School Equity Learning Walks and Experiences Guide

Columbus City Schools District (CCS)

COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS

Prepared by: Terrance L. Green, Ph.D.

October 15, 2024

THANK YOU

Presentation Outline

- Professional Background
- Overview of the Guide that will inform the school tours
- Next Steps
- Q & A

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University of Texas at Austin, As
Educational Leadershi

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How I Knew I Was a Teacher

My science lessons changed a life.

By Terrance Green

My first year teaching was rough. There were many times when I felt inadequate, and asked myself, "Why am I doing this?"

There was the honors class full of eager learners that I lost control of. I wanted so much for them to like me that I failed to create the right tone and build the professional teacher-student relationship. Even honors students will run all over you if you let them.

search   search

Community-Based Equity Audits: A Practical Approach for Educational Leaders to Support Equitable Community-School Improvements

Terrance L. Green[1]

Abstract

Purpose: To equitably transform urban schools of color and the neighborhoods where they are nested requires approaches that promote community equity and foster solidarity among a range of stakeholders. However, most school–community approaches solely focus on improving school-based outcomes and leave educational leaders with little guidance for how to critically understand their school's community context and act in solidarity with neighborhood stakeholders on community issues. The purpose of this conceptual article is to introduce what I call community-based equity audits and explain how educational leaders can use this process to work toward equitable school-community outcomes. **Method and Approach:** This process builds on equity audits in educational leadership, community audits, and community-based research practices and is theoretically grounded in Freirean dialogue. To demonstrate its impacts, this article draws on reflections of aspiring principals who conducted community-based equity audits in a leadership preparation program. **Findings:** The

[1]University of Texas at Austin, TX, USA

OPINION //

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Terrance L. G

Dec. 18, 20

The Research Lab
The Fundamentals

RELATIONSHIPS

The School Closure

Four things you may not have realized about school closures.

Posted October 7, 2019 | ✔ Reviewed by Ekua Hagan

Closing a school is a difficult and contentious decision.

One thing that makes the decision tough is that everyone wants what is best for their own children.

However, the more pressing question is: Does everyone want what's best for other people's children?

Despite having good intentions for student groups who have been underserved by schools, is closing schools best for children?

I've been studying this question for the past seven years and to answer it, there are four things that every person needs to know about school closures.

Closing Schools Rarely Saves Money

Districts commonly explore closures when they are in a fiscal crisis, which is the case in many districts in the state.

1 of 5

Highland Heights Elementary is one of 10 Houston Independent School District's schools that may be closed or taken over by the state Wednesday, May 9, 2018, in Houston. (Godofredo A. Vasquez / Houston Chronicle)
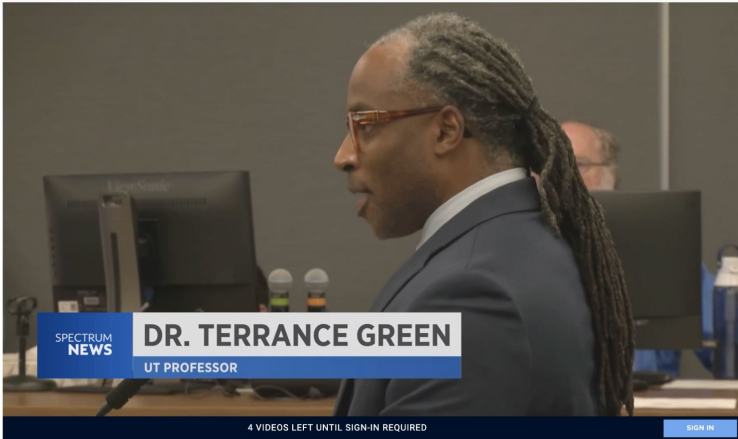
Project Lead - Dr. Green, Ph.D., UT-Austin

Rightsizing Equity Audit for San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) During the P

Prepare

Co

Report #2

In this Aug. 15, 2015 file photo, children hold hands as they walk. (AP Photo/Lynne Sladky, File)

EDUCATION

San Antonio ISD Board of Trustees approves measure to close 15 schools, merge others

Equity Audit of San Antonio Independent School District's (SAISD) Rightsizing Process

SOUTH TEXAS / EL PASO | OCTOBER 9, 2024 | 10:00PM

ember 10, 2023

. Terrance L. Green[1] (he/him)

ors: Dr. Aprile Benner and Dr. Havala Hanson

Suggested Citation: Green, T. (2023). San Antonio Independent School District: Rightsizing equity audit report. Austin, Texas: Limitless Attitude.

