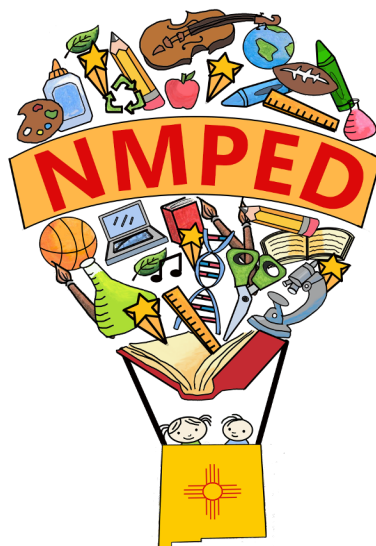




2021
BRIEF

EQUITY COUNCILS

NEW MEXICO





State of New Mexico
Public Education Department
EQUITY COUNCIL BRIEF SUMMER 2021

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This document is available on the New Mexico Public Education Department's (NMPED) website at:
<https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/yazzie-martinez-updates/equity-councils/>

BACKGROUND ON EQUITY COUNCILS

'THE APPROACH SITUATES LOCAL COMMUNITIES AT THE CENTER OF SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION BY FOCUSING ON EQUITY CHALLENGES, BUILDING LOCAL EQUITY-FOCUSED SKILLS, AND KNOWLEDGE AND CATALYZING LOCAL ACTIONS FOR EQUITY.'

On November 22, 2019 the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) released guidance for District/Charter School Executive Directors' Equity Councils and the Martinez and Yazzie Consolidated Lawsuit. A committed group of individuals partnered with the NMPED to launch Equity Councils, the first phase of a long-term initiative aimed at correcting systemic obstacles to success for all children in New Mexico. The intention of Equity Councils is to convene stakeholders to drive local, community-based, transformative solutions that will establish equity in education. This intention

empowers local communities, placing them at the center of system transformation. Equity councils focus on equity challenges, build skills and knowledge, and catalyze local actions focused on equity.

The Equity Council concept was inspired by the work of community members and educators in the Albuquerque Public School (APS) District in 2004-2005. Community members came together to discuss and generate their best ideas grounded in the lived experience of students, families, and educators in order to improve outcomes for students. As part of the APS Equity Council initiative, a community-led school was created to meet the needs of the growing urban Native American student population who had experienced varied outcomes as compared to their peers.

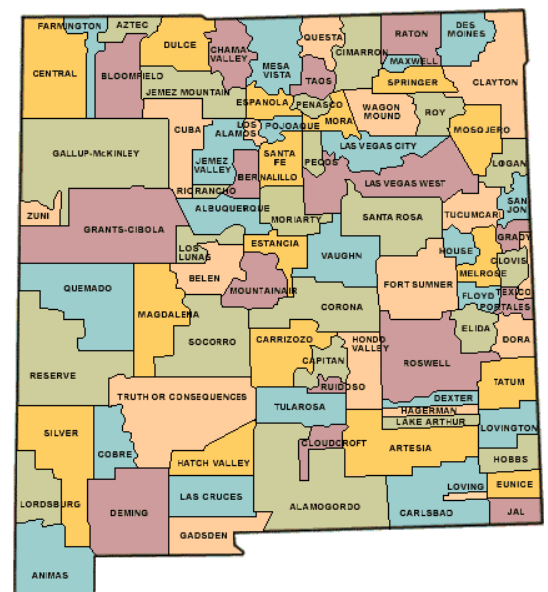
In order to set a foundation for the Equity Council work, an Education Equity Roundtable was convened on January 9-10, 2020 in Albuquerque, NM. The two-day roundtable included a mix of whole-group and small-group discussion, activities, reflection, learning about Equity Councils, family and community empowerment, and culturally and linguistically responsive design (CLR). The Education Equity Roundtable also focused on the Martinez and Yazzie Consolidated Lawsuit.

OUT OF 185 TOTAL DISTRICTS AND CHARTER SCHOOLS IN NEW MEXICO...

