



## Uprooting Inequities in Schools—Online Summit Key Takeaways

***Thank you to those who joined us for this event, which took place on Wednesday, March 18, 2020. Below, you can read the reporter wrap-up our journalists wrote for you.***

It remains all too common that a student’s race, neighborhood, or family income are strong predictors of the educational opportunities they can access in their K-12 years—the essence of inequity. Most K-12 leaders believe all children deserve an equitable education, no matter their background or circumstances, but most of them struggle to confront the range of inequities in their schools and districts—much less root them out.

In this virtual summit, Education Week reporters and expert guests discussed the hard work behind confronting inequities such as challenging educators’ longstanding biases and practices, re-allocating resources across schools to support opportunities for all students and removing barriers to advanced coursework.

***Here are takeaways we’ve distilled from those discussions with you, the Education Week readers.***



### ***What Does a “Culture of Equity” Look Like and How Can Schools Achieve It?***

- ▶ **Moderator: Christina A. Samuels**, Associate Editor, Education Week
- ▶ Before schools can break down barriers that block access to opportunity, leaders must first

foster a learning environment that ensures that educators believe that all students can achieve at high levels. This often includes challenging people's mindsets about race and bias and talking bluntly about longstanding practices that have kept students of color and students in poverty from accessing the same learning opportunities as their white and more affluent peers.

Chief equity officers from two different school districts talk about the work they are undertaking to expose systemic racism, foster community conversations about equity, and adopt policies and practices that aim to eliminate longstanding gaps in access to high quality educational opportunities for students of color and low-income children.

► **Guests:**

- **Dena Keeling**, Chief Equity Officer, Orange County Schools, Hillsborough, N.C.
- **Eric Moore**, Chief of Accountability, Research, and Equity, Minneapolis Public Schools

**Key Takeaways:**

This summit featured a lively and engaged audience—and a few technical difficulties, as our guests dealt with the upheaval prompted by school closures. Participants are encouraged to return to the summit site and read through the comments, as our guests answered questions after the official end of the event.

**Participants are searching for concrete examples of ways to build equity in their school communities.**

Keeling said her work has focused on developing careful plans to build support for equity at all levels in her district: “All leadership does monthly or every other month training. Our school board does annual training. Then I had key roles trained, so counselors for equitable advisement, math and literacy coaches for culturally relevant coaching, 2-3 teachers at every school for school-based equity teams and to become advisers for student equity teams.”

Moore, in Minneapolis, said that his district has an equity, diversity, impact assessment committee. “The committee is composed of 16 community-based organizations of color that examine policy and provides recommendations to the school board. This year we examined teacher of color recruitment, hiring and retention. We also examined student placement and how placement policies impact district segregation based on race and income.”

**More districts seem to be creating “chief equity officer” roles in the top ranks of district**

**administration, though it may be too soon to measure their impact in some cases.** Moore noted that “I often find that Equity departments struggle to have access to the type of resources that support addressing systemic issues of racism and inequality.” In contrast, Moore oversees federal money that flows through Title I, Title II (for teacher recruitment and training) and Title IV (which pays for student support and academic enrichment.) He also oversees state funds to promote school improvement. “As school improvement and central office plans are developed, I can ensure that equity is embedded in all district work. I also have access to resources to support initiatives.”

**There may not be one perfect “model of equity” for districts to follow.** While the ultimate goal may be universal, the path to get there may be different for different districts. Said Keeling, in response to a question about models to follow: “When I first started, I had the same thought, let me find a good model or a model district of equity and I struggled to find a district similar to ours that was “doing

equity." That's when it occurred to me, I can't put equity into the same system I'm trying to dismantle. So, I created a model that would work for my district."

**Participants shared a large number of books and other resources that they have used—either to support their personal growth, or in their schools as fodder for deeper discussion. They include the books:**

- Deep Diversity: Overcoming Us Vs. Them by Shakil Choudhury;
- For White Folks Who Teach In the Hood...And The Rest of Y'all, Too, by Christopher Emdin;
- We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom by Bettina Love;
- White Fragility by Robin DiAngelo.

Other resources include Project Implicit, the Equity Literacy Institute; Integrating Social, Emotional and Academic Development: An Action Guide for School Leadership Teams from the Aspen Institute, and Teaching Tolerance.

