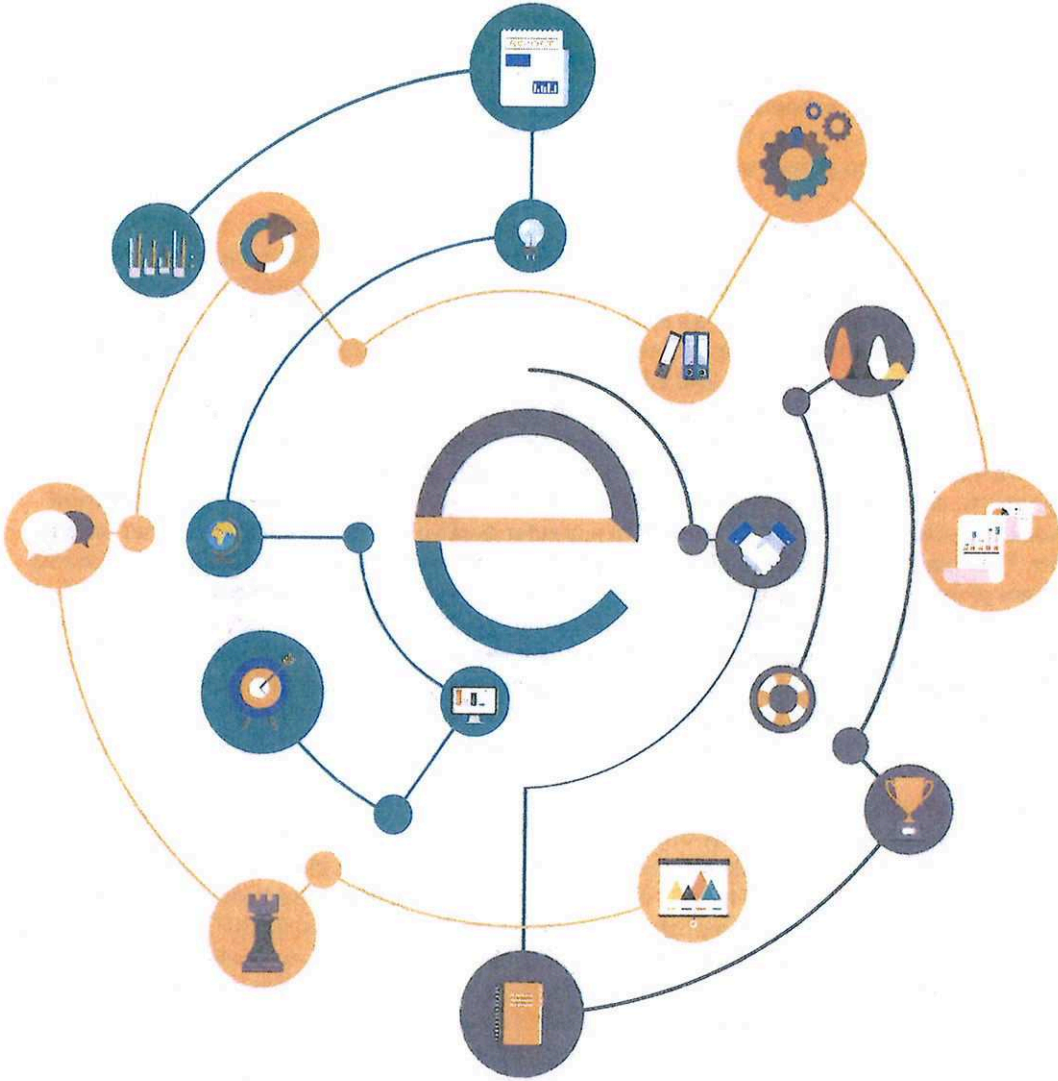


EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY AUDIT REPORT

CESAR CHAVEZ COMMUNITY SCHOOL



NATIONAL CENTER FOR URBAN SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION



www.ncust.com

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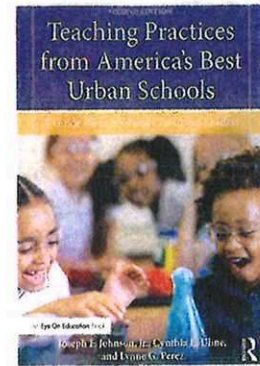
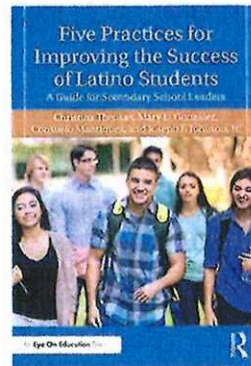
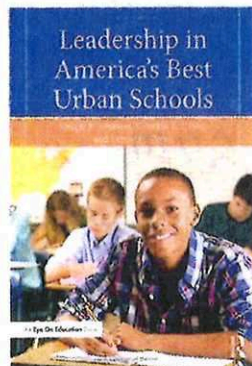
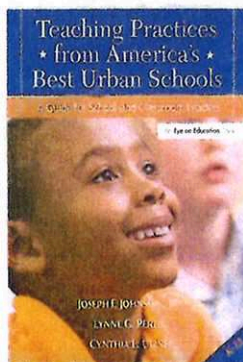
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BACKGROUND

In 2005, San Diego State University founded the National Center for Urban School Transformation (NCUST) to help urban school districts and their partners transform urban schools into places where all students achieve academic proficiency, evidence a love of learning, and graduate well prepared to succeed in post-secondary education, the workplace, and their communities. To this end, NCUST identifies, celebrates, and studies urban schools where all demographic groups achieve outstanding educational successes. Our annual America's Best Urban Schools Award Program provides us the opportunity to learn from schools that exemplify both equitable and excellent learning results. We strive to disseminate all we learn from these schools as we endeavor to support other schools and districts that are eager to pursue similar outstanding results.

Our research has resulted in a substantial knowledge base regarding the beliefs, characteristics, structures, systems, and practices that lead all groups of students to excellent learning outcomes. Key findings are documented in these books: *Teaching Practices from America's Best Urban Schools* (2012), *Leadership in America's Best Urban Schools* (2017), *Five Practices for Improving the Success of Latino Students: A Guide for Secondary School Leaders* (2018); and *Teaching Practices from America's Best Urban Schools, 2nd edition* (2019). This knowledge base is the benchmark we utilize when conducting our equity audit process and is the focus of our work aimed at building the capacity of other educators. We have found impressive similarities across the high-performing schools we have studied despite differences in location, size, enrollment characteristics, grade-level configurations, expenditures, and other factors. In short, the educators in these schools improved curricula by teaching more rigorous content to a greater depth of understanding than other urban schools. They planned and delivered instruction in ways that were more likely to lead their students to mastery of the concepts and skills they were teaching. They fostered school cultures in which all students, teachers, parents, and support staff felt safe, cared for, valued, and respected. They built and implemented a coherent educational improvement system – a set of interdependent structures designed to support the ongoing improvement of student outcomes across a variety of indicators (e.g., achievement, extracurricular engagement, graduation, etc.). And, perhaps most importantly, these actions were guided by their shared belief in the capacity of all their students to succeed.

