1:</b> Administrators of Color are on their own for Support	<b>Theme 8:</b> Characteristics of White Dominant Culture
<b>Experiment:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conference/workshop format focus on RESJ (leadership, culturally responsive instruction, keynote speaker)</li><li>• Building AOC Affinity spaces as communal, supportive spaces</li></ul>	<b>Experiment:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inclusion (leaders of color) in significant decision making points in district’s work</li><li>• Decision making tool re: invitation for committee work</li></ul>
<b>Focus:</b> 2022 August Leadership Institute and subsequent admin leadership sessions	<b>Focus:</b> 2022-2023 School Admin Committee Structure

# Safe to Fail Experiment: 2022 August Leadership Institute

**Theme 1:**

Administrators of Color are on their own for Support

**Experiment:**

Conference/ workshop format focus on RESJ (leadership, culturally responsive instruction, keynote speaker)

**Focus:**

2022 August Leadership Institute and subsequent admin leadership sessions

The administrators of color (AOC) committee provided feedback and input on the design of the 2022 Leadership Institute.

- We planned with an focus on supporting AOCs, such that, for example, affinity spaces were structured to build community.
- Keynote Speakers: Dr. Mohammad Khalifa, focused on culture and culturally responsive leadership. Dr. Khalifa provided a brief historical context on the importance of culture and race.
- The focus on our “Individual Racial Why” during leadership institute was driven in response to individuals feeling “drain on their humanity and sense of self that comes from working the PPS culture as a person of color.”
- Initiated the re-imagined work within the AOC Affinity spaces in partnership with Leadership Academy

In addition to August Leadership, we continue to pair newly hired principals of color with a principal coach of color (when it is feasible).

# Safe to Fail Experiment: 2022-23 School Admin Committee Structure

**Theme 8:**  
Characteristics of White  
Dominant Culture

**Experiment:**

- Inclusion (leaders of color) in significant decision making points in district's work
- Decision making tool re: invitation for committee work

**Focus:**

2022-2023 School Admin  
Committee Structure

Research is clear: [School leadership](#) is second only to teaching among school-related factors in impacting student learning. The role of the [central office](#) in helping all schools build their capacity for improvement is vital.

**Together**, school district central office administrators and school leaders can exercise essential leadership to build the collective capacity at PPS to accelerate growth and close opportunity gaps.

To that end, we are resetting, restructuring, and establishing eight administrator committees:

- Gather regular and direct insight (and adapt to new info) from administrators on (a) what is going well? and (b) challenges and barriers
- Will be open to all administrators (participation matrix in development). Each committee will be comprised of up to seven school leaders, a majority identifying as people of color.
- Establish clear protocols that provide consistent, reliable and open information. Create tools that highlight and make visible the impact of administrator participation.
- Regular feedback loop on customer service excellence and on structure and experiences for administrators of color.

# Next Steps

The equity audit report—and the subsequent work—serves as an important marker in our collective understanding of addressing systemic inequities in our district.

We plan to work with administrators of colors to articulate clear and decisive action steps to significantly improve the experience of our leaders of color at PPS.

## Experiment #1

- In October, AOC will work with central office team to design leadership gatherings for the remaining of the school year.
- Focus on matching AOC with mentors of color
- Implementation of Racial Equity Center Principal Pipeline
- District-sponsored in-person social hour affinity space
- Intentional Racial Equity Training for all staff and ongoing coaching and PD
- Intentional hiring, recruiting practices at every level of leadership of having AOC of color

## Experiment #2

- Goal: Committee structure to be finalized and communicated by end of October 2022
- This will include a “Admin Committee Fair” to learn more about the eight committees.
- A continuous feedback loop tool will be finalized and shared with all administrators to monitor impact of committee structure.

# Additional Safe to Fail Experiments to Pursue (Based on Root Cause Analysis work)

- Provide racial equity training across the system, focused on implicit bias and identifying white-dominant culture
- Provide affinity structures for Administrators of Color
- Cultivate a leadership pipeline that centers the needs of Admins of Color
- Focus on hiring and retaining Administrators of color at every level of the system, (this requires training staff on implicit bias in hiring)
- Re-introduce the Courageous Conversations protocol for use throughout the system
- Institute regular equity audits throughout district departments
- Create intentional supports for Administrators of Color who are serving in predominantly white schools



# **Portland Public Schools**

## **Equity Audit: Experiences & Needs of Administrators of Color**

### **Findings Report**

**Prepared by The  
Leadership Academy  
August 2021**

# Portland Public Schools Equity Audit Findings

## Report prepared by The Leadership Academy, August 2021

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# Portland Public Schools Equity Audit Findings

## Report prepared by The Leadership Academy, August 2021

### Introduction

The Portland Public Schools (PPS) Superintendent Leadership Team, together with the members of the Administrators of Color Steering Committee, has conducted a focused equity audit with support from The Leadership Academy. In an equitable system, each person has what they needed to thrive and be successful. Through this audit, PPS staff hope to learn what administrators of color are experiencing across the district and what they need to thrive, especially as many have left the district in recent years. The equity audit would help PPS to better understand the specific experiences and needs of administrators of color and identify strategies and next steps for retaining and supporting them.

The Leadership Academy’s approach to equity audits is to conduct an audit of the specific areas of greatest concern, as opposed to conducting an audit of all possible areas of inequity. Under this approach, the data collection, root cause analyses, and action planning of the equity audit process are tightly focused, leading to the ability to both *discern* the underlying causes, structures, and mental models supporting inequities and then *devise solutions* that effectively address those inequities. Future equity audits could examine

For this equity audit, the areas of focus were determined by the PPS staff (Superintendent Leadership Team, together with the members of the Administrators of Color Steering Committee) were specifically about the experiences and needs of administrators of color. The PPS equity audit committee informed the audit process by engaging various stakeholders to determine focus group and survey questions and target sample. As such, current or former administrators of color were eligible to participate in this equity audit (a total possible sample of 123 leaders). These leaders were current or former assistant principals, principals, or district leaders; they were not cabinet level district leaders. A total of eight focus groups were conducted and included the following stakeholders: PPS staff of color who are Supervisors and above, staff who have worked in the district and/or position for 6 or more months, and administrators who are no longer employed with the district. All 123 eligible individuals were emailed instructions for how to sign up for a focus group or complete a survey. Of those 123 individuals, 33 participants attended the focus groups and 21 individuals elected to complete an online survey. All survey respondents (100%) and the majority of focus group participants (73%) were current staff members; 27% of focus group participants were former staff members. The survey respondents selected the race/ethnicity with which they identified: Hispanic/Latinx (n=11); Black/African American (n=5); Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander (n=2); multi-racial (n=2); Indigenous (n=1); no answer (n=1).

#### PPS Equity Audit at a Glance:

**What:** Focused equity audit – examining experiences and needs of PPS administrators of color to inform solutions to inequities

**When:** May – July 2021

**Who:** 123 eligible leaders of color; 54 (44%) participated

The equity committee met between May and July 2021 to identify data, develop questions and surveys to collect stakeholder perspectives. This audit began with input from administrators of color and will move to action planning and shared development of metrics for tracking progress. Upon receipt of this report, the Portland Public Schools equity committee will use the data presented to engage stakeholders in building the collaborative action plan in August and beyond.


## Audit Findings


One hundred and twenty-three individuals were invited to participate in the data collection process via a Focus Group, or the survey; 33 participants (total) attended one of eight Focus Groups and 21 individuals elected to complete a survey. Themes and sub-themes of findings are presented below, with the number of focus groups expressing each theme indicated (“n” reflects how many of the eight total focus groups that supported each theme or sub-theme). Themes that were supported by more than half (five or more of the eight focus groups) are marked as a ‘main theme’. Survey results are shared in alignment with the themes.


### Theme 1: Administrators of color are on their own for Support

All focus groups (100%; n=8) noted that administrators of color are often without the support and resources that they need to be successful. Within this theme, they identified a lack of formal resources that are relevant to leaders of color, the burden on leaders of color to secure their own support, the usefulness of having a mentor of color, the limited capacity of leaders of color to help support others, and the universal and impersonal nature of the support provided to leaders within the district.