**Books:**

- Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment: Patricia Hill Collins
- Building Equity: Policies and Practices to Empower All Learners: Dominique Smith, Nancy Frey, Ian Pumpian, and Douglas Fisher
- Culturize: Jimmy Casas
- Deep Diversity: Overcoming Us Vs. Them: Shakil Choudhury
- For White Folks Who Teach In the Hood...And The Rest of Y'all, Too: Christopher Emdin
- The Guide for White Women Who Teach Black Boys: Edited by Eddie Moore, Ali Michael and Marguerite W. Penick-Parks
- How to Be an Antiracist: Ibram X. Kendi
- I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness: Austin Channing Brown
- Is Everyone Really Equal? An Introduction to Key Concepts in Social Justice Education: Robin DiAngelo and Özlem Sensoy
- Rage Becomes Her: The Power of Women's Anger: Soraya Chemaly
- Salsa Dancing in Gym Shoes: Exploring Cross-Cultural Missteps with Latinos in the Classroom: Alyson Leah Lavigne and Tammy Oberg De La Garza
- Unconscious Bias in Schools: Sarah E. Fiarman and Tracey A. Benson
- We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom: Bettina Love
- White Fragility: Robin DiAngelo

**Resources:**

- Amazeworks, <https://www.amazeworks.org/>
- Cracking the Code: A Trip to the Grocery Store  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GTvU7uUgjUI>
- Equity and Diversity Impact Assessment of Minneapolis Schools Human Resources' Policies, Practices, and Procedures:  
[https://humanresources.mpls.k12.mn.us/equity\\_and\\_diversity\\_impact\\_assessment](https://humanresources.mpls.k12.mn.us/equity_and_diversity_impact_assessment)
- Equity Literacy Institute, led by Paul Gorski <https://www.equityliteracy.org/>

- Hello Privilege: It's Me, Chelsea: (Netflix)
- Integrating Social, Emotional and Academic Development: An Action Guide for School Leadership Teams
- [https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2019/03/UPDATED-FINAL-Aspen\\_Integrating-Report\\_4\\_Single.pdf?\\_ga=2.57408810.1637579352.1557758989-580193211.1556206710](https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2019/03/UPDATED-FINAL-Aspen_Integrating-Report_4_Single.pdf?_ga=2.57408810.1637579352.1557758989-580193211.1556206710)
- Intercultural Development Inventory: <https://idiinventory.com/>
- Kirwan Institute: <http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/>
- Looking Through the Equity Lens, Maryland Association of Boards of Education: <https://www.mabe.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/2018-Equity-Lens-Card.pdf>
- Project Implicit: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>
- Teaching Tolerance: [Teachingtolerance.org](http://Teachingtolerance.org)
- Safeschools: <https://www.safeschools.com/courses/cultural-competence-and-racial-bias/>



***What Equitable School Funding Looks Like and Why It's So Hard for Districts to Get It Right***

- ▶ **Moderator: Daarel Burnette II**, Staff Writer, Education Week
- ▶ Many policymakers, researchers, district administrators, and teachers have taken up the cause of bringing “equity” among different groups of students—by race, income level, and disability status. At professional conferences, in school posters, at administrative headquarters, and in school boards’ vision statements, equity is usually defined as the eradication of disparities or achieving "equal" academic outcomes among all student groups. It has also come to mean equal access to gifted programming, high-quality teachers, and high-quality curriculum.

But in the purely fiscal world, the word "equity" has a much muddier, complicated—and legally fraught—definition. And the issue is likely to come under renewed scrutiny with the Every Student Succeeds Act's new requirement for the public release of school-by-school spending data as an element of states' school report cards.

In this discussion we discussed fiscal why equity is so hard to accomplish and share success stories of states and districts that have made efforts to accomplish fiscal equity in recent years.

- ▶ **Guests:**

- **Roberto Padilla**, Superintendent, Newburgh Enlarged City Schools District, Newburgh, N.Y.
- **Jonathan Travers**, Partner, ERS

***Key Takeaways:***

Much of the discussion on fiscal equity was shaped by the coronavirus pandemic that has shut down most schools indefinitely and has elevated concerns even more about equitable spending, invited guests and participants said.

- Superintendents and chief financial officers right now are struggling to figure out whether they can provide the same resources for all of their students, especially students of color, poor students and students with special needs.
- Many districts lack the resources of others because of inequitable state funding formulas and found themselves pulling out of their savings accounts to purchase distance learning materials at the last minute.
- Many feel that inequitable spending patterns could be exacerbated in the coming months as sales and income tax revenue, which poor and rural districts heavily rely on, plummets amid the coronavirus huge negative hit on employment and the broader economy.
- Read more coverage here: <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/03/19/districts-states-brace-for-crash-in-k-12.html>

Using a weighted student funding formula is one option for district administrators and advocates who are seeking to come up with a more equitable way to distribute money to schools, invited guests said.

