

5-2017

Leadership for Educational Equity: Seek Understanding beyond the Words and Beneath the Practices

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**Leadership for Educational Equity:
Seek Understanding beyond the Words and Beneath the Practices**

By

Cindy Shevlin-Woodcock

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

in Educational Administration and Leadership

May 5, 2017

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Abstract

Current literature has identified multiple underlying causes for disproportionate and widespread underachievement between student groups: the history of inequities in American education (Noguera, 2012; Singleton, 2015), a prevailing White racial-frame worldview and systemic racism producing implicitly-biased educational policies and practices (Lawrence & Keleher, 2004; Feagin, 2014), and opportunity gaps perpetuating lower educational achievement and attainment by students of color and students from impoverished backgrounds (Jordan, Brown & Gutiérrez, 2010; Noguera, 2012). Educators must critically reflect on the obstacles to achieving educational equity and the lack of access to quality instructional opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds and the impact these barriers have on students' lives (Nieto & Bode, 2012).

The study focuses on developing a comprehensive understanding of the factors needed to achieve educational equity for all learners (GLEC, 2012, 2016a). Specifically, the study focuses on the actions of the education staff to pursue the key constructs of educational equity through organizational, curricular, and policy practices and by access to rigorous, challenging courses, meaningful participation and engagement, cultural representation and voice, and positive academic and social results and outcomes for all learners, especially those from diverse racial, ethnic, and low socioeconomic backgrounds (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a).

The results of the study point out school leaders must enact systemic changes which move “beyond the words” and “beneath the practices” to create equitable learning environments.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge Jack's, my husband, incredible support and unconditional love. He has read every version, edited, coached, and listened, especially when it got tough. Thank you for being my primary source of strength throughout this life journey. He is as passionate about this work as I am.

I want to thank Sarah, my fellow traveler on this expedition. Sarah's positive can-do attitude helped me persevere. The insights and feedback she gave me were invaluable. I am so glad we met and formed an incredible bond. Thank you for your encouragement, support, and strength. Moonshots matter!

I want to acknowledge my mother and my sisters; they would not let me lose sight of my dream. I am sad Mom is not here to see me graduate. I love you, Mom.

To Mara and Rob and Ben and Kat, all my love always and forever. You are my light, my heart, and my joy. Being your mother is my greatest joy.

There are many people at St. Cloud State University I want to thank, especially Dr. John Eller, Dr. Roger Worner, Dr. Randy Kolb, and the graduate assistants at the Statistical Research and Consulting Center. You were always there to offer assistance and guidance and much needed support.

Thank you to Dr. Cheryl Lange for many years of friendship and guidance. You have always shared your expertise and knowledge with me. Your contributions to the field of education are boundless.

Lastly, to all the children who have not received the best our education system should offer, I believe in you and we will do better in the future. You were my inspiration.

Dedication

I dedicate this project to all the strong and wonderful women in my life: my mother, sisters, daughter, friends, and coworkers. You have inspired me by your intelligence, grace, and beauty. You have demonstrated your love and compassion in so many ways throughout this journey. You have picked me up when I was falling, encouraged me when I was unsure and afraid, and most importantly, lead me through the darkness into light. I have felt your love in every cell of my being. Thank you, I could not have done this without you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

...if strong relationships with all children are at the heart of educational equity, then it is essential to acknowledge differences in children's lived experiences. To ensure that we create schools that are socially just, educators must overcome silences about such aspects as ethnicity and social class. (Shields, 2004, p. 110)

The United States education system continues to have significant gaps in educational attainment along the dimensions of race and income (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015; Noguera, 2012; Reardon, 2011). Review of the related literature pointed out the reasons children from diverse backgrounds and poverty fail to achieve in schools are complex and overlapping (Reardon, 2011).

The research has identified multiple, underlying causes for disproportionate and widespread underachievement between student groups: the history of racial inequities in American education (Noguera, 2012; Singleton, 2015), a prevailing White racial-frame worldview, and systemic racism producing racially-biased educational policies and practices (Feagin, 2014; Lawrence & Keleher, 2004), and opportunity gaps perpetuate lower educational achievement and attainment by students of color and students from impoverished backgrounds (Jordan, Brown & Gutiérrez, 2010; Noguera, 2012).

The study focuses on developing a comprehensive understanding of the systemic policies and practices contributing to the realization of educational equity for all learners. Specifically, the study focuses on the actions of educational leaders to pursue the key constructs of

educational equity: access to rigorous, challenging academic courses; meaningful participation and engagement; cultural representation and voice; and positive academic and social results and outcomes for each learner, especially those from diverse racial, ethnic, and low socioeconomic backgrounds (Fraser, 2008; Great Lakes Equity Center, 2012, 2016a). Gorski and Swalwell (2015) espouse for educators to create equitable learning environments, they must understand equity and inequity, justice and injustice, and the way all individuals are treated by one another and by institutions.

Research Problem

Numerous studies reported the underachievement of Indigenous, African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino and children from low socioeconomic backgrounds as compared to white, middle-class children. Low achievement, high failure and dropout rates, and placement in low-level academic programs are predominantly experienced by black and brown children, and children suffering poverty (AECF, 2014, 2015). For students to experience educational equity, an analysis of current scholastic practices needs to occur, as well as a close inspection of the school policies, curricula, resources, and culture (GLEC, 2012). Students need teachers and school leaders prepared with the knowledge, strategies, support, and courage to make curriculum, instruction, student engagement, and family partnerships inclusive and culturally responsive (Cooper, 2009; Great Lakes Equity Center, 2015).

No studies were found investigating the implementation and effectiveness of practices based on the core elements for educational equity (access, meaningful participation and engagement, cultural representation, and successful results and outcomes), as defined in current literature (GLEC, 2012, 2016a). The study gathers information from Minnesota school leaders

regarding the opportunities and barriers implementation of innovations. Innovations aimed to ensure equitable outcomes include instructional practices, school policies, curricula, resources, and culture being student-centered, inclusive and responsive to the needs of each student (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016a; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015). Educational equity is not equal treatment of all students, as some educators think; equity is about each student receiving the support he or she needs to be successful in school (Linton, 2011). Children of color and children from impoverished backgrounds are often unable to overcome the systemic barriers which exist in U.S. schools (Shields, 2004). Educators and their leaders need the knowledge and skills to recognize, respond to, and redress the systemic biases and inequities preventing all students from being engaged and successful in school (Gorski & Swalwell, 2015).

Ensuring all students have equitable access to an educational experience does not guarantee all students success. It seeks, however, sufficient opportunity for meaningful participation in the educational experiences necessary to be successful at school. Meaningful participation will occur by identifying and eliminating systemic barriers which prevent a student from accessing high quality educational experiences. Quality educational experiences and equity are inextricably linked (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). Disparities in outcomes for students from diverse racial, ethnic, or economically-challenged groups must be addressed to close the opportunity and disparity gap.

Purpose Statement

The study focuses on developing a comprehensive understanding of the factors creating educational equity for all learners (GLEC, 2012, 2016a). The purpose of the study is to explore the extent of implementation of the core constructs of educational equity in select Minnesota

schools (Bustamante, Nelson, and Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Chen et al., 2014; GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016a; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015; Henze, Katz & Norte, 2000; Jenlink, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Mulligan & Kozleski, 2009; Paris, 2012; Shields, 2004). Specifically, the study focuses on the actions of educational leaders to pursue the key constructs of educational equity: access to rigorous, challenging courses; meaningful participation and engagement; cultural representation and voice; and positive academic and social results, and outcomes for each learner, especially those from diverse racial, ethnic, and low socioeconomic backgrounds (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a).

Significance of the Study

The research is important and timely due to proof by numerous studies about student academic and social success and its positive impact on society overall (Blankstein & Noguera, 2015). All students perform at a higher level in an equitable school setting and are better prepared for the global marketplace. Parent, staff, and community support grows with the increase of school achievement (Blankstein & Noguera, 2015).

The study contributes to knowledge and practice of school leadership. The commitment to achieving equity and excellence requires leadership to remove structural barriers to learning, address systemic racist policies, and provide the supportive learning environments needed for students to access quality educational services on an equitable platform (Blankstein & Noguera, 2015; Linton, 2011). Most school leaders have not been taught or trained to resolve sociopolitical or sociocultural matters, nor are they knowledgeable of their roles and influence in shaping and defining issues of race, class, gender, and other areas of difference for and with other school members (Evans, 2007).

Foundational Social Justice Theories

Three social justice theories are foundational to the study due to the fact they studied leading systemic change from an equity perspective (Tate, 1997). The theories, white racial frame (Feagin, 2014), critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), and critical pedagogy theory (Freire, 2000), are the base for the development of theory-informed equity practices. These theories are lenses used to scrutinize and challenge the barriers to educational equity in the school systems and address institutional racism based in dominant culture norms (Bustamante et al., 2009; Cooper, 2009; Evans, 2007; Feagin, 2014; Jordan et al., 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ledesma & Calderón, 2015; Lewis, 2001; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Miller & Martin, 2015; Noguera, 2010; Parker, 1998; Ryan, 2003; Singleton, 2015; Tate, 1997).

Based on the research of sociologist Joe Feagin (2014), the white racial-frame theory defines the principles of racial and ethnic oppression and systemic racism in society. According to this theory, most human behavior and actions are automatic and unconscious. Deep racialized framing (e.g., images, emotions, and expressions) negatively influences how people of color are viewed and are often seen as less favorable (Feagin, 2014). White racial framing posits Whites are superior in culture and achievement and white culture is the norm and disproportionately privileges those from the white-dominant cultural group. This worldview obscures attention to the existence and consequences of structural inequalities and could, when not challenged, permit discrimination and inequities to exist (Feagin, 2014).

Since the 1970's post-civil rights era, the critical race theory (CRT) movement has been confronting racism by giving "voice" to people of color to tell their "lived experiences" as a means of uncovering a "racialized social reality" (Evans, 2007; Shields, 2004; Tate, 1997).

Critical race theory presumes racism is ingrained in American institutions and policies, including schools (Ladson-Billings, 1998). The strategy to face oppression becomes one of exposing false premises and confronting norms of color blindness, neutrality, and meritocracy (Evans, 2007; Tate, 1997). Critical race theory confronts traditional values and standards for decision-making and the advantage created by the white-dominant culture (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator, has had a profound impact on the field of education through his work in teaching illiterate people to read and write (Freire, 2000, forward by Shaull, p.29). As a result of being empowered to look critically at their situations and act to transform society, his students used the skills gained through education to transform their lives. Freire's critical-pedagogy methodology is based on the belief of the oppressed being victims of economic, social, and political domination. The domination survives due to a "culture of silence." Freire (2000) believed every human being is capable of critically assessing issues in the community and contributing by "say[ing] his or her own word, to name the world." Becoming knowledgeable and educated creates a sense of dignity and spurs people to action. Education is the "practice of freedom" (Freire, 2000).

The main principles of these critical race theories are a) white privilege and systemic racism are not currently recognized in educational institutions (Feagin, 2014), b) people of color and poverty experience prejudice and bias on a regular basis (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), and c) the key to liberation from oppression is through education (Freire, 2000). Critical race praxis guides the understanding of bias and prejudice (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Even when not purposefully or consciously perpetrated, bias and prejudice create inequitable opportunities and outcomes in the education system. Application of these theoretical foundations to educational

organizations, policies, and practices is important to enacting systemic change (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Multi-Dimensional Framework for Achieving Educational Equity

To create transformational, systemic change and design school programs to be equitable, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of each learner, the following definition and conceptual framework of educational equity has been advanced by the federally-funded Great Lakes Equity Center (2012, 2016a).

When educational policies, practices, curricula, resources and school cultures are representative of all students, such that each individual has access to, can participate and make progress in high-quality learning experiences, regardless of her or his race, socioeconomic status, gender, ability, religion, national origin, linguistic diversity, or other characteristics.

To raise the achievement of all students, close the gap between the highest and lowest performing students, and eliminate disproportionality between student groups based on race and socioeconomic categories, school systems should focus on a conceptual framework for equity (Blankstein & Noguera, 2015).

All students benefit from the following:

- access to all services available to everyone without barriers
- meaningful participation in quality educational experiences regardless of race, socioeconomic status, gender, ability, religious affiliation, national origin, linguistic diversity, or other characteristics

- the ability to see themselves, their race, and culture represented respectfully in the school curriculum, environment, and culture
- making progress and achieving high outcomes (Bustamante, et al., 2009; Chen, et al., 2014; Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016a; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015; Henze, et al., 2000; Jenlink, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Mulligan & Kozleski, 2009; Paris, 2012; Shields, 2004; Singleton, 2015; Theoharis, 2009)

It is important for educators to critically reflect on the obstacles related to equity and lack of access to quality instructional opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds and the impact these barriers have on students' lives (Nieto & Bode, 2012). To create and sustain equitable classrooms and schools, educators and leaders must place the core constructs of educational equity at the center of the conversation (GLEC, 2012, 2016; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015). Lewis (2001) suggested the notion of educational institutions nurturing students, both socially and intellectually, while providing real opportunities to learn in environments; such environments foster appreciation for diversity and critical educational experiences to help all students better understand their place in a global context.

Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to gather information from educational leaders in select Minnesota school districts regarding the implementation and effectiveness of the core elements of educational equity as defined by the current literature (Bustamante et al., 2009; Chen et al., 2014; Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016a; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015; Henze et al., 2000; Jenlink, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Mulligan & Kozleski, 2009; Paris, 2012; Shields, 2004). The research questions are designed to inquire from school leaders the successes and barriers

they experienced as they enacted systemic change and implemented instructional practices, school policies, curricula, provided resources, and developed inclusive school cultures. The results of the study will contribute to the understanding of the leadership skills needed to create and sustain equitable learning environments in Minnesota school districts.

The following research questions guide this study:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of the representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in implementing school equity programs who responded to the survey?
2. To what extent did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs report their districts' systemically addressed educational equity through organizational, curricular, and policy practices?
3. To what extent did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs report equity-based practices that had been implemented in their district, schools, and classrooms?
4. What barriers to implementation of equity-based practices did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs report having experienced?
5. What did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs identify as effective practices to achieve educational equity in their school districts?
6. Was there a significant difference in how select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity program reported systemically addressing equity-based

organizational, curricular, and policy practices based on demographic characteristics?

Was there a significant difference in the perceptions of implementation of equity-based practices based on demographic characteristics?

Delimitations

According to a study by Roberts (2010), delimitations are based on decisions made by the researcher to limit or set boundaries for the scope of study. The following are established as delimitations of the study:

- The study population is limited to representatives from select Minnesota school districts that were eligible to participate in the Achievement and Integration (AI) program for the 2016-17 school year as required by Minnesota Statute 124D.861. The list of the 132 school districts that were eligible for participation in the AI program is published on the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) website. Districts were eligible to participate in the AI program based on a statewide analysis of the October 1 enrollment data and comparing enrollment between districts and schools. A district was considered racially isolated (RI) when there was a 20 percent or higher difference in its number of enrolled protected students in relationship to an adjoining district (Minnesota Department of Education, 2016). A school was racially identifiable when the difference of enrolled protected students at a school was 20 percent or higher when compared to another school in the same district serving the same grades; the school with the higher percentage was considered a racially identifiable school (RIS) (Minnesota Department of Education, 2016).

- The study is limited by the voluntary participation of the representatives involved with developing and leading AI programs in Minnesota school districts. The focus of the study is to understand the successes and barriers district leaders experienced as they implemented student-centered and inclusive programs and services. In Minnesota, the leaders of the AI program were charged with this work. Logically, they would be the most knowledgeable group to report on their perceptions and experiences. However, since participation in the study is voluntary and limited to the number of respondents choosing to complete the on-line survey within the allotted time frame, the results are based on the data provided and may not be representative of the entire state of Minnesota.
- The study reports the perceptions of representatives on issues related to the implementation of the educational-equity core constructs in the Minnesota public school districts they represent. Therefore, the study results are relative to each respondent's knowledge and understanding of the factors creating inclusive and responsive educational learning environments.
- The study was conducted in the fall of 2016 and survey responses were accepted from late September through late November, 2016. During this timeframe, districts were implementing the final year of the existing three-year plan and beginning to develop the plan for a subsequent three-year cycle, July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2020. The Minnesota Department of Education will be conducting training and providing technical assistance to districts as they work to develop the 2017-2020 AI plan for the districts.

- The study instruments are designed on the basis of current research and a review of current literature. The multidimensional framework for achieving the core elements of educational equity – used as the basis for the survey inquiry questions – are based on research cited in the current research and literature reviewed. The study provides opportunities for respondent to include their own perceptions and influences.
- The study reveals a point-in-time level of understanding.

Assumptions

The reasons children from diverse backgrounds and poverty fail to achieve in schools are complex and overlapping (Reardon, 2011). Select Minnesota public school districts have been provided with funding and program guidelines through the “Achievement and Integration for Minnesota” legislation to pursue racial and economic integration, increase student achievement, create equitable educational opportunities, and reduce academic disparities based on students' diverse racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds (MDE, 2016). Given that the survey and interview participants are directly involved in developing and implementing AI programs in their districts, the assumptions of this mixed-methods study are:

1. Study participants make an effort to complete the survey as accurately and honestly as possible.
2. The participants completing the surveys are a representative sample of the school leaders developing and implementing educational equity programs in Minnesota public schools.
3. Survey participants are currently in positions of leadership and are knowledgeable about equity practices in their school districts and are willing to be reflective

- regarding their experiences, opportunities, and barriers in developing and implementing inclusive programs and services.
4. Interviewees share their professional perspectives in a constructive and informative manner.
 5. The results from the districts represented in the study can be generalizable to other districts in Minnesota.

Definition of Terms

Roberts (2010) recommends terms used in a study should be defined to provide an appropriate context for understanding the research. Many expressions are pertinent and will benefit the reader in understanding the study's focus. This section will briefly discuss language relevant to the study of educational equity.

Diversity includes all the ways people differ. It encompasses everyone, is all-inclusive, and recognizes and values everyone and every group (University of California-Berkeley, 2009).

Equity is the guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers preventing full participation of some groups (University of California-Berkeley, 2009).

Educational equity occurs “when educational policies, practices, interactions, and resources are representative of, constructed by and responsive to all people such that each individual has access to, can participate and make progress in high-quality learning experiences that empower them towards self-determination and reduces disparities in outcomes regardless of individual characteristics and cultural identities” (GLEC, 2012, 2016a).

Equality is the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, and opportunities (Dictionary.com).

Achievement gaps, according to National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (2015), occur when one group of students outperforms another group and the difference in average scores for the two groups is statistically significant. Unequal or inequitable distribution of educational results or benefits results in a gap in achievement between student groups.

Disparity is the condition of being unequal and the level of inequity is a noticeable difference. Disparity usually refers to unfair and unequal differences (Vocabulary.com).

Race refers to skin pigmentation and other physical features. The terms “race” and “ethnicity” are often used interchangeably (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Racism is any program or practice of discrimination, segregation, persecution, or mistreatment based on membership in a race or ethnic group. Racism is a socially-constructed belief that skin color is the primary determinant of human characteristics and capabilities and differences and inherent superiority are attached to physical attributes, such as skin and eye color, hair texture, and bone structure (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

Ethnicity is often preferred over race as it does not imply biological or genetic differences; rather it refers to a combination of ancestral origin and cultural characteristics. Ethnicity is learned (cultural) and a dimension is given at birth (ancestral). Group characteristic is often based on national origin, ancestry, language, or other cultural characteristic (Henze et al., 2000; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Socioeconomic status (SES) is generally a measure of a family’s economic and social position in a community based on income, education, and occupation (Wikipedia).

Organization of Study

The study is presented in five chapters. Chapter one includes the introduction to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, operational definitions, assumptions of the study, delimitation of the study, and theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Chapter two includes a review of the related literature as it pertains to educational equity, the disparity gap, barriers to achieving educational equity, and the multi-dimensional educational equity framework. Chapter three describes the research design and methodology engaged to conduct the research for the study, an overview of the research methods and design, study participants, institutional review board regulations, survey instrument design and dissemination, and data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter four explains the data analysis and discusses the findings of the study. Chapter five presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study, as well as suggestions for further research. The study concludes with a bibliography and appendices.

