

Maryland's Largest School District

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

*Expanding Opportunity and Unleashing Potential*



# Antiracist System Action Plan



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# WHAT LED US HERE

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“In 2020, as [the US] found itself amid a national racial reckoning on the eve of George Floyd’s murder, it was not enough for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to merely take a stance against racism and bigotry and hate. Or to just condemn these forces. Or to simply state our raw shock... and disbelief...and horror. With our students and staff grieving... taking to our streets in anguish...and calling on us to do better...it was not enough to stand idly and OBSERVE our nation’s problems with race and their manifestations in our own community. Floating in that sea of anguish was an opportunity here in MCPS – an opportunity to examine how close we truly are to who we hope to be.

That’s why we commissioned the antiracist [system] audit – because beneath every stone we turned over...on every indicator of student opportunity...we found undeniable racial disparities that have existed for decades....Disparities that carry with them the weight of shortchanged student potential and unrealized student dreams. At the heart of WHY we launched the antiracist [system] audit was a commitment to uncover how our school system’s policies, practices, and structures must CHANGE...how WE must change...so that ALL 161,525 of our students are wrapped in BELONGING from the very moment they walk through our schools’ doors.”

Dr. Monifa McKnight, April 27, 2023

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After a [two-year study \(“audit”\)](#) that engaged over 130,000 students, staff, and families, the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium (MAEC) presented findings and recommendations to the Montgomery County Board of Education (the Board) on Tuesday, October 11, 2022. MCPS staff quickly got to work on short and long-term actions.

The resulting Antiracist System Action Plan (“action plan”) outlines the steps that we believe will get us closer to “who we want to be.” **It will never be final** because one aspect of being antiracist is to demonstrate an everyday commitment to reflection on our beliefs, practice, and interactions. And while the action plan is comprehensive, it is impossible to address all the findings and recommendations at once. That said, the plan will adapt as we get more feedback and learn successes and challenges.






The focus of this action plan is to address racism. As we have previously written:

“We believe all forms of oppression are harmful and impact the academic and social-emotional outcomes of students and staff. However, one process cannot effectively address all forms of oppression. Racial disparities can be seen in the data across all areas (ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, language proficiency, or disability). Focusing on the systemic impact of racism will allow us to have the lens and tools to examine the systemic inequities impacting outcomes for all marginalized groups.”



## What's different now

- MCPS has studied the impact of racism before. But those past initiatives focused on **addressing issues in isolation** and didn't consider all of the structural barriers that can contribute to student outcomes.
- This Antiracist System Audit provided a holistic systemic view. It found that policies and best practices differ from school to school, suggesting a fragmented system. **Thus, much of the initial action is focused on changing how Central Office does its work**, with a focus on five elements:
  - Coherence
  - Accountability for the Racial Equity Work
  - Equity-Centered Capacity Building
  - Continuous Data Collection
  - Relational Trust

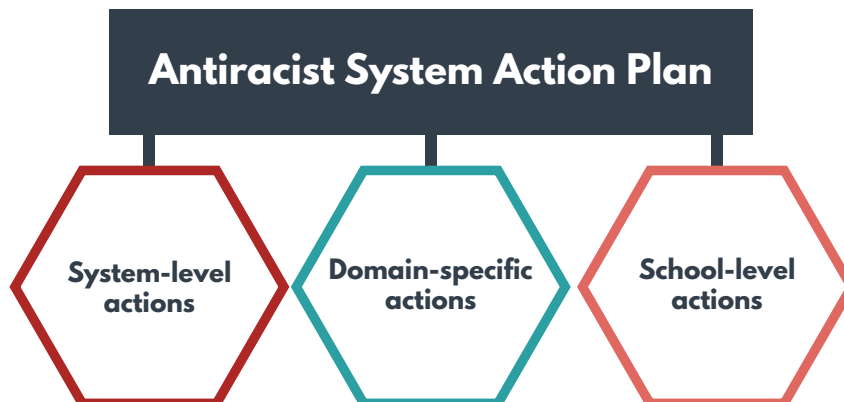
 <p><b>Coherence</b> MCPS should develop a theory of change centered on racial equity that "represents what matters most" to the district community.</p>	 <p><b>Accountability for Racial Equity Work</b> Formalized community accountability measures and accountability metrics will provide greater transparency around how the district is enacting its stated racial equity goals.</p>
 <p><b>Equity-Centered Capacity Building</b> MCPS needs to provide staff with more systematic and ongoing professional learning opportunities to address emerging racial equity issues in their respective roles.</p>	 <p><b>Continuous Data Collection</b> MCPS must create mechanisms for continuous evaluation, data collection, analysis, and action-planning regarding racial equity.</p>
 <p><b>Relational Trust</b> Relational trust allows different groups within the school community to mutually depend on one another to accomplish shared goals.</p>	

## About the plan

The Antiracist System Action Plan has three parts:

- System-level actions
- Domain-specific actions
- School-level actions

**Please note:** The effective implementation of the Antiracist System Action Plan is a necessary tool to ensure that we achieve the goals outlined in the [MCPS Strategic Plan](#).