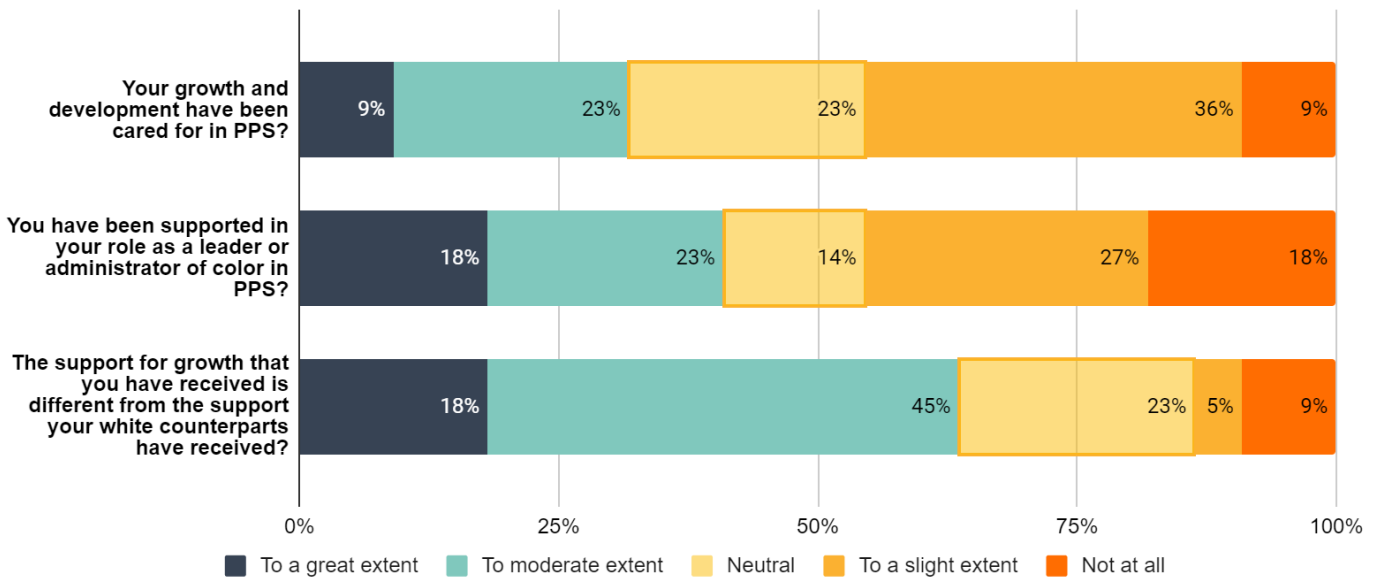
- **Nonexistent Formal Resources:** Those interviewed raised that formal resources or support for leaders of color do not exist, or they existed previously and were discontinued. When formal support is available, it is not relevant to the personal or professional experiences of leaders of color. (Reported by 88% (n=7) of focus groups.)


- **Self-Advocacy Required:** In Portland Public Schools, leaders of color find that they have to self-advocate for resources and support in their leadership. It is up to them to secure support and development that relates to their experiences as leaders of color. (Reported by 63% (n=5) of focus groups.)


- **Mentorship by Leaders of Color:** Focus group respondents reported how helpful it has been to have been mentored by another person of color, whether formally or informally. Many reported that mentoring and support from a fellow person of color is head and shoulders more useful and valuable than other sources of support. (Reported by 63% (n=5) of focus groups.)



- **Capacity to Mentor:** While it is valuable to be mentored by fellow leaders of color, respondents noted that this places additional burden on people of color. Leaders of color may desire to be mentors but are overextended and have limited space on their own plates to provide all the support needed by other leaders of color coming up the ranks. (Reported by 25% (n=2) of focus groups.)
- **One Size Fits All:** Some respondents indicated that district support opportunities and leadership spaces are created in a spirit of 'one size fits all'. Offerings and environments are not changed for leaders of color or created with multiple people, styles, or needs in mind. Respondents indicated that they felt the offerings are not meant for them as people of color. (Reported by 50% (n=4) of focus groups.)

## Theme 1 Survey Results: Support and Development within PPS (n=22)



## Theme 2: The invisibility & isolation of POC


The majority of focus groups (88%; n=7) described how Portland Public Schools leaders of color feel minoritized and marginalized within the district, often feeling isolated, excluded from decisions and information, and brought into support or decisions in inauthentic or ineffective ways.


- Feeling unseen, unknown:** Administrators of color in Portland Public Schools spoke of feeling that they exist in the margins and often report feeling unseen or unknown within the district and by leaders above them. They named feeling isolated and invisible. (Reported by 88% (n=7 of focus groups.) 
- No voice in larger decisions:** Respondents spoke of not being involved in decisions - that they are not asked to be 'at the table' for decisions, resulting in their voice not included or valued. (Reported by 38% (n=3 of focus groups.)
- Being invited, but not included:** Respondents also spoke of times when they are invited to the decision making 'table' or to a professional opportunity, but their contributions or involvement is not included or valued. (Reported by 38% (n=3 of focus groups.)
- Leaders of color as an afterthought or token:** Leaders of color shared experiences in which they felt they were brought in or considered in inauthentic manners, such as being an afterthought and being involved too late to really shape directions, or feeling like they are a token, and their involvement checks a box for inclusivity. (Reported by 38% (n=3 of focus groups.)
- Leaders of color are not informed:** Some leaders of color also reported feeling in the dark, with white colleagues seeming to be more "in the know" (knowing more, knowing earlier). (Reported by 25% (n=2 of focus groups.)


### Theme 3: Differing acceptance & accountability

All focus groups (100%; n=8) described an environment in which they are accepted to a lesser degree and reprimanded to a more significant degree. They also described an environment with different or shifting standards for them, in which their behaviors are interpreted differently from their colleagues.

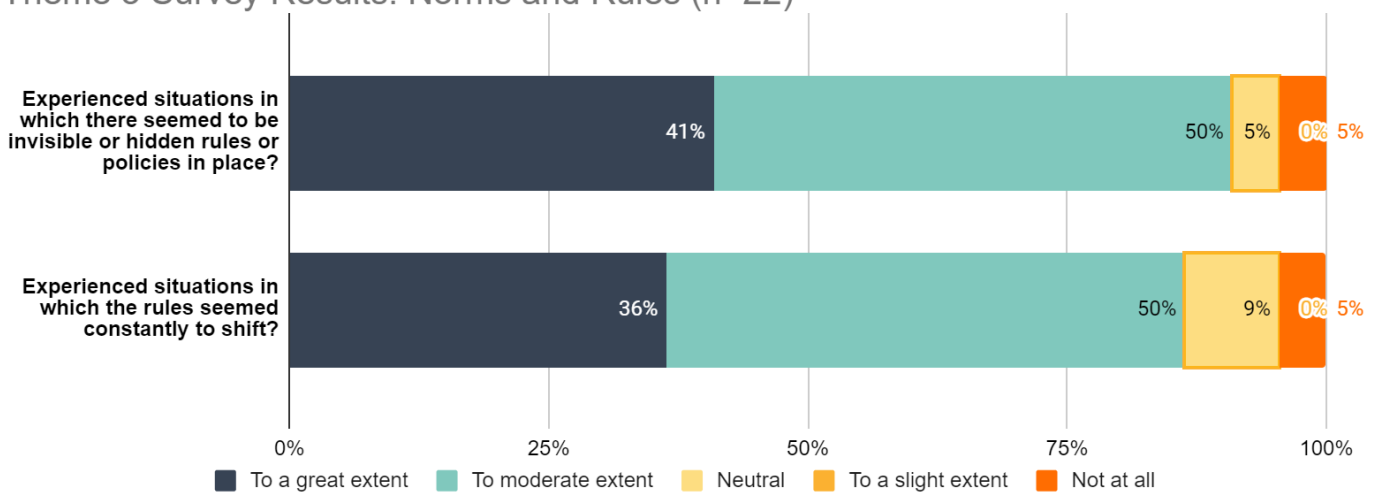
- Shifting standards, norms, interpretations:** Leaders of color reported several examples of experiences in which similar behaviors among leaders are interpreted differently, based on race. In some instances, rules needed to be followed more strictly by people of color but were more loosely applied to white colleagues. In other instances, leaders of color were limited in their decision-making authority because whiteness and white privilege were prioritized and rewarded. The acceptable processes surrounding decision-making have been anchored in whiteness (prioritizing written word, deprioritizing relationships, operating with those already 'in the know', etc.) and have created an environment in which people of color feel less accepted and integrated. (Reported by 100% (n=8 of focus groups.)