Summary

The study focuses on investigating the successes and barriers school leaders have experienced during the process of enacting system change and implementing student-centered, inclusive instructional practices, school policies, curricula, resources, and school cultures responsive to the needs of each learner. Specifically, the study will focus on the actions of educational leaders in Minnesota schools to implement the key constructs of educational equity including access to rigorous, challenging courses, meaningful participation and engagement, cultural representation and voice, and positive academic and social results and outcomes for each learner, especially those from diverse racial, ethnic, and low socioeconomic backgrounds

(GLEC, 2012). The results of the study will contribute to the understanding of requisites for creating and sustaining equitable learning environments in Minnesota school districts.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

Introduction

The purpose of the study is to gather information about the issues related to educational equity (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a), the implementation of equity-based practices in Minnesota schools (Bustamante et al., 2009; Chen et al., 2014; Fraser, 2008; Jenlink, 2009; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015; GLEC, 2012, 2016a; Henze et al., 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Mulligan & Kozleski, 2009; Paris, 2012; Shields, 2004; Singleton, 2015; Theoharis, 2009), and the role of the educational leader in achieving academic and social results and outcomes for each student (Theoharis, 2007).

Based on a review of the current related literature, the chapter is organized into four sections: 1) understanding the concepts of equity and equality in education, 2) the barriers to achieving educational equity, 3) a social justice theoretical and conceptual framework for equity-based practices, and 4) the summary. The first section is a discussion centering on the concepts of equity and equality and the resulting inequities students of color and children from low-income backgrounds have experienced when learning opportunities are not fair or equitable (AECF, 2015; Aud, Fox & Kewal Ramani, 2010; Cooper, 2009; Noguera, 2012). The second section probes the possible causes for inequitable outcomes for racially and ethnically diverse students and/or students living in poverty, rooted in historical injustices, systemic bias, and discrimination, and opportunity gaps (Feagin, 2014; Jordan, Brown & Gutiérrez, 2010; Lawrence & Keleher, 2004; Noguera, 2012; Singleton, 2015). The third section addresses leading systemic

change from an equity perspective based on social justice theory and a conceptual framework for achieving educational equity (Jordan et al., 2010; Lewis, 2001; Miller & Martin, 2015).

Understanding the Concept of Educational Equity

The pursuit of equity in education has become a “pervasive and widely discussed educational issue” (Carey, 2013). Unfortunately, America’s education system is failing a significant number of children, especially “disadvantaged and minority students and their peers” (Bell, McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004; Singleton, 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Compelling evidence exists about student success and failure in school follows particular patterns revolving around race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic factors (AECF, 2015; Noguera, 2012; Reardon, 2011; Ryan, 2003).

Through policy and funding, the public education system in the United States provides “equal educational opportunities” and schooling to all children, however, achievement outcomes for youth from diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds are not equal (Cooper, 2009; Aud et al., 2010; AECF, 2015). The persistently poor outcomes experienced by some youth in the education system signal a need for moving beyond a “sameness as fairness” principle (Gutiérrez & Jaramillo, 2006). “Equal, fair and impartial” treatment has not, in the process of educating students, proven to be successful (The Glossary of Education Reform, 2014). Policies and practices purporting to treat all as “equal” may work when everyone starts from the same place and needs the same help and support to make academic and social progress (Jordan et.al, 2010; Noguera, Darling-Hammond, & Friedlaender, 2015; Nordstrum, 2006; Singleton, 2015; Verba, 2006).

For each student to receive a quality educational experience, it is critical to scrutinize current educational practices, policies, curricula, allocation of resources, and school culture through the “lens of equity” (GLEC, 2012; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015). Students need teachers and leaders prepared with the knowledge, strategies, support, and courage to make curriculum, instruction, student engagement, and family partnerships culturally responsive (GLEC, 2015; Cooper, 2009). Educators must provide students with different levels of support so each and every student is successful (Singleton, 2015).

Equity in education is framed in terms of equal access to quality instruction and equitable treatment of each student (De Valenzuela, Copeland, Qi & Park, 2006; Jordan, et al., 2010; Linton, 2011; Nieto, 1996). Quality educational experiences and equity are inextricably linked (Scanlan, 2012). All students benefit from having access to, equitable participation in, and the opportunity to make progress and achieve success in school regardless of race, socioeconomic status, gender, ability, religious affiliation, national origin, linguistic diversity, or other characteristics (GLEC, 2012; Singleton, 2015). Creating an equitable learning environment will raise the achievement of each student, close the gap between the highest and lowest performing students, and eliminate disproportionality between student groups based on race and socioeconomic categories (Linton, 2011; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Singleton, 2015).

Ensuring all students have access to quality learning experiences does not guarantee success for all students, but it does ensure all students have sufficient opportunity to make a meaningful contribution (O’Malley & Amarillas, 2011). School leaders and educators must not tolerate disparities in student outcomes, unequal or socially and economically detrimental to children and communities (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Gorski and Swalwell (2015)

advocate for educators to create equitable learning environments; they must understand equity and inequity, justice and injustice, and the manner individuals are treated by one another and by institutions.

The disparity gap. The Annie E. Casey Foundation policy report (2014) found African-American, American Indian, Hispanic/Latino students, and students from low-income families struggle the most on indicators important for positive educational outcomes and successful early work experiences including early reading proficiency, middle school mathematics, high school graduation, postsecondary employment, and completing a postsecondary degree.

Mastering reading by the end of third grade is a crucial developmental benchmark for young children. Such ability enables them to keep up with the rigor of reading in the content area in the upper grades (AECF, 2014, 2015). According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2013 test results, more than 80 percent of Black and Hispanic/Latino fourth graders and 78 percent of American Indian students in public schools were not proficient in reading (AECF, 2015; Bohrnstedt, Kitmitto, Ogut, Sherman & Chan, 2015).

The National Assessment of Educational Progress monitors and reports the reading and mathematics achievement of over 50,000 nine-, thirteen-, and seventeen-year-old students in the United States. Being proficient in mathematics is an indicator of college and career readiness according to the recent studies (AECF, 2014, 2015). In 2013, 79 percent of Hispanic/Latino and American Indian and 86 percent of black students were not proficient on the NAEP mathematics assessment (AECF, 2015; Bohrnstedt et al., 2015; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013).

To attend a post-high school training institute, a young person must graduate from high school or earn a high school equivalency degree (AECF, 2014). Graduation rates for black and American Indian students in the United States is 30 percent below white students (AECF, 2015). Completing high school and attending postsecondary education and training increases the likelihood of career success and may be an indicator of income stability for a person of color (AECF, 2015).

The results of the 2012 NAEP assessments reveals some progress toward closing the gap between White-Black and White-Hispanic scores in reading and mathematics over time, although white students continue to score more than 25 points or more higher on average than black students in 2012 (NCES, 2013). The reasons children from diverse backgrounds and poverty fail to achieve in schools are complex and overlapping (Reardon, 2011). School leaders and educators need to identify the systemic barriers preventing students from accessing quality educational experiences and eliminate those barriers (Shields, Larocque & Oberg, 2002; U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

Educational practices based on ignoring of inequities, either by blaming social, economic, or political factors external to the school or attempting to ignore them, are manifestations of firmly rooted and pervasive systemic bias (Shields, 2004). Singleton (2015) quotes Tomas A. Arciniega describing this reasoning as "shift[ing] the blame for failure of the schools to meet the needs" of students and families "on to the shoulders of the clients they purport to serve" (p. 13). Assuming the reason children do not perform well in school is solely the result of issues external to the school is morally wrong (Scheurich & Skrla 2003; Singleton, 2014).

Achieving educational equity means transferring the focus of responsibility for academic achievement from the student and family to the school leaders and teachers (Linton, 2011). Students and families must help meet expectations, but the educators need to provide a culturally responsive learning environment to ensure all children can learn and succeed (GLEC, 2015; Linton, 2011). Educators must have the skills to recognize, respond, and repair the inequities within the educational system (Gorski & Swalwell, 2015).

Barriers to Educational Equity

A review of the current literature has identified several underlying issues with an impact on the achievement of diverse learners, such as the history of racial inequities in American education (Noguera, 2012; Singleton, 2015), a prevailing dominant culture worldview and systemic inequities to produce biased educational policies and practices (Feagin, 2014; Lawrence & Keleher, 2004,), and opportunity gaps to perpetuate lower educational achievement and attainment by students of color and students from poverty backgrounds (Jordan et al., 2010; Noguera, 2012).

The historical relationship between white and racial and ethnic populations in the United States has a significant role in educational inequality even today (Noguera, 2012; Singleton, 2015). Since the 1600s, the systematic oppression and discrimination against Indigenous peoples, enslaved Africans, and poor people has prevailed (Feagin, 2014; Singleton, 2015). The biased system of laws and privilege, created in the United States early years, is still evident today (Feagin, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Noguera, 2012). During the colonial period, laws excluded Indians and Blacks from attending school with white children (Darling-Hammond, 2010). As a result, an underground education system for children of color was established

(Feagin, 2014; Singleton, 2015). Legalized segregated schooling continued to be the norm until the mid-20th century (Feagin, 2014; Singleton, 2015). The segregated schools attended by children of color and Indigenous children were underfunded and inadequate, perpetuating oppression and discrimination (Noguera, 2012; Singleton, 2015).

The United States advanced toward creating an increasingly equitable system of education in 1954 when the Supreme Court decided the *Brown v. Board of Education* case (347 U.S. 483, 497). The Supreme Court declared separate public schools for black and white students as unconstitutional and a violation of the 14th Amendment (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Singleton, 2015). The passage of the Civil Rights Act of the 1964 (Public Law 88-352) forced the end of legal segregation at schools and somewhat reduced discrimination based on race (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Feagin, 2014). However, the implementation of this law failed to create educational equity for youth from diverse backgrounds (Darling-Hammond, 2010). The United States Congress continues to pass discriminatory legislation and policy to this day (Feagin, 2014).

The historical foundations of inequities in American education are known and studied (AECF, 2014). It is important to understand the negative impact slavery, the forcible removal of American Indians from their land, Jim Crow laws, and segregated schools have had on the education of many American children (AECF, 2014; Noguera, 2012). Discrimination, along the dimensions of race and income, are part of America's history; social, cultural, and economic development still have a prevailing role (Feagin, 2014; Tate, 1997). Equity demands remedies to redress historic injustices preventing or diminishing access to quality educational services (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

A significant number of educational institutions' operations limits opportunity for some children through biased practices and policies (AECF, 2014). Inequitable practices are reinforced by norms embedded in a school's culture and supported by expectations in community (Bustamante et al., 2009). Systemic inequities are a result of enactments of power and privilege and decisions that benefit some, but not all (Singleton, 2015). Such actions create a system of privilege for some children at the expense of other students (AECF, 2014).

“White privilege” refers to the benefits of being White in society (McIntosh, 1992). The white, middle-class male has shaped societal values, norms, and set the standard for comparison (Feagin, 2014; Tate, 1997). Caucasians are often unaware of their privileged status, as it is the norm for them (Feagin, 2014; Wingfield & Feagin, 2012). The level of impact of the white cultural experience still greatly influences actions of white educators and administrators, thus subjugating people of color and ignoring their contributions and influence in society (Parker, 1998). Behavior and actions contributing to discrimination are unconscious, but racially motivated (Tate, 1997).

Racism is a systemic issue not easily identified or understood (Ryan, 2003). Research confirms white educators lack understanding of the indicators of racism and consequences of racism within the educational system (Evans, 2007). In educational institutions and classrooms, race and racism continue to be taboo topics (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). There is a “hidden curriculum” with regards to race in relation to academic subjects, dialogue, and practices in educational pedagogy (Lewis, 2001). When racism is unacknowledged, it is difficult to detect the implicit racial messages conveyed and learned in schools (Lewis, 2001).

School personnel often view themselves as being "color-blind" in their interaction with students (Rousseau & Tate, 2003). Studies report educators believe "colorblindness" is appropriate because it demonstrates they "see no differences in their students" (Ryan, 2003). They conceive equity as equal treatment (Jordan et al., 2010). Colorblind thinking protects the status quo and is a hegemonic practice only white people can perpetuate (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015). Manifestations of colorblindness negates fundamental differences in culture, tradition, and the ability to see the world through another's eyes (Evans, 2007; Parker, 1998). Being "color-blind" permits educators to avoid addressing the individual academic and social needs of all learners in their classrooms (Evans, 2007; Ledesma & Calderón, 2015; Yosso, 2002).

A denial of the importance of race and culture is a denial of the innumerable life experiences and unique knowledge students of color bring to their learning (Evans, 2007; Ledesma & Calderón, 2015; Yosso, 2002). School personnel may discount a child's experiences of racism, not recognizing the microaggressions, subtle slights, nonverbal snubs, and implicit biases undermining a child's identity (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Ryan, 2003). Educators may not recognize or acknowledge the impact racism has on a child's ability to learn in school (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Ryan, 2003). Ignoring the problem of systemic racism or not recognizing the racial discrimination in socially-constructed long held practices, educators are perpetuating inequities within the education system (Feagin, 2014; Shields, 2004). Educators must be aware of their actions and language pertaining to race and racial stereotypes (Lewis, 2001). Educators need to develop cultural proficiency and a "cognitive frame" for educational equity (Jenlink, 2009). Gorski and Swalwell (2015) advocate that in order for educators to create equitable learning environments, they must understand equity

and inequity, justice and injustice, and the treatment of all individuals by one another and by institutions.

The opportunity gap. In the school setting, educators acknowledge the need to educate all children equally. In reality, they are most likely to be successful with middle-class students (Miller & Martin, 2015). The racial and poverty divide that plagues education and society, in general, has resulted in an “opportunity gap” for bicultural children (Lewis, 2001). Jordan et al. (2010) found that prosperous, dominant-culture students enter school with a distinct advantage provided by their status in society and communities, whereas youth experiencing poverty or from racial or ethnically diverse backgrounds face inequities because they must overcome multiple barriers.

Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond (2010) describes the opportunity gap as the accumulated differences in access to key educational resources including experienced and excellent teachers, personalized attention in the classroom, high-quality project-based core curriculum, good educational materials, and plentiful information and resources supporting learning at school and at home. Children raised in impoverished homes and communities may have limited access to experiences and language-building environments impacting cognitive development (AECF, 2015; Noguera et al., 2015). Children with experiences of race- and poverty-related burdens (i.e., poor housing, low family income and educational attainment of parents, and a lack of educational resources in the home) are susceptible to poor educational outcomes (AECF, 2015; Carey, 2013). These factors are also associated with diminished prospects later in life (AECF, 2015).

Educational researchers have conjectured these “opportunity gaps” experienced by students are not the result of deficiencies in the students, nor of their communities; instead, the challenges result from biased systemic organizational practices and policies (Miller & Martin, 2015). Children without dominant-culture knowledge, background, and skills experience lowered expectations from teachers, placement into lower-level skills-based course work, and poor quality teaching (Gershenson, Holt, Papageorge, & Papageorge, 2015; Miller & Martin, 2015). Deficit-thinking on the part of educators has a negative impact on learners (Jenlink, 2009). Research confirms the perpetuation of educational inequities as long as school staff see children from diverse cultural or impoverished backgrounds through a deficit lens (Gorski, 2014). A deficit-thinking approach assumes a student’s ability to achieve is determined by race or income rather than ability (Shields, 2004).

As previously discussed, access to high quality education shapes future success. The complacency surrounding the failure of black and brown children in the education system and the impact failure may have on their future career prospects is concerning (Noguera, 2007). Good teaching matters—commitment, dedication, and deliberate approaches to meeting the needs of students are the keys to making a difference in the lives of poor children and children of color (Theoharis, 2007). Educational leaders committed to working in partnership with parents provide strong instructional leadership and resource management in their schools, develop core curriculum and instructional practices, engage in on-going and frequent evaluation of effective strategies and interventions, and increase attention to the social, emotional, and developmental needs of the children and will connect and engage all youth with learning (Noguera, 2007). Research has shown the beliefs and actions of educators have a significant influence on student

attainment (Gershenson et al., 2015). Considerable work is required to establish a fair and equitable system of education, where opportunities to learn and the ability to reach high standards are uncorrelated to race, ethnicity, and class. (Jordan et al., 2010).

Achieving Educational Equity

Three social justice theories are foundational to this study due to the fact they consider leadership for systemic change from an equity perspective (Tate, 1997). The theories, white racial frame (Feagin, 2014), critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), and critical pedagogy theory (Freire, 2000), are the basis for the development of theory-informed equity practices. These theories are lenses used to scrutinize and challenge the barriers to educational equity in school systems, based in institutional racism and dominate culture norms (Bustamante et.al, 2009; Cooper, 2009; Evans, 2007; Feagin, 2014; Jordan et al., 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ledesma & Calderón, 2015; Lewis, 2001; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Miller & Martin, 2015; Noguera, 2010; Parker, 1998; Ryan, 2003; Singleton, 2015; Tate, 1997).

Figure 1 provides a description of each theory, the key characteristics pertaining to education, and the primary research source.

Social Justice Theoretical Context of Educational Equity

White Racial Frame (WRF)

WRF is the study of white privilege and systemic racism. Racial and ethnic oppression, exploitation, and inequality are not recognized by most White people because such behavior is accepted and deeply engrained in daily life; e.g., racial stereotypes, metaphors, images, emotions.

- Framing is broad, deeply held racialized knowledge and understandings shaping human action and behavior and are often automatic or unconscious.
- Whites are viewed as mostly superior in culture and achievement and people of color are of less social, economic, and political consequence than whites.
- Social institutions are white-controlled and whites therein are unjustly enriched and disproportionately privileged.
- Learned stereotypes, images, and interpretations in discriminatory actions are deeply embedded and often unconscious.
- Common cultural currency - friendship and kinship groups are not mixed (Feagin, 2014).

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

CRT is an activist movement seeking to transform the relationship among race, racism, and power. In education CRT's tenets are the lens used to analyze issues of school discipline, organizational hierarchy, school policies, tracking, and controversies over curriculum and the teaching of history, and IQ and achievement testing.

- Racism is an everyday experience for persons of color.
- Interest convergence (elitist materialism).
- Social construction-race is a product of social thought and relations.
- Differential racialization-dominant society racializes groups differently at different times.
- Intersectionality-no person has a single, easily stated unitary identity.
- Voice of oppression-masters of own narrative (Delgado & Stefancic 2001).

Critical Pedagogy Theory (CPT)

CPT theorizes the key to liberation from oppression is through education. Critical thinking and consciousness create informed action. Oppressed people must be engaged through partnership and dialogue. End the "culture of silence."

- Social class is an important factor in understanding oppression.
- Informed action will result when a balance between theory and practice is achieved.
- Conscientization is the use of education as a means of consciously shaping the person and the society.
- To overcome problems in society, dialogue and partnerships of cooperation, unity, organization and cultural synthesis are means to liberate the oppressed (Freire, 2000).

Figure 1: *Social Justice Theoretical Context of Educational Equity*

Based on the research of Feagin (2014), the white-racial frame theory defines the principles of racial and ethnic oppression and systemic racism in society. According to this theory, most human behavior and actions are automatic and unconscious. Deep racialized framing (e.g., images, emotions, and expressions) negatively influences how people of color are viewed and are often seen as less favorable (Feagin, 2014). White-racial framing posits Caucasians are superior in culture and achievement, white culture is the norm, and disproportionately privileges those from the white-dominant cultural group. This worldview obscures attention to the existence and consequences of structural inequalities and could, when not challenged, permit discrimination and inequities to exist (Feagin, 2014).

