

# Canton Public Schools Equity Audit

*Presentation to School Committee*

*April 2023*

# Organization

- Equity Audit Framework
- Equity Audit Methodology
- Canton Public Schools Community
- Priority Recommendations & Examples of Related Findings
- Full Equity Audit Report
- Conclusion and Next Steps



A group of diverse children, including boys and girls of various ethnicities, are running happily down a school hallway. They are all wearing backpacks and smiling. The hallway has lockers on the left and a door on the right. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter.

# Equity Audit Framework

# What is an equity audit?

An equity audit is a study of an institution's policies, programs, and practices from an equity lens in pursuit of **educational equity**.

An equity audit critically examines policies, programs, and practices that directly or indirectly impact students or staff relative to their race, ethnicity, gender, national origin, language, disability, age, sexual orientation, sexual identity, religion, or other significant demographic factors.

## What is educational equity?

*Educational Equity means ensuring each student receives what they need for successful academic, emotional, and social outcomes.*

### Educational Equity is....

- Providing each student with individualized resources
- Providing all necessary support to meet desired expectations
- Demanding academic rigor and necessary resources

### Educational Equity is not...

- Removing necessary resources from students
- Lowering expectations
- Reducing academic rigor

### An Analogy

**Service:** providing shoes.

**Equality:** everyone gets a pair of shoes.

**Equity:** everyone gets shoes that fit.

**Equity Audit:** determining

1. who “everyone” is,
2. what constitutes “shoes,” and
3. creating decision-making processes for how “fit” is identified and evaluated.



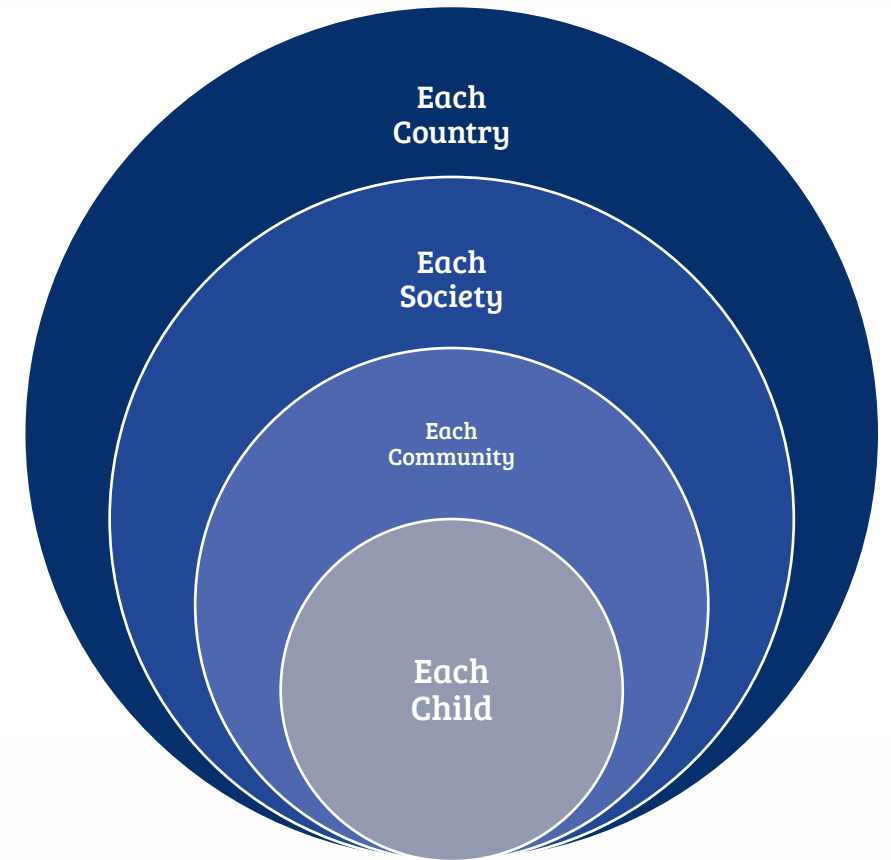
# How does educational equity benefit each child, each community, and society as a whole?

The education of a society's population directly correlates to the strength and health of the society.

With educational equity, **each child** has the opportunity for improved academic achievement, leading to improved future opportunities such as careers, income, housing, health, and quality of life.

With educational equity, each community is better positioned to have **more educated members**, leading to improved future opportunities such as a thriving and self-sufficient community.