- Harsher treatment:** Nearly every focus group reflected on experiences in which they experienced dire consequences and were quickly moved to reprimand or consequences for behaviors or comments that did not elicit the same reaction for white peers. (Reported by 88% (n=7 of focus groups.)


- Accountability flawed:** When looking to systems of accountability for improving the conditions for leaders of color, respondents found those systems to be flawed, inconsistent, or missing. They find that there is limited accountability for white peers, while leaders of color feel unsteady and unsafe in engaging the accountability structures that do exist. (Reported by 75% (n=6 of focus groups.)


- Different bar:** Those interviewed described the context of Portland Public Schools as supporting and rewarding white mediocracy, resulting in leaders of color having to work harder and shoulder more stress in their positions. (Reported by 38% (n=3 of focus groups.)

#### Theme 3 Survey Results: Norms and Rules (n=22)



## Theme 4: Unsupportive leadership

Every focus group (100%; n=8) commented on an absence of support or consistent support from the leaders above them in the district.



- **Who you know:** According to interviewees, connections are seen as the route for support or progress: if you know the right people, you advance. If you don't, then you stay stagnant in your career. District leaders are seen as gatekeepers who can tap certain staff to advance or listen more favorably to certain requests to advance. The people in power reward people who are like them in behaviors or backgrounds. (Reported by 75% (n=6 of focus groups.)
- **Performative leadership:** Participants felt the district leaders are not earnest in leading, supporting, or hearing feedback from leaders of color or in advancing district equity. They felt the district leaders' focus is less on the internal district and more on being responsive to and representing well to the school board, to white parents, to Portland Public School's national reputation, etc. (Reported by 50% (n=4 of focus groups.)
- **Shifting experiences with superintendent leadership:** Leaders indicated changes in types and styles of support across recent superintendents. (Reported by 38% (n=3 of focus groups.)

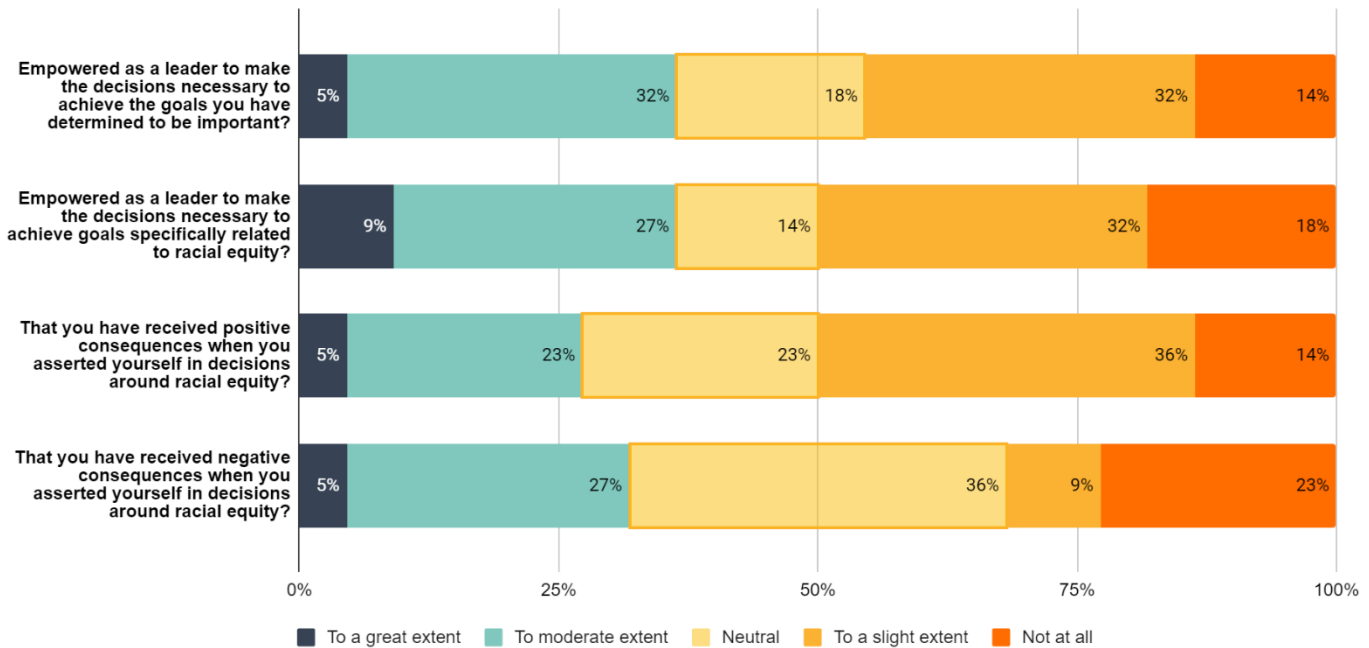
## Theme 5: Variable or limited empowerment

In addition to the above referenced shifting standards and greater acceptance of white peers, most focus groups (75%; n=6) reported additional detriments to their empowerment as a decision-maker and leader.



- **Variable empowerment:** Leaders of color named that they do not consistently feel empowered to make decisions; rather, their sense of empowerment varies depending on their team (or other people involved), the type of decision, and the possible repercussions. (Reported by 63% (n=5 of focus groups.)
- **Kids not prioritized:** Respondents spoke of anchoring their decisions in students' needs, but feeling thwarted when surrounding decisions, conversations, or practices are not keeping students at the core. (Reported by 50% (n=4 of focus groups.)
- **No one has your back:** Respondents described limited decision-making empowerment because of a sense that no one has their back; if they make an unfavorable decision, people may shift course and not stand behind them and their leadership. (Reported by 38% (n=3 of focus groups.)

### Theme 5 Survey Results: Empowerment (n=22)



### Theme 6: Environment unsupportive of POC self and humanity


Half of the focus groups (50%; n=4) spoke about the overall drain on their humanity and sense of self that comes from working in the Portland Public Schools culture as a person of color.


- Undermined self-worth:** Respondents reported that the Portland Public Schools culture leads people of color to doubt their value, identity, skill as people and professionals. (Reported by 50% (n=4 of focus groups).)
- Forced inauthenticity:** Leaders also shared experiences in which they felt they had to hide part of their identity or be inauthentic about oneself and not bring their full self into the workplace. (Reported by 38% (n=3 of focus groups).)


## Theme 7: Feedback not productively received

A large proportion of focus groups (88%; n=7) indicated their feedback is not welcomed within the district, and have experienced patterns of having feedback discounted, ignored, or commandeered by white colleagues. There is a hesitation in giving feedback, for fear of retribution or negative attributions.

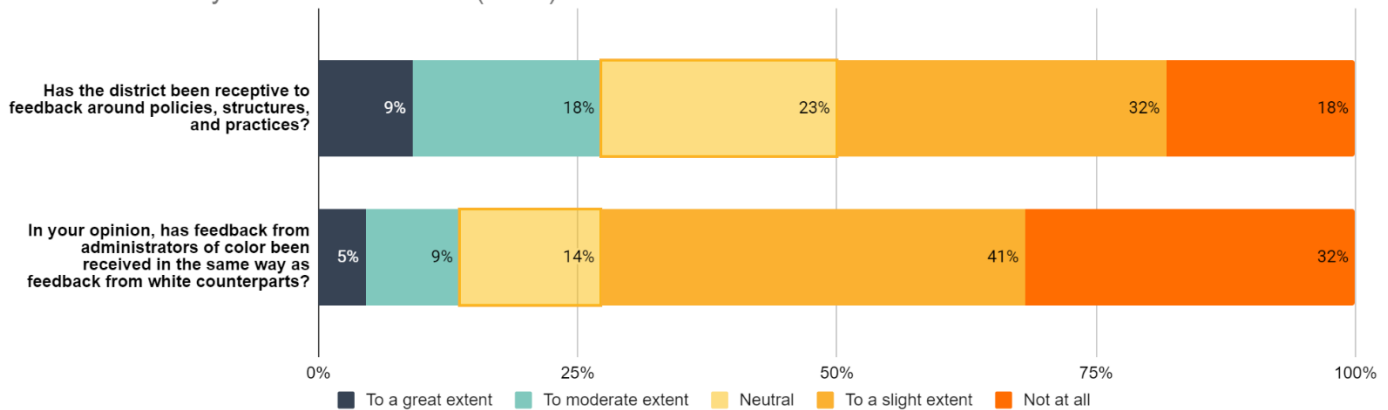
- Feedback falls flat:** Focus group participants reported several instances of sharing feedback but having it be ignored, with no action taken as a result of feedback, and no change resulting. (Reported by 75% (n=6 of focus groups.)