Since the 1970's post-civil rights era, the critical race theory (CRT) movement has been confronting racism by giving "voice" to people of color to tell their "lived experiences" as a means of uncovering a "racialized social reality" (Evans, 2007; Shields, 2004; Tate, 1997). Critical race theory presumes racism is ingrained in American institutions and policies, including schools (Ladson-Billings, 1998). The strategy to face oppression becomes one of exposing false premises and confront norms of color blindness, neutrality, and meritocracy (Evans, 2007; Tate, 1997). Critical race theory confronts traditional values and standards for decision-making and the advantage created by the white-dominant culture (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, has had a profound impact on the field of education through his work in teaching illiterate people to read and write (Freire, 2000, forward by R. Shaull, p. 29). As a result of being empowered to look critically at their situation and act to transform society, his students used the skills acquired through education to transform their lives. Freire's critical pedagogy methodology is based on the belief of the oppressed being the victims

of economic, social, and political domination. Such domination survives due to a “culture of silence.” Freire (2000) believed every human being is capable of critically assessing issues in the community and contributing by “say[ing] his or her own word, to name the world.” Becoming knowledgeable and educated creates a sense of dignity and spurs people to action. Education is the “practice of freedom” (Freire, 2000).

The pedagogy of the oppressed, according to Freire (2000), involves culturally confronting the principles of domination and exposing fallacies and myths to bring about transformation. Through this methodology, the learner, by a process of dialogue with others, is a co-creator of knowledge regarding personal and social reality and takes action to transform limiting situations (Freire, 2000).

The main principles of these critical race theories are a) white privilege and systemic racism are not currently recognized in educational institutions (Feagin, 2014), b) people of color and poverty experience prejudice and bias on a regular basis (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), and c) the key to liberation from oppression is through education (Freire, 2000). Critical race praxis guides the understanding of how bias and prejudice, even when not purposefully or consciously perpetrated, creates unequal opportunities and outcomes in the education system (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Application of these theoretical foundations to educational organizations, policies, and practices is important to leading and enacting systemic change (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

A Multi-Dimensional Framework for Achieving Educational Equity

Achieving educational equity means raising the achievement of each student, closing the gap between the highest and lowest performing students, and eliminating disproportionality

between student groups (Blankstein & Noguera, 2015). Inequities are a result of some students being excluded or screened out of educational opportunities based on their lack of the background knowledge, contextual information, income, or social skills necessary to fully participate (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Marginalized students do not receive the education they deserve unless purposeful steps are taken to consciously change school policies and practices to an equity and social justice perspective (Theoharis, 2007). An educational equity context for decision-making ensures equal access to participate in and make progress in high-quality relevant and rigorous learning experiences preparing each student for life success and career choices after high school (GLEC, 2012).

The concept of educational equity is based on the Great Lakes Equity Center's (2016) theoretical constructs of educational equity:

When educational policies, practices, interactions, and resources are representative of, constructed by and responsive to all people such that each individual has access to, can participate and make progress in high-quality learning experiences that empower them towards self-determination and reduces disparities in outcomes regardless of individual characteristics and cultural identities (p. 3).

The following conceptual framework is advanced by the federally-funded Great Lakes Equity Center to create transformational, systemic change and design equitable and inclusive school programs (GLEC, 2012, 2016a). The multi-dimensional framework for educational equity has broad organizing principles and key concepts to guide the flow of information (i.e., access to empowering rigorous coursework, meaningful participation and engagement, cultural

representation and voice, and positive results and outcomes) (GLEC, 2012, 2016a). It is difficult to segment each element into a single category. In fact, the concepts are blurred based on their relationship to each other and the dimensions of the framework interacting (Scanlon & Lopez, 2012).

Figure 2 is a conceptual model of the multi-dimensional framework for achieving educational equity's key constructs (Bustamante et al., 2009; Chen et al., 2014; Fraser, 2008; Jenlink, 2009; GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016a; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015; Henze et al., 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Mulligan & Kozleski, 2009; Paris, 2012; Shields, 2004; Singleton, 2015; Theoharis, 2009).

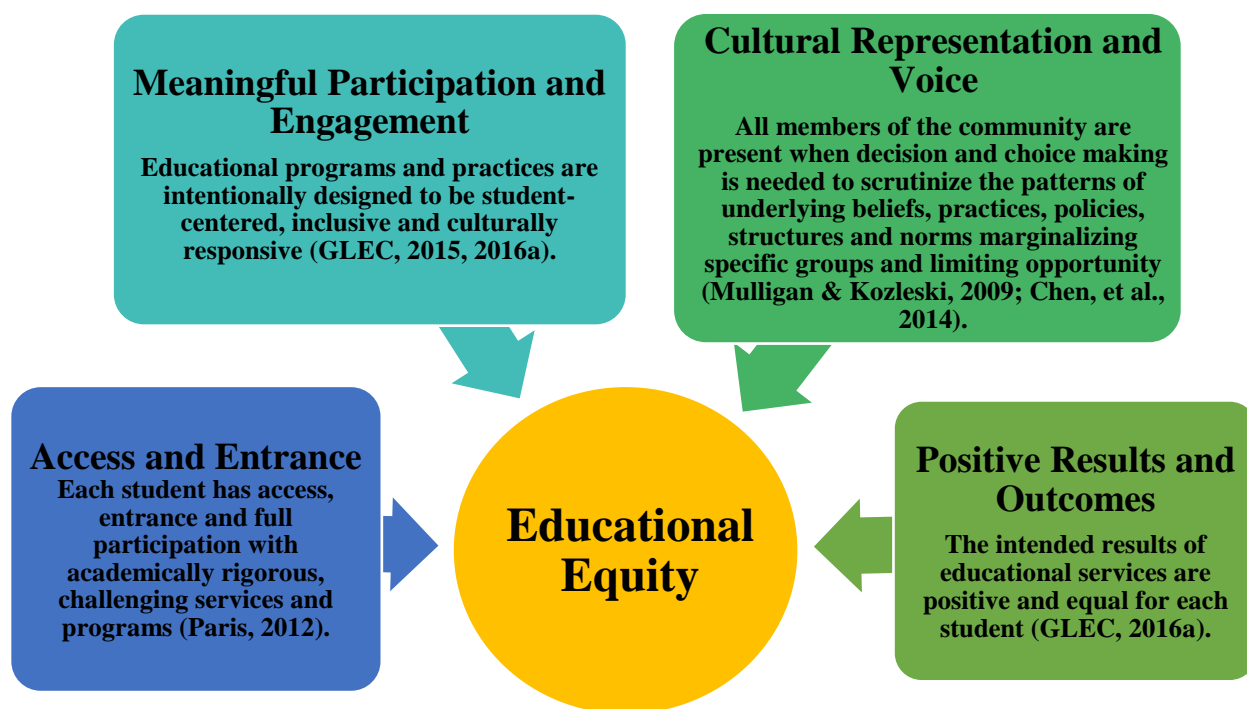


Figure 2: A Multi-Dimensional Framework for Achieving Educational Equity

Educators must be accountable for serving a diverse and changing public (Cooper, 2009). It is important for educators to critically reflect on the obstacles related to equity and lack of access to quality instructional opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds and the impact these barriers have on students' lives (Nieto & Bode, 2012). To create and sustain equitable classrooms and schools, educators and leaders must place the core constructs of equity (i.e., access to rigorous, challenging courses, meaningful participation and engagement, cultural representation and voice, and positive results and outcomes) at the center of the conversation (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016a; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015).

Access and entrance to rigorous, challenging services and programs. Providing educators with cultural awareness or cultural diversity training does not necessarily generate equitable educational practices (Evans, 2007). Jenlink (2009) urges educational leaders to be accountable for quality curricula in their schools and ensuring quality instruction and authentic learning is occurring. Each student, regardless of individual characteristics and without barriers, benefits from having access to academic and social supports and services to achieve positive outcomes (GLEC, 2012, 2016; Singleton, 2015).

Paris (2012) describes access as a meaningful strategy to ensure each member of the school has entrance into, involvement with, and is able to fully participate in all aspects of the school in a manner honoring heritage and community practices. According to the principle of access, "services should be available to everyone who is entitled to them and should be free from any form of discrimination irrespective of a person's country of birth, language, culture, race or religion" and any barriers to access should be removed. (Leoncini, Napoli, & Wong, 2002; Muthukrishna & Schlüter, 2011).

The issue of access to quality educational resources fluctuates depending upon a student's race, social class, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, or disability. As stated, disparities in student achievement have often resulted from discrimination, racism, oppression, and exclusion (Muthukrishna & Schlüter, 2011). The challenge, then, is for school leaders and teachers to create school and classroom cultures where each student, regardless of their background, is welcomed and respected, and provided with the best opportunity to learn (GLEC, 2015; Muthukrishna & Schlüter, 2011)

To ensure equity of access, education professionals must make available to each child programs to meet their cultural, social, and academic needs, and provide an opportunity for children to include in their school experience their own valid and worthy cultural experiences and background (Shields, 2004). Each student must have access to the resources needed to enable the student to matriculate through the educational system with fair, just, and equal participation (Jenlink, 2009). Equity-oriented leaders must inspect written and unwritten policies, question assumptions, and explore the intent of potentially biased decisions (Cooper, 2009).

Leaders and advocates need the knowledge, strategies, support, and courage to make curriculum, instruction, student engagement, and family partnerships inclusive and culturally responsive. (Cooper, 2009). School leaders promote educational equity and excellence by building strong school-community partnerships and facilitating student-centered learning (Scanlan & Lopez, 2012). Culturally responsive practices ensures teachers are using unbiased, robust, and challenging curriculum, instruction, and assessments (Scanlan & Lopez, 2012).

Theoharis' (2007) research outlines the actions a school leader must take to create and sustain a student-centered, inclusive, and responsive instructional environment providing every learner with access to quality instruction. A school leader must:

- Value diversity and model cultural respect to students, staff, and the community.
- End tracking programs in schools for marginalized children.
- Strengthen teaching and curriculum and ensure each student has access to rigorous, quality core instruction aligned with the standards.
- Provide professional development in a diverse and collaborative framework.
- Ensure each student receives the same academic and social opportunities.
- Collaborate with staff to ensure every child is successful.
- Seek support from equity-oriented leaders.
- Analyze outcome and context data through lenses of equity.
- Use student-centered strategies, such as differentiated instruction.
- Become an integral part of the school community.

Darling-Hammond (2010) states school leaders must develop a “teaching and learning system” which offers an empowering and equitable education to each child.

Meaningful participation and engagement. Creating an equitable learning environment for students involves ensuring each student meaningfully participates in the classroom and school community, makes academic and social progress, and achieves successful outcomes (GLEC, 2012, 2016a; Singleton, 2015). Meaningful participation is realized when all students feel they belong and find their realities (i.e., race, culture, ethnicity, and background) reflected in the curriculum and conversations of the schools (Shields, 2004). Schools attending to learning

and development through cultural lenses, and fully realize the numerous opportunities exist to make connections with diverse student populations, augment the student's possibility for academic and social success (Carey, 2013; Lee et al., 2003). The principle of meaningful participation and engagement requires the relationship of the school to the student and the design of educational programs and practices (i.e., organizational, curricular, and pedagogical) guarantee equal participation to all (Jenlink, 2009). In order for students to participate in meaningful ways, school culture and communities need to acknowledge, appreciate, and affirm each student's identity related to race, culture, ethnicity, and other characteristics (Shields, 2004).

Educators must cultivate the knowledge, skills, and consciousness necessary to recognize, respond, and repair conditions perpetuating inequities within their systems and institutions (Gorski & Swalwell, 2015). Educators need to know and recognize the biases, subtle and blatant, in classroom materials and school policies, and advocate for just actions rather than permitting inequities to continue. Leaders need to be able to facilitate and foster conversations with colleagues about equity issues and press for equitable school practices (Gorski & Swalwell, 2015).

Scanlan (2012) offers the option for other types of learning including incorporating global influences, such as bilingual-bicultural educational approaches and supports and more asset-oriented approaches to linguistically diverse families. Integrating student culture into school experiences as "funds of knowledge" to promote feelings of belonging and engage students in learning and commitment to school (Scanlon & Lopez, 2012). Viewing student cultural identity as an asset is affirming and makes learning relevant and meaningful (Scanlon &

Lopez, 2012). Jordan et al., (2010) suggests educators include in their instruction and teaching practices opportunities for students to demonstrate multiple ways of expressing and demonstrating their learning and constructing-knowledge building on each child's understandings and experiences.

Numerous researchers have investigated and found that interdependence between good instructional practice and caring and trusting relationships among students and teachers make a difference (Hawley & Nieto, 2010). Multiple researchers have suggested teaching practices building and strengthening learning relationships by:

- Demonstrating interest and respect for each student's culture and lived experiences.
- Teaching basic and higher-order thinking skills
- Including students' prior knowledge, values, and experiences.
- Avoiding stereotypes.
- Limiting use of instructional grouping by ability.
- Knowing each student's ability to communicate (semantics, accents, dialects, and language)
- Addressing behavior fairly.
- Challenging instructional materials as historically inaccurate, stereotypical, or threatening to some students.
- Actively engaging families in their children's learning.

(GLEC, 2012, 2015; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015; Jordan et al., 2010; Lewis, 2001; Ledesma & Calderón, 2015; Linton, 2011; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Riester, Pursch, & Skrla, 2002; Shields, 2004; Theoharis, 2009)

Cultural representation and voice. According to Lewis (2001), educational institutions nurture students both socially and intellectually, while providing real opportunities to learn. School environments should foster appreciation for diversity and critical educational experiences to help all students better understand their place in a global context. Schools could better employ student knowledge about their own lives as a path to improve achievement and explore multiple means of students' cultural wealth through representation, expression, and engagement (Lynn & Parker, 2006).

Research has demonstrated repeatedly students' increased engagement in learning and greater school success when the environment, curriculum, community, and school culture reflect their culture and heritage (Lynn & Parker, 2006; Shields, 2004; Theoharis, 2007). Equitable educational opportunities are created when students and families from diverse cultures see their race, ethnicity, and culture represented respectfully in the school curriculum and environment, and their input on decisions are intentionally included and valued (Shields, 2004). In a representative school environment, bias, discrimination, and inequities are recognized, responded to, and remedied quickly (Cooper, 2009).

The principle of cultural representation in equity-oriented organizations involves "providing and having adequate presence of all" members of the community "when decision and choice making" to question "the patterns of underlying beliefs, practices, policies, structures and norms which marginalize specific groups and limit opportunity." (Chen et al., 2014; Mulligan & Kozleski, 2009; GLEC, 2012, 2016a). To overcome inequitable practices, policies, or procedures in educational settings, educational leaders must consider changes inflicted by bias and discrimination in shaping the operation of the school. Educational leaders ask for input from and

listen to those whose backgrounds, perspectives, and understandings differ from the “majority” perspective (Coleman, Negrón, Lipper & Riley, 2011; Gay, 2002). Diverse perspectives make explicit the need for fundamental change in the ways educators think and construct knowledge and to uncover different cultural viewpoints (Tate, 1997).

Developing a culturally-competent school community depends upon the ability of school’s policies, programs, and practices to reflect the needs and experiences of the diverse enrollment in the school (Bustamante et al., 2009). Everyone, from all income levels and racial-ethnic groups, has the right and the responsibility to be involved in decisions about the school community, and their voices are needed to contribute to the discussion and decision-making (Shields, 2004). The issues of race and ethnicity affect the educational experiences for all students (Gay, 2002; Shields, 2004).

School leadership must intentionally include multiple perspectives and voices in school processes (GLEC, 2016b). There must be purposeful involvement of members of historically marginalized communities so multiple perspectives are pursued and valued. Conflict and social justice issues need to be addressed in an open forum (GLEC, 2012). Marginalized people may be reluctant to raise sensitive topics because they fear repercussions or they believe there is little to be gained by bringing up conflictual issues (Shields, 2004).

The development of policy and practices in today’s multicultural society and increasingly ethnically heterogeneous schools expect an inclusion of participants with another perspective, alternative explanations, and manner of understanding at the policy table (Shields, 2004). The membership of school-community groups (e.g., PTO, site council, curriculum committee) should be representative of the demographic make-up of the student body as a means of bringing

marginalized populations to the table and giving them voice and a role in decision-making (Cooper, 2009; GLEC, 2012; Theoharis, 2007).

Positive results and outcomes. Some researchers suggest the ultimate measure of a school leader's success are the academic outcomes of the traditionally marginalized students in his/her school and the school leader's ability to purposefully reach out to all families and community partners to create more educationally equitable and just schools (Gay, 2002; Scanlon & Lopez, 2012). Researchers have become adept at identifying educational inequities and describing structural changes to ameliorate these inequities, but are less clear about the processes to bring about high quality teaching and increase achievement outcomes for students from racially and economically diverse backgrounds (Scanlan, 2012). In general, the research signifies improving academic and social outcomes for children of color includes quality instruction, equitable, inclusive, and socially just practices, and a cultural context for learning (Bustamante et al. 2009; GLEC, 2012; Jordan et al., 2010).

Schools confronted with evidence of systemic bias and disparities in student outcomes must find effective solutions to benefit all learners in the education system quickly (Miller & Martin, 2015). Several key characteristics and interconnected themes have emerged from the literature to inform theory and practice for creating and sustaining equitable learning environments:

1. Educators look at personal belief systems and assumptions about diversity and equity. An individual's teaching philosophy and practices are driven by personal beliefs and attitudes, and inform how he/she relates to students, families, and the school community.

2. Explore the cultural context of the school environment through the eyes of the students and define what is culturally relevant to all students. Recognize bias in materials, interactions, and policies to advocate for justice and reject deficit-thinking and color-blind frameworks.
3. Use data to measure that learning is occurring on a frequent enough basis to make adjustments in school practices and foster conversations about inequities in achievement, instruction, interactions, and policies.
4. Place significant emphasis on early literacy development and teaching through an equity lens.
5. Build a strong connection among the school, family, and community. Learn to make social change through the community.
6. Prepare students for real opportunities for future self-determination and the ability to act as contributing citizens in a democratic society and global community (GLEC, 2012; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015; Jordan et al., 2010; Ledesma & Calderón, 2015; Lewis, 2001; Linton, 2011; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Riester et al., 2002; Shields, 2004; Theoharis, 2009).

Numerous authors have written about the positive, overall impact on society resulting from academic and social success at school (Blankstein & Noguera, 2015). Equity is about each child achieving the highest outcomes possible with the help and support of the education professionals in their lives (Linton, 2011). The commitment to achieving equity and excellence requires removing structural barriers to learning, addressing systemic racist policy, and providing the

supportive learning environments needed for students to access quality educational services on an equitable platform (Blankstein & Noguera, 2015; Linton, 2011).

Summary

Achieving educational equity is not about equal treatment of all students, but about achieving quality outcomes for every student (GLEC, 2012; Linton, 2011). For every student to succeed, when taking into account such factors as race, ethnicity, poverty, gender, language, and family background, each learner needs access to instruction and support from qualified instructors (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Creating an equitable learning environment shifts the focus of responsibility for academic achievement from the student to the education professionals to provide instruction in a manner facilitating learning for all students (Linton, 2011).

Equity is not about treating each child the same, but about striving to ensure equal educational outcomes for all children and youth (Jordan et al., 2010). Educational equity means each child is guaranteed success because the educators provide instruction to each child in order for them to be successful (Linton, 2011). Educators committed to equity provide differentiated support to all learners so every student gets what he/she needs to have a quality learning experience (Blankstein & Noguera, 2015). Teaching is more challenging and complex as educators integrate more differentiated strategies into their lessons (Noguera et al., 2015).

The student population is changing and learning environments have become increasingly integrated, bringing together students from multiple backgrounds and experiences (Blankstein & Noguera, 2015). Developing a compelling and enriched educational environment for academic and social growth is important for the 21st century global workplace (Blankstein & Noguera,

2015). Students learn to work and communicate together across cultures and socioeconomic realities (Noguera et al., 2015). There is mounting evidence about the benefits to academic, social, and psychological outcomes for students educated in diverse environments (Blankenship & Noguera, 2015; Reno and Gumus-Dawes, 2010).

