

EQUITY IN ACTION REPORT 2024



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

THE EQUITY IN ACTION REPORT, produced by The Mind Trust, illuminates the efforts of charter schools in Indianapolis Public School boundaries, to achieve remarkable outcomes for students. This research initiative was driven by the recognition that the practices of successful schools often remain unheralded, yet are integral to realizing equitable educational outcomes for all students. While not all schools featured in this report initially prioritized equity as a central mission, their commitment to delivering exceptional academic results prompted a deeper understanding of the importance of addressing individual student needs and backgrounds.

The report showcases four public charter schools: BELIEVE Circle City High School, Circle City Prep, Herron Classical Schools, and Paramount Schools of Excellence. Spanning from Kindergarten through 12th grade, each institution offers a unique perspective, approach, and school model. This report aimed to showcase their innovative strategies and accomplishments, sparking ongoing dialogue and action within the education community on how to address the diverse needs of every learner and attain incredible results, irrespective of backgrounds.

Themes

FOLLOWING EXTENSIVE INTERVIEWS with four charter schools located within Indianapolis Public School boundaries aimed at uncovering their practices for achieving equitable outcomes for students, three overarching themes prevailed. Each of the schools have a **steadfast commitment to academic acceleration, adeptly leverage student data, and foster a conducive learning environment through strategic partnerships**. Their practices are anchored in a staunch conviction that all students, regardless of their race, gender or family's socio-economic status, possess the potential to excel academically. A summary of each theme is provided below:

A STEADFAST COMMITMENT TO ACADEMIC ACCELERATION

Each school highlighted in the report emphasized the significance of establishing a clear academic bar for students and implementing strategies to expedite their progress toward those goals. These schools demonstrate a dedication not only to offering academic interventions if students fall behind, but also guaranteeing that every student has access to grade-level instruction, dual-credit courses, and accelerated career pathways in high school. This approach ensures that upon graduation, students have the option to seamlessly enter the workforce or pursue higher education immediately.

"I think we just have clear expectations for all kids and what the academic bar is. We are non-compromising in that we are an academic institution focused on literacy and math and the reality of what that means for our students' long-term trajectory." (Circle City Prep)

ADEPTLY LEVERAGING STUDENT DATA

A pivotal practice consistently emphasized in each interview was the systematic collection, review, and analysis of student data. All interviewed schools employ diverse formal and informal assessments to gather data, utilizing it to pinpoint additional support required for students to achieve their goals.

"When we individualize and leverage data to the student level, it really helps us get to the granular level of the need and provide the right accommodations for every

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single student to get them over the hump. We have to look at data and be responsive to the data.” (Paramount Schools of Excellence)

“We try to make testing more meaningful for our students. We want to see if they are performing to their ability. We don’t just administer tests to give tests. Anytime an assessment comes up, we ask ourselves how we will utilize the data.” (Herron Classical Schools)

FOSTERING A CONDUCTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THROUGH STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The schools featured in the report implement Multi-tiered Systems of Support providing students with the academic, attendance, and social-emotional support needed to thrive. Moreover, these schools actively engage with parents and community partners to expose students to a variety of opportunities and provide cultural affirmation and access to essential resources, enabling students and their families to prioritize attendance and learning..

“We’ve partnered with Reading Interventions Partnerships for our kids who struggle with reading the most. They have intensive interventions everyday. We have kids who come to us reading on a first or second grade level but we don’t focus our energy on how that happened. It doesn’t matter, they’re here now and we have to fill in the gaps.” (BELIEVE Circle City High School)

A Path Forward: Insights for Community Use

ONE FINAL INTERVIEW QUESTION FOR SCHOOLS in our study inquired about suggestions they might provide to others aiming to produce similar outcomes. While reluctant to prescribe “recommendations” due to the diverse needs of each individual school and the communities they serve, they did offer insights based on the practices they will preserve moving forward. We have synthesized their insights as a potential roadmap for schools aspiring to achieve similar success.

AUTOMATIC ACCESS.

To expedite student learning, schools should consider automatic, seamless access to advanced courses and learning opportunities. These courses should not be exclusive to specific students unless prerequisites are required. Remediation without acceleration may not accelerate students toward their goals as quickly. Schools must ensure that students can access learning standards at or above their current grade level while also addressing skill gaps.

“We provide access to high-quality curriculum and instruction without the barrier of affluence....Everyone gets exposure to thoughts and arguments, logic and rhetoric....We have embedded honors courses, extensive

dual-credit courses, and open access to Advance Placement classes.” (Herron Classical Schools)

USE THE DATA.

While many schools have access to abundant data, detailing students’ readiness to learn, it is imperative that schools consistently review and promptly respond to this data. This ensures that student needs are addressed in real-time, facilitating timely support and intervention

“Assessment is critical. You’ve got to have data.” (Paramount Schools of Excellence)

“We try to make testing more meaningful for our students. We want to see if they are performing to their ability. We don’t just administer tests to give tests. Anytime an assessment comes up, we ask ourselves how we will utilize the data.” (Herron Classical Schools)

REMOVE THE BARRIERS.

A belief that all students can achieve is only part of the equation. Schools should pay keen attention to removing the barriers hindering students from academic achievement through their tiered systems of support.

“We’ve partnered with outside providers to push in for our MTSS Tier 3 interventions. We partner with the Indy Learning Team to do Orton Gillingham support and we work with Ignite Tutoring to do one-on-one literacy intervention. All of those are offered outside of what students are already getting in the general education classroom” (Circle City Prep)

“We have a Family Resource Center (FRC) so parents can come in and get any nonperishable foods that they need or soap or coats. We want to address any barriers that keep kids from being successful when they get into the building.” (Circle City Prep)

SHARE THE LOAD.

Achieving equitable outcomes for students of diverse backgrounds, abilities, and disabilities necessitates collaboration; it cannot be pursued in isolation. To maintain a steadfast focus on academic achievements, partnerships are indispensable. Parents and communities play a crucial role in providing the resources essential for fostering an environment conducive to learning in schools. By sharing the responsibility with your community, their achievements become intertwined with yours, and vice versa. Their success becomes your success, and yours becomes theirs.

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