- Personalized & discounted:** Administrators of color experienced their feedback not given credence, such that their feedback is made out to be unique to that person, and therefore not worthy of change or attention, and then discounted. (Reported by 63% (n=5 of focus groups.)


- Distrust:** Respondents expressed a fear of retaliation for feedback, resulting in a tendency to not provide feedback and instead hold one's tongue for fear of retribution. (Reported by 63% (n=5 of focus groups.)


- Lack of transparency/data:** Concerns were raised by those interviewed about the lack of transparency and lack of data on decisions, processes, feedback loops, etc., within the district. (Reported by 50% (n=4 of focus groups.)
- Change & credit happens through white colleagues:** Some leaders of color observed a pattern of ideas only being received when a white colleague voiced the same feedback as the leader of color. At the same time, some leaders have identified white colleagues as allies who can put forth ideas or feedback, since the ideas are not received from the leaders of color. (Reported by 38% (n=3 of focus groups.)

Theme 7 Survey Results: Feedback (n=22)



## Theme 8: Characteristics of White Dominant Culture

Interviewees were presented with a list of characteristics of white dominant culture and were asked which [characteristics](#) are most prominent in Portland Public Schools. Three-fourths of focus groups (75%; n=6) indicated that all characteristics presented on the list were present in the district.

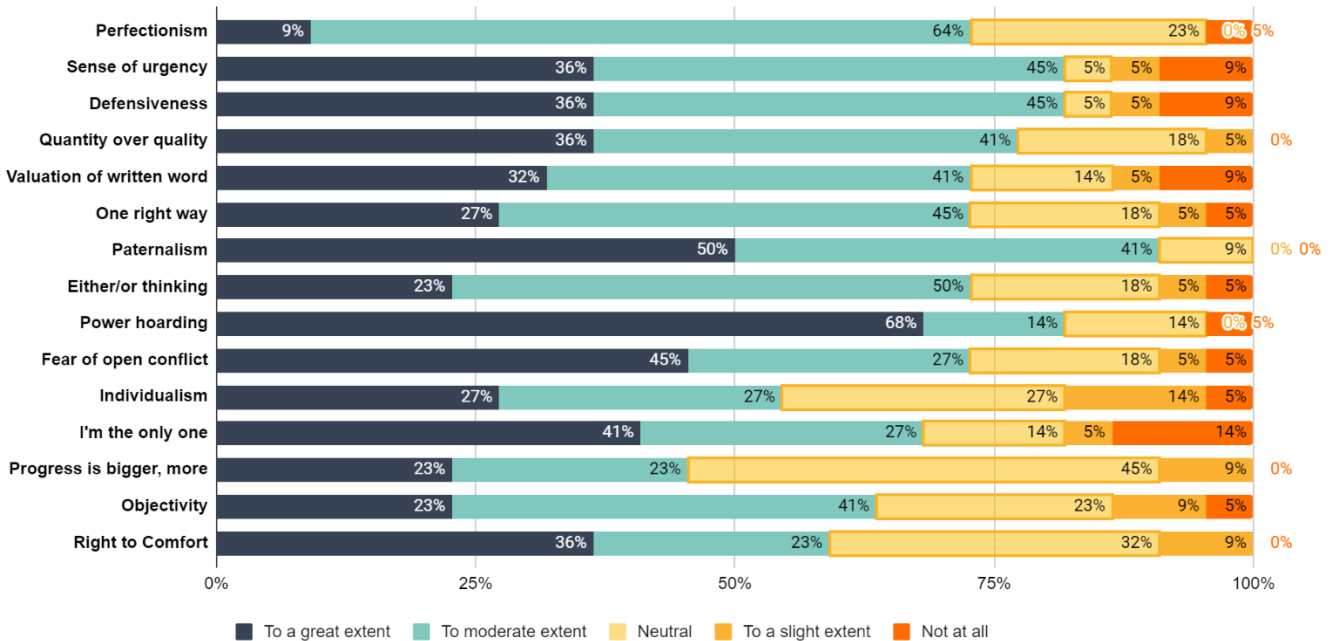
The traits most commonly named were:

- ★ Main Theme

• **Power hoarding:** Power hoarding views power as a finite resource. Those with power assume they have the best interests of the organization at heart and feel threatened when anyone suggests changes. (Reported by 75% (n=6 of focus groups.)
- ★ Main Theme


• **Sense of urgency:** A continued sense of urgency gets in the way of being inclusive, intentional, to encourage democratic and/or thoughtful decision-making, and to separate out what is important from what feels most pressing. (Reported by 75% (n=6 of focus groups.)
- **Defensiveness:** In a culture of defensiveness, power is protected. New or challenging ideas are met with defensiveness and criticism is viewed as threatening. (Reported by 50% (n=4 of focus groups.)
- **Quantity over quality:** In this space, what can be measured is more highly valued than those that cannot. There is little to no value attached to process, complexity, or emotional responses. (Reported by 50% (n=4 of focus groups.)
- **Individualism:** With individualism, there is a belief that problems are best handled alone. Competition is more highly valued than cooperation and there is a desire for individual recognition or credit. (Reported by 38% (n=3 of focus groups.)
- **Perfectionism:** Perfectionism is the tendency to focus on what is wrong, to view mistakes as person (i.e., making a mistake is confused with being a mistake) and little time or energy is put into reflection or improvement.
- **Worship of the written word:** This belief is that information must be shared through writing. Other ways in which information gets shared is not valued. (Reported by 38% (n=3 of focus groups.)

### Theme 8 Survey Results: Characteristics of White Dominant Culture (n=22)



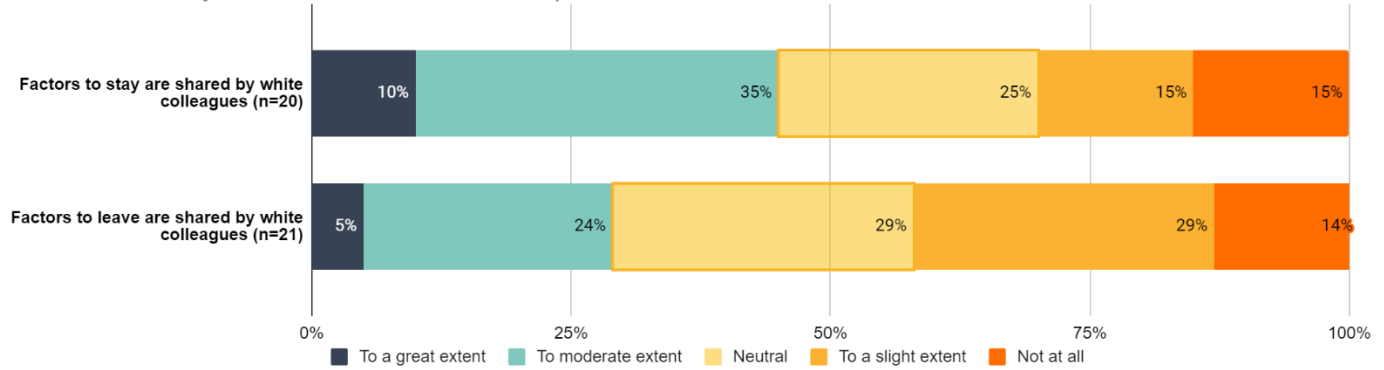
### Theme 9: Factors Influencing Whether Leaders of Color Stay or Leave District

Three-fourths of the focus groups (75%: n=6) shared factors that entice them to leave the district, while 63% shared what makes them stay within Portland Public Schools.