The conditions affecting student learning include culture, language, and the experiences the child and family have with schools (Nieto, 1999). Systemic racism is perpetuated by school policies and institutional practices (Lawrence & Keleher, 2004; Nieto, 1999; Noguera et al., 2015). Such policies and practices inadvertently stratify students by race, ethnic, or socioeconomic class and create inequality, widen the achievement disparities, and maintain the opportunity gap (Lawrence & Keleher, 2004; Nieto, 1999; Noguera et al., 2015). All students need access to rigorous and challenging classes and courses, participate meaningfully in all aspects of school life, see their language and culture represented in the school policies, practices, curricula, and school ethos, and most importantly, achieve high quality outcomes providing an opportunity for future success beyond school (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016a).

The cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic demographic make-up of students in American schools is changing (Cooper, 2009). Educational leaders and teachers need to be prepared to provide high-quality educational experiences for the diverse and changing student population (GLEC, 2015; Cooper, 2009). It is important for educators to develop learning environments, instructional strategies, and curriculum with the experiences and perspectives of all learners included, not just the dominate culture (Jenlink, 2009). Development of culturally proficient classroom instruction to meet the needs of learners from ethnically and racially diverse backgrounds will prevent further marginalization (Jenlink, 2009).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

In the United States, Indigenous, African American, Asian American, Hispanic/ Latino, and Pacific Islander children fail to achieve in school at the same levels as other children and are often unable to overcome the barriers and challenges to their successes in the school system as it currently exists. Low achievement, high failure and dropout rates, and placement in low-level academic programs are particularly prevalent among children of color (Shields, 2004).

Educational practices ignoring outcome inequities, either by blaming social, economic, or political factors external to the school, are manifestations of firmly rooted and pervasive bias and racial attitudes (Shields, 2004). Educators must be accountable for serving a diverse and changing public (Cooper, 2009). For students to experience educational equity, a scrutiny of current educational practices, policies, curricula, resources, and school culture through equity lenses must occur (GLEC, 2012).

Creating an equitable learning environment shifts the focus of responsibility for academic achievement from the student to the education professionals to provide leadership and instruction to facilitate acquisition of knowledge (Linton, 2011). Students need teachers and advocates prepared with the knowledge, strategies, support, and courage to make curriculum, instruction, student engagement, and family partnerships culturally responsive (GLEC, 2015; Cooper, 2009). All students need access to rigorous and challenging classes and courses, to be able to meaningfully participate in all aspects of school life, see their language and culture represented in the school policies, practices, curricula, and school ethos and most importantly, achieve high

quality outcomes providing an opportunity for future success beyond school (GLEC, 2012, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Numerous studies have reported the underachievement of Indigenous, African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino and children from low socioeconomic backgrounds as compared to white, middle-class children. Low achievement, high failure and dropout rates, and placement in low-level academic programs are predominantly experienced by black and brown children and children experiencing poverty (AECF, 2014, 2015). For students to experience educational equity, an analysis of current scholastic practices needs to occur, as well as close scrutiny of the school policies, curricula, resources, and culture (GLEC, 2012). Students need teachers and school leaders prepared with the knowledge, strategies, support, and courage to make curriculum, instruction, student engagement, and family partnerships inclusive and culturally responsive (GLEC, 2015; Cooper, 2009).

No studies were found investigating the implementation and effectiveness of practices based on the core elements for educational equity including access and entrance, meaningful participation and engagement, cultural representation and voice, and positive results and successful outcomes (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016a). This study gathers information from Minnesota school representatives regarding the opportunities and barriers they experience when they implement innovations to ensure equitable outcomes including instructional practices, school policies, curricula, resources, and culture that is student-centered, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of each student (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016a; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015).

Educational equity is not equal treatment of all students as some educators believe; equity is about all students getting the supports they need to be successful in school (Linton, 2011). Children of color and children from impoverished backgrounds are often unable to overcome the systemic barriers currently existing in schools (Shields, 2004). Educators and their leaders need the knowledge and skills to recognize, respond to, and redress the systemic biases and inequities preventing all students from being engaged and successful in school (Gorski & Swalwell, 2015). Ensuring all students have equitable access to an educational experience does not guarantee all students will succeed, but it does ensure all students have sufficient opportunity for meaningful participation in the educational experiences necessary to be successful at school. Meaningful participation will occur when the systemic barriers preventing a student from accessing high quality educational experiences are identified and eliminated. Quality educational experiences and equity are inextricably linked (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). Disparities in outcomes for students from diverse racial, ethnic, or economically-challenged groups must be addressed to close the opportunity and disparity gap.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to describe the extent to which the core constructs of educational equity are systemically implemented in select Minnesota schools (Bustamante et al., 2009; Chen et al., 2014; GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016a; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015; Henze et al., 2000; Jenlink, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Mulligan & Kozleski, 2009; Paris, 2012; Shields, 2004). The study focuses on developing a comprehensive understanding of the factors creating educational equity for all learners (GLEC, 2012, 2016). Specifically, the study focuses on the actions of the education staff to pursue the key constructs of educational equity through

organizational, curricular, and policy practices and by access to rigorous, challenging courses, meaningful participation and engagement, cultural representation and voice, and positive academic and social results and outcomes for all learners, especially those from diverse racial, ethnic, and low socioeconomic backgrounds (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016a).

For students to experience educational equity, analysis of current scholastic practices needs to occur, as well as a close investigation of school policies, curricula, resources, and culture (GLEC, 2012). Students need teachers and school leaders prepared with the knowledge, strategies, support, and courage to make curriculum, instruction, student engagement, and family partnerships inclusive and culturally responsive (GLEC, 2015; Cooper, 2009). No studies were found investigating Minnesota school leaders' knowledge and understanding of educational equity or assessing their ability to create and sustain equitable learning environments needed to ensure that instructional practices, school policies, and curricula are student-centered, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of learners from diverse racial, ethnic, and low socioeconomic backgrounds (GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015).

This study explores the successes and barriers school leaders experience as they work to enact systemic change and implement inclusive instructional practices and policies. The focus of this study is on developing a comprehensive understanding of the factors to ensure educational equity for all learners, specifically asking school leaders about their perceptions/perspectives of successes and barriers they experience when implementing the key constructs of educational equity including access to rigorous, challenging courses, meaningful participation and engagement, cultural representation and voice, and positive academic and social results and

outcomes for each learner, especially those from diverse racial, ethnic, and low socioeconomic backgrounds (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016a).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of the representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in implementing school equity programs who responded to the survey?
2. To what extent did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs report their districts systemically addressed educational equity through organizational, curricular, and policy practices?
3. To what extent did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs report equity-based practices had been implemented in their district, schools, and classrooms?
4. What barriers to implementation of equity-based practices did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs report having experienced?
5. What did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs identify as effective practices to achieve educational equity in their school districts?
6. Was there a significant difference in how select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs reported systemically addressing equity-based organizational, curricular, and policy practices based on demographic characteristics?

Was there a significant difference in the perceptions of implementation of equity-based practices based on demographic characteristics?

Research Design

Mixed methods research combines quantitative and qualitative research methods in a single study. The purpose of a mixed methods research study is to understand a problem more fully than is possible using a single approach. This type of research design is known as explanatory sequential (Mills & Gay, 2015).

In the first phase of the study, quantitative data was collected through an on-line survey. Survey research involves the gathering of “standardized, quantifiable information” from a cross-section of the sample population (Mills & Gay, 2015). The purpose of the survey was to collect information from school personnel about the implementation of the educational equity constructs in their school district and compare the results based on demographic variables (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a; Mills & Gay, 2015). The questionnaire results were analyzed to assess current understandings about the implementation of educational equity constructs in select school districts in Minnesota (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a). The findings of the quantitative study assisted in determining the type of data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the qualitative data.

The qualitative phase of the study included interviews with a select group of school leaders participating in the online survey and providing contact information stating their willingness to be interviewed. The process for selecting six participants for the interviews was based on a random number generator. Through the interview, the implementation of the core construct of educational equity was explored more deeply. The data collected through interviews

has been analyzed and the emerging themes from the analysis are compared to the results of the survey data (Mills & Gay, 2015).

Choosing a mixed method research approach to study educational equity produced richer insights and broader perspectives. The quantitative survey gathered data to assess respondents' knowledge and understanding of the core constructs, and the qualitative interviews developed the "story" and garnered specific examples of how leaders in schools are working to implement the core constructs in policies, curriculum, and instruction and school culture. The combined data conceptualizes the leadership strategies being operationalized in schools.

Study Participants

The study's participants are school personnel involved with the achievement and integration programs in 130 Minnesota school districts. The database of survey participants' emails was available from the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), Office of Equity and Innovation (OEI), and workshop participants attending MDE/OEI (Fall, 2016) workshops. Approximately 295 school district personnel were included in the survey sample. From the survey sample, six respondents were selected for interviews and follow-up based on results of the survey. Participation in the survey was voluntary. Participants were sent the link to an electronic survey at the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year. Participants were surveyed on their perception/perspectives of current status of educational equity constructs within their schools. Participants were asked whether they were be willing to be interviewed for follow-up (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a). Interviews were arranged with six representatives with diverse experiences and leadership roles, backgrounds, and genders from the metropolitan, suburban, and outstate geographic areas. The interviewees volunteered and were selected based

on a random selection process. The study included two males and four females from rural, urban, and suburban areas in small, medium, and large school districts. One interviewee was Caucasian, five were of color.

The study participants were selected from the list of Minnesota School districts eligible for “Achievement and Integration” (AI) revenue in 2016 (Minn. Stat. 124D. 861). The "Achievement and Integration for Minnesota" program was established to pursue racial and economic integration and increase student academic achievement, create equitable educational opportunities, and reduce academic disparities based on students' diverse racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds in Minnesota public schools. Districts are eligible for the program when their enrollment of protected students (“Protected students" are students self-identifying or are identified in the general racial categories of African/black Americans, Asian/Pacific Americans, Hispanic /Latino Americans, and American Indian/Alaskan Native; also, multiracial students self-identifying or are identified as having origins in more than one category or as having origins in one category coupled with Caucasian) is more than 20 percent. Districts are eligible to participate in the AI program based on a statewide analysis of the October 1 enrollment data comparing enrollment between districts and schools. A district is considered racially isolated (RI) when there is a 20 percent or greater difference in their number of enrolled protected students and an adjoining district (Minnesota Department of Education, 2016). A school is racially identifiable when the difference of enrolled protected students in a school is 20 percent or greater when compared to another school in the district serving the same grades; the school with the higher percentage is considered a racially identifiable school (RIS) (Minnesota Department of Education, 2016).

A list of eligible districts is published on the Minnesota Department of Education website and is based on the October 1 enrollment data provided by each district. Adjacent districts may partner with an eligible district to provide integration programs and services. Each participating district is required to develop a three-year plan to increase achievement and reduce integration disparities for students from diverse racial, ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds. The sample group of respondents interviewed were selected as an outcome of their representation of a diverse racial and ethnic leadership cohort in Minnesota. These respondents work toward creating equitable learning environments for students on a daily basis and have knowledge and expertise about the quality of educational practices occurring in their schools. Their insights and experiences provide important information to inform future planning. The data gathered may be generalizable to other Minnesota schools since the sample includes districts from metropolitan and outstate Minnesota, rural, urban, and suburban areas, and small, medium, and large size districts.

Human Subject Approval - Institutional Review Board (IRB)

The rights of all human subjects are protected per the Institutional Review Boards (IRB) regulations' professional standards of conduct and practice. Multiple criteria are addressed in the IRB regulations including risk-benefit ratio, selection of participants, obtaining informed consent, maintaining privacy and confidentiality, and ethical treatment of vulnerable populations (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007).

The physical, psychological, or legal risk to a participant's involvement in the study is minimal. The benefits of the study include the advancement of understanding educational equity and the implementation of education programs and services for students in order to close the

achievement gap, which outweighs the risk (Gall et al., 2007). No minors were respondents in the study. Participants were selected equitably from the target group permitting broad geographic and district representation. Each participant was informed about the study's methodology. Participants were asked to sign a letter of consent confirming they understood the purpose of the study, the intended use of the data, and their roles in the study. Maintaining privacy and confidentiality of research data is extremely important. Data was coded using an identifier detached from the data. This study uses language respectful of all racial and ethnic populations and encouraged participants to think about their ability to provide equitable educational experiences for all students. The IRB regulation of ethical treatment of vulnerable populations was considered (Gall et al., 2007).

Instrumentation

The survey and interview instruments were developed by the researcher based on a review of the related literature on educational equity and supported by the following major theoretical constructs: access to rigorous, challenging courses, meaningful participation and engagement, cultural representation and voice, and positive academic and social results and outcomes for each learner, especially those from diverse racial, ethnic, and low socioeconomic backgrounds (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a). The study's survey-instrument questions were aligned with the research questions and the multi-dimensional framework for achieving educational equity (Bustamante et al., 2009; Chen et al., 2014; Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015; Henze et al., 2000; Jenlink, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Mulligan & Kozleski, 2009; Paris, 2012; Shields, 2004; Singleton, 2015; Theoharis, 2009). The survey results were analyzed by demographic characteristics to assess whether or not

relationships existed between the reported demographic characteristics and the equity-based practices implemented.

Survey participants were asked to rate, using an ordinal scale, the extent their school or school district:

1. Systemically addresses educational equity through organizational, curricular, and policy practices.
2. Implements equity-based practices.
3. Measures the success of the equity-based practices in achieving educational equity.

The validity and reliability of the survey and interview instruments were established through pilot testing, using multiple review processes before administration, to identify issues needing to be clarified before conducting surveys and interviews (Dillman, Smith & Christian, 2009). The survey instrument was reviewed by dissertation committee members with extensive expertise in research evaluation and survey design. The review guided the refinement of the survey questions, clarifying the specific questions participants were being asked to respond, and providing suggestions to probe for more detailed information. Subsequently, the survey was administered to a cohort of doctoral students to secure feedback on the clarity of questions, understanding of terms, and length of survey. The completed survey was refined to increase ease of administration, data analysis, and interpretation. After review and approval by the dissertation committee, the survey was submitted to the IRB office for approval.

To measure internal consistency, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α) was applied to the survey questions. The purpose of this statistic is to measure the reliability of the survey instrument (Mills & Gay, 2015).

Table 1: *Reliability Statistics of Survey Instrument*

Survey Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
4.1 - 4.15	.914	.91	15
5.1 - 9.5	.905	.90	16

The survey was administered electronically by Survey Monkey. Motivating participants to respond to the survey included stating a willingness to share the study results, expressing sincere appreciation for participants' time and insights, appealing to the need to learn more about the implementation of equity-based programs in the education field, and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity (Dillman et al., 2009). Survey participants were asked whether they would be willing to be interviewed for the study.

The interview process was pilot tested to ensure the interview would provide the supplemental data needed for the mixed-methods study design (Gall et al., 2007). Trial administration of the interview was designed to test the use of recording technology, estimate approximate length of the interviews, and ensure clarity of the phrasing of the interview questions. The interview contained a sensitive question about the interviewees' experiences with barriers to achieving educational equity. The concern was they may feel reluctant or uneasy discussing this topic with the interviewer. Interviewees were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. The interview questions were reviewed by members of the dissertation committee.

The interview consisted of questions posed by the interviewer and the oral responses provided by the respondents were recorded and then transcribed. The interviews were conducted individually with respondents. Approximately one hour interviews were arranged at mutually agreeable times and locations for both the interviewee and the interviewer. The purpose of the interview was to gather, in the respondents' own words, reflections and more comprehensive insight into the systemic implementation of the educational equity constructs (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a).

Interviewees were selected based on their willingness to participate, the regional and demographic context of their school districts, roles and responsibilities for leadership of school-based equity programs, and demographic characteristics of the interviewees. The interviewer established rapport and trust with the interviewees, making it possible to obtain valid and complete responses to the questions. The interviewer requested the opportunity to follow-up with respondents for clarification and further information if necessary.

The interview questions were standardized and relate directly to the research questions. A standard set of questions was administered to each interviewee. The interview focused on asking school leaders the extent they perceived educational equity was being systemically addressed in their schools or districts on organizational, curricular, and policy levels and look at district artifacts (i.e., written policies). The interview questions probed for understanding about how the equity-based practices are being implemented and evaluated for achieving equity-based outcomes. The interview also asked school leaders about their perceptions of the barriers to achieving educational equity. The intended outcomes of the interviews were to learn from school leaders through their experiences as they endeavored to develop policies, people, and

practices which are student-centered, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of students from diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Responses were compiled, organized, sorted, and labeled using the educational equity conceptual framework. The qualitative data gathered through the interview was analyzed, categorized, and generalized to the topic.

Data Collection Procedures and Timeline

Data were gathered through two methods. Quantitative data were gathered from the school representatives through an emailed survey in the fall of 2016. Qualitative data were gathered from a subset of the aggregate sample through interviews to provide a more detailed study of their understanding and perceptions of the core constructs of educational equity related to the research questions. Six school equity leaders within the subset of all respondents were chosen to be interviewed based on a random number generator.

At the end of the online survey, respondents signified their willingness to participate in one-on-one interviews. Interviewees were contacted by the researcher to arrange the interview time and location convenient to both. Interviews were conducted in December, 2016. The purpose of the interviews was to gather more detailed information from school representatives about their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions regarding the implementation of the core equity constructs in school districts in Minnesota (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a). The interview duration was 45 to 75 minutes. To maintain consistency, each interviewee was asked the same questions. Their responses were recorded electronically and transcribed using speech-to-text software.

Data Analysis

After the survey instrument was administered and responses collected, the data were tabulated and analyzed to identify and develop themes. The quantitative data were analyzed to yield frequencies and percentages to the closed-form questions (Gall et al., 2007). All survey responses were collected and coded using Survey Monkey. Data was transferred from Survey Monkey into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software program for statistical analysis. Descriptive and inferential statistics using hypotheses testing (frequencies, analysis of variance and reliability) were used for data analysis.

A coding process was used to analyze the open-ended comments received through the survey and the individual interview transcripts. The written comments and transcripts were carefully reviewed to identify the broad themes emerging from the data (Mills & Gay, 2015). The process of classifying, organizing, and sorting the qualitative data contributed to the overall understanding of the systemic implementation of equity-based practices, the barriers experienced, and recommendations for leadership strategies (Mills & Gay, 2015).

The noted differences emerging from the analysis of the survey statistics were used to develop the questions for the research interviews. The interview questions further probed the perceptions of the school personnels' concerns and attitudes regarding educational equity practices in Minnesota schools. The interview also probed for agreement or disagreement with the implementation of the core constructs of educational equity as posited by the research study. Data from the survey and interviews provide a more complete understanding of the implementation of educational equity constructs in Minnesota schools (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a).

Research Question One

What are the demographic characteristics of the representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in implementing school equity programs who responded to the survey?

The researcher used descriptive statistics to ascertain the basic information about the survey respondents and their demographic characteristics (Mills & Gay, 2015). The quantitative data were analyzed to find a frequency count and percent of the survey respondent's role in their district, number of years they have been in their current role and their race/ethnicity.

Survey respondents were asked to provide the school districts' numbers to determine the districts' memberships in economic development regions. The economic development regions numbers were used to categorize districts by geographic area. The Minnesota Department of Education's Data Center [Schools and Organizations \(MDE-ORG\)](#) and [Economic Development Region](#) map were used for reference.

Research Question Two

To what extent did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs report their districts systemically addressed educational equity through organizational, curricular, and policy practices?

The Leadership for Educational Equity survey respondents were asked to rate 18 statements based on their perceptions of how their school districts or schools systemically addressed educational equity through organizational, curricular, and policy practices using a close-ended response rating of *Agree*, *Somewhat Agree*, *Somewhat Disagree*, and *Disagree* (Dillman et al., 2009).

Eight questions on the survey asked respondents to rate their perceptions of their school systems' equity-based organizational practices. Organizational practices were defined as those school management structures that impact student learning and monitor educational services and outcomes to ensure they are equitable for all student groups (GLEC, 2012; Romo, 1986). Five questions on the survey asked respondents to rate their school systems' equity-based curricular practices. Curricular practices are those culturally responsive instructional and classroom management strategies that are student-centered, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of each student (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016a; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015). Five questions on the survey asked respondents to rate their perceptions of the school systems' policies to ensure equitable educational programs (Gay, 2002; GLEC, 2012). Additionally, respondents were asked whether their districts had written policies defining educational equity.