Each part is explained in the following sections.

# 1. System-level Actions

The actions below focus on creating the district-wide structures and coherency that are vital to ensure that schools have the support, tools, and oversight necessary to make changes that directly impact students.

## MCPS Theory of Action

The [audit report](#) states that “To make further progress in promoting racial equity across MCPS, the district must develop a systemic, coherent plan to address issues identified in this report”. In order to create a coherent approach to the district’s racial equity work, MCPS first identified a theory of action that is grounded in racial equity and is aligned with a vision of excellent teaching and learning. This theory of action will drive the work of the action plan across the district. The Theory of Action is below:

If schools *differentiate resources* to meet the needs of schools and communities...

*Build staff capacity* to create antiracist learning environments where all students learn and thrive...

Consistently use *structures of accountability*...

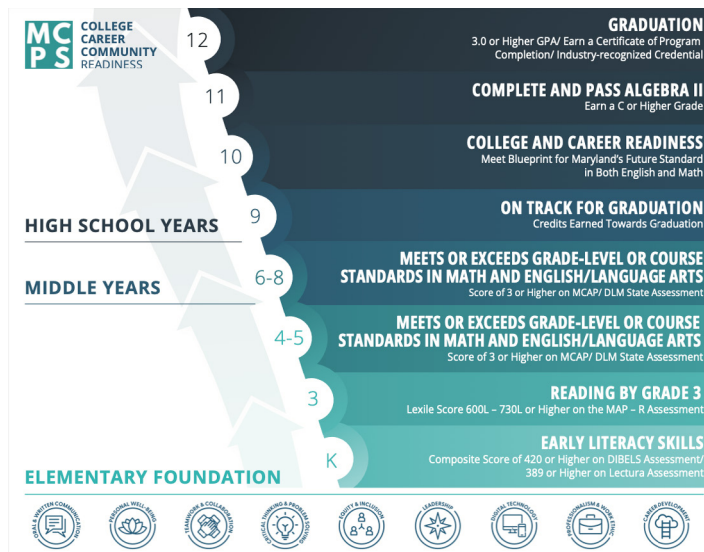
...then **student outcomes will improve.**

*“Some families report a mistrust of MCPS due to a lack of transparency. They perceive that the district intentionally miscommunicates with families of color about scheduled events, enrichment, and college and career programs, updates on academics, conflicts involving students, and expectations of parents.” ~Audit finding*

## How will success be measured?

The new *Pathway to College, Career, and Community Readiness* provides clear expectations for all students and schools. MCPS will measure success of the Antiracist System Action Plan by how well students from all backgrounds meet these expectations.

The *Pathway to College, Career, and Community Readiness* has three parts: Academic Milestones, Competencies all students should learn by the time they leave MCPS, and Experiences that every child should have throughout their time in MCPS.



The Antiracist System Audit confirms that MCPS policies and practices impact students, staff, and families differently based on race and ethnicity, as well as other factors of identity.