- Several guests raised concern that they many of their students with special needs are not being provided with the resources they need.
- Guest Jonathan Travers, a partner at Education Resource Strategies, said educators who work in large urban districts should look into weighted student funding formulas, which require districts to provide each school with an amount of money to spend based on their student population, demographics, and needs.
- Weighted student funding formulas also provide principals with more autonomy to spend money as they think is most appropriate.
- Read our coverage here: <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2019/09/25/for-already-burdened-principals-budget-control-remains.html>

School-by-school spending numbers will provide more transparency for advocates and district administrators but what matters most is the conversations that those publicly available data sparks.

- The federal government, under the Every Student Succeeds Act, this school year has required states to begin reporting school-by-school spending numbers.
- The general public typically understands district spending as per-pupil spending.

- Guest Travers said that the data will provide districts more insight into whether its neediest schools are receiving the necessary resources to boost test scores and provide students with the necessary wrap-around services.
- But Travers said it's important for school board members, administrators and advocates to regularly engage with the new data so that they have a better understanding of district-wide inequities.
- Read our coverage here: <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2019/10/09/your-guide-to-essas-new-school-by-school-spending.html>

Chief financial officers have a responsibility to lead district equity initiatives.

- CFOs are usually the ones within districts who best understand how complicated federal and state funding formulas work and how to leverage money to work best for districts' needs.
- But CFOs have traditionally been tasked with keeping districts out of the red.
- It's important, Travers and Padilla said, to have CFOs in regular communication with principals and curriculum and instruction administrators to assure that all students in the district are receiving the necessary resources they need to succeed.
- Read our coverage here: [http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/District\\_Dossier/2019/11/three\\_ways\\_district\\_cfos\\_cand.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/District_Dossier/2019/11/three_ways_district_cfos_cand.html)



***An Equity Issue You May Not Have Considered:  
Teachers' Access to Professional Development Opportunities***

- ▶ **Moderator: Sarah Schwartz**, Staff Writer, Education Week
- ▶ Teachers often say they're lifelong learners. But how much support they receive to seek out opportunities for professional development and continuing education can vary district by district. In this session, we'll discuss what barriers exist for teachers seeking out professional growth, and how access—or lack thereof—can affect their students' learning. We'll also look at systems that have tried a different approach to ensuring equitable instruction for all students—by injecting more structure and less flexibility into teachers' PD plans.
- ▶ **Guest:**
  - **Robin McClellan**, Supervisor of Elementary Education, Pre-K, RTI, Teacher Leaders, Sullivan County Department of Education, Blountville, Tenn.

### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Balancing choice with structure in professional development is difficult--but necessary.** For teachers to buy in to PD, they need to feel like it's meeting a need. But districts often have to design professional learning around a shared curriculum or set of priorities, to ensure that all educators have the same skills. How to balance these priorities? Coaches and other instructional leaders suggested soliciting feedback from teachers ahead of time on their challenges and making the process cyclical. The topic focus can be shared--evidence-based literacy practices, for example--while different teachers are working on specific skills.
- **Differentiate.** A veteran teacher will have different needs than a first-year teacher, just as 4th grade teachers would need something different than 1st grade teachers. Whenever possible, group teachers with peers who they can learn with, to tailor the experience to their needs.
- **Leaders should take a hard look at whether the opportunities for support and growth are equitable across their districts and talk frankly to teachers about disparities.** Teachers can be part of conversations about how to more equitably distribute resources across districts.



### ***Remote Learning Under the Coronavirus: Grappling With Equity***

- ▶ **Moderator: Kevin Bushweller**, Assistant Managing Editor and Executive Editor of Ed Tech Leader, Education Week
- ▶ The widespread closing of schools across the country is putting a bigger focus on the inequitable distribution of resources for students, especially regarding access to WiFi, digital learning devices, and quality online resources. What complicates matters is that some teachers are much more experienced in delivering online learning than others. Ultimately, schools need to find a way to navigate through these big equity concerns under very difficult circumstances. What can schools and districts do at this time? We want to hear your concerns, ideas, and solutions for addressing these challenges.
- ▶ **Guests:**

- **Mark Lieberman**, Staff Writer, Education Week
- **Susan Patrick**, President and CEO, Aurora Institute (formerly known as the International Association for K-12 Online Learning)

### **Key Takeaways:**

- Educators are concerned about **how to balance delivering robust instruction across the board with ensuring that all students have equal access to learning opportunities**. They're hungry for resources and models from other schools they can look to as they scramble to figure out plans. Many educators have little to no experience teaching online and aren't sure how to engage students productively, how much to keep in touch with them and in what ways, and how to leverage technology to ensure that students don't have a disruption during a crucial period in their learning and development. Populations like special education students, English-language learners and students from low-income families are of particular concern.
- As the COVID-19-related chaos continues to swirl and the situation on the ground in school districts continues to shift rapidly, educators are feeling **overwhelmed and uncertain about the future**. Several people asked about the possibility that these disruptions will cause long-term issues for students who need to continue on their academic tracks. Others were worried about leaving behind students who simply aren't accustomed to keeping in touch with a teacher who's not physically present, and those who aren't suited to learning in an isolated environment.
- Many educators came to the chat looking for **suggestions for online tools** they can use to connect with and engage students. Though online teaching is already happening in pockets across the country, many teachers simply aren't familiar with the technology resources they can use to connect with students, and might be accustomed to a particular teaching style that doesn't feel immediately adaptable to a completely digital context.
- Our discussion ended with a reminder to educators to **be gentle on themselves and their students** during this difficult time. It's impossible to know the range of experiences students are facing, and educators are not always going to know what to do in every new situation. One commenter offered an uplifting message to close out: "We are here for the children and this is a great opportunity to show them it's ok to make mistakes as long as you learn from them."

**Below is a list of resources mentioned by participants in Education Week's online summit discussion about how schools are putting remote learning programs in place during the pandemic, and the many equity challenges that come with such efforts.**

### **Reading Resources**

- [Epic](#)—Online source for children's books.

- [Online access to Boston Public Library](#)
- [Children’s Book Authors Doing Live Readings](#)—Google doc schedule of authors’ readings
- [Online Access to NYPL Library Cards](#)
- [Online Access to NYC Schools Library System](#), Username: nycdoe Password: book123
- [ReadingWorks](#)—online resources for literacy education

#### Non-Internet Dependent Activities

- [Advice](#) from the Campaign for a Commercial Free Childhood
- [Proposals](#) for non-internet activities, from South Windsor public schools in Connecticut

#### Resources to Create Online Surveys

- [The Edublogger sample survey](#)
- [Survey Monkey](#)
- [Bright Bytes](#)

#### Lists of Further Resources

- [Twitter thread](#) of creativity resources
- [Tools for Online and Blended Facilitation](#)
- [Learning Keeps Going](#)
- [COVID-19/Coronavirus Resources for Schools](#)
- [SETDA Coalition for eLearning](#)

#### Official Guidance

- [COVID-19 \("Coronavirus"\) Information and Resources for Schools and School Personnel](#)
- [OCR Coronavirus Statement](#)

#### Resources for SEL, Accessibility and Cultural Responsibility

- [Using Social Emotional Learning to Help in Times of Stress](#), Hull Services
- [Accessible Teaching in the Time of COVID-19](#)
- [Culturally Responsive Teaching in the Online Classroom](#)
- [School Responses to COVID-19: ELL/Immigrant Considerations](#)

#### Math Specific Resources

- [Mangahigh](#)
- [Prodigy](#)

#### General Information About Remote Learning

- [Leaving to Learn in an Age of Coronavirus](#)
- [Virtual Learning Newsletter](#)
- [7 Habits of Healthy Kids](#)
- [Family Resilience And Connection Promote Flourishing Among US Children, Even Amid Adversity](#)

#### Resources for Physical Activity

- [GoNoodle](#)

#### Online Classes

- [Educere](#)

- [Imagine Learning](#)
- [smartmusic](#)

#### Video Resources

- [Seesaw](#)
- [Flipgrid](#)

#### Resources for Connecting with Parents

- [Class Dojo](#)
- [Remind](#)

#### General Learning Resources and Apps

- [Brainpop](#)
- [Newsela](#)
- [Edmentum](#)
- [Commonlit](#)
- [Quizlet](#)
- [Quizizz](#)
- [Nearpod](#)
- [Peardeck](#)
- [Khan academy](#)
- [Edpuzzle](#)
- [Aurora Institute](#)

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For more information about the “Uprooting Inequities in Schools” special report, read the entire report here: [www.edweek.org/go/inequities-report](http://www.edweek.org/go/inequities-report).

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