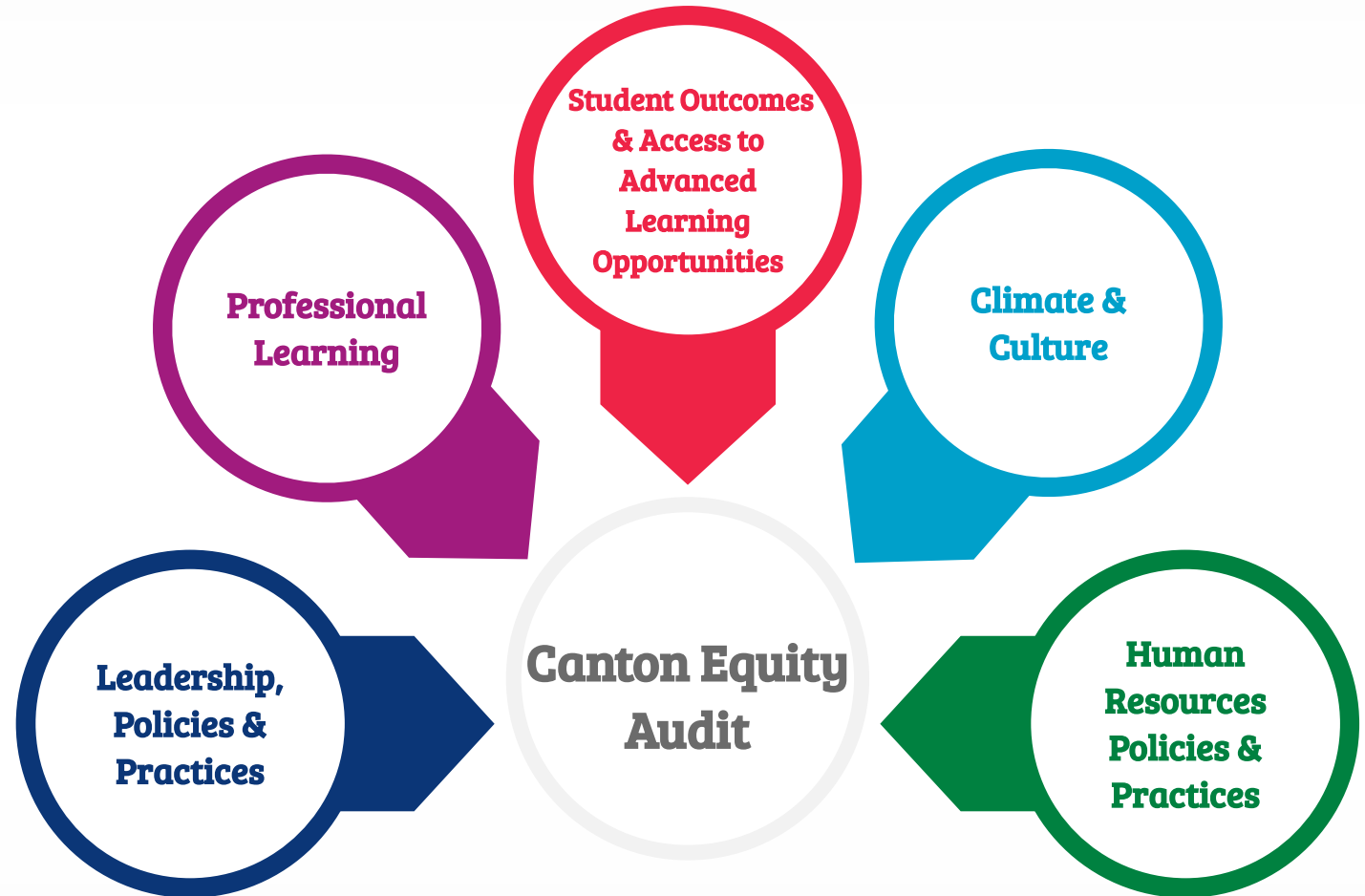
**“The impact of education on society...would be...the impact on the individual – amplified.”**



# Canton Equity Audit Scope

The scope for this equity audit in Canton Public Schools includes **five focus areas**, in alignment with PCG's overall equity audit framework:

1. Leadership, Policies, and Practices
2. Professional Learning
3. Student Outcomes and Access to Advanced Learning Opportunities
4. Climate and Culture
5. Human Resources Policies & Practices



# Framework and Guiding Questions

Focus Area	Guiding Question
<b>Leadership, Policies, and Practices</b>	To what extent do the <b>policies, practices, and actions of leadership</b> in CPS promote a diverse, equitable, and inclusive district?
<b>Professional Learning</b>	How does CPS <b>professional development</b> support equity, diversity, and creating schools free of bias, prejudice, and discrimination?
<b>Student Outcomes and Access to Advanced Learning Opportunities</b>	How are <b>student outcomes and program participation</b> patterns linked to student characteristics and demographics? Are <b>student discipline practices</b> consistent, transparent, and equitable for all students?
<b>Culture and Climate</b>	To what extent are the <b>family engagement efforts</b> of CPS inclusive, collaborative, and equitable? What are <b>students' experiences of belonging and inclusion</b> at CPS?
<b>Human Resources Policies and Practices</b>	How do <b>human resources policies and practices</b> in CPS support hiring and retaining a diverse workforce?



A young boy with a joyful expression is seated in a wheelchair at a desk in a classroom. He is holding a pencil and looking towards the camera. In the background, other students are seated at desks, some appearing to be working. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text 'Equity Audit Methodology' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font across the middle of the image.

# Equity Audit Methodology



# Mixed Methods Research Design

## Qualitative Data

### Case Study Approach

Researchers use case studies to investigate an unknown, contemporary issue or to find a better understanding of a process in which several variables are pertinent to the case (Glesne, 2010).

Case studies rely “on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion” (Yin, 2003).

### Phenomenological Approach

Researchers use the phenomenological approach to grasp the stakeholder experience and the meaning making of the experience (Creswell, 2013).

In all approaches, due to the topic of equity, “**onlyness**” is considered.

Onlyness refers to feeling alone, or feeling like one of few, and centers around a heightened awareness of the self in relation to one’s surroundings (Ruggiano, 2022). As such, experiences may be singular in nature, but are nonetheless valid and require further investigation.

Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Pearson.

Glesne, C. (2010). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Allyn and Bacon

Ruggiano, C. (2022). Adapt and Serve the Community!: Voices of Families of Youth of Color in Predominantly White, Rural Communities. *The Rural Educator*, 43(1), 54-73

Yin, R.K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.



# Mixed Methods Research Design

## Quantitative Data

The analysis of quantitative data in the equity audit is primarily contained to descriptive analyses. This means that we report summary statistics (sums, averages) pertaining to data provided.