School Equity Learning Walks and Experiences Guide

(Version 1)

School Equity Learning Walks and Experience Guide (c)

COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS

Created by Dr. Terrance L. Green

Review of 70+ Articles on Urban School Closures from 2000-2024

Research on Instructional Rounds & Equity-based Observations, School Visits

Over 12 years of research on school closures, gentrifications & equity audits

Feedback from stakeholders at the 9 schools on the list for closure

"There is no way to solve a complex education problem without listening to the perspectives of those affected by the problem."

CCS Board Members' School Visit Protocol

1. What important things do you think the school board should look for when they visit schools?

2. Who should the school board members talk to and listen to when they visit schools? This can include specific people and/or general groups.

3. What experiences should school board members have when they visit schools?

4. What places in the school neighborhood should school board members visit to understand the role of the school in the community?

Data to Look-for

Data to Listen-for

Experiences

Neighborhood Places

English
Spanish
Arabic
Nepali

Guiding Principles[2]

Description, Not Interpretation

Observation, Not Evaluation

Situate Current Realities within Historical contexts

Fact-Based Evidence

Collaborative & Equitable Reflections

Description, Not Interpretation: Visitors describe what they see, hear, and experience during their visits without making assumptions or interpretations. This will help keep the focus on fact-based and observable data.

Observation, Not Evaluation: The purpose of the *School Closure Equity Learning Walks and Experience Guide* is to observe school functioning and community impact, not to evaluate individual staff or students. Visitors should focus on collecting evidence of how the school environment, resources, and practices affect student experiences and equity outcomes, rather than providing judgmental feedback or interpretations.

Fact-Based Evidence: Collect factual, observable data without personal bias to ensure all visitors record equitable and fact-based evidence.

Collaborative and Equitable Reflections: After visits, the team engages in reflective discussions, analyzing data to identify patterns of inequity related to the school closure process. The goal is to ensure decisions are made with a deep understanding of how closure may mitigate or perpetuate existing disparities.

Situate Current Realities within Historical Context: Be aware of how systemic racism and segregation in neighborhoods, housing, and schooling as well as past disinvestments, policies, decisions, and structural inequities have shaped present-day opportunities and challenges. Therefore, recognizing the school's and neighborhood's history will be important to properly situating current conditions.

[2] Elmore, R. F., Fiarman, S. E., & Teitel, L. (2010). Instructional rounds in education: A network approach to improving teaching and learning. Teacher Librarian, 37(3), 69.

How to Use this Guide

The School Equity Learning Walks and Experiences Guide is a three-part process to support school visits. This guide explains each step of the process in detail and describes what to do before, during, and after the visits. It also includes space to record your observations, conversations and experiences. You are encouraged to use this guide in its entirety. However, we also encourage you to adjust the steps as needed to best align with your context and circumstances.

- **Learning Prior to the Visit:** Before conducting school visits, understand the school's racial, historical, and social context, identify and challenge your biases, and select your focus areas, look-fors, listen-fors and guiding questions.

- **Learning During the Visit:** Use the guide to conduct equity learning walks and experiences by visiting key areas of the school, observing through an equity lens, and documenting fact-based observations and insights to inform decision-making.

- **Learning After the Visit:** Debrief by reflecting on individual and team learnings from the visits, discussing key observations, and identifying patterns to inform equitable decision-making.

Learning Prior to Visit
Take the following steps:
1. Understand the racial, historical, and social context of the school
2. Identify & challenge your B.A.M.S.
3. Select your focus areas, look-fors, listen-fors, and guiding questions

Learning During Visit
Take the following steps:
4. Conduct equity learning walks and experiences, and record your observations and learnings

Learning After Visit
Take the following steps:
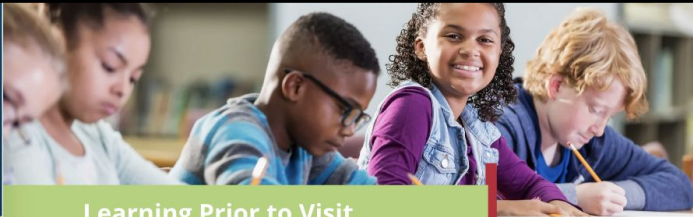5. Debrief and Reflect on individual and team visits

3 Phases With 5 Steps

Learning Prior To Visiting (Steps 1-3)

Learning During The Visit (Step 4)

Learning After The Visit (Step 5)

Learning _Prior_ To Visit: Step 1

Learning _Prior_ to Visit

Step 1: Understand the racial, historical, and social context of the school
Understanding the racial, historical, and social context of a school is essential for making equitable and informed observations. This will help you understand the current realities of the school within the historical context that shaped its current state. Answer the following questions prior to the school visit.

1. What are the demographics of the students who are served at this school? Specifically pay attention to race, socioeconomic status, native language, gender, students who receive special education services.

2. What historical and racial events and decisions have shaped the identity and conditions of the school?

3. What systemic inequities have impacted the school's resources, opportunities, or relationships with the broader community?

4. How and in what ways is this school supporting student outcomes and experiences?

[2] Elmore, R. F., Fiarman, S. E., & Teitel, L. (2010). Instructional rounds in education: A network appr...

School Equity Learning Walks and Experiences Guide ©

Demographics

Historical & racial events and decisions

Systemic inequities that have impacted resources, opportunities, etc.

Supporting student experiences and outcomes

Step 1: Understanding the racial, historical, and social context of the school

Learning Prior to the Visit
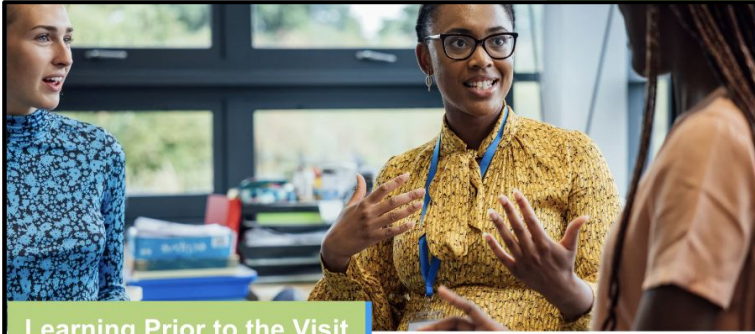
Step 2: Bring Up Your B.A.M.S.
There are two major biases that can easily show up during school observations and they are confirmation biases and vividness biases.

Confirmation Biases are when people tend to **focus on information that supports what they already believe and ignore or dismiss information that challenges those beliefs.** It's like only seeing or hearing things that confirm what you want to be true, even if there's evidence to the contrary. Example: This is a "failing school" and so it will be better if it is closed.

Vividness biases are when people give more weight to information that is dramatic, emotionally charged, or visually striking, often from a prior experience, even if it's less accurate or relevant. **It's the tendency to be influenced by memorable events or details, making us overlook more important but less sensational facts.** For example, a single dramatic story might shape someone's views more than solid data or statistics on the same issue.

Confirmation Biases

Vividness Biases
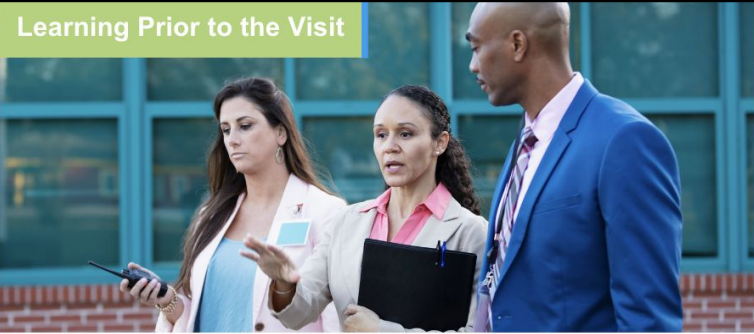
Prior to the Visit

Confirmation Biases

(What confirmation biases might you hold about this school?)

Vividness Biases

(What Vividness biases about this school?)

Learning Prior to the Visit

Step 2: Bring Up Your B.A.M.S.

Actively identify and examine biases, assumptions, myths and stereotypes that may influence your observations, conversations and experiences during your visits. As a result of our socialization and the ways that society has been structured, we all carry biases, assumptions, myths and stereotypes.

Assumptions are ideas or beliefs we accept as true without proof, often based on limited information or experience. **Myths** are widely held but false beliefs or ideas, often passed down through culture, that distort or simplify reality.

Stereotypes are oversimplified and generalized ideas about a particular group of people, often based on incomplete or inaccurate information, and can lead to unfair or biased treatment. **This step is not intended to be a "gotcha" or something that is used against you.** Rather, the aim is that you are able to **surface and name your BAMS so that they don't undermine your visits to the schools.**

Pause, Reflect, and Acknowledge.
Before your visit to each school, take a moment to reflect and identify your BAMS about the school that you're going to visit.

Assumptions

Myths

Stereotypes

Prior to the Visit

Assumptions	Myths	Stereotypes
(What assumptions might you hold or are prevailing assumptions about this school?)	(What myths might you hold or are prevailing myths about this school?)	(What stereotypes might you hold or are prevailing stereotypes about this school?)

Learning <u>Prior</u> To Visit: Step 3

Step 3: Generate Guiding Questions, focus areas, look-fors, listen-fors, and experiences
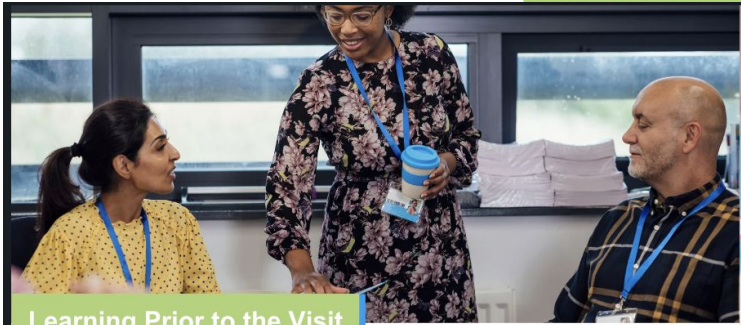
Learning Prior to the Visit

Step 3: Select your guiding questions, focus areas, look-fors, listen-fors, and experiences. With your team, select your focus areas, look-fors, listen-fors, experiences, and guiding questions. The goal of this section is to actively observe, engage in conversations, and experience the school environment to gain a deeper understanding of its culture, strengths, and challenges. By selecting specific focus areas, look-fors, listen-fors, and guiding questions, you can gather meaningful insights that help build a comprehensive picture of the school's context.

Generate 1-3 Guiding Quetions

- Stakeholders at each school via the principal
- Data about the school regarding closure that you're curious about
- Question Bank in this guide

Sources of Questions
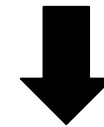
Learning **Prior** To Visit: Step 3

Question Bank

1. What role does this school play in the broader community, and how would its closure affect local families?

2. How does the school address the needs of students who have historically been most underserved, and how might these groups of students be impacted by the closure?

3. What unique strengths and resources does this school offer that may not be immediately visible in district data?

4. What are the potential long-term educational and social impacts on the neighborhood if this school closes? Will those impacts advance or hinder educational equity?

Guiding Questions

↓
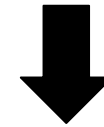
What to Look-For

↓

What to Listen-For

↓

What experiences to have

Learning __Prior__ To Visit: Step 4 (Example Conversations)

Learning __During__ Visits

Step 4: Conduct equity learning walks and experiences, and record your observations and learnings. When conducting visits, note your guiding questions for easy reference, and spend **at least 15 minutes in each space** to gather as much data as possible during the time. In spaces with students (e.g., classrooms, cafeteria), focus on **student-to-student interactions, teacher-student interactions, and how the space supports learning and is being used. In spaces without students (e.g., library, staff lounge, hallways), seek to learn how the space is utilized, the condition of resources, and accessibility.** This aim is to generate a balanced view of both student experiences and the school's functionality and usage.

❖ "What factors should the board consider about this school that may not have been fully explored regarding its potential closure?"

❖ "What unique strengths does this school offer its students and community?"

❖ What do you value most about this school and what here demonstrates that?"

Talk with teachers, staff, students, principals, families, caregivers, all stakeholders at the school

² Elmore, R. F., Fiarman, S. E., & Teitel, L. (2010). Instructional rounds in education: A network approach to improving teaching and learning. Teacher Librarian, 37(3), 69.

Learning <u>Prior</u> To Visit: Step 4 (Example Experiences)
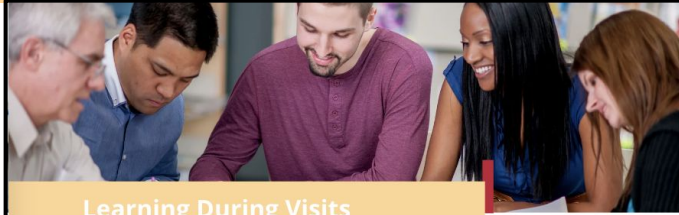

Learning <u>During</u> Visits

Step 4: Conduct equity learning walks and experiences, and record your observations and learnings. When conducting visits, note your guiding questions for easy reference, and spend **at least 15 minutes in each space** to gather as much data as possible during the time. In spaces with students (e.g., classrooms, cafeteria), focus on **student-to-student interactions, teacher-student interactions, and how the space supports learning and is being used. In spaces without students (e.g., library, staff lounge, hallways), seek to learn how the space is utilized, the condition of resources, and accessibility.** This aim is to generate a balanced view of both student experiences and the school's functionality and usage.

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❖ **Walk from the school to the receiving school:** Experience the distance and route that students would take if the school closes, gaining insight into transportation challenges and safety concerns.

❖ **Attend a community meeting or visit local community-based org:** Engage with parents, students, and community members to hear firsthand about the school's significance.

❖ **Walk around the neighborhood:** Understand the school's physical presence and accessibility within the community and the potential effects of its absence.

❖ **Observe after-school programs:** See how the school serves as a hub for student support and community engagement beyond regular hours.

Notecather

Name of School:	Date and Time:
Engagement Type ▼ ☐ **Observation (Look-for)** ☐ **Conversation (Listen-for)** ☐ **Experience**	**Describe Engagement Type:**

Guiding Principles:
- Descriptive, Not Interpretive, with an Equity Lens
- Observation, Not Evaluation
- Collaborative Reflection and Equity Analysis
- Contextual and Culturally Responsive

Guiding Questions:
-
-
-

Evidence Collected:

Learning <u>After</u> Visit: Step 5 (Example Experiences)

Learning <u>During</u> Visits

Step 5: Debrief and reflect on the visits. Take the following steps to debrief.

- Determine the Guiding Questions
- Organize by Focus Areas
- Review Evidence
- Turn Patterns into Statements
- Reflect on Individual Learning
- Discuss Collective Learning
- Generate Next Steps

[2] Elmore, R. F., Fiarman, S. E., & Teitel, L. (2010). Instructional rounds in education: A network approach to improving teaching and learning. Teacher Librarian, 37(3), 69.

Next Steps

- Feedback from stakeholders at 9 schools
- Analyze data
- Incorporate feedback from into guide
- Send completed guide to Board by October 21st

English

Español

Questions?