## What training will staff receive?

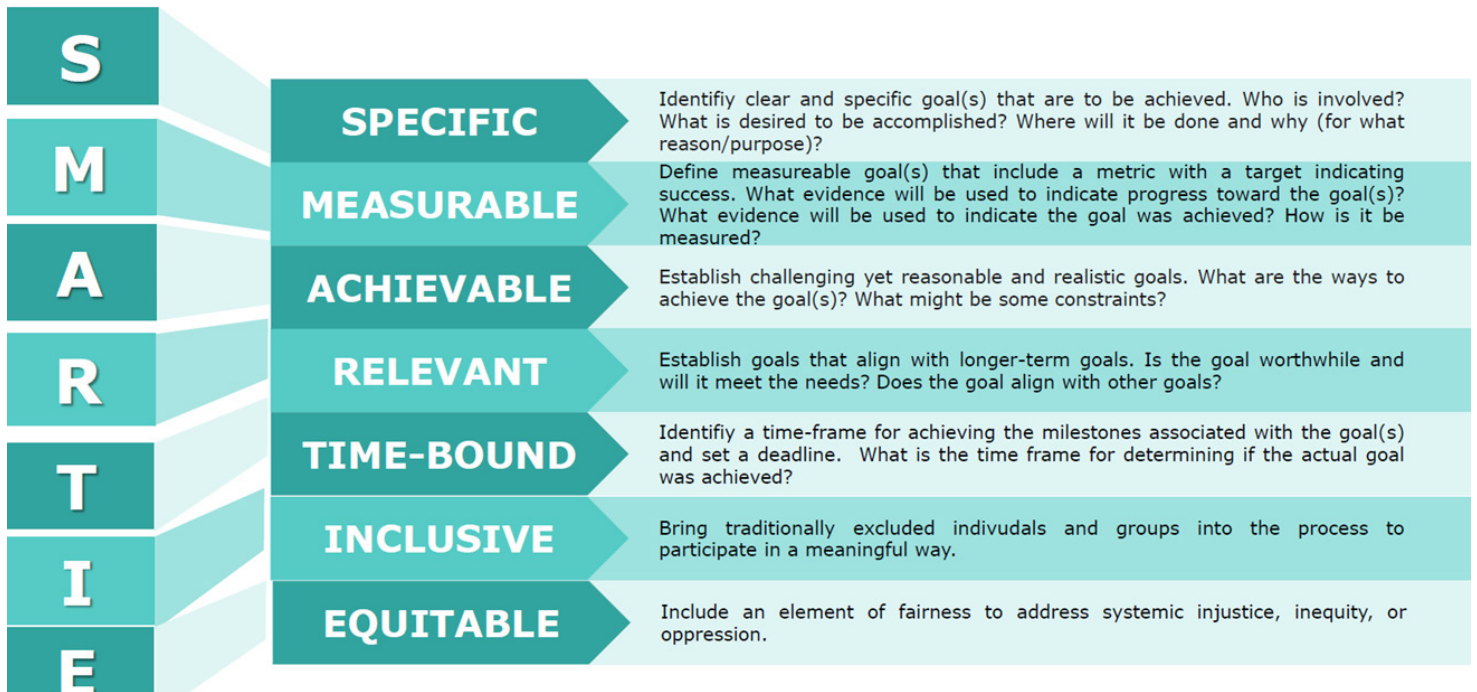
All central office, operations, and school-based leaders are attending 16 hours of professional learning during the Spring of 2023. The goal is to ensure that antiracist and culturally responsive practices become normalized across the district and that all employees, starting with leaders, have the skills to:

- Organize and lead professional learning communities that support staff to work together toward equitable outcomes.
- Respond to immediate challenges with antiracist and culturally responsive practices.
- Identify and interrupt policies and practices that lead to outcomes that lead to racial disparities for students, families, and staff.
- Create antiracist and culturally responsive policies and practices.
- Use data to ensure equitable outcomes for all.

*\*This Equity-Centered Capacity Building will continue throughout next school year to ensure all staff members receive the necessary professional learning.*

# How will MCPS know if programs are working?

The District Accountability and Evaluation Framework was created to measure the impact and success of a program or initiative. This is used to support and determine the extent to which resources or programs need to remain or be adjusted. Monitoring by program staff allows for continuous tracking of changes in program performance.



# 2. Domain-specific Actions

The Audit was organized into six (6) domains, with actions outlined for each one:



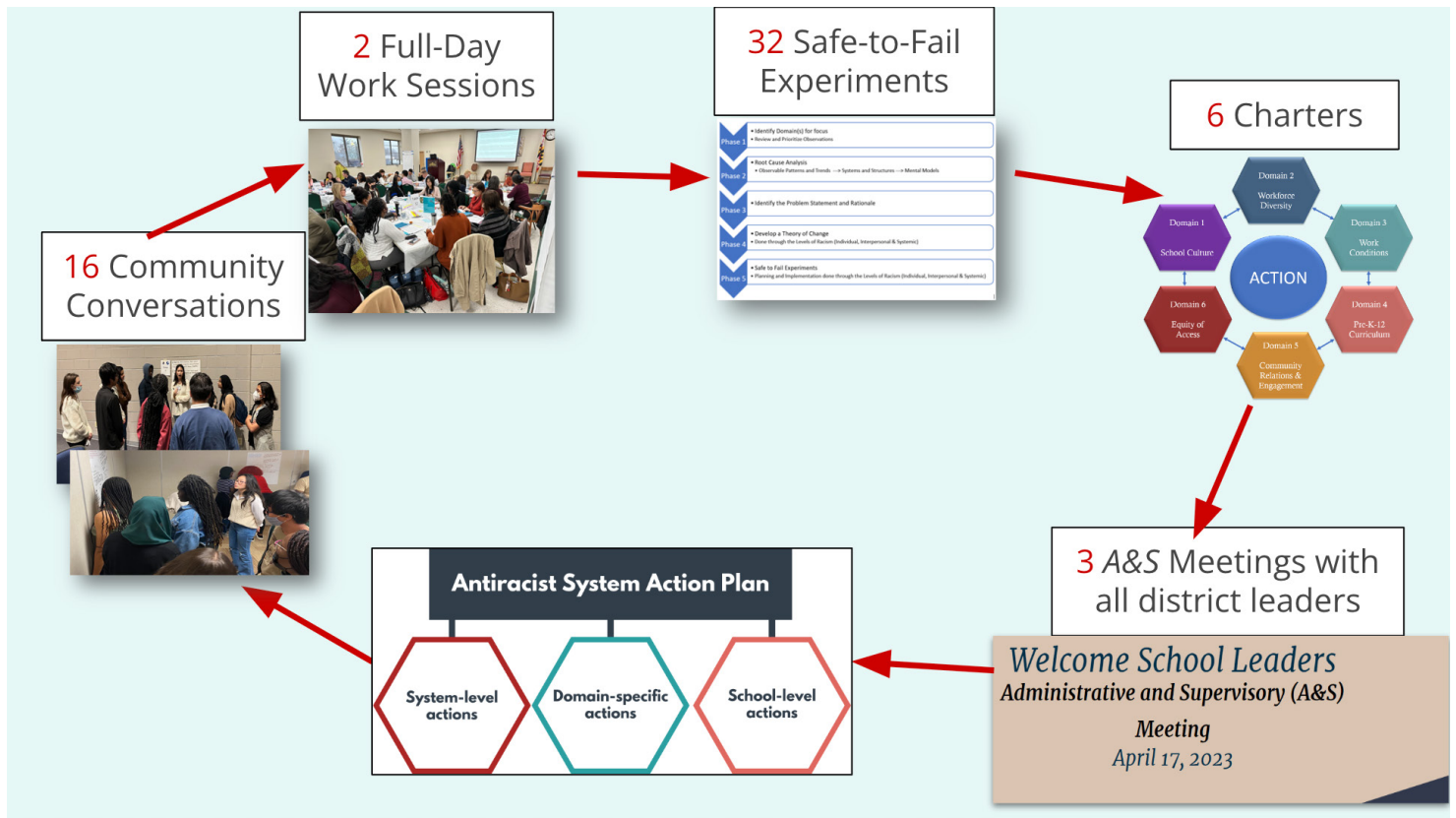
NO.	DOMAIN	ACTIONS
1	<b>School Culture</b>	Create equitable and antiracist schools by taking a proactive and holistic approach to teaching students and staff about the harm of racism and hate bias.
2	<b>Workforce Diversity</b>	Hire for quality, expertise, and diversity in all areas of MCPS.
3	<b>Work Conditions</b>	A work environment for employees in every office, division, and school that acknowledges and addresses the complexities around race, diversity, and inclusion and how these factors impact a person’s physical, psychological, and emotional well-being.
4	<b>Pre-K-12 Curriculum</b>	<p>The curriculum provides interconnected and interdisciplinary learning experiences for students, Pre-K–12, that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• strengthens students’ sense of racial, ethnic, and tribal identities,</li> <li>• helps students understand and resist systems of oppression, and,</li> <li>• empowers students to see themselves as change agents.</li> </ul>
5	<b>Community Relations and Engagement</b>	All staff engage and work collaboratively with all communities to hear their needs and perspectives.
6	<b>Equity of Access</b>	All students receive equitable opportunities to learn and thrive academically and emotionally.

# How did MCPS create action charters for each domain?



- 16 Community Conversations were held to get input from students, staff, and families.
- All central office leaders participated in two full-day work sessions to develop the skills and structures necessary to analyze and address the Audit findings. The sessions also ensured that all offices used the same process to analyze the findings and develop action steps.
- All offices did a root cause analysis with the Audit domain most aligned with their work.
- Each office developed possible pilot projects (Safe-to-Fail Experiments) to address root causes.
- Six cross-office committees, called charters, were organized to create comprehensive action plans for each domain.

Each step built on the learnings of the previous step(s).



## What is in each action plan?

In this section we outline the actions for each domain.

➡ [Please refer to this link](#) to see more comprehensive details on each of the actions below and to review status updates as they become available.





## Domain 1 - School Culture

Create equitable and antiracist schools by taking a proactive and holistic approach to teaching students and staff about the harm of racism and hate bias

- A new, antiracist School Improvement Process will be implemented and include:
  - Input and feedback from students, staff, and families who reflect the diversity of the school community
  - Intentional and purposeful actions to recognize, respond to and redress issues of bullying, harassment and discrimination
  - Instructional priorities identified in the pathways that ensure equitable achievement, competencies and experiences
  - Data collection, analysis and monitoring to dismantle structures, policies, practices and ways of being in order to ensure the elimination of racial disparities within all aspects of school culture including, but not limited to academics, discipline, and attendance
- As a part of and in alignment with the professional learning structures outlined in Domain 6, implement professional learning at the school level to develop inclusive cultures, affirming climates, bullying free spaces, equitable achievement and discipline practices
- Develop systemic feedback structures and training for staff to engage stakeholders (students, families, and staff) in dialogue and collaborative action to share their race based experiences, address racism, bias, school culture, race-based bullying, equitable achievement and equitable discipline practices

***“There’s been multiple times where she’s been called terrorist in class, where the leadership like has told her to go sit down, to not make a fuss. She’s had a couple of teachers who stood up for her, but for the most part, the teachers don’t seem to care.”***

~ (Family member, Middle Eastern/North African)



## Domain 2 - Workforce Diversity

Hire for quality, expertise, and diversity in all areas of MCPS

- In order to increase the retention and advancement of teachers of color in MCPS, the National Board Certification program will increase engagement and achievement of teachers of color in MCPS
- Create and implement comprehensive, culturally responsive professional learning for newly hired employees and for leaders who hire and provide evaluations, to ensure an increased knowledge base of the experiences and barriers of bias and stereotypes of those within our historically marginalized communities
- Higher Education Partnerships will establish a direct pipeline between our associates degree partnership program at Montgomery College and bachelor's degree program at Towson University, The Universities at Shady Grove, in order to enhance future employees of color to diverse talent pools
- MCPS will increase the number of diverse candidates available for hire by 5% and will increase the number of open contracts for males and diverse teachers by 10% for the FY25 hiring season
- Identify emerging leaders (internal and external) by creating different opportunities of events to bring in and retain more leaders of color

***“With that lack of representation in leadership, that means there’s also a lack of representation at the decision-making table. And oftentimes I think that they’re missing the perspective of what it means to truly be culturally responsive to our students. Just little things that I feel like if someone were at the table who was representing us, then I think some decisions would be made differently.”***

~ (Staff, Hispanic/Latino)



## Domain 3 - Work Conditions

A work environment in every office, division, and school that acknowledges and addresses the complexities around race, diversity, and inclusion and how these factors impact a person's physical, psychological, and emotional well-being

- Culture of Respect framework, created and reviewed by cross-functional groups, that incorporates anti-racism and cultural proficiency in promoting positive work environments
- Streamlined reporting form and clearly documented process (written and video), available in multiple languages, for reporting and addressing bullying and harassment, inequities, and a culture of disrespect
- Administrator/Supervisor guide for onboarding and feedback check-ins (give and receive) for employees in new locations/positions
- Collaborate with Domains 1 & 6 on the deliverable "A

comprehensive and coherent professional learning plan to address implicit bias and culturally responsive practices in alignment with Domain 1."

*"You can file a grievance, but you best believe you're probably going to be blacklisted because of it, and I have seen it. Whenever things happen to me, I don't make complaints. I don't file the complaints. I have seen Black people make complaints about racist treatment and they have been blocked and they have been harassed through the evaluation process. You don't do it. For those who do, if you're trying to move up or do something else and you notice you can't do it or can't move up, that is the reason."*

~ (Staff, Black/African American)

## Domain 4 - Pre-K-12 Curriculum



The curriculum provides interconnected and interdisciplinary learning experiences for students, Pre-K–12, that:

- » strengthens students' sense of racial, ethnic, and tribal identities,
- » helps students understand and resist systems of oppression, and,
- » empowers students to see themselves as change agents.

- Curriculum teams conduct reviews to create subject-specific plans for ensuring inclusive curricula and aligned professional development in collaboration with the Equity Unit, Department of English Learners and Multilingual Education and Office of Special Education
- Well-deployed school structures are in place to promote increased collaborative planning amongst content-specific teachers, English Language Development, and special educators
- A change to the elementary mathematics course structure and grouping practices that support all students' developing a solid mathematics foundation, with increased rigor through heterogeneous grouping (Special Education, Emergent Multilingual Learners, and Focus Group Students)

- Strong and consistent communication with the community regarding content, instructional practices, assessment, and course pathway decisions. (Developing communication plans)

*"A lot of the curriculum I've taught in the past has been more oriented to when people of color in the past have been discriminated against. But there's no focus on the agents of change, and the way that people of color have addressed a lot of discrimination they have faced. I think that is something that I think students would relate to more and get more hope from . . . understanding that yes, you can be an agent of change, that it has worked in the past."*

~ (Staff, Asian)



## Domain 5 - Community Relations and Engagement

All staff engage and work collaboratively with all communities to hear their needs and perspectives

The following deliverables cut across all aspects of MCPS including: the School Improvement Planning process; the Pathways to College, Career and Community; Back to School Night; IEP Meetings; Parent/Teacher Conferences; and Access to special or higher level classes

- Antiracist and Culturally Responsive Engagement tools and resources for all employees that will include sample templates and processes for engaging families
- Antiracist and Culturally Responsive Engagement Training for all staff
- Implementation of a new system-wide communication tool (Remind) for easier and culturally responsive two-way communication

- Onboarding for all new families at the school level (“Welcome to MCPS”)
- Culturally Responsive resources for families with tips on how to navigate MCPS

*“I’ve spoken to other parents of children of color and they tell me, ‘Yeah, the child’s scoring very high, but the teacher hasn’t really talked to me about it.’ And then I speak to children of Caucasian background and they’re scoring high as well, and they’ve already been sort of given an overview of these special programs for talented kiddos. So I just wonder again, is that something that’s happening across the board here, or am I feeling like this because of people of color? I don’t know. And so I would say that, as well as for my other kiddos, that’s a little bit behind, I feel like I’m asking for help consistently.”*  
~ (Student, Black/African American)



## Domain 6 - Equity of Access

All students receive equitable opportunities to learn and thrive academically and emotionally

- Develop a program budget that aligns with embedded and explicit racial equity goals and strategies
- A set of data dashboards that align to system measures, make inequities visible while surfacing actionable data, and drive a coherent and consistent approach to ongoing monitoring for central office and school leaders
- A comprehensive and coherent professional learning plan to address implicit bias and culturally responsive practices in alignment with Domain 1
- A consistent framework for identifying future program placement in schools; and updated enrollment criteria for accelerated programming that accounts for racial proportionality and identifies students who can be successful in advanced coursework with appropriate academic supports

- Work with Domain 5 to develop antiracist and culturally responsive strategies to ensure that underrepresented families receive and understand information needed for access to pathways and programs

*“When I had a situation that negatively impacted me, I would say since my program is very competitive . . . It’s a very White-filled program . . . I’d have to push through whatever that situation is and pretend that it doesn’t bother me because then I feel like there are some people that would question if I’m in the right place or not.”*  
~ (Student, Black/African American)

# 3. School-level Actions

A new School Improvement Plan (SIP) has been developed for schools to use in the new school year.

The purpose of the SIP is to help organize and identify the school priorities for improvement. The new process includes an antiracist, inclusive lens designed to change conditions for the most underserved students.

All schools analyzed their school-specific results from the Audit. They reviewed the student, staff, and community results separately to understand the experiences of each group. They then created a “data story” that combined the findings from all three groups. This data story became the foundation for their SIP.

All SIPs will have the following **non-negotiables**:

- Input and feedback from students, staff, and families who reflect the diversity of the school community.
- Intentional and purposeful actions to recognize, respond to and redress issues of bullying, harassment and discrimination.
- Instructional priorities identified in the pathways that ensure equitable achievement, competencies and experiences.
- Data collection, analysis and monitoring to dismantle structures, policies, practices and ways of being in order to ensure the elimination of racial disparities within all aspects of school culture including, but not limited to academics, discipline, and attendance.

## What steps we're taking

The following action steps will address school-level improvements through the findings from the Audit:



### Schools will:

- Have a clear SIP that operationalizes an antiracist response to hate bias and race-based bullying.
- Develop SMARTIE goals derived from a comprehensive root cause analysis process.
  - Professional development will be provided to develop SMARTIE goals.
- Design and facilitate a Professional Learning Plan for staff that addresses the Audit and the school's data.
- Establish structures, processes and practices (with the support of central office partners) to ensure ALL stakeholders feel seen, valued, safe, and heard.
  - The structures, processes and practices will have a data collection, regular monitoring and an evaluation structure.
- Involve multiple stakeholders in the development and monitoring of the SIP.



### Central Office Partners will:

- Provide coaching to ensure school support is focused on creating welcoming school cultures for all.
- Put in place data monitoring and feedback structures that connect coaching to improvements in student academic and well-being outcomes.



### Schools and Central Office will:

- Provide truthful feedback through purposeful structures at both the school and central office level.
- Be accountable for operationalizing a response to feedback specific to climate and culture, bullying and discipline and equitable achievement.
  - Implement a 60 to 90 day cycle of measuring data collection. The data collection will include survey and focus group/community conversations.
    - Share survey results and the data story with stakeholders.
    - Provide a system outline, template and expectations to ensure a cohesive method of sharing information.

# Accountability and Community Input

*"MCPS should be brave to remove from school, staff who are not committed to this change."*

~ MCPS Community Conversation

The Audit revealed a need for increased accountability for the district's racial equity work. The Antiracist System Action Plan will be both an **internal** and an **external** model of accountability.

## What We're Doing

### At MCPS:

**Accountability: Repurpose an existing leadership team meeting.**

- Convert existing monthly meeting to serve as the Project Management Oversight Committee (PMOC) over all six domains, attended by all chiefs, associates and the deputy superintendent.
- At the meeting, those charged with leading each domain charter and schedule will: (1) update the group on progress being made, (2) identify barriers, and (3) communicate a plan for addressing inaction and gridlock.
- The PMOC will ensure the progress plan is implemented coherently and as intended, plus track evidence that plan actions are working (or not).

**Accountability: Build on the existing Professional Growth Standards (PGS) and implement with fidelity.**

- Implement structures and monitoring protocols of accountability for building-level leaders and staff to make sure the work of the Antiracist System Action Plan is being done as intended.
- Use the existing Professional Growth Standards and competencies to evaluate all employees.



### With Our Community:

**Rebuilding Trust: Increase transparency.**

- Implement public-facing structures and processes to hold ourselves accountable.
- As data is collected, charters will report out to the Board on progress on our results.
- Along with these Board updates, we will visually display and track our progress as a reminder of the work.
- We will continue to use the Antiracist Steering Committee (made up of various community members) for input and feedback.

**Community Input: Listen, learn from, and engage our community in an antiracist way.**

- Hold facilitated dialogues with the community to share the Antiracist System Action Plan.
- After presenting the plan to the Board, MCPS will schedule a series of meetings that will give the community time to process, reflect on and share feedback about the plan.

# Addendum

## 1 - What do these different words mean?

*"We must hear from school-level leadership, using terminology that is coherent and that reflects antiracist principles."*

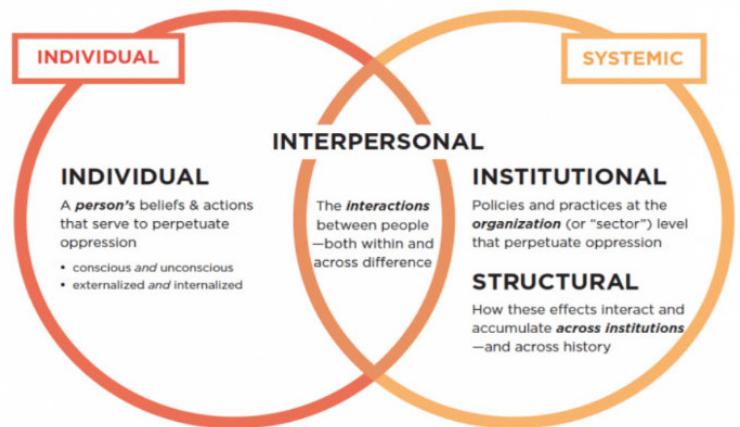
~ MCPS Community Conversation

Too often, the terms below are used interchangeably, yet they mean different things. To have coherency and success with plan actions, the MCPS community needs to have common definitions so that we can better communicate, collaborate, and evaluate our work. (The MCPS Equity Initiatives Unit is creating a more comprehensive glossary of terms by June 15, 2023.)

- **Equity** means that every student, family, and staff member has the opportunities, resources, and supports necessary to succeed. Equity is the goal.
- **Antiracism** is one process to support equity. Antiracism is "actively working to ensure racial justice by identifying, interrupting, and dismantling racist practices, policies, and attitudes that disproportionately harm communities of color. MCPS this looks like the following:
  - Demonstrate an everyday commitment to critical reflect of how our beliefs, practice, and interactions contribute inequitable outcomes by race.
  - Acknowledge the generational harm and disadvantages racism has caused in the communities in which we work live.
  - Understand how the prioritization of dominant culture contributes to racial inequities and the permanence of racism.
  - Identify the racial inequities in our context and collaborate with staff, students, families, and community members to address them and hold each other accountable.
  - Disrupt and eliminate racist policies, practices, and procedures that block access, opportunity, and equitable outcomes for students, staff, and families of color.
  - Proactively develop(-ing) new practices and policies that create access, opportunity, and equitable educational, social-emotional, and health outcomes for students, staff, and families of color.



- **Racism** is systemic oppression of a racial group to the social, economic, and political advantage of another. Racism plays out on multiple levels: internalized, interpersonal, institutional, and structural.



- **Cultural Proficiency** is knowing, valuing, and affirming students cultural backgrounds, languages, and learning styles as assets within the context of our teaching.

## 2- What tools will help us make an impact?

The Audit revealed a need for consistent equity tools. The following will be used by all MCPS staff when creating and implementing policies, practices, and initiatives. The use of these tools will ensure equitable outcomes.

The Antiracist System Audit confirms that MCPS policies and practices impact students, staff, and families differently based on race and ethnicity, as well as other factors of identity.

