Concept Paper:

Building an Equity Framework for Full Service Community Schools and Promise Neighborhood Schools

An initial framework developed by:
Urban Strategies Council and the Promise Neighborhood Institute at PolicyLink
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Introduction

As the nation's school population increasingly is comprised of students of color, and as our schools continue to experience gaps in achievement and graduation for students of color while producing disproportionately high negative outcomes such as suspensions and dropouts, we face enormous economic and social challenges. It is imperative that we become more effective in educating students of color to the highest levels of achievement. An equity framework is an essential tool for both closing the gaps and increasing the achievement levels of all students. Educators, parents, communities and policy makers all must engage in the business of embedding equity into our practices for educating our students.

This document represents an initial framework for identifying the practices upon which an equity-driven approach to educating students should be based with a special focus on the opportunities that two innovative models for school structure – full service community schools and promise neighborhood schools – offer for accelerating the adoption of equity practices. This framework draws heavily from the work of PolicyLink as described through its recent publication, *California's Tomorrow: Equity is the Superior Growth Model (2012).* Using the concepts presented in that paper, we have attempted to adopt the important principles to the school setting and have developed a set of initial recommendations for how to embed equity practices into the development and implementation of full service community schools and Promise Neighborhood schools.

We intend to further develop this initial framework, incorporating feedback and suggestions from colleagues, partners, educators and community members who are willing to offer their thoughts.

Rationale

While many working on full service community schools and Promise Neighborhood schools are committed to equity and believe equity to be implicit in all of their work, we believe that that there needs to be an explicit equity framework for full service community schools (FSCS) and for Promise Neighborhood Schools (PNS). The framework should begin with defining what equity means in a school context.

Definition

A basic definition for equity that can be applied to schools is:

> "…fairness achieved through proactive measures that result in equality for all."[1]

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[1] The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario."Social Justice and Equity." The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, 2012.

In a full service community school or Promise Neighborhood school, this definition can be further refined to read:

> Fairness achieved through systematically assessing and addressing disparities in opportunities and outcomes so that all students experience high quality instruction and receive effective individual and family supports and services they need to succeed in school and in the community.

Community Schools

Some argue that equity is implicit in the full service community school approach because of its focus on creating conditions for <u>every child</u> to succeed. The successful full service community school is a center of the community, open to all, and its integrated focus on academics, services, supports and opportunities should lead to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities[2] *for everyone* [emphasis ours].

However, while community schools have succeeded in improving dozens of academic, behavioral, and health-related outcomes,[3] we do not always know whether they have improved results for those students showing the greatest disparities in outcomes. Unless we measure, track and respond to disparities, we will not recognize, nor will we determine how to address particular, needs of students and their families. We will not see which populations are being underserved, and in which areas of achievement and well being.

Promise Neighborhood Schools

Promise Neighborhood Schools (PNS) serve a similar purpose; they are core institutions for coordinating resources in a neighborhood chosen primarily because the educational and developmental outcomes for children in that area are below standards. The Promise Neighborhood school supports a continuum of solutions for children from early childhood to graduation from high school, and is required (by Department of Education funding parameters) to develop solutions systemically across a neighborhood, based on indicators determined by a data-driven needs assessment (segmentation analysis).

In a Promise Neighborhood school, there is a built-in accountability for results and a commitment to improving outcomes for every child in the neighborhood, not only those in a Promise Neighborhood school. Because this place-based model focuses on the neighborhood as a whole, it too calls out for a framework to measure, track and respond to those most in need of supports by looking in detail at the neighborhood *and* school populations. Indeed, it is problematic to determine interventions for children without looking at academic, health and wellness outcomes within a school context.

A Model for Intervention

The strategy of targeted universalism is particularly useful when talking about full service community schools and Promise Neighborhood schools: as john powell points out, fairness is not advanced by treating those who

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[2] Blank, Martin J., Melaville, Atelia and Shah, Bela P., "Making the Difference: Research & Practice in Community Schools," Coalition for Community Schools, May 2003.