Semi-structured interview questions were designed to gather additional data on how school districts systemically addressed educational equity through organizational, curricular, and policy practices (Gall et al., 2007). Interviewees were asked a series of structured questions to ascertain, from their perspectives and experiences, examples of how their districts systemically implemented organizational, curricular, and policy practices to address educational equity. Interviewees were also asked whether their districts had written policies regarding standards for educational equity and how the policies were developed.

A system for coding and categorizing the qualitative data collected through the interview process was designed using the survey questions as a framework (Gall et al., 2007). The collected responses were compiled, organized, sorted, and labeled based on the practices as they were defined in the literature review (Fraser, 2008; Gay, 2002; GLEC, 2012, 2016a; Gorski &

Swalwell, 2015; Romo, 1986). The percentage of respondents indicating their district was engaged in organizational, curricular, and policy practice was calculated. The quantitative survey results were compared to the qualitative interview results.

Research Question Three

To what extent did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs report equity-based practices had been implemented in their district, schools, and classrooms?

The participants in the Leadership for Educational Equity survey were asked to identify, based on their perception of the implementation in their school or district, 16 equity-based practices. Respondents were asked to rate the degree a practice as being *fully*, *partially*, or *not implemented at this time* (Dillman et al., 2009).

Throughout the interview, respondents were asked to elaborate on the equity-based instructional practices being implemented and evaluated in their districts or schools. The collected responses were compiled, organized, sorted, and labeled based on the equity-based practices as defined in the literature review (Bustamante et al., 2009; Chen et al., 2014; Fraser, 2008; Jenlink, 2009; GLEC, 2012, 2016a; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015; Henze et al., 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Mulligan & Kozleski, 2009; Paris, 2012; Shields, 2004; Singleton, 2015; Theoharis, 2009).

Research Question Four

What barriers to implementation of equity-based practices did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs report having experienced?

To learn from school representatives their perceptions of barriers to implementation of equity-based practices, they were asked two questions during the interview:

- What barriers to achieving educational equity have you experienced as a leader in your school or district?
- How did you address the barriers or what changes have you made to address the challenges?

The interview transcripts were reviewed for common topics and themes. Results were summarized and synthesized using a coding process to classify, organize, and sort comments collected via the interview (Mills & Gay, 2015). Responses were analyzed to identify broad themes and patterns. The researcher was looking for what was important in the data, why it was important, what can be learned from it, and how is this data helpful in understanding leadership for achieving educational equity (Mills & Gay, 2015).

Research Question Five

What did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs identify as effective practices to achieve educational equity in their school districts?

The respondents to the Leadership for Educational Equity survey were asked to rank, based on their perception of the implementation of sixteen equity-based practices, the practice achieving positive outcomes for the students in their districts. The survey respondents were provided opportunities to make comments about any of the equity-based practices listed in the survey or add additional successful practices they had observed. The collected responses were compiled, organized, sorted, and labeled based on the equity-based practices as defined in the

literature review (Bustamante et al., 2009; Chen et al., 2014; Fraser, 2008; Jenlink, 2009; GLEC, 2012, 2016a; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015; Henze et al., 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Mulligan & Kozleski, 2009; Paris, 2012; Shields, 2004; Singleton, 2015; Theoharis, 2009).

Throughout the interviews, respondents were asked to elaborate on the equity-based instructional practices being implemented and evaluated in their districts or schools and explain the equity-based instructional practices showing the most significant outcomes for students. The collected responses were compiled, organized, sorted, and labeled based on the equity-based practices as defined in the literature review (Bustamante et al., 2009; Chen et al., 2014; Fraser, 2008; Jenlink, 2009; GLEC, 2012, 2016a; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015; Henze et al., 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Mulligan & Kozleski, 2009; Paris, 2012; Shields, 2004; Singleton, 2015; Theoharis, 2009).

Research Question Six

Was there a significant difference in how select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs reported systemically addressing equity-based organizational, curricular, and policy practices based on demographic characteristics? Was there a significant difference in the perception of implementation of equity-based practices based on demographic characteristics?

To determine whether there is a significant difference in how the representatives from select Minnesota school districts involved with developing school equity programs report their district systemically addresses equity-based organizational, curricular, and policy practices based on demographic characteristics (representatives role in district, years in current role, race/ethnicity or region) and whether there is a significant difference in the perception of

implementation of equity-based practices based on demographic characteristics, a quantitative comparative analysis was conducted. A quantitative comparative analysis is a statistical data study technique for determining whether the difference between two or more variables in a data set is statistically significant (Gall et al., 2007). For this study, the independent variables (representative's role in district, years in current role, race/ethnicity, or region) were used to determine whether they have a statistically significant influence on the various dependent variables.

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) choice was based on the existence of two or more levels in the factors involved and a comparison of group means was required to evaluate the responses by the different demographic groups (Statistical Consulting and Research Center, 2014). The ANOVA reveal whether the responses significantly varied across the variables. Post hoc tests were computed in case significant differences were found (SCRC, 2014).

Summary

The study combines quantitative and qualitative research methodologies in a mixed-methods study (Mills & Gay, 2015). The purpose of a mixed methods research study is to understand a problem more fully than is possible using a single approach. Choosing a mixed-method research approach to study educational equity produces richer insights and broader perspectives. Survey participants were asked to provide their perceptions/perspectives of the current status of educational equity constructs within their schools (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a). The quantitative survey was designed to gather data about the implementation of the core constructs of educational equity in Minnesota schools and districts. The qualitative interviews broadened the “stories” and provided specific examples of how leaders in schools are

working to implement the core equity constructs in policies, curriculum, instruction, and school culture (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a). The interview permitted respondents to relate or report on conceptualization of the strategies for leadership and generalization of how the core concepts are being operationalized in schools. The interview questions further probed the understanding of the leaders' concerns and attitudes regarding educational equity issues in Minnesota schools and those leaders' perceptions and agreements or disagreements with the implementation of the core constructs of educational equity as posited by the research study. Data was triangulated between the study survey, interviews, and current literature in this area. Findings were analyzed and recommendations formed.

Chapter 4: Results

Overview of Study

The study focused on developing a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of systemic organizational, instructional, and policy practices to create educational equity for all learners. Specifically, the study surveyed the perceptions and concerns of educators as they pursue the key constructs of educational equity including access to rigorous, challenging academic courses, meaningful participation and engagement, cultural representation and voice, and positive academic and social results and outcomes for each learner, especially those from diverse racial, ethnic, and low socioeconomic backgrounds (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016a).

The Leadership for Educational Equity survey was electronically administered to 295 representatives from 130 select Minnesota school districts eligible to participate in the Achievement and Integration (AI) program for the 2016-17 school year as required by Minnesota Statute 124D.861. The number of surveys attempted was 175 (59.4%), however, 131 (44.41%) were used for analysis. Surveys with 10 or more missing responses were eliminated from the data sample. When a survey was missing fewer than nine responses, the missing values were replaced with an overall sample average for the item.

Adjustments were made to the timeframe allotted for the survey to be available to respondents. Originally the survey was to be accessible for three weeks, however, there were issues with the email containing the link to the online survey reaching the intended audience. Personal contacts were made asking school personnel to complete the survey. The period to

complete the survey was extended to provide sufficient time to gather a sample large enough to be generalizable.

The Leadership for Educational Equity Survey (Appendix A) was developed after reviewing the literature and identifying the major constructs for achieving educational equity. The survey requested respondents rate how their school districts systemically addressed educational equity through the implementation of organizational, curricular, and policy practices. Respondents were then asked to rank those practices based on the equity constructs they believed most successful in achieving positive outcomes for students.

Structured interviews were conducted with six school leaders to explore the successes and barriers they experienced as they implemented equity-based programs and services. The interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis, either face-to-face or by conference call. A random number generator selected the equity leaders to be interviewed. Interviews were arranged through email and phone. Each interview was approximately 45 to 75 minutes in length. Responses were recorded and transcribed. Chapter 4 presents results of the study organized by the six study questions.

Results

To develop questions for the study, the researcher reviewed literature pertinent to creating equitable learning environments for all learners. The following six research questions established the framework for the study:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of the representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in implementing school equity programs who responded to the survey?

2. To what extent did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs report their districts systemically addressed educational equity through organizational, curricular, and policy practices?
3. To what extent did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs report equity-based practices had been implemented in their district, schools, and classrooms?
4. What barriers to implementation of equity-based practices did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs report having experienced?
5. What did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs identify as effective practices to achieve educational equity in their school districts?
6. Was there a significant difference in how select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs reported systemically addressing equity-based organizational, curricular, and policy practices based on demographic characteristics? Was there a significant difference in the perceptions of implementation of equity-based practices based on demographic characteristics?

The study was conducted using a mixed-methods study design. Mixed-methods research combines quantitative and qualitative research methods in a single study (Mills & Gay, 2015). The purpose of a mixed-methods research study is to understand a problem more fully than is possible using a single approach. In the first phase of the study, quantitative data were collected through an electronic survey using Survey Monkey. The survey results data were analyzed to

describe what was understood about the implementation of educational equity constructs in select districts in Minnesota. The second phase of the study involved interviews with a select group of school representatives participating in the online survey and providing contact information stating their willingness to be interviewed. Twelve participants provided contact information. The interviewees were chosen using a random selection generator. Throughout the interviews, the implementation of the core constructs of educational equity were explored more deeply. The data collected through interviews were analyzed and the emerging themes from the analysis were compared to the results of the survey data (Mills & Gay, 2015).

Six school leaders were interviewed and asked to respond to ten questions (Appendix B) which provided their perceptions and described their experiences in implementing equity-based programs in their districts. The six interviewees were randomly selected from the survey participants providing contact information. Four were female, two were male. One was an assistant superintendent in a suburban school district, one was a suburban elementary school principal, three were coordinators of school district equity programs, two in a metropolitan region, and one outstate, and one was a direct service provider in a suburban school district. Five were people of color. Interviewees were sent the questions prior to the interviews and they were provided with a copy of the questions at the time of the interview. Interviews were recorded and the researcher made detailed notes for each question. The interview was transcribed using speech-to-text software. After the interviews, transcriptions were sent to each of the interviewees for their review. Minor clarifications/corrections were made to two interview transcripts based on the feedback of the interviewees.

Choosing a mixed-method research approach to study educational equity permitted perspectives to be gathered through surveys and interviews. The quantitative survey gathered data to assess respondents' knowledge and understanding of educational equity, while the qualitative interviews developed the "stories" and provided specific examples of how leaders in schools were working to implement the equity-based organizational, curricular, and policy practices. The combined data conceptualized the leadership for educational equity strategies being operationalized in schools. The following discussions report the results of the research study organized by the study questions. The research questions provided the framework for exploring the implementation of equity-based practices.

Research Question One

The purpose of the first study question was to ascertain who responded to the survey from the select Minnesota school districts developing and implementing educational equity programs and services. "What are the demographic characteristics of the representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in implementing school equity programs who responded to the survey?" This research question was analyzed using the data provided from the survey results. Descriptive statistics in Tables 2 through 5 reveal the number of responses and the percentage relative to the total number of responses for each demographic characteristic surveyed.

The district representatives completing the Leadership for Educational Equity survey provided information about their professional roles in their districts, the number of years they served in their current roles, and their racial or ethnic background. The school district numbers were used to determine the districts' membership in economic development regions. The

economic development region boundaries were used to group districts by a geographic area for analysis.

Survey results. In total, 131 educators completed the Leadership for Educational Equity survey. Three survey questions asked for demographic information from the survey respondents. The researcher specifically intended to ascertain the roles, years of experience, and racial/ethnic profiles of the survey respondents. Responses to demographic questions were grouped in order to produce more meaningful statistical analysis and to provide additional confidentiality for survey participants.

The survey was distributed to personnel in 130 school districts in Minnesota; completed surveys were received from 91 school districts. Seventy percent of the surveyed districts are included in the results. The data results for the survey respondents' current roles in their districts are provided in Table 2.

Table 2: *Survey Respondents' Current Roles in Districts*

Current Roles in Districts	N	Percentage
Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent	37	28.2%
Director of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, Research and Assessment, or Equity Services	23	17.6%
Principal, Assistant Principal	23	17.6%
Coordinator of Equity, Integration, Collaborative, or Academic Programs	30	22.9%
Teacher, Cultural Liaison, Other	18	13.7%
Total	131	100%

Respondents serving in executive leadership roles in their districts included Superintendents and Assistant Superintendents (28.2%) and District Directors of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning, Research and Assessment, or Equity Services (17.9%). School principals and assistant principals totaled 17.6%, while 22.9% of the respondents identified their roles as a Coordinator of Equity, Integration, or Academic Programs or as a Coordinator of a regional collaborative. Direct service providers (i.e., teacher, cultural liaison, or other support staff) totaled 13.8%. The data results presented in Table 3 include the frequency and percentage of survey respondents by number of years in their current roles in their districts.

Table 3: *Survey Respondents' Years in Current Roles in Districts*

Years in current position	N	Percentage
0 to 2 years	35	26.7%
3 to 5 years	49	37.4%
6 to 32 years	47	35.9%
Total	131	100%

The number of respondents who reported having served in their current roles in their districts 2 years or less was 35 (26.7%), while 49 (37.4%) indicated they had been in their current roles 3 to 5 years. Those indicating they had been in their current position 6 or more years numbered 47 or 35.9%. The data results presented in Table 4 are the frequency and percent of survey respondents by their race or ethnicity.

Table 4: *Race/Ethnicity of Survey Respondents*

Race/Ethnicity of Survey Respondents	N	Percentage
White	103	78.6%
Persons of diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds	28	21.4%
Total	131	100%

Note: Responses were grouped into two categories to protect privacy and confidentiality.

The majority of survey respondents were self-identified as White (78.6%), while 21.4% of the survey respondents identified themselves as persons from diverse racial or ethnic backgrounds. The race/ethnicity categories were as follows: Asian, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islanders, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Black, African or African American Somali, Hispanic/Latino. Multi-race were combined to protect privacy and confidentiality of survey respondents. The school district number was specifically intended to determine the general region and geographic location of each district represented in the survey responses. The data results in Table 5 report the districts represented in the survey organized by region.

Table 5: *Economic Development Regions Reported by Survey Respondents*

Economic Development Regions	N	Percentage
Regions 1 through 5 and 7E & 7W (North)	25	19.2%
Regions 6 E & 6W and 8 (SW)	26	20.0%
Regions 9 and 10 (SouthEast & SouthCentral)	20	15.4%
Region 11 (7-county Metropolitan area)	59	45.4%
Total	130	100%

The majority (45.4%) of districts' respondents who completed surveys were located in Region 11 encompassing the 7-county metropolitan area surrounding Minneapolis and St. Paul. Twenty percent of the districts participating in the survey were located in southwest/west central Minnesota (Region 6E, 6W & 8). Districts in northern Minnesota (Regions, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7E & 7W) totaled 19.2%, while 15.4% of the districts identified in the survey were located in southeastern Minnesota.

Summary of results for research question one. In summary, 131 educators in 91 school districts completed the Leadership for Educational Equity survey. Respondents who were Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents, or District Directors totaled 45.8%, while 17.6% of respondents were school principals or assistant principals, 22.9% of the were program coordinators, and 13.8% were direct service providers. Survey respondents with 0 to 2 years of experience in their current roles totaled 26.7%, while 37.4% reported 3 to 5 years of experience, and 35.9% had served in their current positions 6 to 32 years. The percent of survey respondents identifying as White was 78.6%, while 21.4% identified as persons of color. The percent of school districts represented in the survey from the metropolitan Region 11, including Minneapolis and St. Paul, totaled 45.4%, while 20.0% were located in the southwest/west central Minnesota region, 19.2% were located in northern Minnesota, and 15.4% were located in southeast/south central Minnesota.

Research Question Two

Study question two explored how districts systemically addressed educational equity through organizational, curricular, and policy practices. "To what extent did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs report their

districts systemically addressed educational equity through organizational, curricular and policy practices?” The results of question two provided insights into the survey respondents’ perceptions of the systemic implementation of equity-based practices in their districts and their understanding of their districts’ equity policies.

Eight questions in the Leadership for Educational Equity survey asked respondents to rate their perceptions on how their school districts were addressing educational equity through organizational practices with a Likert-like ordinal scale (Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, and Disagree). For purposes of the study, organizational practices were defined as those school management structures impacting student learning and monitoring educational services and outcomes to ensure they are equitable for all student groups (GLEC, 2012; Romo, 1986). Five questions in the Leadership for Educational Equity survey asked whether the respondents *agreed, somewhat agreed, somewhat disagreed, or disagreed* their school systems’ curricular practices were addressing educational equity. For purposes of the study, curricular practices are those culturally responsive, instructional, and classroom management strategies which are student-centered, inclusive and responsive to the needs of each student (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016a; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015). Five questions in the Leadership for Educational Equity survey asked whether the respondents *agreed, somewhat agreed, somewhat disagreed, or disagreed* their school districts’ policies were ensuring multiple perspectives and diverse voices while being represented in decision-making. Additionally, respondents were asked whether their districts had written policies defining educational equity.

Survey results. The data in Table 6 shows the results from the survey respondents' ratings of their perceptions regarding their districts systemically addressing the equity-based organizational, curricular, and policy practices.

Table 6: *Respondents' Rating of Their Districts' Systemically Addressing Equity-Based Organizational, Curricular, and Policy Practices.*

Equity-based Systemic Practices	Agree/ Somewhat Agree	Disagree/ Somewhat Disagree
Organizational - management structures impacting students' learning and monitoring access to equitable educational services and outcomes for all students (GLEC, 2012; Romo, 1986).	71.3%	28.7%
Policy - principles guiding decisions, procedures, and protocols to ensure adequate presence of all members (Coleman et al., 2011; Gay, 2002).	69.7%	30.3%
Curricular - culturally responsive instructional and classroom management practices that are student-centered, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of each student (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016a; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015).	66.1%	33.9%

Overall, 71.3% of survey respondents *agreed* or *somewhat agreed* their districts' organizational practices were equity-based and 69.7% of survey respondents reported their districts implement equity-based policies to guide decision-making procedures and protocols, while 66.1% *agreed* or *somewhat agreed* culturally responsive instructional and classroom management practices were being implemented in their school districts. Table 7 shows the results from the survey question asking for information about district policies defining educational equity.

Table 7: *Written Policies Defining Educational Equity*

Does your district have a written policy defining educational equity?		
Yes	No	Don't Know
49.6%	28.2%	22.1%

In Table 7, 49.6% of survey respondents indicated their districts had written policies defining educational equity, while 28.2% responded *no, their district did not have a written equity policy*. Respondents stating they did not know if such policies were in place in their districts totaled 22.1%. Further information was gathered about the systemic implementation of organizational, curricular, and district policies addressing educational equity through the face-to-face interviews. The following are summaries of the interview discussions.

Interview results. In the six interviews, the school representatives were asked about the organizational practices being systemically implemented to address educational equity in their schools or districts. For purposes of this study, organizational practices are defined as those school management structures impacting student learning and monitoring educational services and outcomes to ensure they are equitable for all student groups (GLEC, 2012; Romo, 1986). The data collected are reflected in Table 8.