- **98.4%** have identified an Equity Council Lead.
- **42.7%** have a superintendent or charter school leader serving as the Equity Council Lead.
- **29.9%** have yet to establish their Equity Council membership.

About 26% of Equity Councils have gained members over the past year, while the remaining have maintained membership since their initial establishment.

The data reference above was collected during in-person and web-based meetings during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 SYs.



EQUITY COUNCIL GUIDELINES PROVIDED BY THE NMPED:

- Provide one point of contact that will interface with the NMPED.
- Select up to 15 members serving in staggered 3- and 4- year terms, convened by the Equity Council Lead.
- Include representatives of the district or charter school leadership, school staff, students, parents and family members, community members, and members of Nations, Tribes, or Pueblos.
- Ensure that at least half of the membership represents the student groups identified in the Court's ruling in the Martinez/Yazzie case – students with disabilities, Native American students, students who are English Learners, and economically disadvantaged students.
- Include one member from each local Nation, Tribe, or Pueblo with a significant number of students attending the district or charter school (for districts or charter schools identified by the NMPED as serving a significant number of Native American students).
- Establish a fair and transparent process for member selection.
- Publicly post an explanation of the selection process along with the names of the selected council members.

GOALS FOR EQUITY COUNCILS AS OUTLINED BY THE NMPED:

- Complete a Martinez/Yazzie Readiness Assessment.
- Develop a district- or charter-level Equity Plan.
- Create and implement a CLR Framework.
- Provide budget recommendations, including operational and at-risk funding.
- Seek alignment with the NMPED Martinez/Yazzie initiatives, including implementation of and compliance with New Mexico Indian Education, Hispanic Education, and Bilingual Multicultural Education Acts.
- Ensure compliance with federal legislation including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Every Student Succeeds Act, and Office for Civil Rights requirements for serving English Learners.
- Submit 90-day plans through the New Mexico Data, Accountability, Sustainability, and High Achievement tool (NMDASH) with specific focus on economically disadvantaged students, Native American students, English learners, and students with disabilities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE EQUITY COUNCIL GUIDELINES AND GOALS:

<https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/yazzie-martinez-updates/frequently-asked-questions/>

**"AT LEAST HALF OF
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NMPED EQUITY COUNCIL LEAD SUPPORT

A virtual meeting in February 2020 marked the launch of many support meetings for the Equity Council Leads across the state. This was followed by a two-day, in-person convening in Albuquerque on March 5-6. Equity Council Leads from each of the 184 district and charter school Equity Councils engaged in equity focused learning and Equity Council development workshops. The NMPED created four essential questions to guide the establishment of the Equity Councils. The essential questions shaped Equity Council Lead support and provided a frame for critical dialogue about creating equity. The questions also provided a starting place to gauge Equity Council challenges.

In response to the COVID-19 State Health Order, issued March 20, 2020, the support provided by NMPED for Equity Council Leads pivoted to monthly, online gatherings. Through June 2020, Equity Council Leads opted into monthly sessions based on the size/type of district or charter school and by level of Equity Council development.

THE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

How is my district/charter prioritizing the students and families furthest from opportunity in the establishment of Equity Councils?

How do we establish an Equity Council that is set up to succeed in advising the district or charter school on budget, services and programs?

How do we establish an Equity Council that moves the district or charter school beyond compliance to commitment?

How do I support the establishment of structures and systems to ensure effective relationships and partnership between all stakeholders on the Equity Council?

TRAINING AND ACTION MODEL

After the 2019-2020 school year, the NMPED and a consultant team engaged in a reflection session before moving into the new school year. An outcome of this reflection session was the design of the *Equity Council Lead Training and Action Model*. The model is a framework designed to provide content knowledge, technical skills, and reflective practices to support district and charter schools. The model is divided into four components: (1) Onboarding (2) Building (3) Learning, and (4) Action. When combined and used by Equity Councils with critical, equity-centered content, the four components support the creation of strong council foundations and a potential for long-term transformation.