- Stay: Work to be done here:** Leaders shared their commitment to improving the district and the educational system. By staying in the district there are opportunities to be part of a solution. (Reported by 63% (n=5 of focus groups.)
 
- Stay: kids, families:** Leaders talked about the direct impact they feel they have (or can have) on students and families, especially students and families of color. (Reported by 50% (n=4 of focus groups.)
- Stay: Portland is home:** Leaders interviewed also spoke of the loyalty they feel to Portland. Portland is their home and their community. (Reported by 38% (n=3 of focus groups.)
- Stay: proof of momentum:** Leaders recognize that there has been professional momentum - 'tenure', dues paid here, retirement banking. Leaders who want to continue to advance their career are worried that if leave, they would have to start from a lower position. (Reported by 25% (n=2 of focus groups.)
- Leave: not valued:** Some leaders think of leaving the district because they do not feel appreciated or they do not feel that they can bring their full, authentic self to work. (Reported by 50% (n=4 of focus groups.)

- Leave: opportunity for growth elsewhere:** Leaders are also thinking about the possible opportunities for professional development and advancement elsewhere, and the opportunity to affect education more elsewhere. (Reported by 38% (n=3 of focus groups.)

Theme 9 Survey Results: Retention and Departure Factors



Note: Survey participants were asked the same questions about factors for staying in or leaving the district. Their responses and comments heavily overlapped with the sentiments shared by focus group participants. In addition, they were asked the degree to which they felt the factors they mentions are shared among their white counterparts. Their responses reflected sentiment that the factors making leaders of color want to leave are more unique to people of color within the PPS culture.

## Appendix

### Supporting Research for Equity Audits

Over the last four decades, the U.S. public school student population has become more ethnically, linguistically, and economically diverse (Ming & Dukes, 2006; Minkos et al., 2017). At the same time, the U.S. public education system has remained rooted in middle-class, Euro-Centric values, leading many schools to ignore or downplay the strengths of diverse students and their families (Bazron, Osher, & Fleishman, 2005). This cultural disconnect has led to a history of racial and ethnic disparities in educational access, participation, and attainment. For example, students of color and economically disadvantaged students are more likely to have inexperienced teachers, attend under-funded schools and face lower expectations as evidenced by less challenging curriculums (Mayfield & Garrison-Wade, 2015). Black and Latinx students are less likely to attend schools where advanced courses are offered, and when they do, they are less likely to be enrolled in those courses (Patrick, Socol & Morgan, 2020).

Policies that require leaders to address these disparities have not been enough to address them (Khalifa et al., 2016). Educational equity requires a look at the underlying systemic contributors that underlie and perpetuate the inequities present in the learning opportunities of students (O’Day & Smith, 2016). Equity audits offer a practical process for developing a more comprehensive, insightful understanding of the inequities that exist in districts and school (Skrla et al., 2004).

In Portland, the equity audit committee recognizes the experiences of administrators of color to be representative of the experiences of other staff members and students of color throughout the system—and not only representative, but directly tied together. For students of color to be able to learn from teachers and leaders who share racial and cultural identities with them, Portland must be a place where leaders of color can be affirmed, supported, and do their best work. In taking action to ensure the success and well-being of leaders of color, Portland will be taking steps to ensure the success and well-being of Black, Indigenous, and children of color throughout the system.

In the educational and work environment, racial and ethnic minorities generally have different experiences than their white counterparts. This may include feeling less connected to organizational information, power and influence; having less social support; and feeling like they do not fit into the organization to the same extent as their peers (Smith & Calasanti, 2005). Due to these different experiences, educational leaders who are members of historically underserved groups in the United States may practice educational leadership through different filters of experience. Research suggests that educators of color tend to think differently about how to create effective teams and communicate ideas, and how students reach goals. As a result of historical and often shared oppressions, they tend to challenge assumptions about ways in which systems function, and as a result, may be more likely to promote multiculturalism or social justice (Santamaria, 2013).

## Overview of Audit Process

The Leadership Academy’s equity audit process enables districts to diagnose their current state of equity and to identify focal points and recommended strategies for making improvements. The audit process is broken up into four distinct phases.



In the pre-launch, a committee representing a cross-section of internal and external stakeholders is formed to help lead the work. In the project launch, the equity committee contributes to shaping an equity goal and helps to identify data sources. Next, insights and feedback are collected from staff through a series of focus groups and surveys, and the collection of district data and policies to help capture the district’s current state. Once the Leadership Academy’s Research & Evaluation team synthesizes all the data and feedback, the committee engages in a root cause analysis in order to ensure proposed strategies are aligned to the real challenges the district needs to address. Finally, through a cycle inquiry, the committee shapes shape strategies and action plans to address the inequities surfaced.

For this PPS equity audit, Robbie Davis, now principal of daVinci Middle School, served as primary chair to the core equity committee that helped to inform the audit process. Also, on the committee were various stakeholders to assess the current state of Portland Public Schools and work collaboratively on the equity audit and action planning (please note that the titles below are current, and that several have changed since the equity audit began):

- **Robbie Davis**, Principal of daVinci Arts Middle School
- **Dr. Kimberly Matier**, former Senior Director of Professional Learning & Leadership
- **Dr. Karmin Williams**, Principal of Faubion School
- **Dr. Aisha Hollands**, Director of Workforce Diversity, Training & Development
- **Dr. Shawn Bird**, Deputy Superintendent, Instruction and School Communities

The Portland Public Schools equity committee met between May and July 2021 to identify data, develop questions and surveys to collect stakeholder perspectives, and will engage in the action planning process to help inform next steps for Portland Public Schools in August and beyond.

## Timeline of Committee Work

Meeting Date	Agenda
May 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2021	<p>Participants: Main Equity Committee, The Leadership Academy Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch project – define deliverables and objectives</li> <li>• Created norms for working together</li> <li>• Reviewed Equity at Work tool</li> <li>• Discussed additional committee members</li> <li>• Starting scheduling out potential Focus Group times/participant list</li> </ul> <p>Interim work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Leadership Academy reviews policies and provided PPS artifacts</li> </ul>
May 17 <sup>th</sup> , 2021	<p>Participants: Main Equity Committee, Chief of Schools staff, The Leadership Academy Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewed bank of Focus Group questions generated by The Leadership Academy based on policy-review and provided PPS artifacts</li> </ul>
June 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2021	<p>Participants: Main Equity Committee, The Leadership Academy Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued review of bank of Focus Group questions</li> <li>• Revised scheduling</li> </ul> <p>Interim work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PPS team begins to gather participant list and former AOCs</li> </ul>
June 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2021	<p>Participants: Main Equity Committee, The Leadership Academy Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalized bank of Focus Group questions</li> <li>• Review Focus Group Facilitator Guide</li> <li>• Finalize Focus Group groupings</li> </ul> <p>Interim work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PPS sends out initial communication around signing up for Focus Groups</li> </ul>
June 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2021	<p>Participants: Main Equity Committee, The Leadership Academy Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalize Focus Group groupings and comms</li> <li>• Confirm facilitator/note-taker roles</li> <li>• Discuss Likert scale survey for post-Focus Group</li> </ul>
June 22 <sup>nd</sup> - June 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2021	Conducted 8 Affinity-Based Focus Groups
June 23 <sup>rd</sup> , 2021	<p>Check-In</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check-in around how Focus Groups are going; any updates</li> <li>• Confirm sending reminders</li> <li>• Contract extensions</li> <li>• Likert scale survey review</li> </ul>
June 28 <sup>th</sup> , 2021	<p>Participants: Main Equity Committee, The Leadership Academy Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalize Likert scale survey</li> </ul> <p>Interim work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalize communication strategy for survey</li> </ul>
August 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2021	Data Analysis Review Part #1
August 17 <sup>th</sup> , 2021	Data Analysis Review Part #2
August 19 <sup>th</sup> , 2021	Meaning-Making Meeting
August 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2021	Action Planning Meeting

