

Equity Stance

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How does Scaling Student Success promote equity?

*Rather than serving as a driver for equitable outcomes, California's public school system has consistently fallen short of its potential to create a more level playing field. The school system's failure to recognize its roots in white supremacy culture and complicity in reproducing harm in communities of color has led to persistently inequitable outcomes over generations and left a debt owed to those communities most deeply harmed. Our unwillingness to fully invest in our education system to ensure that any child who walks through its doors has all the support and opportunities needed to thrive, has only compounded this debt. As a result, **our schools are frequently misaligned with community priorities and spend their precious few resources on compliance and control** [emphasis added], thus breaching their duty to adequately educate all of California's children and fueling a school-to-prison and deportation pipeline.*

California Endowment website

We know our educational system alienates students, particularly those who are Black, brown, and poor. We know our systems replicate structural racism and oppression. Scaling Student Success dismantles structural inequities by promoting Graduate Profiles that put students at the center of their learning, explicitly advocating for sustaining the cultures of traditionally underserved student groups. Through asset-oriented antiracist Graduate Profiles that build on the strengths and needs of diverse learners and reflect a belief in their unlimited potential for learning, growth, and high intellectual performance, we create the conditions for young people to have agency in their own lives and become successful leaders in their families, communities, and beyond.

Scaling Student Success is dedicated to educating the **whole child**, intentionally aligning student outcomes with community priorities. We support school districts to draft and operationalize a **Graduate Profile**¹ -- a succinct, 1-page statement that reflects the knowledge, skills, competencies, and qualities necessary to prepare students for future success. Examples of Graduate Profiles can be found [in this Gallery](#).

Creating and operationalizing a Graduate Profile includes multiple strategies for actively building equity and dismantling structural inequities that historically have limited opportunities and outcomes for Black, Indigenous, and other students of color (BIPOC).

- The Graduate Profile itself is designed to be **student-centered**, i.e., prioritizing student voice and choice, building agency, and supporting a **competency-based approach** to

¹ The primary theory of action for Scaling Student Success

learning that allows students to set their own goals, monitor progress, and demonstrate outcomes in the culturally sustaining ways and paths.

- Black, Indigenous, and other students of color (BIPOC) benefit from being the agents of their own learning, striving to achieve outcomes that their families and communities value.
- The Graduate Profile is **locally-derived**, typically gathering input from hundreds of stakeholders (students, parents, family members, teachers, administrators, as well as leaders of community, civic, and faith-based organizations, business and industry partners, and postsecondary education institutions), driven by clearly articulated values, and informed by reputable research and evidence.
 - To do so equitably, districts center the voices of those who historically have been most marginalized.
- Operationalizing a Graduate Profile requires schools and districts to become **outcome-based**, i.e., not being satisfied with merely providing sufficient inputs, but rather sharing accountability for assuring that each and every student has equitable opportunities to develop and demonstrate the Graduate Profile outcomes.
 - This requires educators to attend first to **social-emotional needs** of students, enabling the right conditions for learning, and personalizing learning in a way that caters to each child's unique interests and needs, sustains their unique cultures and languages, and utilizes asset-based antiracist pedagogies and practices.
 - This **re-balances educational priorities** by supplementing state- and university-driven content mastery with development and demonstration of skills, competencies, and mindsets valued by the local community and shown to be essential for success in an increasingly globalized and multilingual world.
- Operationalizing a Graduate Profile requires districts to shift to an **asset-based** approach, valuing and building upon the cultures, languages, strengths and opportunities that every child brings to his/her educational experience.
 - In turn, districts shift away from a deficit-based approach that historically has relied upon narrow metrics to define student success and disproportionately (mis)identified BIPOC students as failing or lacking qualifications.
 - Rather than relying solely on the inherited Western classification-based system of data and measurement, districts use "street-level data"² as an emerging alternative that centers qualitative data and voices from the margins to transform the system.

² Shane Safir (2021)

- An asset-based approach dismantles punitive discipline policies and replaces them with **restorative justice practices** that positively impact school culture, discipline, and academic needs.
- An asset-based approach also promotes **antiracist grading policies** that summarize student mastery over time, after a child has had time to re-do and revisit, rather than using grades as a hammer to promote compliance to behavioral, participation, or other norms that may be rooted in white supremacy culture.
- Operationalizing a Graduate Profile requires districts and schools to create a culture that is **human-centered**, i.e., recognizing that all learning is social and emotional, attending regularly to individual strengths and needs, and establishing classroom environments and processes that value differences.
- Operationalizing a Graduate Profile requires a **project-based approach** to learning, i.e., one driven by curiosity, inquiry, student voice and choice, prioritizing opportunities for students to create new knowledge and do real work to benefit a real-world audience.
- Operationalizing a Graduate Profile requires dismantling the presumption that going to a 4-year college is the only valued (and valuable) postsecondary option, instead encouraging students to explore career options, pursue their passions, and craft a postsecondary plan aligned with their values, goals, and aspirations (while keeping all options open).
 - The structure of school and its traditionally narrow focus on a Western canon of content knowledge historically has advantaged some students and disadvantaged others.
- Operationalizing a Graduate Profile shifts district outcomes towards priorities like cultural and linguistic competence, collaboration, and critical and creative thinking. In doing so, it begins to reshape the culture and ethos of schools, towards inclusiveness and solidarity, cooperation and creativity.
 - These priorities represent a refreshing counter-balance to the longstanding premium schools have placed on individual scores and competition.
- When the collective North Star is set on a district's ability to collaborate, problem solve, innovate, and persist, district leaders must embody and model the outcomes by displaying antiracist and culturally sustaining approaches, curiosity and inquiry, practicing open communication and transparency, building trusting relationships, experimenting and taking healthy risks, innovating, and harnessing and amplifying the collective wisdom of students, staff and community -- all of which leads to a healthy shift in organizational culture.
 - These culture shifts counter more traditional top-down, command and control forms of leadership and promote inclusion, collaboration, and partnership among

diverse students, staff, administration, labor, community, and other key stakeholders.

- Ultimately, operationalizing a Graduate Profile values research on what it takes to be successful as citizens, professionals, and humans in a global, multilingual world, and aligns schools with that reality.

As we know, the PreK-12 system does not operate in a vacuum. While PreK-12 school districts can work to dismantle structural inequities in the ways described above, as long as postsecondary institutions are privileged to narrowly define success as criteria for admissions, then LEAs will feel pressured (by students and parents) to meet *those* standards rather than shifting their paradigm to put students at the center of their education and focus on whole child assets. A critical mass of voices may succeed at influencing UC and CSU to institute more equitable eligibility and admissions policies and practices.

Resources:

1. Districts Advancing Racial Equity (DARE) Tool, Learning Policy Institute (2021).
<https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/reIn-districts-advancing-racial-equity-tool>
- 2.