TRAINING AND ACTION MODEL COMPONENTS

EQUITY COUNCIL LEAD ONBOARDING

The equity council lead onboarding provides crucial context about why all districts and charter schools are building equity councils, what an equity council is and has the potential to be, and how equity councils will carry out their role as equity leaders and advisors. *Topics: historical context and key terms, grounding in essential questions, building an equity vision for a district or charter, and expectations for councils.*

EQUITY SKILLS BUILDING

Trusting relationships create space to understand one another's experiences, to build empathy for one another, to deepen an individual and collective commitment to equity, and to build the resilience to speak honestly without fear. The skills-building elements provide tools and guidance for building trusting relationships within equity councils and across districts and charter schools. Topics: trust building, facilitation and mediation, courageous conversations, and managing power dynamics and conflict.

EQUITY SYSTEM LEARNING

It is important for equity leads to continuously deepen knowledge and understanding about students furthest from opportunity. These learning elements are designed to open hard conversations, explore personal narratives, and develop the empathy to be strong advocates for equity. Topics: roots of trauma, anti-racism and anti-oppression in education, best practices in family engagement, and equity-focused education data.

EQUITY IN ACTION

NM PED guidance and webinars support equity-focused advisements from the equity council to the district or charter school. These elements are tools for equity councils to apply skills and learnings at least annually. Topics: strategic equity plan, readiness assessment advisement package, and the Culturally and Linguistically Responsive (CLR) Framework

In addition to focusing on the four essential questions, the reflection session, and the training and action model, the NMPED adopted the following goals for Equity Councils during the 2020-2021 school year:



GOALS

1. Establishing relationships
2. Differentiating support for Equity Council Leads through the Support Hub
3. Centering equity in systems (e.g. policies, processes and programming)
4. Leveraging the equity in action items
5. Re-thinking and re-designing schooling during the expansion of in-person learning

EQUITY COUNCIL SUPPORT HUB

Based on feedback from community members serving as consultants, and district and charter school Equity Council Leads, the NMPED moved into an Equity Council Support Hub model.

EQUITY COUNCIL SUPPORT TEAM

- Coordinates tasks, scheduling, meeting logistics, content development, statewide communications.
- Gathers and monitors progress, challenges, and innovations.



EQUITY FACILITATORS

- Provide thought partnership and content expertise for building and learning across the state in the monthly statewide meetings.
- Meet monthly with an assigned group of districts and charter school Equity Council Leads to provide support.
- Provide the Equity Council Support Team with feedback about progress, challenges, and innovations that can be shared statewide.



EQUITY COUNCIL LEAD

- Participates in statewide meetings.
- Takes learning and information back to district/charter school leadership, and local Equity Council.
- Leads the work of centering equity in their local community.
- Uses the Equity In Action items to guide the work of the Equity Council.

The NMPED launched the Equity Council Support Hub in January 2021. The Hub includes a support team and contracted Equity Facilitators with expertise in racial equity, community-based education, coaching, community organizing, and educational transformation. The Equity Facilitators work with designated Equity Council Leads in individual and small group sessions and provide support based on the following principles.

THE PRINCIPLES OF EQUITY COUNCIL LEAD SUPPORT

- Provide timely and relevant skills to build equity, deep learning about equity, and how to put equity into action.
- Ground all initiatives in the essential questions.
- Acknowledge the current context, challenges, and public discourse.
- Be consistent and transparent about expectations and deadlines.
- Model how to have difficult conversations.
- Facilitate relationships with local organizations and nonprofits to collaborate on equity.
- Center equity and acknowledge how the education system has caused injustice.
- Make equity explicit in all guidance and initiatives from the NMPED.
- Hold high expectations for progress on key developmental markers and equity action items.