## Data Collection and Sample

To establish the current state of equity in the district, the Leadership Academy, with the cooperation and assistance of Portland Public School staff, collected data through focus groups. The purpose of the focus groups was to understand the experiences and perspectives of stakeholders within the district. Focus group questions were created collaboratively between the Leadership Academy team and the Portland Public Schools Equity Audit Committee. A total of 8 focus groups were conducted and included the following stakeholders: PPS staff of color who are Supervisors and above, as well as staff who have worked in the district and/or position for 6 or more months. All 123 eligible individuals were emailed instructions for how to sign up for a focus group or complete a survey. All participants who were invited to the Focus Groups, whether or not they were able to attend, received an online data collection form was created containing the same questions asked to focus groups. The questions allowed for a mixed response of Likert-scale responses and open-ended responses. Of the 123 eligible individuals, 33 participants attended the focus groups and 21 individuals elected to complete an online survey. All survey respondents (100%) and the majority of focus group participants (73%) were current staff members; 27% of focus group participants were former staff members. The survey respondents selected the race/ethnicity with which they identified: Hispanic/Latinx (n=11); Black/African American (n=5); Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander (n=2); Multi-racial (n=2); Indigenous (n=1); no answer (n=1).

## Data Analysis

Leadership Academy staff took extensive notes during the focus groups. The Leadership Academy's Research & Evaluation team coded these focus groups according to the discussion topic (e.g., focus group guide question), and the themes within each topic. Themes that emerged repeatedly across focus groups serve as the findings. Survey responses were examined by the percentage of respondents who selected each answer option for each of the Likert scale questions, and open-ended responses were analyzed similarly to the focus group data.

## Focus Group Protocol

(Note: The questions were asked in an order that made sense for flow of conversation, but always starting with Topic 1, Question 1. Not all groups answered all questions, depending on time and flow of conversation.)

### *Topic 1: Talent Management/Relationships*

1. To what extent do you feel your growth and development are cared for in PPS?
  - a. Can you describe the ways you've been supported in your role as a leader or administrator of color in PPS?
  - b. How if at all do you perceive support for growth to be different for your white counterparts?
  - c. Describe the types of people, behaviors, relationships, and experiences that are rewarded in PPS.
2. What makes you stay in the district? What might make you leave?
  - a. To what extent do you believe these factors are shared among your white peers?

### *Topic 2: Accountability/Communication*

1. When and under what circumstances do you feel empowered as a leader to make the decisions necessary to achieve the goals you have determined to be important?
  - a. Would you answer this question differently if the decisions were specifically related to racial equity?
  - b. If so, what positive or negative consequences have you experienced when you asserted yourself in decisions around racial equity?
2. How receptive is the system to feedback around policies, structures, and practices? Is feedback from administrators of color received in the same way as feedback from your white counterparts, from your point of view?

### *Topic 3: Culture/Identity*

1. We'd like to ask you about unspoken norms in the district—related to decision making, social structures, etc. Have you experienced situations where there seemed to be invisible or hidden rules or policies in place—or where the rules seemed constantly to shift? If so, please explain.
2. Which elements of white dominant culture do you experience regularly in PPS? ([provide list of descriptions](#))

## Survey

### *Email language*

*(sent June 2021, reflective of titles of committee at the time)*

**Portland Public School District** is engaging in an Equity Audit process with The Leadership Academy to help us diagnose the current state of equity in the district and to identify focal points and next steps for making improvements. The Equity Audit will allow Portland Public Schools the opportunity to better understand the experiences and needs of leaders and administrators of color and to identify strategies and next steps for retaining and supporting these leaders, especially as we know many have left the district in recent years.

We have chosen to partner with The Leadership Academy, an educational non-profit whose work focuses on building the capacity of educational leaders through leadership training to confront inequities & create conditions for students to thrive. The Leadership Academy will support and co-facilitate Focus Groups with PPS staff, as well as, provide thought-partnership around the data analysis of feedback. To learn more about The Leadership Academy, please visit:

<https://www.leadershipacademy.org/>

**We are providing a survey for those Administrators/Leaders of Color in PPS who were invited to participate in the Focus Groups but were unable to attend.** Administrators/Leaders who were able to attend a Focus Group can also fill out the survey, if they so choose.

This survey is a mix of scale responses, with opportunities for open-ended replies. We envision it should take you no longer than **15 minutes to complete**. **All responses will be confidential.** No email addresses will be collected by the survey. To that nature, we respectfully request that you do not forward or share this survey with anyone else.

**Use the link to access the survey:**

[https://nycleadershipacademy.iad1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_82log7yZrY1iuyj](https://nycleadershipacademy.iad1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_82log7yZrY1iuyj)

Your input is valued and will help future decisions as it pertains to the racial climate of our district.

Thank you,

Administrators of Color Steering Committee Equity Audit Subgroup

Robbie Davis, Assistant Principal of Beaumont Middle School

Dr. Kimberly Matier, Senior Director of Professional Learning & Leadership

Dr. Karmin Williams, Principal of Faubion

Dr. Aisha Hollands, Director of Workforce Diversity, Training & Development

### *Survey language*

Portland Public Schools is participating in an equity audit with support and assistance from The Leadership Academy. The purpose of the audit is to better understand the experiences and needs of administrators of color so we can make sure we are retaining and supporting leaders of color in our system, especially as we know many have left the district in recent years. In an equitable system, each person, regardless of circumstances, would have what they needed to thrive and be successful.

Through a series of focus groups and this survey, we hope to learn what administrators of color are experiencing across the district and what they need to thrive and be successful. Working with The Leadership Academy, the Administrators of Color Steering Committee will be collaboratively creating a set of recommendations to guide our racial equity work for the district. The focus is on principals, assistant principals, and central office leaders.

We estimate that this survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Please complete this survey **by end of day, July 9th**. Should you experience any difficulty using this survey, please contact the Leadership Academy research team ([research@leadershipacademy.org](mailto:research@leadershipacademy.org); [mvaldez@leadershipacademy.org](mailto:mvaldez@leadershipacademy.org)).

Please know that we will not ask for your name on this form. It is completely anonymous and all responses will remain confidential. All data will be analyzed by The Leadership Academy and your specific answers cannot be traced back to you or shared with your employer. Data will only be shared in the aggregate.

## RESPONSES WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL

Did you attend a focus group in June 2021 as part of this equity audit?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Please indicate the race/ethnicity with which you most identify as a Leader of Color within Portland Public Schools.

- Black/African-American (current PPS staff)
- Hispanic/Latinx (current PPS staff)
- Asian/AAPI (current PPS staff)
- Multi-Racial (current PPS staff)
- Indigenous (current PPS staff)
- Past PPS Leader of Color (not current PPS staff)
- Not a PPS staff member (current or former) and/or not a person of color

(answer options: to a great extent, to a moderate extent, neutral, to a slight extent, not at all; otherwise, “Open Text Box” specified)

- To what extent have you felt:
  - Your growth and development have been cared for in PPS?
  - You have been supported in your role as a leader or administrator of color in PPS?
  - The support for growth that you have received is different from the support your white counterparts have received?
- Describe the types of people, behaviors, relationships, and experiences that have been rewarded in PPS. [OPEN TEXT BOX]
- To what degree have you felt:
  - Empowered as a leader to make the decisions necessary to achieve the goals you have determined to be important?
  - Empowered as a leader to make the decisions necessary to achieve goals specifically related to racial equity?
  - That you have received positive consequences when you asserted yourself in decisions around racial equity? That you have received negative consequences when you asserted yourself in decisions around racial equity?