Table 8: *Summary of Interviewees' Comments Related to Districts Organizational Practices*

Themes	Description of Organizational Practices
Leadership teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leadership teams research student outcome data and implement staff development based on data to improve outcomes for each student. ● District principals meet and discuss educational equity.
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Districts provide professional development to train educators to become culturally and linguistically responsive to the needs of their students and families.
Instructional Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Districts provide instructional tools to assist educators in becoming culturally and linguistically responsive to the needs of their students and families.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is challenging to address the system-wide issues supporting inequities. ● The district has never really looked at the policies and practices from an equity perspective. ● It is a challenge to address the somewhat questionable practices happening in the classroom. ● It can be difficult to get teachers to buy-in and not act as gatekeepers. ● The strategy to bring people along is to explain why educational equity is important. ● It is a challenge to increase the number of a racially diverse staff members in the district.
Equity Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Districts have developed instructional frameworks (MTSS, RTI) and monitor formative outcomes closely. ● Data are used to inform leadership about systemic practices. ● Instruction is student-centered and differentiated providing opportunities for student voice and student choice.
Family Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Districts have developed programs to engage families in their children's education and to ensure families have an opportunity for their voice to be heard in terms of what is happening at school. ● Materials for families are translated into multiple languages. ● Translators/interpreters are available at school. ● Bilingual/bicultural liaisons facilitate educational opportunities and outreach to families. ● Parent/teacher conferences are scheduled to accommodate families working different shifts and interpreters are available for all parent/teacher conferences.

Table 8 reflects the summary of the school representatives' responses during the interview to the question inquiring about the organizational practices being systemically implemented to address educational equity in their schools or districts. The following organizational practices were identified as important to their organizations: leadership teams, an equity framework or plan, professional development for culturally responsive instructional practices, and the provision of supports for implementation in the classrooms and family engagement.

Interviewees cited several issues addressing organizational inequities as challenging, such as accountability for questionable classroom practices, getting teachers to accept systemic change, and developing an understanding of why equity is important. It was also noted it is difficult to increase the number of a racially-diverse licensed staff in education.

Table 9 reflects the responses from the interviewees regarding equity issues being addressed in the curriculum. For purposes of the study, curricular practices are defined as the implementation of culturally responsive instructional and classroom management practices which are student-centered, inclusive and responsive to the needs of each student (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016a; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015).

Table 9: *Summary of Interviewees' Comments Related to Districts Curricular Practices*

Themes	Summary of comments regarding curricular practices
Student-centered instructional materials and curriculum content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reflective of the race/ethnicity of the students in the school community. ● Authentic literature, featuring people of color as the main characters and experiencing real life situations and scenarios. ● Student voice included so students see themselves in the materials. ● Students “map” their understanding of concepts in their own words. ● Most school districts are on a 10 year purchasing cycle for textbooks. ● Teachers must be empowered to make curriculum materials current and bring lessons “alive”. ● Curriculum must meet state standards for the grade level. ● Teachers use technology, textbooks, other resources and other data sources to make curriculum live for students.
Coaching and support for teaching staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Topic of cultural relevance needs to be on teacher’s consciousness and district must challenge teachers to develop a deeper understanding. ● Culturally responsive instruction and strategies need to be incorporated into all trainings. ● Teachers need to believe all students can learn at high levels. ● Student-centered instructional practices must be part of every professional learning community (PLC) discussion. ● Secondary schools are still growing in this understanding.
Culturally responsive instructional strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● From an equity standpoint, ensure curriculum and instruction are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Rigorous and exposes students to grade level standards. 2) Scaffolded and supporting the learner. 3) Inclusive of multiple perspectives. 4) Teaching students how to participate in a global society. ● Ensuring white students and students of color experience being the majority and the minority. The perspectives look and feel different. ● Responsive to needs of students in the classroom. ● Inclusive of everyone in the school system. ● Identifying the guiding principles, barriers and essential elements of cultural competence.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Curriculum is very much geared toward middle class white children whose parents provide enrichment experiences such as summer camp. ● Curriculum materials are very much aligned to the privileged cultural group. ● Teachers must challenge their mental models of student’s ability or inability. ● Each school in district runs itself very differently. ● Curriculum is directed by the principal. ● Training on culturally responsive instruction is not consistent. ● Not much accountability for what’s being implemented. ● Implementation is optional.

When asked to describe equity-based curricular practices, the interviewees discussed the needs to ensure student-centered instructional materials and content, rigorous culturally-responsive instructional strategies, and coaching and support for teaching staff, as outlined in Table 9. The following curricular practice were identified as challenges: curriculum materials and instruction which are aligned to the privileged, white, middle class; changing teachers' mental models of students' ability or inability; the lack of consistent implementation and accountability for providing culturally-responsive instruction; and the independent nature of individual schools and principal leadership. Six school leaders were interviewed about whether or not their districts had written policies defining standards for education equity and how the policies were developed. Their responses were categorized into three sequential themes, as described in Table 10

.

Table 10: *Summary of Interviewees' Comments Related to the Development, Implementation, and Evaluation of Policies for Educational Equity*

General themes	Summaries of respondents' comments
Development of written policy for educational equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Policies are developed by the superintendent, members from the school board, community and school staff as guiding principles for decisions, procedures and processes (Colman et al., 2001; Gay, 2002). ● A policy of standards for educational equity is not the same as the equal education policy required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). ● School districts may be reluctant to develop new policies addressing educational equity unless required by law or by the Minnesota Department of Education.
Strategic plans and frameworks operationalizing policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The district's mission or belief statements may include a focus on educational equity. ● A strategic plan operationalizes the policies and priorities of the district and provides a framework for action. ● The development of the strategic plan includes input from multiple perspectives and stakeholders. ● Districts include educational equity in their strategic plan or mission statement acknowledging their school community is changing. ● All operations in the district must align their work to the strategic plan. ● Through the implementation of the priorities in the strategic plan, districts identify the barriers to student achievement. ● Data help the district to scaffold supports by looking backwards to find the root cause of the issue by ensuring any data collected is at a level of detail to measure whether the district is implementing equitable practices. ● From an instructional standpoint, districts should have books, literature and resources with multiple perspectives. ● Districts need to make sure all curriculum is 1) standards-based 2) rigorous, engaging, and interesting to students.
Implementation and evaluation to ensure equity for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To ensure equitable outcomes for each student, at each grade level, districts monitor results. ● The data inform the district about what needs to grow at each grade level, find the shortfalls, and determine what staff need. ● The goal is equity practices become general practice and policy.

Table 10 summarizes the equity policy discussion with the six interviewees. Three themes emerged from the discussion: development of the policy, how the district operationalized policy through strategic plans and frameworks, and the implementation and measurement of the results and outcomes to ensure equity for all.

Summary of results for research question two. In summary, survey respondents *agreed* or *somewhat agreed* their district's organizational practices (71.35%), district policies (69.7%), and curricular practices (66.1%) are equity-based. Respondents reported that 49.6% of their districts had written policies defining educational equity. The school representatives were asked about the organizational practices being systemically implemented to address educational equity in their schools or districts. The organizational practices identified as important were leadership teams, an equity framework or plan, professional development for culturally responsive instructional practices, and the provisions of support for implementation in the classrooms and family engagement.

Interviewees cited several issues addressing organizational inequities as challenging including accountability for questionable classroom practices, getting teachers to accept systemic change, and developing an understanding of why equity is important. It was also noted it is challenging to increase the number of a racially-diverse licensed staff in education. When asked to describe equity-based curricular practices, the interviewees discussed the needs to ensure student-centered instructional materials and content, rigorous, culturally-responsive instructional strategies, and coaching and support for teaching staff.

The following issues were identified as challenges in districts: 1) Curriculum materials and instruction aligned to the privileged white, middle class, 2) Teacher's mental models of

students' abilities or inabilities, 3) Inconsistent implementation and accountability for providing culturally responsive instruction, and 4) The independent nature of individual schools and principal leadership. Furthermore, the six school leaders interviewed were asked whether their districts had written policies regarding standards for education equity and how the policies were developed. Four of the six leaders (66.6%) reported their districts either had a policy in place or were in the final stages of developing a district-wide policy. Research question two explored equity-based organizational, curricular, and policy practices in the school districts that participated in the survey and through interview discussions.

Research Question Three

Study question three looks at the extent to which survey respondents implied equity-based practices were being implemented in their districts, schools, and classrooms. "To what extent did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs report equity-based practices had been implemented in their district, schools and classrooms?" The results of question three provide insight into the equity-based practices being fully implemented, partially implemented, or not being implemented at this time. Data for this question was collected through the on-line survey, survey comments, and from the individual interviews.

Survey results. Survey respondents were asked to report the extent their districts were implementing equity-based practices and achieving positive outcomes for students. Respondents were presented with 16 equity-based practices and asked to rate those being *fully*, *partially*, or *not implemented* at the time of the study. Table 11 illustrates the survey results indicating the frequency and percent of the data results.

Table 11: *Respondents' Ranking of Their School Districts Implementation of Equity-Based Practices*

Equity-Based Practices	Fully Implemented	Partially Implemented	Total Fully and Partially Implemented
Educational staff collaborating (i.e., grade level teams, professional learning communities) to develop learning opportunities for students who struggle academically at school.	52.3% (68)	45.4% (59)	97.7%
Staff use data that measures learning outcomes to inform instruction.	40.5% (53)	55.7% (73)	96.2%
Each student is treated as intellectually capable.	37.4% (49)	58.0% (76)	95.4%
District or school-based leaders actively promote educational equity.	41.2% (54)	54.2% (71)	95.4%
Educational staff collaborate (i.e., grade level teams, professional learning communities) to develop learning opportunities for students who struggle behaviorally at school.	41.5% (54)	53.8% (70)	95.3%
Developing a school climate that fosters respect for cultural diversity.	24.4% (32)	70.2% (92)	94.6%
Engaging community members actively in the school.	13.0% (17)	79.4% (104)	92.4%
Implementing instructional practices that are inclusive of all students.	27.5% (36)	64.1% (84)	91.6%
Engaging all families actively in the school to help families support student academic success.	16.0% (21)	75.6% (99)	91.6%
Educational staff collaborate (i.e., grade level teams, professional learning communities) to develop learning opportunities for students who struggle socially at school.	40.0% (52)	50.0% (65)	90%
Examining student outcomes and results with equity in mind.	29.8% (39)	58.8% (77)	88.6%
Creating school environments that reflect the diversity of all members of the school community in non-stereotypical ways.	20.0% (26)	64.6% (84)	84.6%
Implementing culturally responsive positive behavior interventions and supports.	22.7% (29)	60.9% (78)	83.6%
Ensuring that instruction is culturally relevant for each student to build on prior knowledge, experiences, cultural background, and language skills.	9.2% (12)	70% (91)	79.2%
Providing teachers with adequate professional development and training to be proficient in culturally responsive teaching.	16.9% (22)	62.3% (81)	79.2%
Providing teachers with adequate professional development and training to be proficient in cross-cultural communication.	11.5% (15)	57.7% (75)	69.2%

Parenthesis = number of survey respondents.

Survey respondents were asked to select the equity-based practices being implemented and successfully achieving positive outcomes in their districts based on the 16 statements shown in Table 11. According to the survey respondents' rankings, the equity-based practices reported being fully or partially implemented and successfully achieving positive outcomes were categorized as data-based instructional decision-making, staff collaborating on instruction, district and school leaders promoting equity, family and community engagement, school climates and environments reflective of the cultural diversity of the community, culturally relevant and inclusive instruction, and professional development for staff.

Table 12 reports the frequency of responses to the equity constructs of access and entrance, meaningful participation and engagement, cultural representation and voice and positive results and outcomes.

Table 12: *Reported Implementation of the Equity Constructs*

	Fully Implemented	Partially Implemented	Total Fully or Partially Implemented
Positive results and outcomes: The intended results of educational services are positive and equal for each student (Bustamante et. al. 2009; Gay, 2002; GLEC, 2012, 2016a; Jordan, et al., 2010; Miller & Martin, 2015; Scanlon & Lopez, 2012; Scanlan, 2012).	37.2% (44)	56.2% (80)	93.4%
Access and entrance: Each student has access, entrance and full participation with academically rigorous, challenging services and programs (Cooper, 2009; Evans, 2007; GLEC, 2012, 2016a; Jenlink, 2009; Leoncini, Napoli, & Wong, 2002; Muthukrishna & Schlüter, 2011; Paris, 2012; Shields, 2004; Singleton, 2015)	38.8% (51)	53.6% (78)	92.4%
Meaningful participation and engagement: Educational programs and practices are intentionally designed to be student-centered, inclusive and culturally responsive (Carey, 2013; GLEC, 2015, 2016a; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015; Lee, Spencer & Harpalani, 2003; Shields, 2004; Singleton, 2015).	19.5% (14)	66.7% (101)	86.2%
Cultural representation and voice: All members of the community are present when decision and choice making is needed to scrutinize the patterns of underlying beliefs, practices, policies, structures, and norms may marginalizing specific groups and limiting opportunity (Chen et al., 2014; Mulligan & Kozleski, 2009; GLEC, 2016b).	15.1% (6)	69.3% (108)	84.50%

Parenthesis = Number of respondents.

Table 12 shows the survey respondents rating of the extent to which the equity constructs were being implemented in their districts at the time of the survey. Survey respondents revealed their districts were implementing strategies and achieving positive results when there was equitable access and entrance into challenging and rigorous course work (92.4%), student outcomes and results were monitored for equity (93.4%), students were meaningfully engaged in instruction and participating at all levels (86.2%), and people of other cultures and ethnicities were represented in decision-making and were given a voice in school matters (84.5%).

Survey comments. Survey participants were provided an opportunity to furnish comments on any of the equity-based practices listed in the survey or provide additional successful practices they had observed in their schools or districts. The comments from survey participants were classified into four themes as reported in Table 13 (administrative leadership, shifting mindsets, culturally relevant and responsive instruction, and family engagement and student voice). The descriptive comments are provided for further explanation.

Table 13: *Summary of Survey Comments Pertaining to Effective Equity-based Practices*

Theme	Summary of Survey Comments
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● School leaders are the linchpin toward creating a system of educational equity. ● School leaders prepare district for changing demographics by developing a collective understanding of equity. ● District leadership distributes resources, provides cognizant systems, and structures equitably in all schools. ● Equity-based leadership is challenging.
Shifting Mindsets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cultural responsiveness is a growing and developing mindset. ● Districts are in the early stages of the equity journey and developing a collective understanding of educational equity. ● Shifting mindsets from the “bell curve” distribution model to "all" students reaching proficiency. ● Educators have accepted a norm of some kids do not "make it”. ● Understanding even when a district is not racially diverse educators must develop a mindset of mutual respect for all cultures and traditions.
Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All students engaged in learning. ● Training and coaching is on-going. ● Teaching respect through respect. ● Weekly planning time to design culturally relevant/responsive lessons/units. ● When results are not tied to actual outcomes for students of color then question the effectiveness.
Family Engagement and Student Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Helping families feel comfortable about school sends a message the family and the school are working in the student's best interest. ● It can be difficult engaging parents and community members. ● Engaging secondary students in discussions about education equity and how to accomplish it in the school system has been positive and beneficial for students and staff.

Some respondents to the survey included comments addressing the implementation of the equity-based practices in their districts. Table 13 categorizes the comments into several themes including administrative leadership, shifting mindsets, culturally relevant and responsive

instruction, and family engagement and student voice. The summary of the descriptive comments from the survey were provided for more detailed understanding. The comments indicated that survey respondents looked to school leaders to take an active role in focusing multiple aspects of organization toward an equity mindset.

Interview results. The six school leaders interviewed were asked to identify the equity-based instructional practices being implemented and evaluated in their districts and cite whether or not practices were similar or different among the schools and grade levels. Table 14 identifies the three themes and summarizes their descriptive comments.

Table 14: *Summary of Interviewees' Discussion of the Equity-based Instructional Practices Being Implemented and Evaluated in Their Districts*

Themes	Summaries from Interview Discussions
Standards for Student-centered Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individualize instruction. ● Encourage dialogue and discussion. ● Teacher post lesson objectives and incorporate objective in evaluation. ● Formative assessment to gauge the student progress toward meeting instructional objective. ● Intercultural competence indicator on the teacher evaluation rubric. ● Social/emotional supports (affinity groups).
Standards for Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Layered approach to standardized curriculum. ● Incorporate multiple perspectives into instruction.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Literacy collaborative model and RTI alone may not address needs of the whole child. ● Equity-based instruction is lumped into everything and not called out. ● Instructional coaches not specifically trained on equity-based instructional practices. ● Lack of accountability and evaluation. ● Just beginning to introduce cultural and linguistic responsiveness to staff. ● Integrating supports in the classroom (EL, etc.).

Table 14 is the summary of the interview discussions inquiring about the implementation and evaluation of equity-based practices in the school districts. Three broad themes emerged from the discussion including standards for student-centered instruction, standards for curriculum, and standards for challenges.

Summary of results for research question three. A summary of the results of research question three includes data collected through the on-line survey, survey comments, and findings secured from the individual interviews regarding the implementation of equity-based practices. From the survey, collaboration between educational staff was the equity-based practice most frequently reported as fully or partially implemented. The equity-based practices most frequently reported as being partially implemented included using data to measure learning outcomes, staff collaborating on instruction, leadership actively promoting educational equity, engaging community and family members, respectful school climates and environments reflective of the cultural diversity of the community, culturally relevant and inclusive instruction, and professional development for staff.

Survey respondents denoted their districts were implementing strategies and achieving positive results when student outcomes and results were monitored for the following: equity; equitable access and entrance into challenging and rigorous course work was a priority; students were meaningfully engaged in instruction and participating fully in learning experiences; and people of other cultures and ethnicities were represented in decision-making and were given a voice in school matters. Survey participants were provided an opportunity to furnish comments on any of the equity-based practices listed in the survey or provide additional successful practices they had observed in their schools or districts. The comments were classified by

common themes, summarized, and synthesized into four categories: leadership, shifting mindsets, culturally relevant and responsive instruction, and family engagement and student voice. The six interviewed school leaders were asked to identify the equity-based instructional practices being implemented and evaluated in their districts, and state whether or not the practices were similar or different among the schools and grade levels. Their responses were categorized into three themes: standards for student-centered instruction, standards for curriculum, and standards for challenges.

Through the on-line survey, survey comments, and from the individual interviews, the results of research question three were gathered. The results indicate that school leaders have an important role for achieving educational equity. Guiding collaborative conversations, analyzing instructional and assessment data, developing school climates that are respectful of diversity, and creating inclusive classroom were strategies that were identified. All staff must explore shifting their mindsets to an equity perspective, engage in training and coaching for culturally relevant and responsive instructional practices, and meaningfully engage families and the community in educational decision-making.

Research Question Four

Study question four explores the barriers to implementation of equity-based practices experienced in Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs. “What barriers to implementation of equity-based practices did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs report having experienced?” The results of question four provide insight into the barriers and challenges faced in districts as

respondents worked to create systemic change and address educational equity in their districts, schools, and classrooms. Barriers to achieving educational equity were summarized in Table 15.

Table 15: *Summary of Interviewees' Discussion Regarding the Barriers to Achieving Educational Equity*

General Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Systemic racism ● Systemic inequities ● Ineffectual teachers: low expectations, deficit mindset, belief gap ● Ineffective instruction ● Lack of communication with families ● Discrimination ● No cognitive frame for educational equity ● Inconsistent collaboration ● Not addressing needs of the “whole” child ● Lack of resources: time, personnel, and funding ● Minimal support for staff to become culturally and linguistically proficient ● Lack of diverse staff in schools ● Technology gap for biracial/bicultural children ● Resistance to change

Table 15 summarizes the results of the interview discussions addressing barriers to achieving educational equity. Interviewees recognized and shared information about instances of systemic racism and inequities, ineffectual instruction and educators not prepared to serve all students due to discrimination, lack of training and preparation, or accountability. Limited resources impact systemic change. Resistance to change was also a factor. The lack of a coherent vision and understanding of the concept of educational equity was cited as a barrier. Next, the interviewees were asked to identify strategies they used to address the barriers and the changes made as a result of these challenges. Responses are categorized and summarized in table 16.

Table 16: *Summary of Interviewees' Discussion Regarding Strategies for Addressing Barriers and Challenges*

General Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Equity-based leadership ● Dialogue ● Systemic changes ● Access to resources ● Time ● Focus on student learning ● Plan for successes ● Take action ● Accountability/compliance

Interviewees stated it took strong leadership at all levels of the organization, on-going dialogue, allocation of resources, maintaining the focus on student learning, and developing an action plan to address the barriers.