We calculated risk ratios which are used to examine whether students from different subgroups are overrepresented in certain populations of students (in this example, students who have received a discipline referral). Risk ratios are calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Risk Ratio} = \frac{\text{Number of students from a subgroup with a disciplinary referral} \div \text{the total number of students in the data set from that subgroup}}{\text{Total number of students with disciplinary referrals excluding the same subgroup} \div \text{total number of students in the data set excluding the subgroup}}$$

A risk ratio of 1.0 means there is no association between the student's demographic group and their likelihood of having a disciplinary referral. A risk ratio of **1.5 or greater** indicates a risk of overrepresentation in disciplinary referrals, while a risk ratio of **less than 1.0** indicates possible underrepresentation. Student subgroups with fewer than ten (10) students in the data set were excluded from analysis.

# Equity Audit Data Sources

## Interviews



14 interview participants

- District leadership
- School Committee members

## Survey



1,375 responses to the student survey for students in grades 6-12.

## Focus Groups



10 community focus groups

- Families
- Students: Middle and High School, students with Historically Marginalized Identities
- Teaching staff: Elementary, Secondary, staff with Historically Marginalized Identities
- Other school- and district-based staff
- School leaders
- District leaders

63 total participants across all groups

PCG received 6 additional contributions via email following focus groups

## Other Data Sources



Sample of sources reviewed:

- Policies and manuals
- Equity-focused programming information
- MCAS achievement data
- Discipline rates
- IEP assignments
- School and District Profiles
- Professional learning offerings
- Staffing and other human resources data



# Strategies Analysis at-a-Glance

High-level rubric to evaluate the presence of core equity practices, tied to evidence-based strategies.

Desired Outcome: List of desired outcome(s) based on the focus area				
Evidence-Based Strategies <i>Strategies needed to effectively move towards the desired outcome(s)</i>	Core Practices <i>Examples of a district's effective use of the evidence-based strategy</i>	Observed in Canton?		
		Yes	Partial	No

## Please Note:

- Determinations on whether core practices were observed in CPS were made based on the data collected from the district, publicly available sources, and stakeholder engagement efforts over the course of this equity audit.
- A “Yes” designation means that a practice was fully observed or was agreed upon by all stakeholders engaged in data collection.
- A “Partial” designation means that a practice was observed partially, occasionally, inconsistently, or not agreed upon by all stakeholders.
- A “No” designation means PCG did not observe the practice. A “No” designation does not definitively mean that a particular practice doesn’t exist in CPS, simply that **PCG did not observe** the practice during this equity audit process.



A photograph of four diverse school children walking together outdoors. From left to right: a young girl with braids and a backpack, a boy with a backpack, a girl with a patterned shirt and backpack, and a boy with a messenger bag. They are all smiling and appear to be walking on a paved area. The image has a purple tint and a white text overlay.

# Canton Public Schools Community

# District Commitment to Equity

**Favorable steps towards equity.** As described by students, parents, leadership, staff, and teachers, several initiatives and action steps have been favorable towards the goal of educational equity in CPS:

- Equity teams/opportunities for various stakeholder groups: District-wide Core Equity Team, School Based DEI Teams, Canton Families Embracing Diversity, DEI, Student affinity groups.
- Focus on equity in District's Strategic Plan and several School Improvement Plans.
- Embedding equity-centric tools in instruction & evaluation
- Review of data by student demographics to identify potential disproportionality.
- Offering of equity-centered professional development i.e.; workshops, book studies, external courses.
- Strong desire from stakeholders to improve and focus on equity-related work.
- Steps towards creating a diverse and representative curriculum.
- Continue curricular reviews through an equity lens.
- Further developed equity strategies and actions when compared to districts of similar size and in the region

# Student, School, and District Characteristics

- The district is majority White (64%), 11% Asian, 11% Black or African American, 7% Hispanic or Latinx, 7% Multiracial (two or more races), less than 1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander and less than 1% Native American or Alaska Native.
- Approximately 22% of CPS students are considered low-income. At the state level, 44% of all students are low-income. Of the neighboring districts, Sharon is the only district with fewer low-income students (13%) than Canton Public Schools (Dedham – 30%, Norwood - 40%, Stoughton – 46%, Randolph – 65%).
- Approximately 14% of the district's students have an IEP. This rate is less than the Massachusetts state average of 19%.
- Three percent of the district's students are English Language Learners. This rate is significantly lower than the state average of 11%. Of the neighboring districts, Sharon is the only district with a similarly low percentage of English Language Learners (3%). Other neighboring districts have higher percentages in their student body of English Language Learners (Dedham – 5%, Norwood – 13%, Stoughton – 8%, Randolph – 16%).



A group of six diverse school children, three girls and three boys, standing in a line outdoors. They are all smiling and wearing backpacks. The image has a blue overlay. The text "Priority Recommendations" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font across the middle of the image.

# Priority Recommendations



# Top Priority Recommendations

Based on the findings of this Equity Audit, PCG recommends Canton Public Schools prioritize the following items for immediate implementation and focus:

- 1. District-Wide Equity Vision**
- 2. Canton Equity Implementation Program**





# Priority Recommendations: District Wide Equity Vision

# Top Priority: District-Wide Equity Vision

## Set a clear vision and common language for equity across CPS.

- Define and communicate how existing visions, mission statements, and goals align to a comprehensive equity vision.
- Engage a diverse range of stakeholders to contribute to and build the shared vision, including students.
- Place the equity vision statement front and center in the district's communications and materials in multiple languages.
- Include definitions of terms and expectations for how and why they will be used in CPS.

# ***District-Wide Equity Vision***

Define and communicate how existing visions, mission statements, and goals align to a comprehensive equity vision.

## **Related Findings**

### **Lack of Equity Focus in Recruitment and Hiring Materials and Policies**

- When reviewing job descriptions currently posted on TalentEd for CPS, the inclusion of equity was inconsistent and surface level. Many job postings, including one for a High School Special Education Teacher, did not mention equity or diversity. Others included a mention of wanting a candidate who “values equity”. Of those that did mention equity, there was no further explanation of expectations around equity for staff members in the district.
- Outside of general statement of expectations around recruitment, there is no guidance or expectations around workforce diversity communicated in school committee policies. The lack of specific, equity-focused language in CPS human resources policies limits the district’s ability to set goals and prioritize the recruitment and hiring of diverse educators and staff.
- Several school and district leaders shared the understanding that the district seeks to diversify the workforce but had no concrete plans or actions for how to achieve that goal.



# ***District-Wide Equity Vision***

Define and communicate how existing visions, mission statements, and goals align to a comprehensive equity vision.

## **Related Findings**

### **School Committee is seen by stakeholders across the district as a hindrance to moving equity work forward**

- Several stakeholders across family, staff, and school leader focus groups and interviews shared the perception that equity work was hindered by members of the school committee.
- The School Committee is perceived as bending to the loudest community voices, which are not seen as representing the needs of the broader Canton school community.
- Some members of the School Committee are perceived as actively blocking equity work

### **No one is owning the work of DEI in Canton**

- While it is important that equity is seen as the responsibility of everyone, the lack of focus in the work is evident in the inconsistent nature of much of the efforts to date.
- Without an individual or team whose sole focus is the development and coordination of equity-focused strategies, the district's ability to move the needle on the work is limited.



## ***District-Wide Equity Vision***

**Engage a diverse range of stakeholders to contribute to and build the shared vision, including students.**

### **Related Findings**

- Families would like greater transparency and inclusion in the information received.
- Families and/or CPS staff asked for more information on the following: academic gap, curriculum, discipline policies, neurodiversity, advanced placement courses and process to take advanced placement courses, and incidents that occur on campus.
- Families want to participate in the process of education but are unclear about their role: “School council didn’t seem like a parent thing.”
- Across stakeholder groups and conversations, district staff want to better understand what equity looks like in day-to-day practice.
  - Shared perception that equity work in the district thus far has been heavily theoretical.



# ***District-Wide Equity Vision***

**Engage a diverse range of stakeholders to contribute to and build the shared vision, including students.**

## **Related Findings**

### **Community mindsets are a barrier to the work.**

- Across interviews and focus groups, stakeholders shared concerns about entrenched mindsets in the broader Canton community. Some examples include:
  - Pervasive feelings of resistance, citing “how we have always done it here;” perceptions of desire to be progressive but are stuck in what is comfortable and perceive equity as taking things away from their students.
  - Community value placed on how long you have lived in the town leading to othering and exclusion of families, students, and staff who more recently arrived.
  - Stakeholders shared the perception that the broader Canton community does not see diversity as an asset.
  - One family member shared that it’s “going to take awhile for the community to figure out how to get comfortable with it” in reference to the work of the equity audit.
- Many stakeholders talked about the deep-seated mindsets against equity as being seen as coming from community members who have been in Canton for generations. Linked to this, many also mentioned the perception that Canton’s workforce is unique in the number of staff who have been in the district for a long time, many growing up in the town and having attended CPS themselves.
  - 52% of teacher and school leader focus group participants have been in CPS longer than 15 years.
  - One leader in the district shared that “not all teachers see all kids as their kids” and another shared challenges with teachers not wanting to “deal with that stuff” in reference to equity concepts and issues with race.
- There has been a lot of leadership turnover in recent years which, coupled with the existing mindsets in the town and district, can create deeper entrenchment and lack of trust from longtime community members.



## ***District-Wide Equity Vision***

Place the equity vision statement front and center in the district's communications and materials in multiple languages.

### **Related Findings**

#### **District leadership is seen as inconsistent and often reactionary**

- Stakeholders often shared the perception that equity work looks completely different depending on the building or department.
- Perceived reluctance of district leadership and school-based staff to have difficult conversations or communicate about topics related to equity.
  - Belief that this stems from fear of “saying the wrong thing” and community pushback.
  - An example cited was of a standards-aligned proposal to celebrate cultural and social holidays at the elementary level that was shut down by former leadership because elementary families weren't thought to be “ready” to acknowledge LGBTQIA+ awareness month.
- Several participants expressed the perception that the district reacts to incidents as they arise but there is a lack of systemic or strategic actions based on needs or best practice.





## ***District-Wide Equity Vision***

**Include definitions of terms and expectations for how and why they will be used in CPS.**

### **Related Findings**

**There is a broad lack of understanding of equity concepts, purpose, and how to achieve equity.**

- Lack of understanding of foundational equity concepts and definitions across stakeholder groups.
- Many stakeholders invoked “equality” or “fairness” when discussing equity, which is a misunderstanding of the concept.
  - This aligns with the perception of many stakeholders that community members are on board with equity until it is perceived that something is being taken from their students.
- One leader stated in response to a question around what Canton is doing well regarding equity: “As someone who doesn’t need to look for equity, I don’t see the inequities.”
- Families and staff members questioned the need for BIPOC-specific focus groups and affinity spaces.
- Several teachers cited surface-level concepts as defining equity, such as claiming to have an equitable classroom because their students “pick what goes up on the walls.”
- Teachers shared a desire to understand what equity looks like in the classroom and for their work.
- Many school and district leaders shared a desire for more accountability in equity work but stated that this cannot happen without more clear understanding of what progress looks like.



A group of seven diverse young children, including boys and girls of various ethnicities, are smiling and standing together outdoors. They are wearing backpacks, suggesting they are school children. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text is centered over the image.

# Priority Recommendation: Canton Equity Implementation Plan

# Top Priority: Canton Equity Implementation Program

Create a formal CPS Equity Implementation Program to continue the efforts of the already established Equity Teams

The new equity implementation program will streamline and formalize the analysis of data for the intentional progression of equity goals. At minimum, the program should follow the below steps for equity implementation at **each school site**:

1. Identify 3 core focus areas, i.e., Academic Achievement, School Climate and Culture, Professional Development.
2. Create a SMARTIE goal for each area, i.e., By June 2024, GMS will raise the Math MCAS proficiency rates of EL students by 3% as measured by MCAS scores through the incorporation of additional culturally responsive teaching practices and new family engagement initiatives. Note the use of measurable data and the actions used to reach the goal.
3. Identify baseline data, i.e., Math MCAS proficiency rates of EL students in 2021-2022.
4. Name and implement action steps, i.e., Culturally Responsive Professional Development, Family Engagement Initiatives.
5. Revisit data after action steps.
6. If the goal has been met, create a new goal. If the goal has not been met, incorporate additional action steps until the goal has been met.

Essential to the development of this plan is to establish clear ownership of each element and action involved. While equity should be seen as everyone's job, **PCG recommends hiring a DEI Director** to own the development and implementation of this plan.



# Canton Equity Implementation Plan

## Related Findings

**There is a need for additional training in culturally responsive practices for teachers.**

- Several stakeholder groups (families, teachers, students) expressed a need for more staff training around culturally responsive instructional practices for teachers.
- PD should be subject specific to show teachers how to be culturally responsive in each of their subject areas, i.e.,:
  - Student-suggested texts in English classes
  - Allowing students to choose their own type of assessments (oral presentation, written test, song, etc.) in Civics

**Mandatory trainings do not consistently require evidence of learning and practical application.**

- Evidence of content learned through one or multiple methods:
  - Lesson plans, student work, self-reflection journals, group discussions, etc.
- The district should regularly analyze and use the data collected from participants to determine strengths and improvements needed for attendees.

## Training and Learning Needs for Human Resources

- Almost every stakeholder group expressed a desire and need for training around equity in recruitment and hiring. Topics such as defining key terms and understanding implicit bias and what it looks like in hiring were mentioned multiple times.
- Many school and district leaders expressed feeling at a loss with how to move the needle on workforce diversity in Canton.

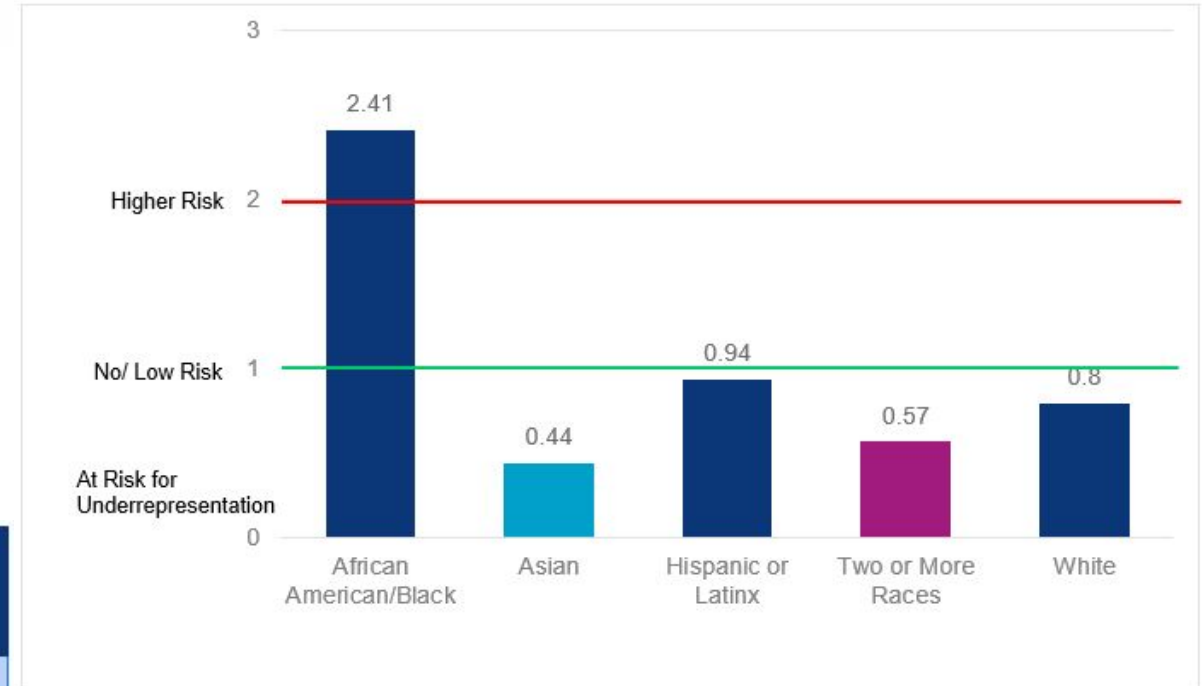


# Canton Equity Implementation Plan

## Related Findings (Disciplinary Referrals by Race: District-Wide)

- African American or Black students have **2.41 times** the risk of receiving at least one disciplinary referral as all other students in the school.
- Asian students have **0.44 times** the risk of receiving at least one disciplinary referral as all other students in the school.
- Hispanic or Latinx students have **0.94 times** the risk of receiving at least one disciplinary referral as all other students in the school.
- Multiracial students (two or more races) have **0.57 times** the risk of receiving at least one disciplinary referral as all other students in the school.
- White students have **0.8 times** the risk of receiving at least one disciplinary referral as all other students in the school.

Disciplinary Risk Ratio by Race: 2021-22



Race	All Students	Students with Disciplinary Referrals
African American or Black	459	86
Asian	396	17
Hispanic or Latinx	173	15
Two or more races	259	14
White	2,231	187
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,601</b>	<b>330</b>

Please note totals include students from subgroups not reported due to small numbers. Additional subgroups included in the totaled values are: American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander students.

The data was retrieved from [Canton Public Schools](#) for school year 2021-22 and encompasses Canton High School, Galvin Middle School, Luce Elementary, JFK Elementary and Hansen Elementary.



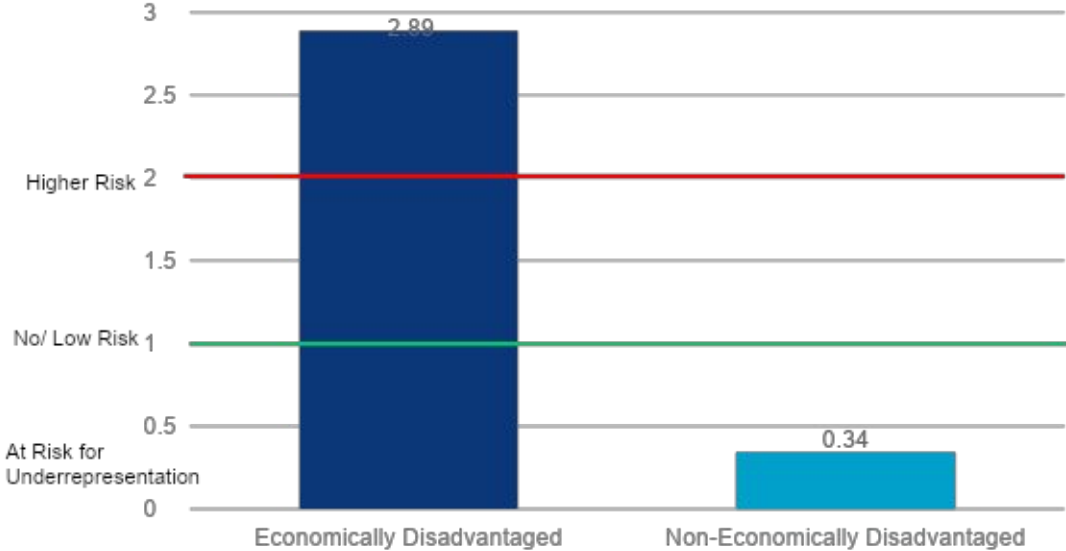
# Canton Equity Implementation Plan

## Related Findings (Disciplinary Referrals by Income: District-Wide)

- Economically disadvantaged students are **2.89 times** as likely to have been disciplined as all other students.
- Not economically disadvantaged students are **0.34 times** as likely to have been disciplined as all other students.

Income Status	All Students	Students with Disciplinary Referrals
Economically Disadvantaged	892	161
Not Economically Disadvantaged	2,709	169
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,601</b>	<b>330</b>

Disciplinary Risk Ratio by Income Status: 2021-22

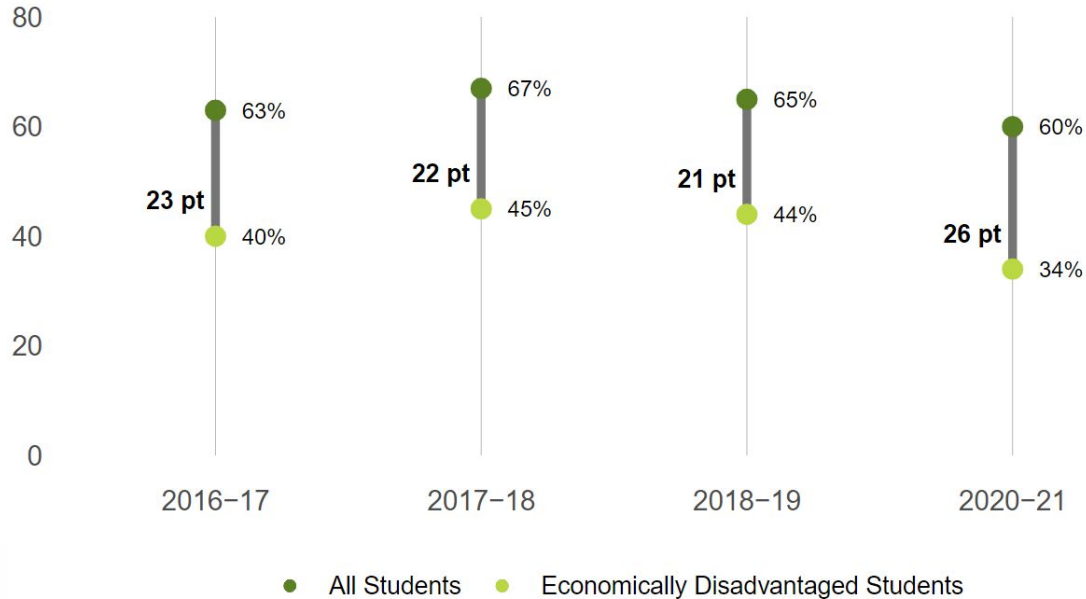


# Canton Equity Implementation Plan

## Related Findings (MCAS Proficiency Gap – Economically Disadvantaged Students)

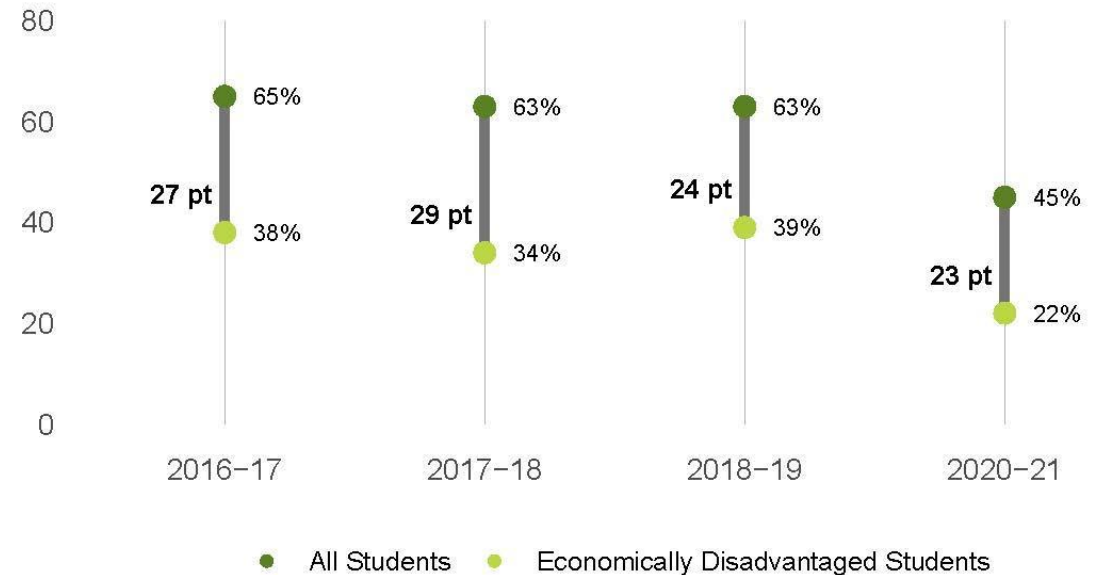
Since 2016, there has been at least a 21-point proficiency gap between all students and economically disadvantaged students in both English Language Arts and Mathematics in grades 3 - 8

Proficiency gap between economically disadvantaged students and all students: MCAS ELA 2017–2021, grades 3–8



Source: profiles.doe.mass.edu

Proficiency gap between economically disadvantaged students and all students: MCAS Mathematics 2017–2021, grades 3–8



Source: profiles.doe.mass.edu

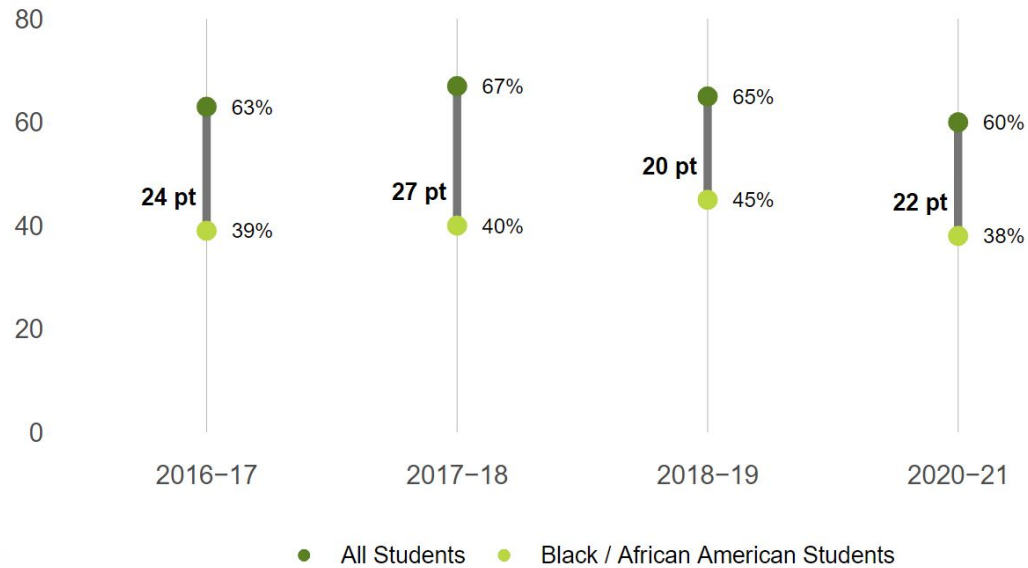


# Canton Equity Implementation Plan

## Related Findings (MCAS Proficiency Gaps – Black and African American Students)

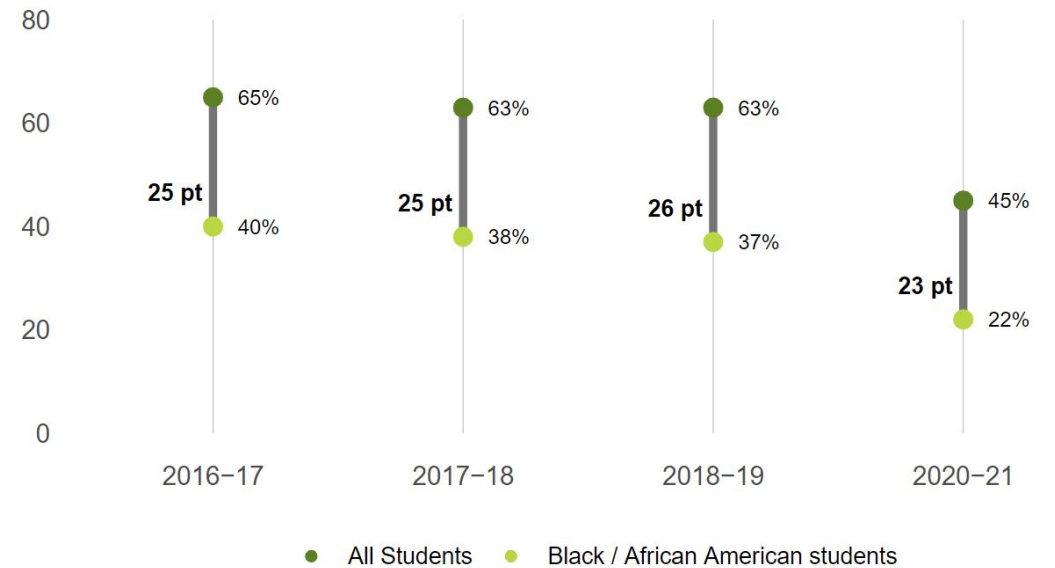
Since 2016, there has been at least a 20-point proficiency gap between all students and Black students in both English Language Arts and Mathematics in grades 3 - 8

Proficiency gap between Black and African American students and all students: MCAS ELA 2017–2021, grades 3–8



Source: profiles.doe.mass.edu

Proficiency gap between Black and African American students and all students: MCAS Mathematics 2017–2021, grades 3–8



Source: profiles.doe.mass.edu







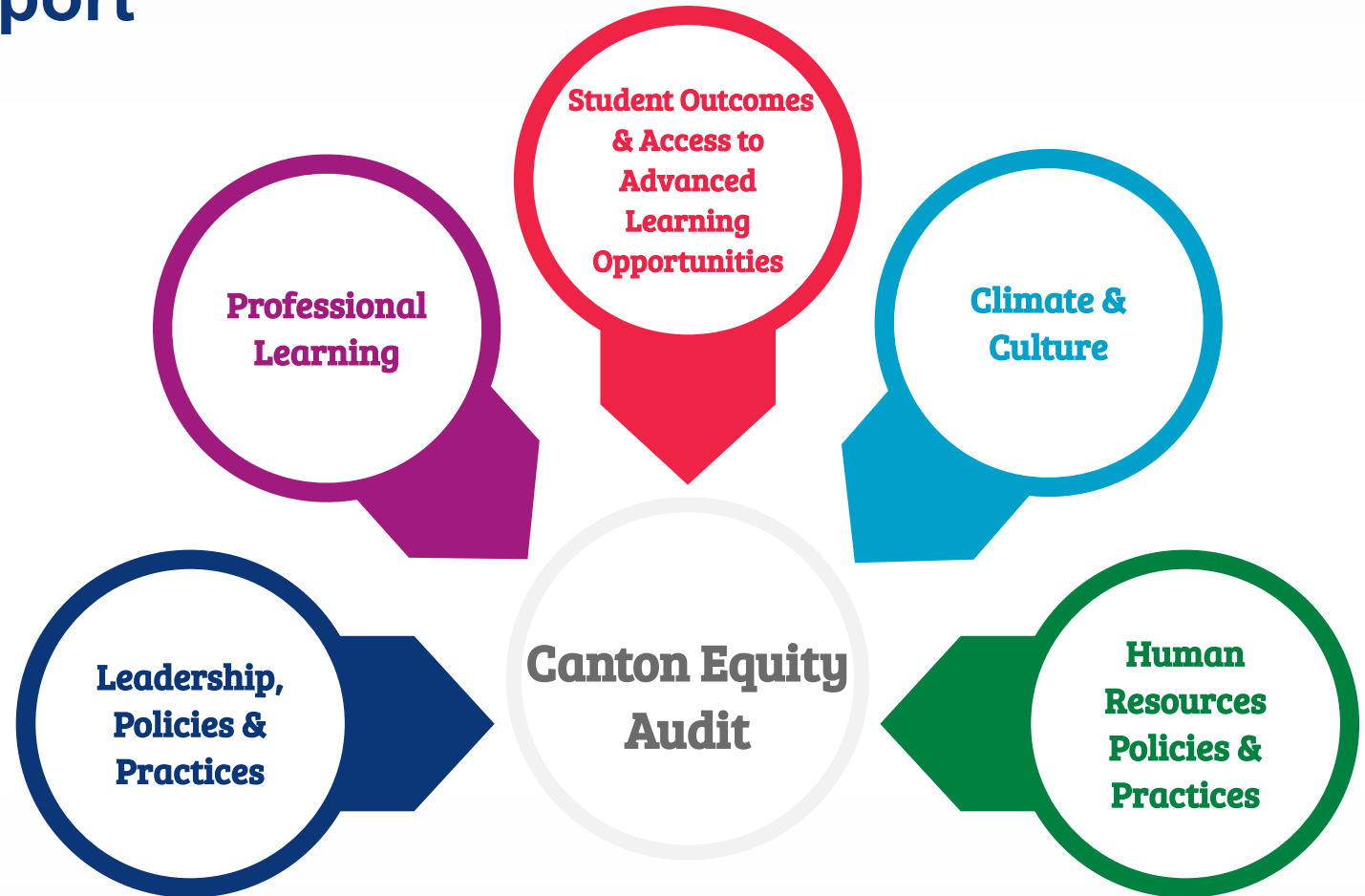
# Full Equity Audit Report

# Canton Equity Audit Full Report

Included in the full report are deeper dives into each of the focus areas:

- Strengths to Build On
- Strategies Analysis at-a-Glance Tables
- Opportunities for Growth
- Recommendations (*48 total*)

The full report also includes **additional analyses and data visualizations**, including MCAS assessment outcomes and risk ratios around IEP assignments.





# Conclusion and Next Steps

# Conclusion and Next Steps

In PCG's review of CPS, PCG recognizes the tremendous amount of work and effort CPS leadership, staff and families have put forth to make CPS more equitable.

CPS has demonstrated the following:

- Commitment to achieving educational equity as demonstrated in the district's Strategic Plan and leadership team actions.
- Planning and preparation of equity-centric teams through action planning, awareness building, and information sharing.
- Capacity to work towards educational equity through school and district-based teams and district-wide initiatives.
- Persistence in understanding experiences of each student and family of CPS through several surveys and opportunities for feedback and dialogue.

At this time, PCG recommends and believes CPS is ready begin to implement many of the plans initiated by CPS and the recommendations shared in this audit.



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