- The next two questions ask you about unspoken norms in the district related to decision making, social structures, etc.
  - To what extent have you:
    - Experienced situations in which there seemed to be invisible or hidden rules or policies in place?
    - Experienced situations in which the rules seemed constantly to shift?
- To what degree have you experienced the following phenomena in the culture of PPS? (*note: when a participant clicked or hovered on one of the below items, the definition and examples popped up*)
  - Perfectionism
  - Sense of urgency
  - Defensiveness
  - The priority of quantity over quality
  - The valuation of written word over other communication formats
  - Belief that there is only one right way
  - Paternalism
  - Thinking patterns categorizing things into either/or, good/bad, with us/against us, etc.
  - Power hoarding
  - Fear and avoidance of open conflict
  - Individualism
  - Individuals believing they are the only ones who can do something right
  - Progress is bigger, more
  - Objectivity, emphasizing logic and de-emphasizing emotions
  - Right to comfort
- To what degree:
  - Has the district been receptive to feedback around policies, structures, and practices?
  - In your opinion, has feedback from administrators of color been received in the same way as feedback from white counterparts?
- What has made you stay in the district? [OPEN TEXT BOX]
- To what extent do you believe these factors are shared among your white peers?
- What might make you leave? Or, if you have left, what has made you leave? [OPEN TEXT BOX]
- To what extent do you believe these factors are shared among your white peers?
- Are there any other things you would like the district to know about your experience, or consider, in order to make the district more equitable for leaders or administrators of color? [OPEN TEXT BOX]

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# Portland Public Schools Equity Audit FAQs

Updated on 10.6.21

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What was the impetus for PPS partnering with Leadership Academy to engage in an Equity Audit process?**

We have chosen to partner with The Leadership Academy, an educational non-profit whose work focuses on building the capacity of educational leaders through leadership training to confront inequities & create conditions for students to thrive.

### **How were leaders of color chosen to participate in the Equity Audit and why?**

The criteria for those selected to participate where:

- Held a managerial and supervisory leadership title (examples: building principals, assistant principals, Area Senior Directors, Senior manager, Program manager, etc.) except for Chief-level staff of color.
- Employed at PPS for a minimum of six months (as of January, 2021)
- Self-identified as a person of color.
- Former PPS leaders of color (2018-2021) were also invited to participate.

The Equity Audit subcommittee developed this criteria to create space for leaders to show up authentically. It also offered, at the urging of PAPSAs, to understand the reasons for staff of color leaving PPS and ways to retain them.

### **Who participated in the Equity Audit? How many people participated in the entire process of the Equity Audit?**

There were 123 eligible leaders, 44% of which participated. There were a total of 54 participants, who identified as either: Black, Latinx, Asian/Pacific Islander, Indigenous and/or Multi-racial. 33 participants (total) attended one of eight Focus Groups and 21 individuals elected to complete a survey. The names of the participants in the focus groups and surveys will remain anonymous. However, the participants who participated are all leaders who identify as being of color.

### **How many focus groups were held?**

There were a total of eight. 7 of the 8 groups were established based on race. The 8th group was a group of former leaders of color.

### **How will The Leadership Academy support the scope and sequence of the work of PPS, as it pertains to our RESJ vision?**

The Leadership Academy is contracted with PPS and has agreed to support with:

1. Development of PPS Equity Action Plan;
2. Support with a multi-year professional learning plan and
3. Design and support existing Equity PLCs within PPS.

**Will there be a follow-up survey to learn from individuals who did not participate (i.e. On leave, unaware of opportunity, etc.)?**

As a committee, we are committed to working with our leaders of color to identify decisive actions we can take to improve PPS to better support students and staff of color. While we will not be conducting follow up surveys for those individuals who did not participate, we welcome everyone to stay tuned in for the myriad of ways you can lend your voice and leadership to taking actional steps to move forward together.

**What is the racial diversity of the Administrators of Color Steering Committee?**

The racial make-up of the committee includes a diversity of perspectives and voices from staff who identify as African American or Black, Hispanic or Latino, White and Multi-racial.

**Is there a connection between The Leadership Academy collaborating with us on the Equity Audit and the Wallace Foundation Grant?**

Yes, the Leadership Academy will also be helping facilitate the equity review through the Wallace Foundation grant.

**If Chief level staff were not invited to participate in the focus groups or equity surveys, why are they invited to participate as part of the AOC Steering Committee?**

In order to make changes for significant improvement in staff outcomes as identified in the Equity Report, it is important for Chief level and above staff to be included as stakeholders and key decision makers.

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**Safe to Fail Experiment #1:  
August Leadership Institute 2022**

**Theme 1: Administrators of Color are on their own for Support**

**School Admin of Color Engagement**

Members of the AOC group participated in the planning and decision-making for the August Leadership Institute.

- Robbie Davis, Principal, DaVinci Arts
- Chris Fraizer, Principal, Franklin HS
- Chrysanthus Lathan, Principal, Sabin
- Dr. Karmin Williams, Principal, Faubion
- Korrina Wolfe, Area Senior Director (Principal Supervisor)
- Karl Logan, Area Senior Director (Principal Supervisor)
- Dr. Esther Omogbehin, Assistant Superintendent
- Dr. Aisha Hollands, Director of Workforce Diversity, Training & Development
- Dani Ledezma, Senior Director, RESJ
- Will Fernandez, RESJ Program Manager

Led by Professional Learning and Leadership with the support of the Innovation Studio, we accomplished the following key objectives:

Members of the AOC group and other leaders of color were invited to participate in the planning and decision-making process for the August Leadership Institute and in the adopted processes of the Innovation Studio.

The members of the AOC group gave feedback and input on the agenda. By bringing school leaders into the planning - affinity spaces were structured to build community and to place emphasis on the importance of racial equity.

For example, the very first session of the week was in affinity spaces, per the AOC members' recommendation - with one main purpose to welcome new leaders of color into PPS.

**Focus on Racial Equity at Leadership Institute**

A focus and emphasis on Racial Equity at the August Leadership Institute was addressed by including two facilitated by experts in this area. One session, facilitated by Dr. Mohammad Khalifa, focused on culture and culturally responsive leadership. Dr. Khalifa provided a brief historical context on the importance of culture and race.

The second session, facilitated by Dr. Anthony Alston along with Dr. Filip Hirstic focused on individual racial equity, supporting every leader to begin to craft their own "individual racial why" and begin to reflect on how they would share that motivation with their school communities.

**Our Racial Why and Sense of Self**

The focus on our "Individual Racial Why" during leadership institute was driven in response to individuals feeling "drain on their humanity and sense of self that comes from working the PPS culture as a person of color."

**Principal Coaches**

In addition to August Leadership, the PLL department is currently and intends to continue to pair newly hired principals of color with a principal coach of color (when it is feasible, there is not always an ample number of mentors or coaches available to meet this goal).

Our Induction programming also uses the Affinity Space model throughout our workshops, in part to build a learning community for new leaders with those who share their racial identity. Of course, this does not address the usefulness of having an assigned mentor of color for all school leaders of color - those not in their first three years on the job.

These are initial steps that we intend to iterate on through the year, with continued support from the Innovation Studio.

However, these steps in isolation within PLL's programming do not address some larger district-wide issues that are at the root of many of the themes of the Equity Audit.

## Safe to Fail Experiment #2:

2022-2023 School Admin Committee Structure

Theme 8: Characteristics of White Dominant Culture

## IN DEVELOPMENT

### **GUIDING DOCUMENTS**

#### **Our Vision for PPS: The Graduate Portrait** *(our destination)*

Our vision articulates the skills and dispositions our graduates should possess by the time they graduate from PPS, and how we as educators and the school system must continue to align around their success. More info: [PPS reImagined](#)

#### **Our Strategic Plan for PPS: Forward Together** *(our roadmap)*

Forward Together is the first of a series of multi-year strategic plans for the district, outlining this important step we expect to take in realizing our community's vision.

More info: [Forward Together](#)

#### **Eliminate Opportunity Gaps** *(our compass)*

At PPS, gaps in student performance along the lines of race are persistent, generational, unacceptable, and at odds with our belief that every student can learn. We intend to eliminate opportunity gaps and improve academic achievement for every student, especially Black, Native American, and students of color.

More info: [School Board Goals](#), [Racial Equity Lens](#), [Instructional Framework](#)

## Introduction

At PPS, we are guided by our community's vision, a portrait of the ways our graduates will enter the world more confident, optimistic, and prepared for their future; and how we as educators, and the system as a whole, must nurture their collective brilliance. Our strategic plan provides us with a roadmap that represents the changes and shifts we believe will get us closer to bringing our vision to reality.