EQUITY IN ACTION ITEMS

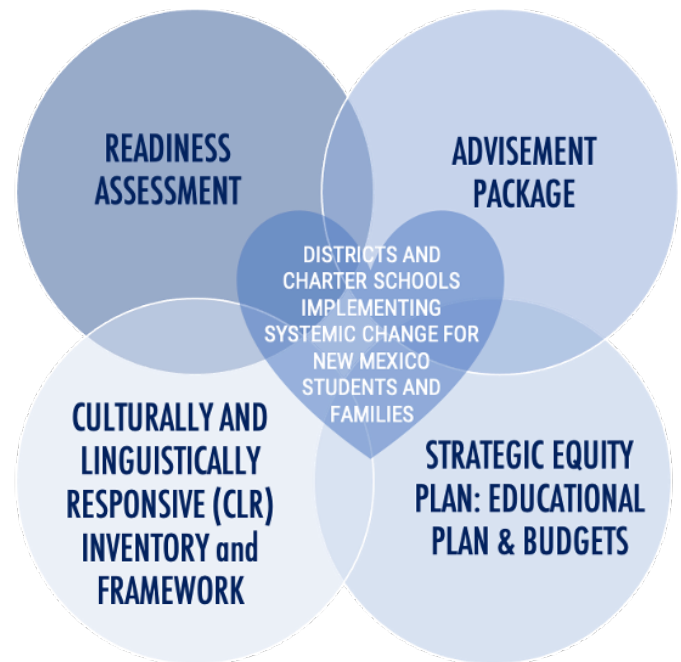
The four Equity in Action items are required by the NMPED and are designed to support districts and charter schools in reimagining education so that ALL students are healthy, secure in their identity, and holistically prepared for college, career, and life.

1. The Martinez/Yazzie Readiness Assessment tool is designed using components from Martinez and Yazzie, et al. v. State of New Mexico et al., Decision and Order and current NMPED compliance and technical assistance guidance documents. The tool is meant to support Equity Councils and district and charter school leadership in having meaningful and productive conversations about current services and programs that impact students.

2. The Culturally and Linguistically Responsive (CLR) Inventory and Framework is the structure districts, schools, and charter schools use to ensure underserved student populations have access to programs and services that are culturally and linguistically responsive and meet their social, emotional, and academic needs. Districts, schools, and charter schools build (or modify) a CLR framework using two tools: The NMPED CLR Framework Inventory (aligned to the 5-stages) and the 5-Stage CLR Framework Schooling by Design Tool. This tool is focused on the practical application of a CLR framework.

3. The Advisement Package is focused on issues that impact students furthest from opportunity and delivered to superintendents, charter school leaders, school boards, or charter school governance boards. The advisement package should be informed by students, the school community, parents, families, Tribes, and other community members.

4. The Equity Council should inform the design of the educational plan using community engagement along with the Readiness Assessment data, the CLR Inventory and Framework, and the Advisement Package.



EQUITY IN ACTION ITEMS	PERCENT DISTRICT/ CHARTER SCHOOLS SUBMITTED BY JULY 2021
Readiness Assessment	43.2%
CLR Inventory	85.9%
CLR Framework	14.1%
Equity Plan	Not Available*
Advisement Package	Not Available*

Data provided by NMPED (July 2021).
*Will be collected in the future.

2020-2021 MONTHLY SUPPORT TOPICS

MONTH	TOPIC(S)	PARTICIPATION
FEBRUARY 2020	EQUITY COUNCIL UPDATES WEBINAR	36.8%
MARCH 2020	EQUITY COUNCIL LEAD CONVENING-IN PERSON	64.9%
MARCH 2020	EQUITY COUNCILS: MARTINEZ/YAZZIE READINESS ASSESSMENT WEBINAR	28.1%
APRIL 2020	EQUITY COUNCIL STATEWIDE MEETING	55.1%
MAY 2020	EQUITY COUNCIL STATEWIDE MEETING	70.3%
JUNE 2020	EQUITY COUNCIL STATEWIDE MEETING	38.4%
JUNE 2020	THE NEW MEXICO CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY RESPONSIVE FRAMEWORK	82.1%
JANUARY 2021	GETTING TO KNOW THE NMPED SUPPORT HUB AND EXPLORING THE CURRENT STATE OF NM	40.5%
FEBRUARY 2021	DEFINING EQUITY AND SETTING AN INTENTION/GOAL FOR THE REMAINING SCHOOL YEAR	37.3%
MARCH 2021	ENSURING EQUITY IN EDUCATION AS STUDENTS AND FAMILIES RETURN TO IN-PERSON SCHOOL	31.9%
APRIL 2021	FEDERAL EDUCATION STABILIZATION FUNDS AND THE EQUITY PLAN.	33%
MAY 2021	THE EQUITY COUNCIL ADVISEMENT PROCESS.	18.4%
JUNE 2021	CELEBRATING EQUITY COUNCIL BRIGHT SPOTS.	20%

While attendance ranged for statewide meetings, nearly 90% of all Equity Council Leads met with an Equity Facilitator in Spring 2021. Outside of the statewide meetings, the Equity Facilitators worked with Equity Council Leads in individual and small group sessions to provided one-on-one support.

SUPPORT TIMING AND MODALITIES WITH A FOCUS ON THE STATE HEALTH ORDER

The original training and action model was designed to be used during in-person meetings. After the March 2020 in-person convening, subsequent statewide meetings were held virtually due to the State Health Order. As state and local policies change, the use of technology *will continue to be an essential mode of delivery* for Equity Council support. Equity-focused dialogue that leads to transformation requires a significant amount of time and emotional engagement from education leaders across New Mexico, and while not ideal, virtual approaches will be leveraged to engage participants beyond geographic limits. Equity initiatives focused on transformation must continue amid the limitations of the state health order and unreliable access to technology in service of our students.

RETURN OF IN-PERSON LEARNING

The February and March 2021 virtual statewide meetings focused on ensuring that Equity Councils set the intention of not returning "back to normal" without responding to the significant changes occurring in New Mexico due to COVID-19. In addition to being responsive to broader societal factors, local Equity Councils may provide a forum for responding to local historical and contemporary context, culture, relationships, and district and charter school norms. Moving from compliance to commitment (Essential Question 4) requires that the NMPED and Equity Councils utilize guidance in the brief and other key NMPED resources while engaging in broadly responsive dialogue about equity issues brought to light prior to and during the pandemic. Equity councils should proactively and thoughtfully inform these issues, providing space for meaningful co-creation and co-production so that students, the school community, parents, families, Tribes, and other community members can weigh in and be heard. To avoid difficult conversations and stay "by the book" or focused on simply crossing off compliance items, would be unresponsive and may not mobilize communities in complex, potentially transformative moments.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EC SUPPORT HUB

The following recommendations are from the Equity Council Support Hub and feedback collected from Equity Council Leads at the end of the 2020-2021 school year.

1. The NMPED and the Equity Council Support Hub should focus on the Equity Councils experiencing resistance to centering equity work. Rationalizations for not centering equity range from not being able to meet the membership requirements outlined by the NMPED to the inability to see the relevance of equity. To respond to these barriers, the NMPED and Equity Support Hub should:

- Identify districts and charter schools that have low enrollment that contributes to demographic diversity and provide intentional CLR, anti-racist, and anti-oppression training that honors the community.
- Identify districts and charter schools with similar demographics as models and best practices for implementation of a peer coaching model.

2. The NMPED and the Equity Council Support Hub should become an exemplar for equity by ensuring that underserved students and families are at the core of all design to improve access to resources.

- Establish an interactive and organized catalog of resources for equity.
- Monitor analytics for the use and reach of resources.
- Create a monthly or quarterly equity-centered communication.
- Provide a list of service providers from New Mexico that can support Equity Councils.

3. The NMPED should create an Equity Council support system maintained using an email and phone inquiry database. The robust tracking database should collect:

- Training attendance
- Requests for support
- Martinez/Yazzie Readiness Assessment completion and reflections
- CLR Inventory and Framework findings and trends

4. The NMPED and the Equity Council Support Hub should establish a technical assistance booking process using data from the Equity Council support system (Recommendation #3) to support districts and charter schools through:

- Identifying coaches that work from an equity framework
- Training Equity Facilitators that collaborate with the NMPED on guidelines and Equity Council requirements
- Deploying Equity Facilitators to provide support to districts and charter schools
- Utilizing a cost share model (NMPED + districts/charter schools) to cover the cost of Equity Facilitators and service providers

5. The NMPED and the Equity Council Support Hub should support districts and charter schools in the leveraging of the Martinez/Yazzie Readiness Assessment by:

- Guiding districts/charter schools through both completing and using the assessment to inform decision making
- Setting expectations for progress based on Martinez/Yazzie Readiness Assessment results
- Supporting analysis of assessment results and aligning them to the CLR Inventory and Framework and the Advisement Package

6. Establish Strategic Partnerships

The NMPED and the Equity Council Support Hub should strengthen the community support for the work of Equity Councils by:

- Identifying equity-focused community organizations and individuals to contribute to monthly trainings
- Encourage Equity Council Leads to speak to community organizations and within district/charter school meetings regarding the work of their Equity Council
- Ensure that the NMPED divisions and bureaus focused on community engagement highlight equity council goals and actions in NMPED's work with external partners

EQUITY COUNCIL QUOTES

The following quotes are taken from the Equity Council Lead statewide meeting in June of 2021. The recording can be found here: <https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/yazzie-martinez-updates/equity-councils/>

"A school board member suggested that they put it into one of their policies that an Equity Council member would be part of our district budget committee which meets monthly and really is a pretty powerful committee and really has access to a lot of the ins and outs of our [district's] budget...the goal of that is to bring that information back to our Equity Council so we could get feedback from the different stakeholders to give back to the board."

-Dr. Roberto Lozano, Associate Superintendent of Equity, Innovation, and Social Justice, Las Cruces Public Schools, and Equity Council Lead

*"This process has been so rewarding...**we have the whole school doing this [equity work]** when it used to just be pockets of classrooms...now, the kids, the teachers, and staff are behind it. We have parents who are on the Equity Council and are just as excited."*

-Jonathan Dooley, Assistant Principal at Media Arts Collaborative Charter School and Equity Council Lead

*"What this Equity Council did was, **lean on the tribe and say, you are the language experts, you have a language committee, you are your cultural experts, you have a cultural committee...**can we tap into that and you [the tribe] show us how to do a CLR Framework from within, not bring anything from the outside, you have it here. Let us pull from that to service your students."*

-Tracey Cordero, Director of the Indigenous Montessori Institute and Equity Facilitator for Dulce Independent Schools

*"We recognized that we had Tribal Consultation...but we did not have the tribal leaders at the table. So **we reached out to tribal leaders and we requested they be part of the Diversity and Equity Council.** We also reached out to the parents of Native American students and asked that they sit at the table as well."*

-Crystal Ybarra, Deputy Equity, Diversity and Engagement Officer Santa Fe Public Schools & Equity Council Lead

*If it's a young student at one of our small rural school districts who is hungry and ready for a snack while we're meeting...to having a bilingual student with disabilities who gives us the feedback that says, **'you know, this survey that you're doing, you need to tone the language down and get out of the educational language and get it down to a level where my mom will understand it and be able to respond.'** So we took that feedback and we implemented it, and we ran it back through those students, and they came back and said, 'I showed it to my mom and she was excited that she could understand it and was able to interpret what you wanted'...I can't express how much and how important it is to have those students [on the Equity Council]"*

-Bryan Dooley, Executive Director at Region 9 Education Cooperative and Equity Council Consortium Lead

*"We've couched [the work of the council] in a framework...and we've presented it with respect to the powers that govern those districts, and I think **we've gained that traction and we've gotten that foothold so that now they recognize us as a legitimate entity** that can provide some substantial, valuable input into the educational process as we move forward."*



-Bryan Dooley, Executive Director at Region 9 Education Cooperative and Equity Council Consortium Lead

*"And so our first meeting was during the lunch hour and it was, it was only 40 minutes, and I think 25 kids showed up for that. I gave them all an index card...as I was walking around and looking at their index cards one of them actually wrote off the top of hers: **'Let us speak. We are more capable than you think...curate a culture of student leadership.'** I read that and I just stopped and I said, would you like to lead this meeting? She jumped in and they started their conversation... I haven't said a word since then, except to, you know, just kind of maybe set some ground rules."*

-Denise Hinson, Curriculum & Instruction Specialist New Mexico School for the Arts and Equity Council Lead