Summary of results for research question four. The interviewees were forthcoming with their recognition of instances of systemic racism and systemic inequities, ineffectual instruction and educators not prepared to serve all students due to discrimination, and lack of preparation and accountability. Limited resources to impact systemic change and resistance to change were also factors. The lack of a coherent vision and understanding of the concept of educational equity was cited as a barrier. Interviewees stated it took strong leadership at all levels of the organization, on-going dialogue, allocation of resources, maintaining the focus on student learning, and developing an action plan to address the barriers.

Research Question Five

Study question five requested survey respondents to rank the effectiveness of practices achieving educational equity in their school districts. The results of question five provide insights

into the type of effective practices which were achieving positive outcomes for students in the school districts surveyed. “What did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs identify as effective practices to achieve educational equity in their school districts?” The purpose of the fifth study question was to identify effective practices achieving educational equity in the school districts surveyed in the study. The respondents to the Leadership for Educational Equity survey were requested to rank the practice most effective in achieving positive outcomes for the students in their district, based on their perceptions of the implementation of 16 equity-based practices. Data for this question were collected through the online survey as outlined in Table 17.

Table 17: *Respondents' Ranking of the Equity-Based Practices Having Significant Impact in Their Districts'*

Practices	Percent (N)
Each student is treated as intellectually capable.	46.7% (57)
Educational staff collaborating (i.e., grade level teams, professional learning communities) to develop learning opportunities for students who struggle academically at school.	37.9% (44)
Staff use data that measures learning outcomes to inform instruction.	30.2% (35)
Developing a school climate that fosters respect for cultural diversity.	28.4% (33)
Ensuring that instruction is culturally relevant for each student to build on prior knowledge, experiences, cultural background, and language skills.	26.7% (31)
Providing teachers with adequate professional development and training to be proficient in culturally responsive teaching.	24.1% (28)
Engaging all families actively in the school to help families support student academic success.	19.7% (24)
Examining student outcomes and results with equity in mind.	15.6% (19)
Implementing culturally responsive positive behavior interventions and supports.	15.5% (18)
District or school-based leaders actively promote educational equity.	14.8% (18)
Educational staff collaborate (i.e., grade level teams, professional learning communities) to develop learning opportunities for students who struggle socially at school.	10.3% (12)
Implementing instructional practices that are inclusive of all students.	10.3% (12)
Educational staff collaborate (i.e., grade level teams, professional learning communities) to develop learning opportunities for students who struggle behaviorally at school.	6.0% (7)
Providing teachers with adequate professional development and training to be proficient in cross-cultural communication.	6.0% (7)
Creating school environments that reflect the diversity of all members of the school community in non-stereotypical ways.	4.3% (5)
Engaging community members actively in the school.	3.3% (4)

Parenthesis = number of survey respondents.

The survey findings found in Table 17 indicated the practices most effective in achieving positive outcomes for students included improving access to quality instruction by collaborating to develop learning opportunities for students struggling academically at school and treating each student as intellectually capable. Positive outcomes were achieved when educational programs were student centered and culturally relevant, and school climates fostered respect for cultural diversity. Providing teachers and school administrators with adequate professional development and training to be proficient in culturally responsive leadership and teaching was reported as effective. The six school leaders interviewed were asked to identify the equity-based instructional practices resulting in the most significant outcomes for the students in their districts. Table 18 outlines the interviewees' responses.

Table 18: *Summary of Interviewees' Discussion Regarding Effective Equity-based Instructional Practices*

General Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Culturally responsive/culturally relevant instruction ● College and career readiness programs ● Access to gifted and talented services ● Standards-based instruction ● Data-driven decision-making ● Collaboration ● Student access to and use of technology

Table 18 lists several generalized themes which were identified from the interviewees' comments about the programs and practices that were demonstrating effectiveness in achieving educational equity in their districts including culturally-responsive/culturally-relevant instruction, college and career readiness programs, access to gifted and talented services,

standards-based instruction, data-driven decision making, collaboration, and student access to and use of technology.

Summary of results for research question five. The purpose of the fifth study question was to identify effective practices achieving educational equity through the online survey and interviews. Results of the survey and the interviews indicated some differences and some commonalities in perceptions of effective practices. Staff collaboration and use of instructional data were cited by both groups. The interviewees stressed training in culturally responsive/relevant instruction, implementing specific programs guaranteeing all students access to college and career readiness programs, and gifted and talented services were effective in achieving positive outcomes for students.

Research Question Six

The purpose of study question six was to determine whether there was a significant difference in how the respondents from select Minnesota school districts involved with developing school equity programs reported their districts systemically addressing educational equity-based on demographic characteristics. “Was there a significant difference in how select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs reported systemically addressing equity-based organizational, curricular, and policy practices based on demographic characteristics? Was there a significant difference in the perceptions of implementation of equity-based practices based on demographic characteristics?” The purpose of study question six was to determine whether there was a significant difference in how the respondents from select Minnesota school districts involved with developing school equity programs reported their districts systemically addressing equity-based organizational, curricular, and policy practices

based on demographic characteristics (representatives role in district, years in current role, race/ethnicity, or region) and whether there was a significant difference in the perception of implementation of equity-based practices, such as access and entrance, meaningful participation and engagement, cultural representation and voice, and positive results and outcomes based on demographic characteristics (representatives role in district, years in current role, race/ethnicity, or region). A comparative analysis of the results was conducted to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between any of the independent/dependent variables.

For the study, the independent variables (representative's role in district, years in current role, race/ethnicity, or region) were used to determine whether they had a statistically significant influence on the dependent variables (organizational, curricular, or policy practices, access and entrance, meaningful participation and engagement, positive results and outcome, and cultural representation and voice). For the organizational, curricular, or policy practices, the "mean" in the tables represents the average of all responses based on the following scale: 1 = disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 3 = somewhat agree, and 4 = agree. For the equity constructs, access and entrance, meaningful participation and engagement, positive results and outcome, and cultural representation and voice, the "mean" represents the average of all responses based on the following scale: 1 = fully implemented, 2 = partially implemented and 3 = not implemented at this time. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used because two or more levels were involved and a comparison of groups' means was required to compare response variation of the different demographic groups to survey questions. Post hoc tests were computed when significant differences were found (SCRC, 2014)

Regional results. Tables 19 through 22 reveal the results of the comparative analysis between the demographic characteristic of region and the dependent variables of organizational, policy, and curricular practices and key constructs of access and entrance, meaningful participation and engagement, cultural representation and voice, and positive results and outcomes (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a). The analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to determine whether there were significant differences between respondents' perceptions of how their districts systemically addressed equity-based organizational, policy, and curricular practices by geographic region. A confidence level of 95% or higher was used to determine whether there was a significant difference in the systemic practices by region. A significant difference was identified between respondents' perceptions of how their districts systemically addressed equity-based organizational practices ($F=3.518$, $df = 3,126$, $p = .017$) by geographic region. Policy and curricular practices were not found to be significantly different. The Tukey post hoc test was conducted to further determine regional differences for the remaining organizational practices. Table 19 provides the results of the Tukey post hoc test.

Table 19: *Reported Differences in Organizational Practices between Regions.*

Regions	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
North	25	22.3	5.7
Southwest	26	22.4	4.8
Southeast and South Central	20	21.6	4.8
7-County Metropolitan	59	25.0	5.3

A significant difference in organizational practices was identified between the 7-county metropolitan areas' districts and the southeast/south central regions' districts ($F = 3.53$, $df = 3,126$, $p = .052$). To further identify the specific organizational practices that were reported as different between regions, a Tukey post hoc test was conducted on the individual survey items. There were eight questions on the survey assessing organizational practices; two survey questions were found to be statistically different by regions. Statistically significant differences were identified between metropolitan school districts and greater Minnesota school districts on survey items querying the composition of the districts' leadership teams and the practices of disaggregating data to determine if youth of color and low socioeconomic status were participating in higher level courses. The results were found to be statistically significant. A Tukey post hoc test was conducted to identify the regions the differences in organizational structures occurred. Table 20 provides the results of the post hoc test.

Table 20: *Differences in Reported Organizational Practices by Survey Question and Region.*

Organizational Practices	Region	Regions	<i>p</i>
Our district leadership team has members who are racially and/or ethnically diverse.	7-County Metropolitan (2.64)	North (1.76)	.006
		Southwest (1.50)	.000
		Southeast/South Central (1.90)	.051
Our district leadership team disaggregates and analyzes student participation in rigorous and challenging courses (i.e., literacy, language, science, and mathematics).	7-County Metropolitan (3.24)	North (2.48)	.002
		Southwest (3.00)	.654
		Southeast/South Central (2.65)	.050

Parenthesis = the mean (average) rating for each practice based on 1 = disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 3 = somewhat agree, and 4 = agree.

Table 20 identifies the statistically significant differences between metropolitan school districts and greater Minnesota school districts on survey items regarding the composition of the districts' leadership teams and the practices of disaggregating data to determine if youth of color and low socioeconomic status were participating in higher-level courses. In examining the diversity of the membership of the districts' leadership teams, multiple outstate regions were statistically different than the 7-country metropolitan region. The metropolitan districts somewhat disagreed that their leadership team members were from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, whereas the outstate districts disagreed that their leadership team members were from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. In other words, the outstate districts reported the members of their district leadership teams were less diverse. The northern and southeast/south

central regions' districts were statistically different from the 7-country metropolitan region in how they reported their districts' leadership teams' disaggregation of data monitoring the participation rates of students of color and low socioeconomic backgrounds in higher-level courses. In other words, the 7-county metropolitan and southwestern regions reported they were disaggregating data to monitor the participation rates of students of color and low socioeconomic backgrounds in higher-level courses.

Results by race/ethnicity. Tables 21 through 25 display the results of the comparative analysis between the demographic characteristic of race/ethnicity and the dependent variables of organizational, policy, and curricular practices and key constructs of access and entrance, meaningful participation and engagement, cultural representation and voice, and positive results and outcomes (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016a). An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to assess whether there were significant differences between respondents' perceptions of how their districts systemically addressed equity-based organizational, policy, and curricular practices based on the race of the survey respondents. A confidence level of 95% or higher was used to determine whether there were significant differences in the systemic practices by racial groups. A significant difference between how their districts systemically addressed equity-based policies ($F = 14.34$, $df = 1.129$, $p = .000$) based on survey respondents' race were identified. There were no significant differences in organizational or curricular practices based on race/ethnicity of the survey respondents. Further analysis was conducted on the data as shown in Table 21.

Table 21: *Reported Differences in Policy Practices between Racial Groups*

Groups	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
White	103	10.6	1.8
People of Diverse Race/Ethnicity	28	9.0	2.3

A significant difference in policy practices was identified between white survey respondents and people of diverse racial/ethnicity backgrounds. To further identify the specific policy practices that were reported as different between racial groups, additional analyses were conducted through individual survey items as illustrated in Table 22.

Table 22: *Differences in Reported Policy Practices by Survey Question and Racial Groups.*

Systemic Practices	Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	F-value	Significant Difference <i>p-value</i>
Our district leadership intentionally pursues input from families to ensure that multiple perspectives and voices are represented in decision-making.	White	103	3.1	0.8	5.2	.024
	People of Diverse Race/ Ethnicity	28	2.7	1.0		
Our district leadership intentionally pursues input from the community to ensure that multiple perspectives and voices are represented in decision-making.	White	103	3.1	0.7	10.1	.002
	People of Diverse Race/ Ethnicity	28	2.6	0.9		
In our district each student is career and college ready upon graduation.	White	103	2.7	0.9	5.4	.021
	People of Diverse Race/ Ethnicity	28	2.2	1.1		

The mean (average) rating for each practice is based on 1 = disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 3 = somewhat agree, 4 = agree.

Table 22 identifies the statistically significant differences between white respondents and respondents of color on survey questions examining districts' policies for equity. Overall, four items on the Leadership for Educational Equity survey questioned respondents regarding their districts' policies for educational equity. The survey items inquired about districts' practices engaging families and community members in decision-making and students being college- and career-ready upon graduation.

In Table 23, the significant differences were identified between white survey respondents' and people of color respondents' perceptions of their districts' pursuit of input from families and the community when they develop policies and make decisions. White respondents somewhat agree their districts intentionally pursue input from families and the community, whereas respondents of color somewhat disagree with these statements. Both white survey respondents and respondents of color somewhat disagree students are college- and career-ready upon graduation.

The analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to ascertain whether there were significant differences between respondents' perceptions of their districts' implementation of the equity constructs including access and entrance, meaningful participation and voice, cultural representation and voice, and positive results and outcomes based on race/ethnicity (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016a). A confidence level of 95% or higher was used to determine whether there was a significant difference in the reporting of the implementation of the equity-constructs by racial groups. A significant difference was identified between respondents' perceptions of their districts' implementation of equity constructs of access and entrance ($F=15.8$, $df = 1,129$, $p = .000$), cultural representation and voice ($F= 4.4$, $df = 1,129$, $p = .038$), and positive results and outcomes ($F=6.9$, $df = 1,129$, $p = .010$) between white survey respondents and respondents of color. There were no significant differences noted for the equity construct of meaningful participation and engagement. To further identify the specific practices that were reported as different between racial groups, additional analyses were conducted on individual survey items as illustrated in Table 23.

Table 23: *Differences in Reported Practices Addressing the Implementation of the Equity Construct Access and Entrance by Survey Question and Racial Groups.*

Equity Practices	Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	F-value	Significant Difference <i>p</i>
Education staff collaborating (i.e., grade level teams, professional learning communities) to develop learning opportunities for students who struggle academically at school.	White	103	1.5	0.6	5.5	.021
	People of Diverse Race/Ethnicity	28	1.7	0.5		
Education staff collaborating (i.e., grade level teams, professional learning communities) to develop learning opportunities for students who struggle socially at school.	White	103	1.6	0.6	12.9	.000
	People of Diverse Race/Ethnicity	28	2.1	0.7		
Education staff collaborating (i.e., grade level teams, professional learning communities) to develop learning opportunities for students who struggle behaviorally at school.	White	103	1.6	0.6	4.0	.049
	People of Diverse Race/Ethnicity	28	1.8	0.4		
Each student is treated as intellectually capable.	White	103	1.5	0.5	37.1	.000
	People of Diverse Race/Ethnicity	28	2.2	0.4		

The mean (average) rating for each practice is based on 1 = fully implemented 2 = partially implemented, 3 = not implemented at this time.

Table 23 identifies the statistically significant differences between white respondents and respondents of color on survey questions examining their districts' implementation of the equity construct of access and entrance by survey question. Overall, five items on the Leadership for Educational Equity survey questioned respondents regarding their districts' collaboration practices, culturally responsive classroom management practices, and beliefs about student's

intellectual abilities. The results in Table 23 indicate a difference in perceptions between white respondents and respondents from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds regarding staff collaborating to develop learning opportunities for students struggling socially at school. White respondents were more likely to indicate their districts were fully collaborating to develop learning opportunities for students struggling academically and behaviorally at school than were people of color. White survey respondents reported their districts were fully implementing “Each student is treated as intellectually capable,” whereas respondents of color were more likely to report partial implementation. In other words, people of color reported that the practices that ensure each child has access to and full participation in rigorous and challenging courses (i.e., gifted and talented, advanced placement) and support for social development were only partially implemented.

The following table identifies the statistically significant differences between white respondents and respondents of color on survey questions examining their districts’ implementation of the equity construct of cultural representation and voice. To further identify the specific practices that were reported as different between racial groups, additional analyses were conducted on individual survey items as illustrated in Table 24.

Table 24: *Differences in Reported Practices Addressing the Implementation of the Equity Construct Cultural Representation and Voice by Survey Question and Racial Groups.*

Equity Practices	Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	F-value	Significant Difference <i>p</i>
Creating school environments that reflect the diversity of all members of the school community in non-stereotypical ways.	White	103	1.9	0.6	7.2	.008
	People of Diverse Race/Ethnicity	28	2.2	0.4		

The mean (average) rating for each practice is based on 1 = fully implemented 2 = partially implemented, 3 = not implemented at this time.

Table 24 identifies the statistically significant differences between white respondents and respondents of color on survey questions examining their districts' implementation of the equity construct of cultural representation and voice. Overall, four items on the Leadership for Educational Equity survey questioned respondents regarding their districts' practices for creating diverse school environments. The results indicate a difference in perceptions between white respondents and respondents from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds perceptions of their school environments reflecting the diversity of all members of the school community in non-stereotypical ways. For this issue, people of color reported only partial implementation.

The following table identifies the statistically significant differences between white respondents and respondents of color on survey questions examining their districts' implementation of the equity construct of positive results and outcomes based on race/ethnicity. To further identify the specific practices that were reported as different between racial groups, additional analyses were conducted on individual survey items as illustrated in Table 25.

Table 25: *Differences in Reported Practices Addressing the Implementation of the Equity Construct Positive Results and Outcomes by Survey Question and Racial Groups.*

Equity Practices	Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	F-value	Significant Difference <i>p</i>
Staff use data that measure learning outcomes to inform instruction.	White	103	1.6	0.6	4.1	.044
	People of Diverse Race/Ethnicity	28	1.8	0.5		
Examining student outcomes and results with equity in mind.	White	103	1.8	0.6	4.6	.034
	People of Diverse Race/Ethnicity	28	2.0	0.6		
District or school-based leaders actively promote educational equity.	White	103	1.6	0.6	5.6	.019
	People of Diverse Race/Ethnicity	28	1.9	0.5		

The mean (average) rating for each practice is based on 1 = fully implemented 2 = partially implemented, 3 = not implemented at this time.

Table 25 identifies the statistically significant differences between white respondents and respondents of color on survey questions examining their districts' implementation of the equity construct of positive results and outcomes. Overall, three items on the Leadership for Educational Equity survey questioned respondents regarding their districts' practices for evaluating results for equity. Survey questions asked about the use of data to measure learning outcomes and inform instruction, whether results were examined with an equity lens and if their school-based leaders actively promoted educational equity. The results shown in Table 25 indicate there is as significant difference in perception of implementation between racial groups when analyzing the use of data to measure learning outcomes and inform instruction examining

school results with an equity lens and school-based leaders actively promoting educational equity. In other words, white respondents rated their districts as more fully implementing the results and outcomes indicators, and respondents from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds rating the survey items closer to partial implementation.

Results by roles in districts. Tables 26 through 29 illustrate the results of the comparative analysis between the survey respondents' roles in the districts and the organizational, policy, and curricular practices and key constructs of access and entrance, meaningful participation and engagement, cultural representation and voice, and positive results and outcomes (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016a). Analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to determine whether there were significant differences between respondents' perceptions of their districts' implementation of the organizational, policy, and curricular practices and the key equity constructs based on their roles in the district. A confidence level of 95% or higher was used to determine whether there was a significant difference in the reporting of the implementation of the equity-based practices and key equity constructs between roles in the district. No significant differences were found for the organizational, policy, and curricular practices. A significant difference based on survey respondents' roles in the districts was identified for the equity constructs of cultural representation and voice ($F = 2.6$, $df = 4,123$, $p = .039$) and positive results and outcomes ($F = 2.8$, $df = 4,123$, $p = .031$). Table 26 shows the results of the Tukey post hoc tests identifying the positions perceiving implementation of the equity construct's cultural representation and voice differently.

Table 26: *Reported Differences in the Implementation of the Equity Construct Cultural Representation and Voice between Roles in Districts.*

Roles in Districts	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents	37	7.6	1.1
Director of Curriculum, Director of Teaching and Learning, Director of Equity Services	17	8.3	0.7
Principal, Assistant Principal	23	7.9	1.1
Coordinator of Equity, Integration, Collaborative, or Academic Programs	23	8.7	1.6
Teacher, Cultural Liaison, Other	28	7.9	1.9

Table 26 indicates a significant difference was identified between the superintendents' and assistant superintendents' and the program coordinators' ($F = 2.6$, $df = 4,123$, $p = .028$) responses to the four survey items specific to cultural representation and voice. To further identify the specific survey questions that were reported as different between the two groups, a Tukey post hoc test was conducted on the individual survey items. There were four questions on the survey assessing practices specific to cultural representation and voice; one survey question was found to be statistically different between roles. Table 27 provides the statistical results.