We also know that there are remarkable things happening in PPS schools, and there are many examples of success. But for many of our students, their experiences are inequitable, often lack rigor, or do not provide them with an opportunity to be proficient in grade-level standards.

**We also believe that to create the conditions for students to thrive, we must first foster an environment of belonging, trust, and shared ownership for the success of every student, each other, and the entire school system.**

With support from The Leadership Academy—a nationally recognized organization focused on developing strong leadership pipelines to strengthen leader practices—PPS released a report entitled "[Equity Audit: Experiences & Needs of Administrators of Color](#)," providing us insight into the lived experiences and needs of many of our leaders and administrators of color, and importantly, what we need to thrive in our school system. We also have results from the Successful School Survey to School Administrators, which captures insight from all school administrators on their perspective on school climate and the relationship with the PPS central office.

The equity audit report—and the subsequent work—serves as an important marker in our collective

understanding of addressing systemic inequities in our district. The themes and findings help us collectively articulate clear and decisive action steps to significantly improve the experience of our leaders of color at PPS.

One of the themes identified in the report is the need to disrupt current structures operating at PPS with [characteristics of White Supremacy](#). According to the report, the current structure limits opportunities for administrators of color, in particular, to participate, provide input, and reflect those inputs in the implementation of our strategic priorities. Specifically, and for example, when our structures are not predictable, clear, and open to school and district leaders (i.e. department heads and school administrators), it can often create a sense of

- *Power Hoarding*: Lack of trust, authentic collaboration, and calibration, and ownership for system progress and collective success.
- *Urgency*: Difficulty to take time to be inclusive, encourage thoughtful decision-making, and consider immediate, and long-term consequences. It often sacrifices the interests of people of color in order to win victories for white people (seen as the default or norm community).
- *Defensiveness*: Response to new or challenging ideas with defensiveness, which makes it very difficult to build collective efficacy, organizational coherence, adaptive leadership, and identify stronger allies (Relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability) in striving to achieve our district's mission:

*We provide rigorous, high-quality academic learning experiences that are inclusive and joyful. We disrupt racial inequities to create vibrant environments for every student to demonstrate excellence. (July 2021)*

### *Safe to Fail Experiment*

The Leadership Academy proposed, and the members of the 2021-2022 equity audit committee agreed to use the tool, "safe to fail experiment." A safe-to-fail experiment allows us to try out a wide variety of possible approaches, all with the intent of learning as much as we can while also nudging the system in the desired direction. Good safe-to-fail experiments have an asymmetric pay-off: their costs are limited, quite a few will fail, but a few will bring big benefits.

We are committed to developing and iteratively improving guidelines and tools to authentically integrate the voices of our administrators of color in key and strategic district priorities. This includes protocols and expectations for participation and communication, and feedback loops so that participants understand the purpose, methods, and outcomes to participate.

The expectation of this *experiment* is that our administrators of color are seen and heard, by connecting and understanding how their input, feedback, and collaboration will be used in achieving the goals outlined in our strategic plan and prioritized by the Superintendent's Leadership Team for 2022-23.

### *Successful School Survey*

In an effort of continuous improvement and soliciting regular feedback from all levels of our organization, last year we released a survey to school leaders, via the Successful School Survey, asking about their experiences in our schools and with the central office. **These data points, which will serve as our baseline data, will help us incorporate stakeholder feedback, improve service and become a stronger learning organization.**

## 2022-2023 School Admin Committee Proposed Structure

The Superintendent's Leadership Team has established **five priorities** for the school year, which are based on making direct progress on **nine strategic plan outcomes** for the year, defining what is important to our system-wide efforts, and driving overall culture and performance. These priorities and goals are intended to define specific strands of work that will build the organizational capacity necessary to drive the acceleration of student outcomes.

With these priorities, we aspire to keep all PPS leaders and stakeholders united towards a shared purpose, with a clear sense of direction towards becoming a better system. According to [research](#), school leadership is second only to teaching among school-related factors in impacting student learning. Decades of [research](#) also acknowledge that the role of the central office in helping all schools build their capacity for improvement is vital.

**Together, school district central office administrators and school leaders can exercise essential leadership to build the collective capacity at PPS to accelerate growth and close opportunity gaps for Black, Native American, and Students of Color, Students with Disabilities and Language Learners.**

In alignment with our [strategic plan](#), which affirms our organizational priority to improve the overall experiences and outcomes for our students and staff of color at PPS, and in direct response to the beginning to address systems of White Supremacy, we believe that the voices, experiences and the expertise of our staff and leaders of color, must and will continue to be prioritized in our district transformation efforts. To that end, we propose resetting, restructuring, and establishing **eight committees**, which will be co-led by both a central office and a school leader:

Three overarching committees that will bring school administrators and central office leaders together to review, provide input and engage in meaningful dialogue about overall progress on key organizational essentials:

1. Monthly School Leadership and Central Office Meeting (PAPSA)
2. Equity-Centered Principal Leadership
3. Customer Service Excellence

Five additional committees will be established in alignment with the five focus areas for the school year:

4. Strategic Alignment
5. High-Quality Teaching and Learning
6. Black Student Excellence
7. Inspiring Learning Spaces
8. Support for Team PPS

### *Priorities for the 2022-23 School Year*

This school year, we are focused on building a better system for our students and staff. Together with our families, school board, school leaders, educators, and community partners, we will meet the goals we have outlined, grounded on narrowing and eliminating persistent opportunity and achievement gaps.

To that end, our five priorities for the year are:

1. **Strategic Alignment:** Align dollars, time, and effort to significantly improve organizational efficacy and culture to serve and support our schools, students, families, and educators to thrive and achieve excellence.
2. **High-Quality Teaching and Learning:** Strengthen our collective knowledge, skills, and dispositions, so that in every classroom, we can foster a joyful, inclusive, high-quality teaching and learning experience that sets high expectations for every student every day.
3. **Black Student Excellence:** With fidelity to a community-led vision, create vibrant learning environments for every Black student in PPS schools, especially in our historic Albina-neighborhood schools.
4. **Inspiring Learning Spaces:** Continue to modernize and improve our learning environments, so that they are conducive to learning, safe and healthy, and technology-enabled; we want our classrooms and schools to be actively shifting practices and design to be in alignment with the district's aggressive climate crisis response policy.
5. **Support for Team PPS:** Create and insist on a culture that is at all times in service of children and models for them an unyielding dedication to racial equity and social justice, appreciation, kindness, and trust; provide resources and support to PPS employees so that we can do our very best work in service of PPS children and their families.

#### *School Board Focus-Areas*

The five priorities developed by the Superintendent's Leadership Team mirror the School Board focus areas (**still in draft**) for the school year:

1. **Review and adopt the FY 2023-24 budget** with a focus on ensuring financial sustainability post-ESSER and prioritizing key investments to achieve our board goals of academic success.
2. Regularly **monitor student academic success**.
3. Adopt a community-led vision for **Black Student Excellence**, especially in historic Albina-neighborhood schools.
4. Monitor the **modernization and improvement of our learning environments** (i.e. climate crisis response policy, school building improvement bond).
5. Plan for and champion the renewal of the **local optional levy**, and consider and approve a successor **collective bargaining agreement** with the Portland Association of Teachers.

*Purpose*

All of these committees will be structured to create space for school leaders to provide input on the five priorities for the year. Our purpose is to describe and execute on a clear through-line from the “cabinet to the classroom,” and adopt an approach that is deeply focused on system transformation that will support and produce an improved and positive educational experience for students, especially Black and Native students. School leader input is critical to making sure our strategic plan priorities are executed and implemented for success, and that they have the desired positive impact. As such, school administrator insight regarding:

- What’s Going Well: Which of our efforts are proving helpful? Which initiatives are supportive of school improvement efforts? Which school-level stories can we profile or spotlight to show our collective impact on student outcomes?
- Challenges & Barriers: Can we identify root cause challenges or any system barriers that we are facing in attempting to achieve our shared goals? How will we resolve them? Do you have any specific suggestions for how to adjust or modify our implementation plans to better support the needs of educators and the acceleration of student outcomes?

Sample schematic for the process:

