



Equity-Driven Systems Coherence: Important Questions to Ask

Systems Coherence is the consistency of beliefs, policies and procedures, and practices that ensure a shared depth of understanding both collectively and individually about the purpose and nature of work in an organization. It requires individuals to take action to ensure all parts of the system are functionally aligned so that people see their part in achieving the purpose and mission of an organization. Equity-Driven Systems Coherence critically examines the values and beliefs of an organization to explain how systems can be improved and made equitable for all students with disabilities. To examine and interrogate systems, the following questions can be asked:

Who is being advantaged and disadvantaged from the way the system is functioning?

- Where are inequities showing up in relation to the education and outcomes for racially and ethnically diverse students with disabilities and their families?
- What systemic factors/conditions (i.e., policies, people, practices, structures) are contributing to the identified inequities for racially and ethnically diverse students with disabilities and their families?

How are systems analyzing, communicating, and using data effectively and honestly?

- What information is needed to identify the root causes of difficult and long-neglected barriers for racially and ethnically diverse students with disabilities and their families?
- Who needs to be involved to provide the information relevant to identifying root causes of difficult and long-neglected barriers faced by racially and ethnically diverse students with disabilities and their families?

- What are some ways to create transparency about the inequities of inputs, outputs, and outcomes of a system for racially and ethnically diverse students with disabilities?
- How is a system communicating the inequities exposed by data to mobilize various stakeholders to act (i.e., teachers, leaders, policymakers, communities, families, students)?
- How do systems use data to support equity in distribution of resources for racially and ethnically diverse students with disabilities and their families (i.e., teachers; professional learning; local, state, and federal funding; administrators; programs; curricula; support systems; digital learning; enrichment and extracurricular opportunities; access to college and career experiences)?
- What methods are in place to support internal accountability, monitor progress of a system toward equitable distribution, and make course corrections for racially and ethnically diverse students with disabilities and their families?

How are systems meaningfully engaging a diversity of stakeholders with intention, innovation, and persistence?

- Who should be involved in forming partnerships and acting on issues that are of critical importance to racially and ethnically diverse communities?
- In what ways can we develop a sense of collective purpose that focuses on deep learning for all racially and ethnically diverse students with disabilities and their families regardless of background and circumstances?
- How do we engage in meaningful work in a collaborative and focused way to improve the learning for racially and ethnically diverse students with disabilities and their families?
- In what ways are we building the capacity of racially and ethnically diverse families and students with disabilities directly impacted by these inequities to be partners in taking action?

How are systems selecting and using research-informed programs and practices effectively for the benefit of the diversity of its students?

- What values or lines of reasoning are centered and normalized?
- Are practices promoted and used for racially and ethnically diverse students with disabilities supported and reinforced by research?
- Does the practice move students closer to or further away from authentic, high-quality academic and social learning opportunities?
- Does the research-informed practice perpetuate a deficit model of education for racially and ethnically diverse students with disabilities?
- How are instructional materials and curricula selected to be inclusive and celebratory of racially and ethnically diverse students with disabilities?

How are system leaders leveraging critical structures and aligning the allocation of resources, supports, policies, and practices to scale and sustain racial equity in these systems?

- How does leadership leverage their decision-making authority to critically examine multiple levels of the system to improve outcomes for racially and ethnically diverse students with disabilities?
- What opportunities exist for professional learning and technical assistance that build the capacity of school and district personnel to implement practices that promote equity and improve outcomes for racially and ethnically diverse students with disabilities?
- What methods of communication and collaboration are used to engage stakeholders as partners and ambassadors to support racially and ethnically diverse students with disabilities throughout the system?

The content of this document was developed under a grant from the US Department of Education, #H326R190001. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Project Officer: Perry Williams (November 2021).

WestEd is the lead organization for NCSI. For more information, please visit www.ncsi.wested.org and www.wested.org.