On September 29, 2021, NCUST conducted an equity and excellence audit for Cesar Chavez Community School in the Yolo County Office of Education. This audit was designed to explore the similarities and differences between the practices and structures in place at Cesar Chavez Community School and those that NCUST has identified in schools that have been very successful in educating all demographic groups of students. During the audit process, NCUST examined critical school characteristics, such as school culture, student access to rigorous curricula, and the quality of teaching and learning. In each of these areas, NCUST considered how processes, structures, and systems influenced what we found and how they could influence powerful, sustained improvement efforts. What follows is a description of our audit process, key findings emerging from the data, and recommendations intended to help Cesar Chavez Community School develop, refine, and prioritize their improvement plans in ways that will lead to higher levels of success for the diverse populations of students they serve.





METHODOLOGY

To begin the audit, Cesar Chavez Community School officials compiled and shared a variety of data regarding school demographics, attendance, student behavior, and school success. In some cases, these data were disaggregated to highlight similarities and differences among different demographic groups.

NCUST staff conducted informal observations of the school's common areas, offices, cafeteria, library, playgrounds, and general school environment. These observations provided general information about the physical facility, how the facility was utilized to support teaching and learning, and how the facility influenced the culture of the school.

The equity audit team member visited three classrooms. An NCUST classroom observation protocol was utilized to document the part of the lesson observed, number and demographics of students, and the cognitive demand of the activity in which students were engaged during the observation. In addition, evidence was collected regarding the climate and culture of the classroom, a variety of teaching practices utilized, teacher clarity and focus on mastery, student engagement, and levels of understanding exhibited by various groups of students.

In addition to the observations, the school principal was interviewed and two county office administrators were interviewed. Also, focus-group interviews were conducted with 15 individuals, including teachers (N=5), other non-certified/credentialed school staff members (N=1), students (N=7) and parents (N=2). Standard protocols were used and included open-ended questions relevant to the expertise of participants. As well, a few questions were common across groups to gather perspectives about core practices from multiple perspectives. Generally, participants were asked about their roles and responsibilities, experiences at school, and their opinions about strengths and needs at Cesar Chavez Community School. All stakeholders were thoughtful and reflective and contributed significantly to our understanding of Cesar Chavez Community School. Artifacts, such as master schedules, bell schedules, curriculum documents, school profiles, and data reports, also informed our study and understanding.

Upon completion of the interviews and observations, NCUST examined the data collected, identified themes, and compared the school's practices with the practices found in the high-performing schools NCUST has awarded and studied. The findings in this report reflect a triangulation of the multiple data sources cited above; however, it is important to note that the findings are based upon a snapshot of the school. Teaching and learning observed on the day of the visit may or may not be representative of typical teaching and learning occurring at Cesar Chavez Community School. Similarly, the interviews conducted may or may not be representative of the sentiments and opinions of all teachers and administrators at the school. That said, we were able to hear from many stakeholders, and clear themes emerged from the data across multiple stakeholder groups. As well, this aligned with our observations and patterns in the quantitative data.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Students at Cesar Chavez Community School

Cesar Chavez Community School serves approximately 30 students in grades 9-12 in two programs: the Cesar Chavez Community School and the Yolo County Career Program (YCCP). Enrollment during recent years has decreased substantially. In Fall 2019, enrollment was approximately 50 students.

Approximately 90% of the students meet eligibility criteria for the free- or reduced-price lunch program. The largest racial/ethnic group served is Latinx, comprising 73% of the student population. The second largest racial/ethnic group is White/Caucasian, comprising 23% of the student population. Additionally, 3% of the students are Black/African American. Approximately 27% of the students are designated as English learners, and 43% receive special education services. None of the current students receive foster care and approximately 20% of the students are experiencing homelessness.

Staff at Cesar Chavez Community School

Students at Cesar Chavez Community School are served by a team of 5.7 teachers, one counselor/social worker, one administrator, and 5.1 other non-certificated personnel. Among teachers, the largest racial/ethnic group is White/Caucasian (52.6%), the second largest racial/ethnic group is Latino or Hispanic (47.4%). Approximately 33% of the teachers are female and 67% are male.

Among the school's teachers, 83% have at least three years of teaching experience and 100% are fully certified to assume their teaching assignments.

An important tool for improving school culture, curricula, and instruction in high-performing schools is professional development. In high-performing schools, professional development is focused on a few critical improvement issues. As well, professional development influences real improvements in practice when the same few topics are pursued until changes in practice and/or changes in outcomes are achieved. Also, the likelihood of a positive impact on student learning is enhanced by professional development that is tightly aligned to the focus of teacher collaboration efforts and the focus of classroom observations and feedback. At Cesar Chavez Community School teachers and administrators described professional development efforts related to English language development instruction, UC Davis Math Project, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, social and emotional learning, and culturally relevant literacy instruction.

Leadership at Cesar Chavez Community School

The principal has led Cesar Chavez Community School for six years. **In high-performing schools, instructional leaders regularly spend abundant time in classrooms observing teaching and learning and providing formative feedback to help teachers improve their craft. In many high-performing schools, principals spent 40% of the time during school days engaged in visiting classrooms and/or in engaged in teacher collaboration meetings.** At Cesar Chavez Community School, the school administrator indicated that she spends approximately 20 minutes in each classroom each day (approximately one hour and 40 minutes).

Leaders in high-performing schools communicate with stakeholders in ways that reinforce a strong focus on improvement efforts. Written and oral communication emphasizes improvement initiatives by celebrating progress and highlighting opportunities to build upon recent efforts. At Cesar Chavez Community School the principal indicated that, most frequently, written and oral communications emphasized daily logistics and messages to encourage staff and students.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Student Attendance at Cesar Chavez Community School

During the 2020-2021 academic year, the average daily attendance at Cesar Chavez Community School was 40-50%. In the 2019-2020 academic year, the average daily attendance at Cesar Chavez Community School was 60-70%.

Each school that earns NCUST's America's Best Urban School Award demonstrates average daily attendance of at least 92% and many achieve 95% or 96% average daily attendance. As well, many America's Best Urban School Award winners have 10% or fewer of their students who are classified as chronically absent. Generally, students who attend school regularly are more likely to learn important academic concepts and are more likely to succeed in school. Efforts to improve average daily attendance at Cesar Chavez Community School may positively influence efforts to improve academic achievement.

English Learners at Cesar Chavez Community School

Cesar Chavez Community School serves eight English learners (approximately 27% of the student population). The principal indicated that English learners were not demonstrating significant progress in developing English skills.

Student Discipline at Cesar Chavez Community School

In some cases, administrators at Cesar Chavez Community School have suspended students from school. This means that students missed one or more days of school because of a disciplinary incident. In total, during 2021-2022, two students (6.6% of the student population) were suspended at least once.

