

STANDARDS-BASED REFORM:

A PATH FORWARD

Although these equity challenges continue, recent research points to equity indicators that can guide us forward. In 2019, the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine published a set of 16 indicators that provide a systematic way to identify inequities to educational opportunities and achievement, from prekindergarten through postsecondary readiness. Six of these equity indicators align with evidence-based drivers or factors that affect student learning experiences, opportunities, and outcomes.

Research shows that SBR led to mixed results and a range of equity challenges. Namely, despite 30 years of SBR, gaps in academic proficiency between students of color and their white peers remain. Further, Black, Latinx, and low-income students attend schools that are marked by:

- ▶ **Standards** that may (or may not) be rigorous but are not equity-focused and still have room for improvement.
- ▶ **Curricula** that are not aligned to standards.
- ▶ **Less rigorous instruction and curriculum** (because of comparatively low-standards and score-inflation in their states).
- ▶ **The heavy use of standardized tests**, which have a racist history.
- ▶ **Racial disparities** in student discipline, particularly in areas where greater racial bias exists, and accountability pressures that have been found to negatively impact their behavior.
- ▶ **Teacher shortages** and only recent attention to diversifying the teacher workforce and addressing implicit bias.
- ▶ **Policymakers** ignoring their communities' pushback, while attending to that of White communities.

Although these equity challenges continue, recent research points to equity indicators that can guide us forward. In 2019, the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine published a set of 16 indicators that provide a systematic way to identify inequities to educational opportunities and achievement, from prekindergarten through postsecondary readiness. Six of these equity indicators align with evidence-based drivers or factors that affect student learning experiences, opportunities, and outcomes.

EQUITY INDICATOR	EQUITY DRIVERS IDENTIFIED IN DISTRICT SCAN
 Access to effective teaching	Proactively recruit, support, and train diverse and effective teachers
 School Climate	Improve school culture and climate, and establish, maintain and strengthen teacher-student relationships so that students feel included and supported
 Non-exclusionary discipline practices	Reduce racial disparities in student discipline
 Nonacademic supports for student success	Promote social emotional learning for students and staff and provide mental health supports
 Access to rigorous course-work	Create a college-going culture and post-secondary advising
 Access to high-quality academic supports	Implement new policies, practices, and data-use approaches that reduce racial disparities in students identified for special education

The district highlighted below deployed these drivers. Initially identified as low performing, failing, or turnaround, they showed subsequent improvements for Black, Latinx, or low-income students.¹

1. These districts did not necessarily *close* the achievement.

EQUITY IN ACTION: DEKALB COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT (DCSD)

District Snapshot. DCSD serves over 93,000 students and has 140+ schools (including 76 Elementary Schools, 22 High Schools, and 19 Middle Schools).

Students Served. DCSD serves a predominantly Black population (60%). Latinx and White students make up 12% each, and the remaining students (7%) are Asian. The overwhelming majority of students served (73%) are experiencing poverty.

Positive Academic Shifts. There have been positive shifts for Black, Latinx, and low-income students. From 2014-15 to 2018-19, the percentage of Black, Latinx, and low-income students reading on grade level or above increased by 9, 7, and 10 percentage points respectively. There is evidence of DCSD closing achievement gaps.

Intentional Equity Work, Strategies, and Efforts. DCSD has been named a National School Boards Association (NSBA) 2021 Magna Award winner for its commitment to advance equity and reduce barriers for underserved students. In particular, the district was recognized for its parent and family engagement facility, services, programs, and initiatives.

Summary of District Drivers: Bright Spots. DCSD drivers include cultivating culturally responsive learning environments; providing teachers with professional learning in Trauma Informed Care, Restorative Practices, Behavior Management, and Discipline Procedures to address mental health impacts; an award-winning, three-component parent and family engagement model; wraparound services; creating and maintaining a positive learning climate that is friendly, inviting, and culturally sensitive; and a comprehensive technology program.

What can we learn from these and other exemplars and how can we better apply at scale the advancements in policy and practice that research suggests work for supporting Black, Latinx and low-income students? Is it time for a new era for U.S. education policy that builds on SBR to center these evidence-based, equity-centered drivers of improved performance for Black, Latinx, and low-income students?

Join the conversation at www.edudream.org to share your perspective.

This Fact Sheet is part of a suite of resources on the lessons learned from 30 years of SBR, and the need to explore how best to advance the next generation of education policies to eliminate structural barriers that stagnate educational outcomes for Black, Latinx, and low-income students - either within the SBR framework or through an alternate policy paradigm. This suite of resources includes 3 Fact Sheets and a slide deck covering the following topics related to Standards-Based Reform: What Is It, What Have We Learned, and A Path Forward. These resources can be found at www.edudream.org.