[3] Coalition for Community Schools, Community Schools Research Brief 09, 2009; and Children's Aid Society, Summary of the Children's Aid Society Community Schools Results to Date, January 2006.

are situated differently the same way.[4] To address disparities, a targeted universal strategy is one inclusive of the needs of both the dominant and marginal groups, but pays particular attention to the situation of the marginal group. Analysis drives our ability to identify the varied conditions and outcomes among groups within the student population and to develop targeted interventions which effectively address their specific needs.

To use an example, when Urban Strategies Council examined suspension rates in the Oakland Unified School District, we found high rates of suspension for all students with a suspension rate of 7% in 2010-11. Further analysis revealed very high rates of suspension for males (10% suspended once or more compared to 5% among female students.) Further disaggregating, we found that African American males were suspended at a rate more than six times that for white males across the district, and that those disparities had not changed over the past six school years. When we moved to answering the question of why African American males were being suspended, we found that three offenses accounted for 75% of their suspensions, with defiance of authority and disruption ranking as the single leading offense accounting for their suspensions. This led to a recommendation that the district establish a standard of no more than a 5% suspension rate (the universal) and a series of recommendations focusing on the use of suspension for defiance/disruption including a requirement of prior documented intervention before consideration of suspensions and the use of in school alternatives to suspension when prior intervention prove unsuccessful (the targeted).

This kind of variation within populations highlights the need to be very deliberate in our disaggregation and examination of data. While research over many decades has established that living in poverty negatively impacts educational and health outcomes, we need to explore differences in outcomes by language, gender, ethnicity and income simultaneously to see what other patterns emerge and begin to address them. Basing strategies on disaggregated evidence also allows us to create culturally appropriate interventions that are more likely to be successful.

Operationalizing an Equity Framework
Building the Framework
To create an equity framework for full service community schools and Promise Neighborhood schools, we have borrowed from PolicyLink's framework for an equity-driven growth model that ensures racial and economic inclusion.[5] PolicyLink cites a developing body of research showing that inequality not only is bad for those at the bottom of the income spectrum—it places *everyone's* economic future at risk. Current research illustrates that greater economic and racial equality in regions also corresponds with more robust growth. We argue similarly that ignoring inequities and disparities in educational and health outcomes places everyone's future success and well being at risk.

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[4] powell, john a., "Post-Racialism or Targeted Universalism?" Denver Law Review, Vol. 86, 2009. (Note that powell chooses not to capitalize his name.)
[5] Tran, Jennifer and Treuhaft, Sarah et al, California's Tomorrow: Equity is the Superior Growth Model, PolicyLink, 2012.

For instance, a conservative estimate of the economic benefit to taxpayers of an individual student graduating from high school is $209,100 over the course of the student's lifetime.[6] That figure includes: $139,100 of additional tax revenue due to higher earnings, health savings of $40,500, crime savings of $26,600, and welfare savings of $3,000. (It does not include the substantial benefits due to improved health and educational outcomes for any children the student has, nor does it include the benefits of raising achievement levels among those who graduate high school.)

If, in 2009, the graduation rate for each group of boys of color in Oakland Unified School District had been 20 percentage points higher (e.g. 69% for African American boys instead of 49%), taxpayers would have seen an economic benefit of $51.5 million. If Oakland were to achieve its goal of 100% graduation rates for all boys of color, taxpayers would realize an additional benefit of $117 million over the lifetimes of a single year's high school graduates.[7]

Community Engagement and Participation

To begin operationalizing an equity framework for full service community and PN schools, we recommend some key steps:

1. Engage populations most affected by outcome disparities as early as possible in the planning process.
2. Ensure ongoing engagement and input through representation in a body that is planning for the school's development as a PN or full service community school (school site council, for example).
3. Use an equity framework to shape the discussion around identifying needs, designing interventions, and determining providers and allocation of resources.
4. Once interventions are in place, use data disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, etc. to track outcomes and determine what is working and what needs to be changed.

Equitable Resource Allocation

Another key consideration for full service community and Promise Neighborhood schools is equitable resource allocation, i.e. deciding where and how to create services and programs. Decisions about resource allocation in full service community and PN schools are built around a collaborative leadership structure that engages multiple stakeholders at the school site and across the community.