### Are You Planning with an Antiracist and Culturally Responsive Lens from the Beginning?

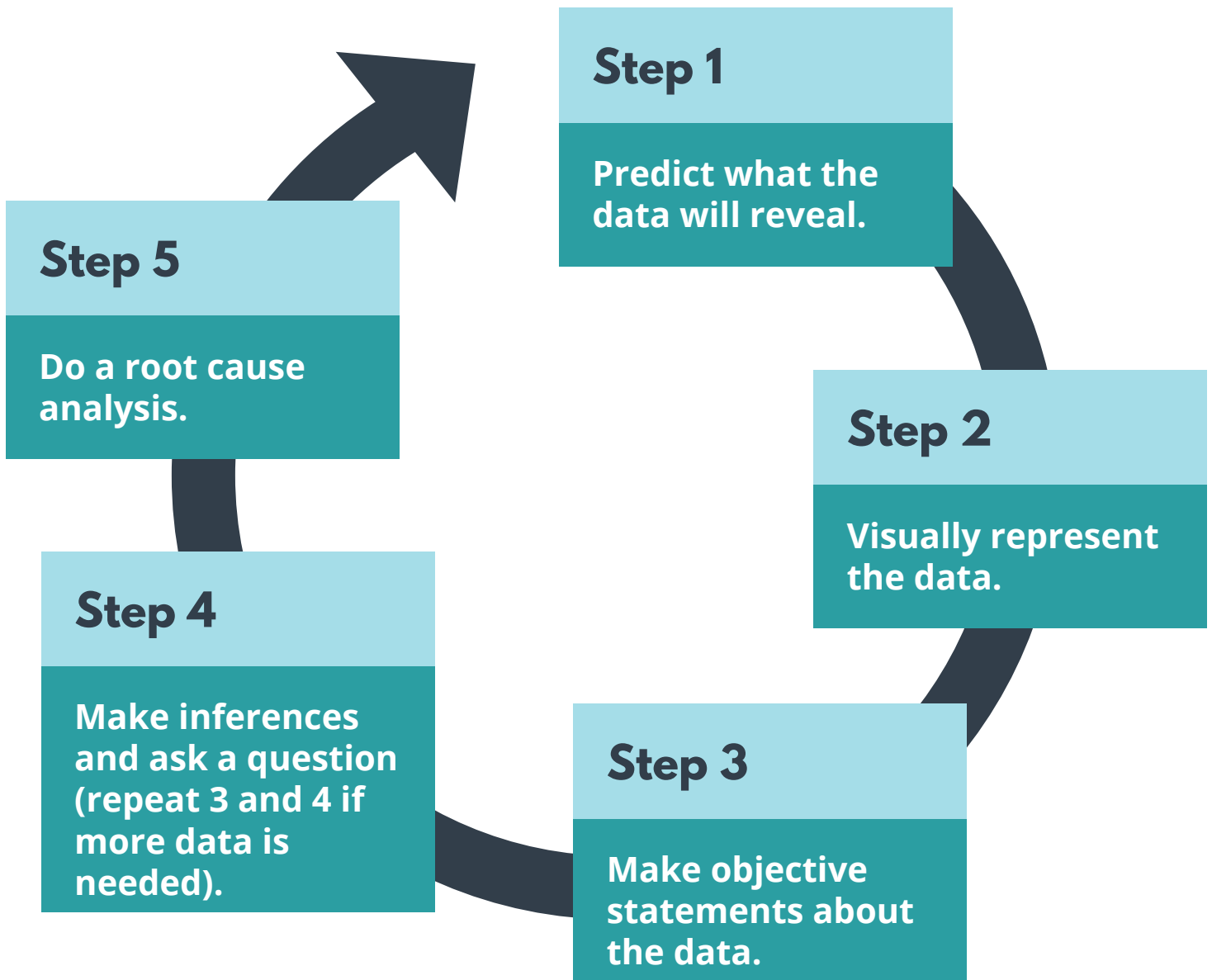
Our achievement data and findings from the Audit confirm that MCPS policies and practices impact students, staff, and families differently based on race and ethnicity, as well as other factors of identity. Planning with an Antiracist and Culturally Responsive lens from the beginning is vital to success.

Consider the current state of what you are reflecting on and where you want to go. Throughout the process, pause and reflect on these equity impact questions.

<p><b>Who does this conversation/ decision/ practice/ policy/ norm/ way of being/ belief/ behavior neglect or marginalize?</b></p>	
<p><b>Whose voices are dominating or being prioritized in this conversation/ decision/ practice/ policy/ norm/ way of being/ belief/ behavior?</b></p>	
<p><b>What adverse impacts or unintended consequences could result from this conversation/ decision/ practice/ policy/ norm/ way of being/ belief/ behavior?</b></p>	
<p><b>What steps are in place for data collection in order to measure the impact? What data do we have that reveals the impact?</b></p>	
<p><b>How diverse are the stakeholders leading the implementation?</b></p>	

# Data-Driven Collaborative Learning Cycle

MCPS standardized the way schools and offices look at data to make decisions. This Cycle includes the following steps:





# What is the Root Cause of the Problem?

Too often, we jump to solutions without taking the time to understand the actual problem or root cause. This often leads to inadequate solutions. For example, we can treat a fever with aspirin, but aspirin won't address the underlying cause of the fever.

All staff will use the following questions to create a more effective and lasting solution:

<b>What is the event or issue?</b>	
<b>What patterns do you see in this issue?</b>  Be specific about the <a href="#">identities</a> of the individuals.	
<b>What are the policies and practices that contribute to the patterns?</b>	
<b>What are the beliefs or <a href="#">Mental Models</a> that contribute to the patterns?</b>	