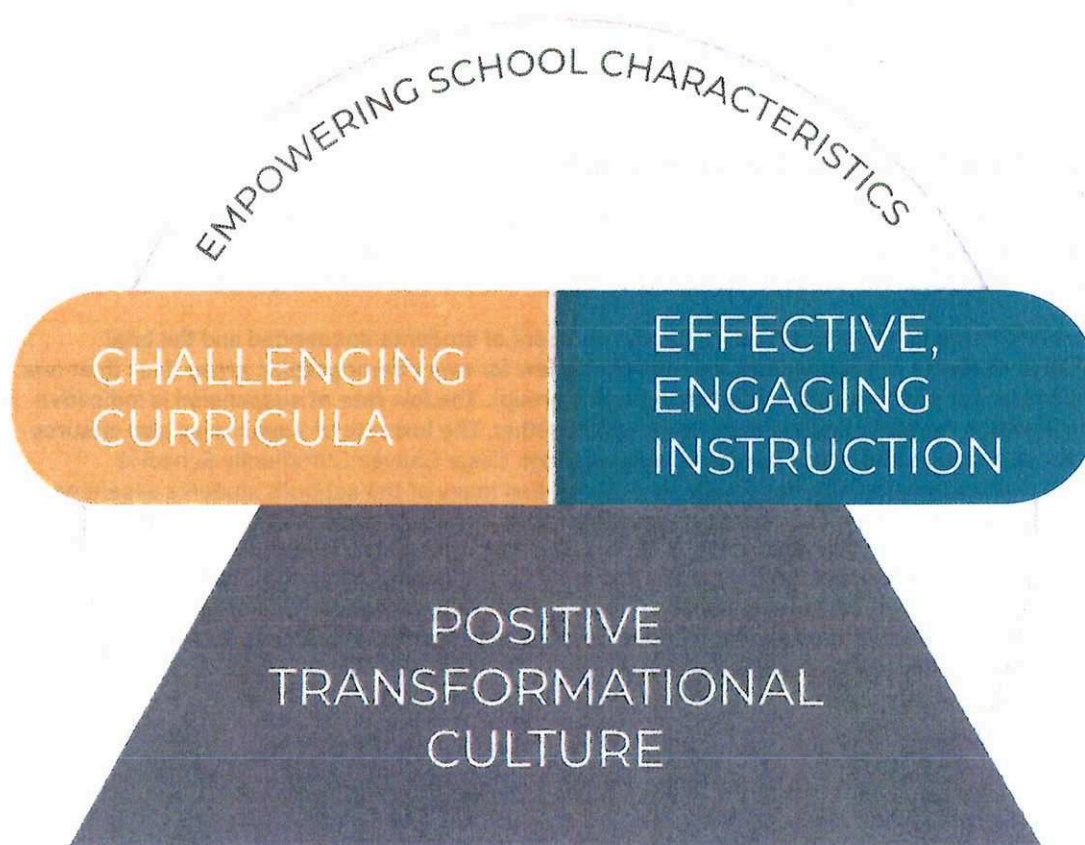
In the high-performing schools NCUST awards, the numbers of students suspended and the total number of days students are suspended are remarkably low for every demographic group (less than one day of suspension for each student in the demographic group). The low rate of suspension is indicative of a culture in which students and teachers work well together. The low rate of suspension also ensures better school attendance and better academic achievement. Cesar Chavez Community School is maintaining a low suspension rate, especially considering that many of the school's students experienced multiple suspensions and other disciplinary actions when they attended conventional secondary schools.

In the following pages, we present the findings of this audit by comparing the culture, curricula, and instruction found in very high-performing public schools that serve large populations of students from low-income families to what we have learned about Cesar Chavez Community School. Based upon the audit findings, we provide recommendations for action.

FINDINGS

EMPOWERING SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

Schools that achieve equity and excellence for all the students they serve possess three empowering school characteristics: a positive, transformational culture; access to rigorous curricula for all students; and effective instruction that leads to engagement and mastery.



FINDINGS

POSITIVE TRANSFORMATIONAL CULTURE

Definition: A **positive, transformational school culture provides the foundation for equitable and excellent learning outcomes.** We define the culture as *positive* because high-performing schools displayed overwhelmingly healthy learning environments where administrators, teachers, staff members, and families treated one another as valued partners in the education of their students. Trust and mutual respect were evident in the relationships between and among all school personnel. Students from every demographic group perceived that the adults in the school knew them well and were committed to their success in school and beyond. Children and adults felt respected, valued, and appreciated. Adults took painstaking efforts to ensure that everyone felt safe and comfortable, both physically and emotionally. The culture was *transformational* because students, teachers, support personnel, and administrators were always focused on improving. Students from every racial/ethnic group described strategies educators had employed to transform traditional school practices and procedures to help ensure their academic success. Even when the school had achieved at levels far beyond typical expectations, educators were asking, "What can we do better to ensure the success of more of our students?"



Key Findings at Cesar Chavez Community School:

- Stakeholders at Cesar Chavez Community School described the school as supportive, flexible, and committed to student success. Teachers characterized Cesar Chavez Community School as nurturing, welcoming, accepting, inclusive, diverse, and fun. They characterized the school as a team that works in unison to resolve challenges that might arise. Parents used the words awesome, caring, positive, safe, and communicative to describe the school. They reported that their students were experiencing success, there were kind staff members, there was frequent communication, and their children were cared about individually. Students portrayed the school as caring, loving, supportive, helpful, and that they are bound to succeed here. When we asked parents whether or not their children liked the school, they responded by saying that their students like the small, supportive environment and find it to be a caring and safe school. And when we asked students if they liked going to school at Cesar Chavez Community School, students reported that they felt they enjoyed coming to school and that they were known individually due to the small environment. They reported that it was a very close community where they were cared for and where staff were patient and committed to their success.
- Most students and parents reported that educators at Cesar Chavez Community School cared about them. Students described the following as evidence of their teachers' care: their teachers take time to get to know them individually, they create classrooms that are consistently warm, caring, and respectful. Similarly, parents described teachers as working diligently to accommodate the needs of their children, frequent communication, creating supportive and flexible support as evidence that teachers cared about their children.
- The administrator at Cesar Chavez Community School reported that students believed their concerns were heard. Students said they felt safe and they liked the small class sizes and the flexibility allowed in the classrooms. Students liked having two adults in each classroom. The administrator stated that students enjoy the individual attention they receive in a school with a smaller student population.

FINDINGS

POSITIVE TRANSFORMATIONAL CULTURE

Key Findings at Cesar Chavez Community School:

Most students reported that Cesar Chavez Community School was a good place to be a student. The most common reasons provided by students included feeling cared for by supportive and helpful teachers and staff. Many noted that the smaller environment was a positive place to learn and that they were able to receive individualized support. Further, many students noted that the small environment allowed them to be known individually. Parent responses were similar and emphasized the caring environment, the safe place to learn, and the many options for meeting students' needs. Teachers suggested that Cesar Chavez Community School was a good place for students, primarily because of the nurturing, inclusive environment, where staff members are responsive to students.

Students reported that they had opportunities to share their ideas and concerns. Students mentioned that teachers, the administrator, and staff listened to them. Also, parents claimed that, through frequent communication, educators involved them in decisions regarding the individual needs of their students.

When equity audit team members observed classrooms at Cesar Chavez Community School they particularly examined classroom climate. On a scale of "one" to "five," with "one" being harsh/cold and "five" being caring/warm, observers reported an average rating of "4.4". The most common rating was "four". Also, on a scale of "one" to "five," with "one" being disdainful/disrespectful and "five" being respectful/courteous, observers reported an average rating of "4.6". The most common rating was "five".

As mentioned above, daily student attendance presents an opportunity for improvement at Cesar Chavez Community School. Students did not suggest that absences were caused by students' dislike of school or school personnel. Instead, students suggested that absences were often related to the challenges students faced at home.

Teachers and support personnel at Cesar Chavez Community School did not indicate that student behavior impeded their ability to teach. In contrast, teachers reported that student behavior had improved considerably over the past six years, creating a much more pleasant working and learning environment than existed previously.

Students at Cesar Chavez Community School suggested that school personnel were using teaching practices that helped them learn and succeed academically. Students indicated that they received individualized instruction, read relevant literature, and engaged in lessons that were relevant to their lives and the real world. Additionally, parents commented about teachers working diligently to meet the individual needs of their children and how the small environment provided for teaching practices that helped their students to be successful.

FINDINGS

POSITIVE TRANSFORMATIONAL CULTURE

Key Findings at Cesar Chavez Community School:

- 🔍 Many teachers, counselors, and support staff reported that Cesar Chavez Community School was a good place to work. In particular, they cited the small, tight-knit community and their ability to work flexibly and creatively as reasons they liked Cesar Chavez Community School. In contrast, some teachers expressed concern about the challenges that come with preparing to teach multiple subjects. At many secondary schools today, teachers must prepare to teach multiple courses over the course of a day or week (e.g., world history, U.S. history, economics, and government). At alternative schools such as Cesar Chavez Community School, teachers may find themselves teaching even more course sections because of the small number of teachers and the wide array of courses students might need to complete to graduate. The school administrator correctly anticipated how school personnel felt about their work. In particular, the administrator indicated that the teachers would agree that inconsistent student attendance impedes teachers' efforts to help students learn important concepts, earn credits, and graduate. The principal also anticipated that teachers would affirm the importance of being flexible and supportive as they worked with each other to create an environment where all students felt worthy and respected.
- 🔍 Comments from Cesar Chavez Community School teachers provided insight into their perspectives about the extent to which teachers worked together as a cohesive team. In the focus group interview, teachers shared that they felt supported by one another. Teachers believed they were a team that works together to resolve challenges in an atmosphere of trust and collegiality. While teachers reported a high level of collaboration with their colleagues, they also acknowledged that there might be ways to increase the quantity and quality of collaboration. For example, many of the Cesar Chavez students have been identified as students with disabilities. Thus, the quality of general classroom instruction might be enhanced if personnel with expertise in special education had more time to support general classroom planning efforts. Also, some teachers thought they might benefit from greater collaboration with individuals with expertise in restorative practices.
- 🔍 **In very successful urban schools, educators believe in their students' capacity to achieve at high levels.** Comments from educators at Cesar Chavez Community School reflect a belief that students possess the capacity to achieve at high levels. For example, teachers commented on unconditional care for their students and their willingness to support all learners. In almost all lessons observed, teachers provided students tasks with relatively high levels of cognitive demand. Students were challenged to think deeply about important concepts and apply their thinking in meaningful ways. These observations, in combination with teacher interview responses are indicative of teachers' belief in their students' capacity to achieve at high levels.

FINDINGS

POSITIVE TRANSFORMATIONAL CULTURE

Key Findings at Cesar Chavez Community School:

In high-performing schools, educators continuously strive to improve teaching and learning, even when impressive goals have already been attained. While all stakeholders at Cesar Chavez spoke extensively about the school's strengths, they also recognized opportunities for growth. For example, the school administrator at Cesar Chavez Community School described several issues in which the school team wanted to influence greater improvement. In particular, the principal expressed the goal of increasing students' access to literature that reflects the students' cultural and social backgrounds. As well, the school team was interested in designing culturally relevant curricula with a social justice lens. The improvement issues described by the school administrator were similar to issues articulated by district administrators.

As mentioned previously, teachers and other school personnel described the need for more collaboration structures including collaboration with special education representatives. As well, teachers were eager to find ways to increase consistent attendance amongst students. Students expressed an interest in seeing improvements related to food choices and food quality as a way to increase their ability to focus on learning. Students also mentioned their desire to go more in depth in specific areas about future careers and viable paths for pursuing career interests. Additionally, parents hoped to see improvements related to helping other parents in Yolo County experience fewer administrative barriers when they sought to enroll their children at Cesar Chavez Community School. In sum, Cesar Chavez Community School stakeholders perceived a need for ongoing improvement efforts. Stakeholders were fairly consistent in describing issues that should be the focus of improvement.

FINDINGS

POSITIVE TRANSFORMATIONAL CULTURE

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Equity Audit Team found several indicators of strength related to the culture experienced by students at Cesar Chavez Community School. Those strengths include the following:

- Teachers created flexible classroom environments that helped students feel comfortable and accepted. Classroom environments were consistently warm, caring, and respectful.
- Teachers demonstrated a high level of positive regard for each student. It is likely that students at Cesar Chavez perceive that they are valued and respected by adults at the school.
- Parents perceived that teachers and administrators at the school cared sincerely about students. Parents cited multiple examples of educators working diligently to accommodate the needs of their children.

Additionally, the Equity Audit Team found several indicators of concern related to the culture experienced by students at Cesar Chavez Community School. Those concerns include the following:

- Students perceived that the lack of food choices and the lack of food quality created a less attractive school environment.

Also, the Equity Audit Team found several indicators of strength related to the culture experienced by teachers and other school personnel at Cesar Chavez Community School. Those strengths include the following:

- Teachers indicated that the school principal was supportive, flexible, and committed to their success and the success of students.

Based on these strengths and concerns, the team offers the following recommendations:

FINDINGS

POSITIVE TRANSFORMATIONAL CULTURE

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations Educators at Cesar Chavez Community School should plan the strategies they will use to maximize regular student attendance. By planning deliberately, educators can establish strong patterns of average daily attendance in a way that increases students' opportunities to learn and succeed. (This goal aligns to the Yolo County Office of Education Strategic Plan Goals 2.1, 2.4, and 3.3).

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- A. **Professional Development:** Professional development should be structured to give educators at Cesar Chavez Community School an opportunity to learn about schools with similar demographics that have higher rates of average daily attendance. For example, principals and teachers from schools with high average daily attendance could participate in professional development via Zoom. NCUST Executive Coaches could recommend educators who might be willing to provide such professional development support. As well, professional development should support the team in considering how the school might become a more powerful resource for students when they are experiencing challenging home issues. (Students suggested that, currently, home issues may inhibit regular school attendance). Professional development might be designed to help educators identify supports that could make Cesar Chavez an attractive source of support when students are experiencing difficult issues at home.
- B. **Schedules, Routines, Procedures:** Based on the ideas generated through the professional development described above, educators at Cesar Chavez Community School should work together to identify and commit to implementing schedules, routines, and procedures that will:
1. Lead students to be excited about coming to school and learning each day.
 2. Make lessons interesting and exciting for students.
 3. Reach out to parents in positive ways that might enlist their support in maximizing student attendance.
 4. Increase intrinsic and extrinsic incentives that encourage regular attendance at multiple points throughout the school year.

FINDINGS

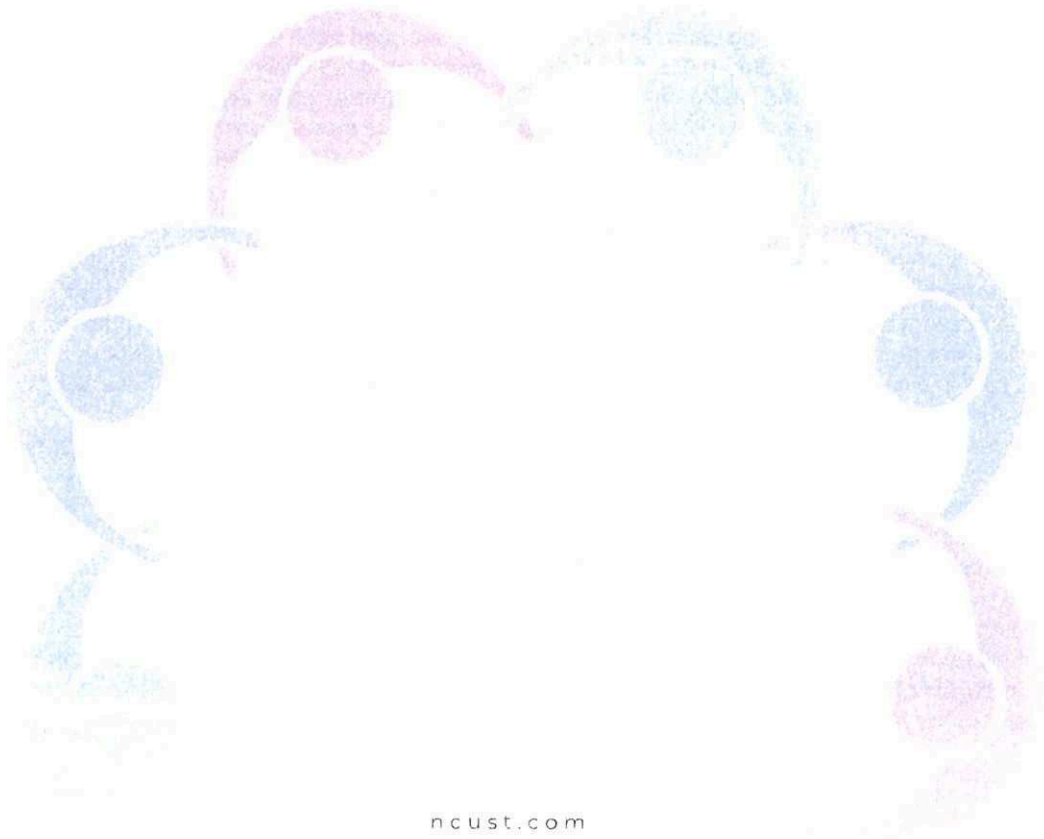
POSITIVE TRANSFORMATIONAL CULTURE

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

1

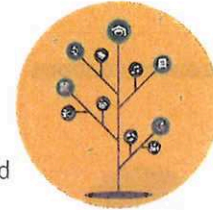
- C. **Teacher Collaboration:** In teacher collaboration meetings, time should be devoted to helping teachers plan interesting and exciting lessons that will increase the likelihood that students are excited about coming to school and learning each day.
- D. **Classroom Observation and Feedback:** Classrooms should be observed frequently, and feedback should emphasize the extent to which lessons are improving in ways that increase the likelihood that students will be eager to attend school each day.
- E. **Communication from Leaders:** School leaders should regularly communicate with educators about best practices observed in implementing lessons that students are likely to perceive as interesting, engaging, and exciting. As well, school leaders should find regular ways to communicate with students and parents about the progress being made in improving student attendance.



FINDINGS

ACCESS TO CHALLENGING CURRICULA FOR ALL STUDENTS

Definition: Educators in high-performing schools worked to ensure that all demographic groups of students (including students whose first language was not English, students who were performing two or three years below their grade level, and students with learning disabilities) had access to challenging curricula balanced with rich opportunities to engage in the visual and performing arts, world languages, technology, and other non-tested subjects. Teachers in each course of study engaged collaboratively to identify and develop a shared understanding of the key standards students in each grade must master. Together, teachers carefully designed instruction to provide every student the opportunity to learn and master the knowledge and skills necessary. Assignments and instructional activities were purposeful with clear learning objectives and explicit success criteria. Students perceived their work as meaningful and relevant to their backgrounds and futures. Teachers had a common method for assessing student mastery of course content. Regularly, after common assessments were administered, teachers and administrators met, reviewed data, identified strengths/needs, and planned improvement strategies.



Key Findings at Cesar Chavez Community School:

In high-performing schools, educators teach state standards, but they also work as a team to ensure that their approach to the state standards is at least as rigorous as required by state assessments and as rigorous as the curricula taught in schools that serve affluent communities. During our visits to classrooms, we found in almost all lessons observed, teachers provided students with tasks with relatively high levels of cognitive demand. Students were challenged to think deeply about important concepts and apply their thinking in meaningful ways. During classroom observations, we rated each lesson from “one” to “five” where “one” indicated that the activities observed were not likely to lead any students to grade-level mastery and where “five” indicated that the activities observed were likely to lead all students to grade-level mastery. On average, we rated the lessons observed “3.5”. This suggests that most lessons challenged students with an appropriate level of rigor.

When conducting classroom observations, we also attended to issues of cognitive demand. During our classroom observations, we rated the cognitive demand of lesson activities from “one” to “five” where “one” indicated that the classroom activities observed only required memorization and recall of basic facts and “five” indicated that the classroom activities observed required students to extend their thinking and address and solve real problems. On average, 80% of lessons were rated a “four” meaning that they required students to use reasoning to determine how to use the procedures they have learned to address and solve real situations. On the other hand, 20% of classrooms were rated a “one” in which lesson activities only required students to memorize and recall basic facts. Similarly, during classroom observations, we rated the cognitive demand of the questions students were expected to answer from “one” to “five” where “one” indicated that the questions only required memorization and recall of basic facts and “five” indicated that the questions required students to extend their thinking and address and solve real problems. In 80% of classrooms, we rated the cognitive demand of questions observed as a “four,” meaning that students were asked to respond to questions or prompts that required them to use reasoning to determine how to use the procedures they have learned to address and solve real situations. However, in 20% of classrooms, we rated the cognitive demand of questions as a “one” meaning questions or prompts required students to only memorize or recall basic facts.

FINDINGS

ACCESS TO CHALLENGING CURRICULA FOR ALL STUDENTS

Key Findings at Cesar Chavez Community School:

- 🔍 **In high-performing schools, all students (regardless of race/ethnicity, language background or disability status) were expected to learn rigorous academic content. Expectations were high; however, teachers also ensured that students had high levels of support to maximize the likelihood that students could achieve the expectations.** At Cesar Chavez Community School observers found the following evidence regarding the level of rigor provided to diverse student populations:
- Where observers were able to identify students with mild disabilities during classroom observations, the observers noted that students with mild disabilities were expected to learn the same rigorous standards all students were expected to learn. At times, however, it was not clear that students with mild disabilities had access to sufficient support to enable them to learn challenging concepts successfully and efficiently. For instance, in some cases, teachers seemed to rely heavily on Edgenuity (a software program); however, some students did not appear to answer prompts correctly, even when they seemed to spend a considerable amount of time reading the material on the computer screen.
 - Where observers were able to identify students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds during classroom observations, the observers noted that all students were expected to learn the same rigorous standards all students were expected to learn.
 - Where observers were able to identify students with different language backgrounds during classroom observations, the observers noted that students with emerging English proficiency were expected to learn the same rigorous standards all students were expected to learn. It is quite possible, however, that students with emerging English proficiency might have benefitted from additional supports that might have increased the likelihood they would learn the same rigorous standards all students were expected to learn.
- 🔍 **In high-performing schools, when students do not develop strong understandings of concepts after initial instruction, students receive prompt intervention tailored to identify and address their needs successfully.** At Cesar Chavez Community School some teachers provided immediate intervention when they realized that students were not understanding important concepts. For instance, in one class, the teacher read a passage to a student who clearly was not able to read the passage independently. In another class, the teacher explained a concept in Spanish when it became clear that a student had a misconception concerning the concept.
- 🔍 **In very successful schools, the curriculum includes rich opportunities for students to engage in the visual and performing arts, world languages, technology, sports, and leadership opportunities.** Data from our observations, and interviews did not indicate that Cesar Chavez Community School students have access to a rich array of extracurricular activities. Students mentioned that they would enjoy more options, such as those available at a comprehensive high school; however, the students quickly affirmed that they preferred to keep the school's small size and personalized approach rather than access the options available at a large school. Cesar Chavez teachers described their efforts to provide more extracurricular activities for students, including access to a yearbook program

FINDINGS

ACCESS TO CHALLENGING CURRICULA FOR ALL STUDENTS

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Equity Audit Team found several indicators of strength related to the curriculum experienced by students at Cesar Chavez Community School. Those strengths include the following:

- In almost all lessons observed, teachers provided students tasks with relatively high levels of cognitive demand. Students were challenged to think deeply about important concepts and apply their thinking in meaningful ways.
- Teachers held high expectations for all students; however, they differentiated supports in ways that helped ensure that all students would meet the high expectations.

Additionally, the Equity Audit Team found several indicators of concern related to the curriculum experienced by students at Cesar Chavez Community School. Those concerns include the following:

- In some classrooms, there were clear expectations regarding the activity in which students were expected to engage; however, teachers did not clearly articulate to students what they were expected to learn. Students might have been more successful if, in each class, there was considerable discussion about what students were expected to learn and be able to do as a result of their participation in the lesson.
- A large percentage of students in the school have been identified as students with disabilities; however, special education personnel do not seem to be directly involved in helping ensure that students with disabilities learn the curricular concepts and skills being taught in general education classrooms.

Based on these strengths and concerns, the team offers the following recommendations:

FINDINGS

ACCESS TO CHALLENGING CURRICULA FOR ALL STUDENTS SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

2

Special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and other school personnel should have time scheduled each month to support general education teachers in planning units of instruction designed to maximize the success of students with disabilities and other students with other serious academic or social/emotional needs. Planning time should help teachers develop instructional strategies that are likely to help ensure that all students master the most important curricular objectives in each academic course. (This goal aligns to the Yolo County Office of Education Strategic Plan Goals 2.4, 3.5, 5.1, and 5.2). To implement this recommendation:

- A. Professional development should be provided to help personnel understand how they contribute to the development of high-quality lessons that ensure the academic success of all students.
- B. Time will need to be set aside each month to ensure that each general education teacher has high-quality support from special education colleagues and other colleagues who can help them plan in a way that maximizes student learning and success.
- C. The school principal should participate in collaboration meetings (at least initially) to ensure that meetings are conducted in a positive, constructive manner and increase the likelihood that general education teachers feel supported in their efforts to get students to master important academic concepts and skills.
- D. The school principal should also observe instruction (both in general education and special education settings) to ensure that plans generated through teacher collaboration meetings are being implemented well.
- E. Communication from the school principal should acknowledge and reinforce the efforts school personnel make to plan and implement lessons that result in all Cesar Chavez students mastering important concepts and skills.



FINDINGS

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION THAT LEADS TO ENGAGEMENT AND MASTERY

Definition: Effective instruction is instruction that results in students engaging in efforts to learn and growing closer to mastering the content the teacher endeavors to teach. In high-performing schools, NCUST researchers found educators utilizing instructional practices that 1) led all students to feel valued and capable and 2) focused on ensuring getting all students to understand and master key concepts and skills. Both of these goals were facilitated when teachers provided clear instruction; ensured that lessons were culturally, socially, and personally relevant to their students; checked student understanding, provided feedback, and adapted instruction accordingly; built student fluency with gatekeeper vocabulary; promoted successful student practice, and nurtured students' love of learning. With such instruction, students from all racial/ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds thrived academically.



In an effort to understand the kind and quality of instruction provided at Cesar Chavez Community School, the equity audit team observed almost every classroom. The team used an observation protocol designed to capture the similarities and differences between the characteristics of teaching and learning found in high-performing schools and those observed in Cesar Chavez Community School classrooms. Additionally, interviews with school administrators and focus groups with teachers, parents, and students provided additional insight regarding instruction at Cesar Chavez Community School.

Key Findings at Cesar Chavez Community School:

- 🔍 Lessons observed at Cesar Chavez Community School frequently were conducted in ways that made all students feel valued and capable. Equity audit team members rated the extent to which each lesson observed was conducted in a manner that made students feel valued and capable. In 80% of the lessons, observers perceived that there was considerable evidence or exemplary evidence that Cesar Chavez Community School students felt valued and capable. During those lessons, observers noted that teachers and paraeducators worked with students, provided direct assistance to those who requested help, and provided frequent reinforcement to students. On the other hand, in 20% of the lessons, observers found only slight evidence that the teacher was leading students to feel valued and capable. Lessons would have been more likely to lead all students to feel valued and capable if teachers had more frequently engaged in conversations with students about the concepts and skills of focus.
- 🔍 **In high-performing schools, teachers planned and delivered lessons aimed at leading students to master the lesson objective the first time it was taught.** Equity audit team members rated the extent to which each lesson observed was conducted in a manner that led all students to develop a deep understanding and mastery of lesson objectives. In 40% of the lessons, observers perceived that there was considerable evidence or exemplary evidence that teachers at Cesar Chavez Community School delivered lessons that helped all students develop a deep understanding and mastery of lesson objectives. In those lessons, equity audit team members noted that teachers engaged in frequent discussions with students and asked questions about the procedures. On the other hand, in 60% of the lessons, observers noted only slight evidence or no evidence of this practice. Lessons would have been more likely to lead students to develop understanding and mastery if teachers had more frequently checked for understanding of student mastery while students were working independently and explained the reasons procedures worked or helped students understand why they were being asked to learn a concept.



FINDINGS

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION THAT LEADS TO ENGAGEMENT AND MASTERY

Key Findings at Cesar Chavez Community School:

🔍 **A factor that influences the pursuit of understanding and mastery of lesson objectives, is the extent to which the lesson objective is clear to students.** In each classroom observation, observers rated the extent to which the lesson objective was clear to them. A score of "one" meant that the rater had difficulty determining the lesson objective. A score of "five" meant that the rater perceived that the lesson objective was specific and clear. The average rating for all lessons observed was "four". This suggests on average, that lesson objectives were specific and clear to the rater. Similarly, for each classroom observation, observers rated the likelihood the lesson objective was clear to students. A score of "one" meant that the observer saw no evidence that the teacher had done anything to ensure that students understood what they were learning and why. A score of "five" meant that the students demonstrated that they understood specifically and clearly what they were expected to learn and why. The average rating for all lessons observed was "3.5". This suggests that in some classrooms there was room to improve the extent to which learning objectives were specific and clear for students.

🔍 **In high-performing schools, teachers designed lessons to enhance students' clarity about key lesson concepts and to minimize students' misconceptions.** Equity audit team members rated the extent to which each lesson observed at Cesar Chavez Community School was conducted in a manner that promoted clarity. In 40% of the lessons, observers perceived that there was considerable evidence that teachers at Cesar Chavez Community School delivered lessons that enhanced students' clarity about key lesson concepts. In contrast, in 60% of the lessons, observers found slight evidence or no evidence of this practice. Lessons would have been more likely to promote clarity among students if teachers had more frequently ensured that students clearly understood what they were expected to learn. Also, lessons might have been more likely to promote clarity among students if teachers had planned and implemented strategies to help students avoid common misconceptions about important lesson concepts.

🔍 **In high-performing schools, teachers designed lessons to include frequent opportunities to check students' understanding, provide feedback, and adapt instruction accordingly.** Equity audit team members rated the extent to which each lesson observed was conducted with frequent checks for student understanding, frequent teacher feedback, and appropriate adaptation of the lesson in response to checks for student understanding. In 60% of the lessons, observers perceived that there was considerable evidence or exemplary evidence that teachers at Cesar Chavez Community School delivered lessons in ways that modeled frequent checks for understanding, frequent teacher feedback, and appropriate adaptation of the lesson. Observers noted that teachers gave lots of feedback to specific students, asked probing questions, and provided clarity during reading of a difficult text. In contrast, in 40% of the lessons, observers noted only slight evidence or no evidence of this practice. Lessons would have been more likely to model strong checking for understanding, providing feedback, and adapting instruction if teachers had planned specific questions, they could ask or strategies they could use to elicit responses from many or all students. Teachers might have planned to ensure that they spoke less and their students spoke more. Also, lessons would have been more effective if teachers had planned strategies they could use when students made errors that were fairly predictable.



FINDINGS

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION THAT LEADS TO ENGAGEMENT AND MASTERY

Key Findings at Cesar Chavez Community School:

- 🔍 **In high-performing schools, teachers designed lessons that were responsive to the cultural, social, and personal backgrounds of the students they served. Often lessons helped students see connections between key academic standards and their own cultural, social, and personal backgrounds and interests.** Equity audit team members rated the extent to which each lesson observed was presented in a manner that helped students relate (culturally, socially, or personally) to the content being taught. In 60% of the lessons, observers perceived that there was either considerable evidence or exemplary evidence that teachers at Cesar Chavez Community School delivered lessons that helped all students relate to the content being taught. In those lessons, observers noted that teachers created projects that students found relevant to their lives. Further, teachers designed lessons that focused upon literature that students perceived as relevant because of their focus on issues of race and racism. In contrast, in 40% of the lessons, observers noted only slight evidence or no evidence suggesting that lessons were responsive to students' cultural, social, and personal backgrounds. The promotion of culturally, socially, and personally responsive teaching might have been enhanced if teacher collaborative planning could have helped teachers consider, "How could this concept be presented in a way that would resonate with our students at Cesar Chavez Community School? How might we make this concept seem less foreign to our students and more connected to their backgrounds and experiences?"
- 🔍 **In high-performing schools, teachers provided lessons that built their students' fluency with gatekeeper vocabulary. Often lessons gave all students many opportunities to use key lesson vocabulary in ways that helped students develop familiarity and comfort with the vocabulary.** Equity audit team members rated the extent to which each lesson observed helped students build fluency with vocabulary that was central to the lesson content and helped students integrate the lesson vocabulary into their speaking vocabulary. In 60% of the lessons, observers perceived that there was either considerable evidence or exemplary evidence that teachers at Cesar Chavez Community School delivered lessons that built their students' fluency with gatekeeper vocabulary. In these lessons, observers noted that teachers required students to use key vocabulary, they pushed students to articulate relationships between words, they engaged in conversations around certain academic vocabulary related to the lesson objective. On the other hand, in 40% of the lessons, equity audit team members observed only slight evidence or no evidence of this practice. Lessons would have been more likely to help students build fluency with gatekeeper vocabulary if teachers had more frequently engaged students in meaningful conversations that required students to use the vocabulary frequently. Prior planning could help teachers design activities, simulations, games, skits, and other activities that would engage students in using gatekeeper vocabulary frequently.



FINDINGS

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION THAT LEADS TO ENGAGEMENT AND MASTERY

Key Findings at Cesar Chavez Community School:

- 🔍 **In high-performing schools, teachers designed lessons that promoted students' successful practice of concepts and skills. Teachers allowed students to practice skills independently only when they knew that independent practice was likely to be successful.** Equity audit team members rated the extent to which, in each lesson observed, students were allowed to practice independently only when they had demonstrated a reasonable likelihood of success. In 60% of the lessons, observers perceived that there was considerable evidence that teachers at Cesar Chavez Community School delivered lessons that promoted students' successful practice of concepts and skills. In those lessons, observers noted that teachers provide large amounts of support to students. On the other hand, in 40% of the lessons, observers noted only slight evidence or no evidence of this practice. Lessons would have been more likely to help students experience successful practice if teachers had more frequently checked to make sure that students had a reasonable level of understanding before releasing students to pursue tasks independently.
- 🔍 **In high-performing schools, teachers designed lessons that led students to love learning. Students became excited about learning academic content because their teachers helped them understand how the content was relevant to their current or future lives. Students often perceived lessons as relevant because teachers engaged them in interesting projects. Teachers used interesting applications of technology to inspire engagement and mastery. Teachers maximized student engagement and mastery by creating frequent opportunities for students to interact with and learn from each other.** Equity audit team members rated the extent to which each lesson observed contributed to students developing a love of learning. In 60% of the lessons, observers perceived that there was considerable evidence that teachers at Cesar Chavez Community School delivered lessons that led students to love learning. Observers noted that teachers designed projects that resulted in high engagement and provided challenging tasks that were highly relevant topics to students. In contrast, in 40% of lessons, equity audit team members found only slight evidence or no evidence of this practice.

When students perceive that academic content is relevant to them, they are much more likely to love learning. Equity audit team members rated the extent to which students were likely to perceive the learning activities observed as relevant to the students' lives. A score of "one" meant the observer believed none of the students in the classroom were likely to perceive the classroom learning activities as relevant to their lives. A score of "five" meant the observer believed all students in the classroom were likely to perceive the classroom learning activities as relevant to their lives. The average rating for all lessons observed was "3.8".

Also, when students are engaged in talking with their peers about lesson concepts and ideas, they are more likely to enjoy lessons and learn to love learning. Equity audit team members rated the extent to which students talked with their peers or with the teacher about the lesson concepts and ideas. A score of "one" meant the observer did not observe any students speaking with their peers or with the teacher about the lesson concepts and ideas. A score of "five" meant the observer saw all students in the classroom speaking frequently with their peers or with the teacher about the lesson concepts and ideas. The average rating for all lessons observed was "3.6".

FINDINGS

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION THAT LEADS TO ENGAGEMENT AND MASTERY

Key Findings at Cesar Chavez Community School:

- Lessons would have been more likely to lead students to love learning if teachers had more frequently demonstrated enthusiasm about the content students were learning, engaged students in projects or other activities that required them to apply the concepts being learned in meaningful, relevant ways, engaged students in deep discussions about lesson concepts, or engaged students in activities that required the integration of the content being learned with high-interest areas such as art, music, drama, physical education, technology, etc.
- Also, observers rated the extent to which students were likely to perceive their classroom as **engaging**. In each classroom observation, equity audit team members rated the classroom climate as “one” if they perceived students found the class uninteresting or tedious. Observers rated the class as “five” if they perceived students found the class engaging and stimulating. On average, classrooms observed were rated “4.6”.



FINDINGS

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION THAT LEADS TO ENGAGEMENT AND MASTERY SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Equity Audit Team found several indicators of strength related to the instruction experienced by students at Cesar Chavez Community School. Those strengths include the following:

- NCUST examined eight instructional practices at Cesar Chavez Community School. For six of the eight instructional practices, we found considerable or exemplary evidence of the practice in 60% or more of the lessons observed. This constitutes a very high level of instructional effectiveness. Few schools demonstrate as much evidence of instructional evidence.
- Some teachers engaged students in hands-on projects that helped students see the relevance of the concepts and skills they were being taught.
- Some teachers utilized books, examples, and other materials that helped students relate the concepts learned to their own cultural, social, and personal backgrounds and experiences. Teachers made impressive efforts to ensure that students perceived academic content as relevant to their lives.

Additionally, the Equity Audit Team found several indicators of concern related to the instruction experienced by students at Cesar Chavez Community School. Those concerns include the following:

- While the Edgenuity Software offers important strengths, school personnel may consider how they might decrease the time students spend utilizing the software and increase opportunities for student conversations about the concepts and skills addressed in the Edgenuity lessons. Adults in the YCCP classroom would be better utilized if they spent more time engaging students in conversation about the concepts and skills that were the focus of Edgenuity lessons.

Based on these strengths and concerns, the team offers the following recommendations:



FINDINGS

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION THAT LEADS TO ENGAGEMENT AND MASTERY SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

3

As students become active partners with their teachers to own their learning, professional development is needed to create project-based learning activities and develop curriculum units that begin with personal meaning for students and culminate with a celebration and sense of possibilities for what students can do with this learning. Project-based activities engage students in the discovery process and encourage teamwork among students. (This goal aligns to the Yolo County Office of Education Strategic Plan Goals 1.4, 2.1, 2.4, 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5).

- A. **Professional Development:** The principal and teachers at Cesar Chavez Community School should engage in professional development targeting project-based learning and incorporating topics that are based on student recommendations. The professional development should result in Cesar Chavez Community School educators reaching agreements about the attributes of excellent project-based learning lessons that are likely to deepen students' understanding of critical academic standards, connect with students' interests and backgrounds, and lead students to love learning. Teachers should agree upon rubrics they can use to determine if a lesson represents the most important qualities of project-based learning. Professional development should also highlight the factors that may make it difficult to implement high-quality project-based lessons. Teachers should have clear strategies for addressing those difficulties. As well, care should be taken to ensure that teachers perceive that they can take risks in implementing project-based learning.
- B. **Schedules, Routines, Procedures:** The principal and district leaders should encourage Cesar Chavez Community School teachers to implement one project-based lesson within the semester. Teachers should have abundant support for planning, refining, and implementing the lesson.
- C. **Teacher Collaboration:** Collaborative planning meetings should be focused on helping teachers plan and implement their project-based learning lesson well. Planning should help teachers utilize the rubric they helped create (See Part A above). As well, planning should help teachers anticipate and proactively address the challenges often associated with implementing project-based lessons well.
- D. **Classroom Observation and Feedback:** School leaders should observe teachers as they implement their project-based lessons. Feedback should primarily emphasize support and encouragement for teachers who are implementing project-based learning the first or second time. Leaders should pay particular attention to acknowledging and celebrating implementation that addresses elements of the rubric created by the school's educators. Leaders should also offer supportive assistance in helping teachers overcome some of the challenges associated with implementing project-based learning well.
- E. **Communication from Leaders:** Leaders should send reports to teachers that celebrate classrooms for their efforts to implement project-based learning lessons. Leaders should make special efforts to commend teachers when their project-based lessons adhere to elements of the rubric they created.



NEXT STEPS

This report provides a large amount of information about school culture, curriculum, and instruction at Cesar Chavez Community School. We recommend that school personnel take time to read and understand the various findings and recommendations contained herein. While reading the report, it is important to keep in mind that the report is based on a snapshot of Cesar Chavez Community School. While the equity audit team endeavored to look comprehensively at the school and acquire input from an array of stakeholders, the report is based on information acquired over a narrow span of time from a limited number of stakeholders. As well, it is important to keep in mind that report compares Cesar Chavez Community School with schools that NCUST has awarded, where every demographic group outperforms state averages. This high bar is likely to suggest areas of improvement that would not be specified in more typical audit reviews. If there are questions regarding any of the findings or recommendations, we encourage school leaders to contact the equity audit team leader. NCUST is happy to engage in conversations about the report with the school principal, with the school's leadership team, or with the school's faculty.

Secondly, we acknowledge that stakeholders may disagree with findings and/or recommendations in this report. Where there are disagreements concerning important issues, school personnel may wish to consider identifying and implementing strategies for acquiring additional objective information about issues of concern. The equity audit team leader would be happy to help suggest ways that school personnel can collect additional information to influence their understanding of important issues discussed in this report.

Finally, the report includes many recommendations. It is important for stakeholders to review and prioritize these recommendations. Stakeholders should consider which recommendations are most likely to yield important improvements for Cesar Chavez Community School students. We encourage schools to limit focus to three or four important recommendations.

When high-priority recommendations are identified, we encourage attention to each of the steps specified. It is particularly important for school personnel to determine how they will monitor their progress toward implementation.

Finally, it is important for everyone involved to commit to pursuing high-priority recommendations with a spirit of teamwork and support. It will be important for stakeholders to remind each other that the reason for each improvement effort is grounded in their common interest in seeing all demographic groups of students at Cesar Chavez Community School excel. As well, it will be important for all stakeholders to understand their roles in implementing each improvement effort and to feel that they have abundant support designed to ensure their success. It will be especially important to identify and celebrate both small and large successes. As well, it will be important to determine how stakeholders will support each other constructively through setbacks and disappointments. This report highlights that Cesar Chavez Community School has many important strengths. By deliberately pursuing a few high-priority recommendations, we are confident that Cesar Chavez Community School will develop many more strengths that elevate learning outcomes for all groups of students.