Our modified framework below, built to reflect the principles of the PolicyLink economic analysis, illustrates how an equity framework could be embedded within the work of a full service community school and PN schools and used to address inequitable and disparate outcomes.

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[6] Levine, H., Belfield, C., Muennig, P. and Rouse, C., *The Costs and Benefits of an Excellent Education for All of America's Children*, Teachers College, Columbia University, January 2007.

[7] All Oakland figures taken from: Urban Strategies Council, *Fact Sheet: Economic Benefits of Investing in the Education of Boys and Men of Color*, Prepared for the Assembly Select Committee on the Status of Boys and Men of Color in California for the Oakland-Bay Area Hearing, January 20, 2012.

Equity Framework for Full Service Community and Promise Neighborhood Schools
Aligned with Equity Driven-Growth Model

Recommendations for Embedding Equity in FSCS and PN Schools	Definition & Principles for Implementing an Equity-Driven Framework for Full Service Community Schools and Promise Neighborhood Schools	PolicyLink's Definition and Principles[8] for Implementing an Equity-Driven Growth Model
Definition		
Define equity and educate the community on its importance	**Definition of equity in full service community or PN schools:** Fairness achieved through systematically assessing and addressing disparities in opportunities and outcomes so that all students experience high quality instruction and receive effective individual and family supports and services they need to succeed in school and in the community.	**Definition of equity in an economic growth model:** Just and fair inclusion into a society in which everyone can participate and prosper. Achieving equity requires erasing racial disparities in opportunities and outcomes.[9]
Principles		
Build data systems to support equity and effectively use data	**Employ Data Driven Approaches** **Problem:** Student subpopulations are consistently or disproportionately displaying poor educational, social-emotional and health (mental and physical) outcomes. **Strategy:** • Build out school and community data systems to support equity assessment, planning and evaluation. • Use existing data system to understand makeup of school population (race, ethnicity, language, gender, family income), subpopulations (English Language Learner, learning disabled, gifted and talented, etc.), the community/neighborhoods, and its assets. • Use data to drive decision making in planning and evaluation, especially to identify populations experiencing the least success.	

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[8] Principles excerpted from Tran, Jennifer and Treuhaft, Sarah et al, California's Tomorrow: Equity is the Superior Growth Model, PolicyLink, 2012

[9] Treuhaft, Sarah, Glover Blackwell, Angela and Pastor, Manuel; "America's Tomorrow: Equity as the Superior Growth Model" PolicyLink and University of Southern California's Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE), 2011.

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Establish explicit equity outcomes and accountability for achieving them	**Establish Outcomes and Accountability for Equity** **Problem:** Leadership and/or personnel are not effective in or accountable for achieving equitable outcomes. **Strategy:** We need to establish specific, measurable outcomes for our equity efforts, regularly assess our progress, and make adjustments and corrections that ensure we are achieving them. Achieving equity also requires accountability for achieving our equity outcomes. While "equity is everybody's business," that idea is not sufficient. Responsibility for achieving equitable outcomes must be specifically assigned to leadership and personnel working with students and families. Those who are effective in achieving equitable outcomes should be recognized and rewarded; those who are not should be supported to improve or coached in finding work in which they are effective.	
Engage the community and ensure leadership is representative of the community	**Ensure meaningful community participation, voice and leadership.** **Problem:** Community is disengaged in the process of improving educational, behavioral, and health outcomes for children, particularly those who represent the diversity of the community. **Strategy:** Site-based leadership – including parents, teachers, staff, students, service providers and community members – is an important ingredient to successful FSCS and PNS. The community must participate in the process of school assessment, identification of needs, and decision-making about prioritizing programs and services. To address inequities, it is essential to create opportunities for leadership and participation and build the capacity of those who have been historically or are currently underserved to participate in school decision-making and management.	**Ensure meaningful community participation, voice, and leadership.** California's new majority needs avenues for participating in all aspects of the political process—from the basic act of voting to serving on boards and commissions to being elected as state leaders.

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Focus on increasing equity *and* achievement	**Choose strategies that promote equity and increase achievement for all simultaneously.** **Problem:** Schools focus primarily on school achievement or disproportionality, but not the two in concert. **Strategy:** Closing the achievement and other gaps is not sufficient. We need to raise the academic achievement bar for all students and make sure we accelerate the achievement of underserved students to meet new, higher standards. But we have an obligation to make sure all students have the supports to reach new achievement standards.	**Choose strategies that promote equity and growth simultaneously.** Equity and growth have traditionally been pursued separately, but the reality is that both are needed to secure California's future. The winning strategies are those that maximize job creation while promoting health and economic opportunity for low-income workers.
Apply targeted universalism	**Target programs and services to the students and families most left behind.** **Problem:** Schools apply intervention to the overall population as a blanket solution without consideration of the needs of particular groups. **Strategy:** Although many strategies and programs can be applied universally, schools must understand the specific needs of their underserved populations in order to offer programs and services that will improve outcomes. It is helpful to apply a strategy of targeted universalism, i.e. acknowledging that some students and families are situated differently and require services targeted to their particular needs in order for them to benefit from universal programs. For instance, if students are not accessing the health clinic situated at the school and the data indicated disparately low usage by Latino and African American students a targeted approach might include focus groups to identify cultural or other population based barriers and development of gender and culturally responsive strategies and services for those populations, like evening hours. The universal approach might involve redesign of the reception areas to a multi-service reception center to de-emphasize health services.	**Target programs and investments to the people and places most left behind.** Public resources must be spent wisely. Focusing the state's programs and investments on the low income families and communities that have been left behind will produce the greatest returns.

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Continually assess for and address equity	**Assess equity impacts at every stage of the implementation process.** **Problem:** Equity is a consideration typically discussed during the initiation of planning for the school year and is not supported by an implementation framework across all programs and services. Students and families that are underserved lack resources to close the achievement and health gaps. **Strategy:** As the FSCS and PNS planning and implementation process proceeds, continually ask: who benefits and who decides? This is especially important in the areas of how services are allocated and funded. Regularly assess the relationship between resource allocation and impacts and outcomes, and adjust policies and procedures as needed to ensure equitable impacts.	**Assess equity impacts at every stage of the policy process.** As the policy process begins, and throughout, ask who will benefit, who will pay, and who will decide and adjust decisions and policies as needed to ensure equitable impacts. For example, when considering revenue-raising approaches, policymakers should examine how they will build the capabilities of its diverse young population and strengthen its low-income communities and communities of color.

About Urban Strategies Council

Urban Strategies Council (the Council) is a social impact organization using the tools of research, policy, collaboration, innovation and advocacy to achieve equity and social justice. Located in Oakland, California and founded in 1987, the Council's mission is to eliminate persistent poverty by working with partners to transform low-income neighborhoods into vibrant, healthy communities. The Council works locally and regionally to provide research, data and policy analysis, strategic planning, program development, capacity building and advocacy in service of low-income communities. The Council maintains three operating programs: economic opportunity, community, safety and justice, and education excellence. We also conduct two support programs: research and technology – data warehousing, online GIS/mapping, research and evaluation analysis to support community change; and community capacity building – tools, program development, training and consulting services for community building initiatives, including Oakland Boys and Men of Color.

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About PolicyLink Promise Neighborhood Institute

The Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink—a nonprofit, independent organization—helps build and sustain Promise Neighborhoods to ensure children are healthy, succeed in school, reach their full potential, and that families and neighborhoods support the healthy development, academic success, and well-being of their children. The Institute works to strengthen and expand Promise Neighborhoods across the nation by managing a hub of high-quality technical assistance providers and consultants, including PolicyLink, the Harlem Children's Zone, and the Center for the Study of Social Policy. The Institute leverages these and other supports to mobilize neighborhood leaders to build communities of opportunity; build a national community of practice for local leaders to share tools, resources, and successes; provide a suite of supports through trainings, webinars, strategic planning, and conferences; strategically engage urban, rural, and tribal neighborhoods in long-term community building work; and systemically align public and private funding to ensure longevity and stability.

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