Table 27: *Differences in Reported Practices Addressing the Implementation of the Equity Construct Cultural Representation and Voice by Survey Question and Current Roles in Districts.*

Survey Question	Roles	Roles	Significant Difference <i>p</i>
Engaging community members actively in the school.	Coordinator of Equity, Integration, Collaborative, or Academic Programs (2.17)	Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents (1.89)	.118
		Director of Curriculum, Director of Teaching and Learning, Director of Equity Services (2.06)	.924
		Principal, Assistant Principal (1.91)	.266
		Teacher, Cultural Liaison, Other (1.82)	.040

Parenthesis = the mean (average) rating for each practice based on 1 = fully implemented 2 = partially implemented 3 = not implemented at this time.

Table 27 identified significant differences between the groups on the survey items inquiring about their districts' practices in engaging community members actively in the schools' policy development. Statistically significant differences were identified between program coordinators' perceptions of their districts' systemic implementation of the equity construct of cultural representation and voice and the perceptions of teachers, cultural liaisons, and other direct service providers. Program coordinators reported there was partial implementation and direct service providers (teachers, cultural liaisons, etc.) disagreed when considering the role of community members in schools' policy development.

A significant difference was established between respondents' perceptions of their districts' implementation of the equity constructs of positive results and outcomes based on their roles in their districts. Analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to determine which roles in the district responded differently to this equity construct. A significant difference was identified between the superintendents' and assistant superintendents' and program coordinators' ($F = 2.7$, $df = 4,123$, $p = .043$) systemic implementation of positive results and outcomes.

Table 28 illustrates the statistical results.

Table 28: *Reported Differences in the Implementation of the Equity Construct Positive Results and Outcomes between Roles in Districts.*

Roles in Districts	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents	37	4.6	1.2
Director of Curriculum, Director of Teaching and Learning, Director of Equity Services	17	5.3	1.0
Principal, Assistant Principal	23	4.7	1.5
Coordinator of Equity, Integration, Collaborative, or Academic Programs	23	5.7	1.4
Teacher, Cultural Liaison, Other	28	5.4	1.7

The results show in Table 28 indicates superintendents and assistant superintendents perceive the systemic implementation of positive results and outcomes for equity differently than coordinators of equity, integration, collaborative, or academic programs. To further

identify the specific practices that were reported differently between the roles, a Tukey post hoc test was conducted on individual survey items. Table 29 provides the results based on a 95% confidence level.

Table 29: *Differences in Reported Practices Addressing the Implementation of the Equity Construct Positive Results and Outcomes by Survey Question and Current Roles in Districts.*

Survey Question	Roles	Roles	Significant Difference <i>p</i>
	Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents (1.4)	Director of Curriculum, Director of Teaching and Learning, Director of Equity Services (1.8)	.049
District or school-based leaders actively promote educational equity.		Principal, Assistant Principal (1.5)	.861
		Coordinator of Equity, Integration, Collaborative, or Academic Programs (1.8)	.021
		Teacher, Cultural Liaison, Other (1.8)	.029

Parenthesis = the mean (average) rating for each practice based on 1 = fully implemented 2 = partially implemented 3 = not implemented at this time.

Superintendents and assistant superintendents indicated their districts' leaders were actively promoting educational equity, whereas program coordinators indicate less agreement. In other words, Table 29 revealed a difference that exists between the perceptions of superintendents and assistant superintendents and coordinators of equity, integration,

collaboratives, or academic programs regarding the perception of district or school-based leaders actively promoting educational equity in their districts and schools.

Results by years in current roles in districts. Tables 30 - 37 display the results of the comparative analysis between the number of years survey respondents had been in their current roles in their districts and the variables of organizational, policy, and curricular practices and key constructs of access and entrance, meaningful participation and engagement, cultural representation and voice, and positive results and outcomes (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016a). Analyses of variances (ANOVA) were conducted to test if there were significant differences between respondents' perceptions of their districts' systemic implementation of the organizational, policy and curricular practices, and the equity constructs between the number of years survey respondents had been in their current roles in their districts. A confidence level of 95% or higher was used to determine whether there was a significant difference in the reporting of the implementation of the equity-based practices and key equity constructs between the number of years survey respondents had been in their current roles in their districts. No significant differences were found for the organizational, policy, and curricular practices. Significant differences between respondents' perceptions of their districts' implementation of the equity constructs of access and entrance ($F = 3.2$ $df = 2, 126$ $p = .032$), meaningful participation and engagement ($F = 4.4$ $df = 2, 126$, $p = .014$), cultural representation and voice ($F = 4.1$ $df = 2, 126$, $p = .019$), and positive results and outcomes ($F = 4.5$ $df = 2, 126$ $p = .013$), based on the number of years respondents had served in their current positions, were identified. Table 30 shows the results of the Tukey post hoc test identifying a significant difference in perceptions between survey respondents by years in their current positions.

Table 30: *Reported Differences in the Implementation of the Equity Construct Access and Entrance between Years in Current Roles in Districts.*

Year in Current Role	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
0 to 2 Years	35	9.2	2.1
3 to 5 Years	49	8.4	2.1
6 to 32 Years	45	7.8	2.4

Table 30 identifies a significant difference between educators having been in their roles for 6 to 32 years and educators having been in their roles 2 years or less for the equity construct access and entrance. Five items on the Leadership for Educational Equity survey addressing the equity construct of access and entrance included questions about staff collaborating to develop learning opportunities for student who struggle with academic, behavioral or social issues at school, the implementation of culturally responsive instruction, and treating each student as intellectually capable. Table 31 provides the results of the Tukey post hoc test and lists the survey questions and the years in current role in districts where the significant differences occurred regarding implementation of the equity construct access and entrance into challenging and rigorous courses.

Table 31: *Differences in Reported Practices Addressing the Implementation of the Equity Construct Access and Entrance by Survey Question and Years in Current Roles.*

Survey Questions	Years in Current Roles	Years in Current Roles	Significant Difference p
Educational staff collaborate (i.e., grade level teams, professional learning communities) to develop learning opportunities for students who struggle socially at school.	6-32 (1.5)	0-2 (1.9)	.018
		3-5 (1.8)	.032
		3-5 (1.6)	.024
Each student is treated as intellectually capable.	0-2 (1.9)	6-32 (1.6)	.012

Parenthesis = the mean (average) rating for each practice based on 1 = fully implemented 2 = partially implemented 3 = not implemented at this time.

Table 31 shows survey respondents with 6 to 32 years in their current positions and survey respondents having been in their positions 0 to 2 and 3 to 5 years differed in how their school teams collaborated to develop learning opportunities for students who struggle socially at school, which were fully implemented. Survey respondents with 0 to 2 years in their current positions and survey respondents having been in their positions 3 to 5 years and 6 to 32 years differed in their agreement that their districts were fully implementing the mindset of each student being treated as intellectually capable. In other words, staff with more experience in the districts indicated that the provision of supports for students who struggle socially at school were more likely to be implemented than staff with fewer years in their current positions. Staff newer to their positions in the district indicated that not all students were being treated as if they were intellectually capable. Table 32 shows results of the Tukey post hoc test which identifies the

significant difference in perceptions between survey respondents' years in their current positions regarding all students meaningfully participating and being fully engaged in their school programs.

Table 32: *Reported Differences in the Implementation of the Equity Construct Meaningful Participation and Engagement between Years in Current Roles.*

Year in Current Role	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
0 to 2 Years	35	8.5	1.6
3 to 5 Years	49	7.5	1.6
6 to 32 Years	45	7.5	1.8

Table 32 identifies a significant difference between school staff in their current positions 0 to 2 years and staff in their positions for 3 to 5 years or 6 more years when reporting on the equity construct of meaningful participation and engagement. There were four items on the Leadership for Educational Equity survey addressing the equity construct of meaningful participation and engagement assessing the implementation of culturally relevant and inclusive instructional practices, school climate, and professional development for staff. Table 33 shows the results of the Tukey post hoc test identifying the survey questions and the years in current roles in districts where the significant difference occurred.

Table 33: *Differences in Reported Practices Addressing the Implementation of the Equity Construct Meaningful Participation and Engagement by Survey Question and Years in Current Roles.*

Survey Questions	Years in Current Roles	Years in Current Roles	Significant Difference p
Developing a school climate that fosters respect for cultural diversity.	6-32 (1.6)	0-2 (2.1)	.000
		3-5 (1.8)	.029
		3-5 (1.8)	.106
Implementing instructional practices that are inclusive of all students.	0-2 (2.0)	6-32 (1.7)	.013
		0-2 (2.2)	.035
Providing teachers with adequate professional development and training to be proficient in culturally responsive teaching.	3-5 (1.8)	6-32 (2.2)	.030

Parenthesis = the mean (average) rating for each practice based on 1 = fully implemented 2 = partially implemented 3 = not implemented at this time.

Table 33 shows the three survey items with significant differences between the groups. Survey respondents with 6 to 32 years in their current positions indicated their school climate fostered respect for diversity, whereas survey respondents having been in their positions 0 to 2 and 3 to 5 years indicated their disagreement with this survey item. Survey respondents with 0 to 2 years in their current positions indicated their districts were partially implementing inclusive instructional practices, whereas survey participants with 3 or more years of experience in their current positions indicated more agreement with this survey item. Survey respondents with 3 to 5 years in their current positions indicated teachers were receiving adequate professional

development and training in cultural responsive instructional strategies, which differed from the perception of staff with 0 to 2 years and 6 to 32 years. Table 34 shows the results of the Tukey post hoc test identifies a significant difference in perceptions between survey respondents of the equity construct cultural representation and voice by survey respondents' years in their current positions.

Table 34: *Reported Differences in the Implementation of the Equity Construct Cultural Representation and Voice between Years in Current Roles.*

Year in Current Role	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
0 to 2 Years	35	8.5	1.2
3 to 5 Years	49	7.9	1.4
6 to 32 Years	45	7.7	1.6

Table 34 identifies a significant difference between school staff in their current positions 6 to 32 years and staff with 0 to 2 years of experience in their current positions. There were four items on the Leadership for Educational Equity survey addressing the equity construct of cultural representation and voice. The survey asked respondents about their perceptions of the school environment, cross-cultural communication, and whether families and the community were represented and sharing their voices in decision-making. Table 35 shows the results of the Tukey post hoc test which identifies a significant difference in perceptions by survey respondents' years in their current positions and the equity construct cultural representation and voice. It lists the

survey questions and the years in current roles in districts where the significant difference occurred.

Table 35: *Differences in Reported Practices Addressing the Implementation of the Equity Construct Cultural Representation and Voice by Survey Question and Years in Current Roles.*

Survey Questions	Years in Current Roles	Years in Current Roles	Significant Difference p
Creating school environments that reflect the diversity of all members of the school community in non-stereotypical ways.	0-2 (2.1)	3-5 (2.0)	.325
		6-32 (1.8)	.016

Parenthesis = the mean (average) rating for each practice based on 1 = fully implemented 2 = partially implemented 3 = not implemented at this time.

One survey item was found to have a significant difference between the groups. Survey respondents with 0 to 2 years (2.1) in their current positions and survey respondents having been in their positions 3 to 5 years (2.0) or 6 or more years (1.8) differed in their perceptions of school environments reflecting the diversity of all members of the school community in non-stereotypical ways. The following Table 36 shows the results of the Tukey post hoc test demonstrating the significant difference in perceptions between survey respondents' perceptions through years in their current positions and the equity construct of positive results and outcomes.

Table 36: *Reported Differences in the Implementation of the Equity Construct Positive Results and Outcomes between Years in Current Roles.*

Year in Current Role	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
0 to 2 Years	35	5.7	1.3
3 to 5 Years	49	4.8	1.4
6 to 32 Years	45	4.9	1.6

Table 36 shows survey respondents with 0 to 2 years (5.7) in their current positions and survey respondents having been in their positions 3 to 5 (4.8) years or 6 or more years (4.9) differed in their perceptions of all students achieving positive results and outcomes in school. There were three items on the Leadership for Educational Equity survey addressing the use of data to measure learning outcomes, examining results for equity, and leaders promoting equity to achieve positive results and outcomes. Table 37 lists the survey questions and the years in current roles in districts where the significant difference occurred.

Table 37: *Differences in Reported Practices Addressing the Implementation of the Equity Construct Positive Results and Outcomes by Survey Question and Years in Current Roles.*

Survey Questions	Years in Current Roles	Years in Current Roles	Significant Difference <i>p-value</i>
District or school-based leaders actively promote educational equity.	0-2 (1.9)	3-5 (1.5)	.003
		6-32 (1.6)	.208

Parenthesis = the mean (average) rating for each practice based on 1 = fully implemented 2= partially implemented 3 = not implemented at this time

One survey item was found to have a significant difference between the groups. Survey respondents with 0 to 2 years (1.9) in their current positions and survey respondents having been in their positions 3 to 5 years (1.5) and 6 to 32 (1.6) years disagreed their districts' leaders were actively promoting educational equity.

Interview results. Six educators were interviewed and asked to comment, from their experiences, why there was a significant difference in agreement between the perceptions of the survey respondents identifying themselves as white and survey respondents of color regarding the systemic implementation of equity-based policies. Table 38 summarizes the results of the interviewees' responses.

Table 38: *Summary of Interviewees' Discussion Concerning the Implementation of Policies for Educational Equity*

-
- Implicit Bias
 - Minimizing issues
 - Equity vs. equality (fairness)
 - Maintain status quo
 - Len/perspective of people of color vs place of privilege
 - Cultural representation and voice in decision-making
 - Communication and information gap
-

The interviewees suggested that white survey respondents may not recognize bias or may be minimizing the issues related to equity in school systems. They indicated that the equity versus equality paradigm was prevalent in schools. Some interviewees stated their districts were focused on maintaining the status quo and not willing to develop a written policy defining educational equity unless required by law. People of color view school policies and practices

from a critical equity viewpoint, whereas white people, because they come from a place of privilege, may not. Current policies defining educational equity may not have included representation or the voice of people from other cultural or racial backgrounds when the policies were developed. Concern was expressed about the continuing communication and information gaps regarding the need for equity-based policies.

Summary of results for research question six. Study question six involved conducting a comparative analysis of the survey results to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the regions, race/ethnicity, representatives' roles in their districts, and number of years in current role, and the equity-based organizational, curricular, and policy practices, as well as the equity constructs of access and entrance, meaningful participation and engagement, cultural representation and voice, and positive results and outcomes. Significant differences existed between responses from the survey based on demographic variables.

A significant difference in the systemic implementation of equity-based organizational practices was identified between the 7-county metropolitan region (including Minneapolis and St. Paul) and the outstate regions in Minnesota. Specifically, the regions in the outstate area in Minnesota indicated their districts did not have members of diverse races and cultures on their leadership teams, nor did the leadership teams disaggregate or analyze student participation rates in rigorous and challenging courses (i.e., literacy, language, science, and mathematics) by race or ethnicity.

The analysis identified there were significant differences between respondents' perceptions of their districts' implementation of equity policies and of the equity constructs of access and entrance, positive results and outcomes, and cultural representation and voice

between white survey respondents and respondents identifying as persons of color. Analyses revealed the specific items where the differences between white respondents and respondents of color occurred:

- Pursuit of input from families and the community when districts develop policies and make decisions.
- Staff collaboration to develop learning opportunities for students struggling academically, behaviorally, and socially in school.
- Teachers' views of students' intellectual abilities.
- School environments reflecting the diversity of all members of the school community in non-stereotypical ways.
- The use of data to measure learning outcomes to inform instruction by education staff.
- The examination of students' outcomes and results with an equity lens.
- School-based leaders actively promoting educational equity.

A significant difference was found between respondents' perceptions of their districts' implementation of the equity constructs of cultural representation and voice and positive results and outcomes based on the perceptions of superintendents, assistant superintendents and coordinators of equity, integration, collaborative, or academic programs. Specifically, survey respondents differed in agreement that their districts were actively engaging community members in decision making. Coordinators of equity, integration, collaboratives, or academic programs and direct services providers (teachers, cultural liaisons, etc.) disagreed district or

school-based leaders actively promote educational equity in their districts and schools (Fraser, 2008; GLEC 2012, 2016a).

Implementation of the equity-based practices perceived as being effective and achieving positive outcomes for youth in schools were ranked differently depending upon the survey respondents' years of experience in their current roles. Survey respondents in their current position more than 6 to 32 years most often indicated their districts as fully implementing the equity-based practices. Survey respondents in their current position 3 to 5 years most often indicated their districts were fully to partially implementing the equity-based practices. Survey respondents with 0 to 2 years in their current positions more often ranked their districts as partially implementing the equity-based practices. The majority of survey respondents indicated professional development for teachers to develop proficiency in culturally responsive teaching was being partially implemented.

The six educators interviewed shared from their experiences the reasons for the significant difference in agreement between the perceptions of survey respondents identified as white and survey respondents of color regarding the systemic implementation of equity-based policies. The following themes emerged from the analysis: bias, minimizing issues, equity vs. equality (fairness), maintain status quo, lens/perspective of people of color versus place of privilege, cultural representation and voice in decision making, and communication and information gaps.

Summary

The study was conducted using a mixed-methods research design. Data were analyzed from 131 on-line survey responses and 6 face-to-face interviews to determine the degree equity-

based organizational, curricular, and policy practices were being systemically implemented in select Minnesota school districts. The data were further analyzed to determine the degree the equity constructs of access and entrance, meaningful participation and engagement, cultural representation and voice, and positive results and outcomes were effective in producing positive outcomes in the select school districts. The qualitative data gathered through the interviews were analyzed, categorized, and summarized for each research question.

Chapter 5: Summary, Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

Chapter 5 presents a summary of the results, conclusions, and recommendations from the Leadership for Educational Equity study. The summary is organized to provide a brief overview of the purpose for the study, the study design, discussion of significant findings, and conclusions. Chapter 5 concludes with study limitations, recommendations for future research, and practice.

Overview of Research Problem and Study Purpose

Numerous studies have reported the underachievement of Indigenous, African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino and children from low socioeconomic backgrounds as compared to white, middle-class children. Low achievement, high failure and dropout rates, and placement in low-level academic programs are predominantly experienced by black and brown children and children suffering poverty (AECF, 2014, 2015). For students to experience educational equity, an analysis of current scholastic practices needs to occur, as well as a close inspection of the school organizational, curricular, and policy practices (GLEC, 2012). Students need teachers and school leaders prepared with the knowledge, strategies, support, and courage to make curriculum, instruction, student engagement, and family partnerships inclusive and culturally responsive (GLEC, 2015; Cooper, 2009).

The study focused on developing a comprehensive understanding of the factors needed to create educational equity for all learners (GLEC, 2012, 2016). Specifically, the study focused on the actions of the education staff to pursue the key constructs of educational equity through organizational, curricular, and policy practices and by access to rigorous, challenging courses, meaningful participation and engagement, cultural representation and voice, and positive

academic and social results and outcomes (Figure 3) for all learners, especially those from diverse racial, ethnic, and low socioeconomic backgrounds (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a). The purpose of the Leadership for Educational Equity study was to examine the extent to which the core constructs of educational equity (Figure 3) are systemically implemented in select Minnesota schools (Bustamante et al., 2009; Chen et al., 2014; GLEC, 2012, 2016a; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015; Henze et al., 2000; Jenlink, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Mulligan & Kozleski, 2009; Paris, 2012; Shields, 2004).

The Multi-Dimensional Framework for Achieving Educational Equity

Achieving educational equity means raising the achievement of each student, closing the gap between the highest and lowest performing students; and eliminating disproportionality between student groups (Blankstein & Noguera, 2015). Inequities are a result of marginalized students being excluded or screened out of educational opportunities based on their lack of the background knowledge, contextual information, income, or social skills necessary to fully participate (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Marginalized students do not receive the education they deserve unless purposeful steps are taken to consciously change school policies and practices to an equity and social justice perspective (Theoharis, 2007). An educational equity context for decision-making ensures equal access to participate in and make progress in high-quality relevant and rigorous learning experiences preparing each student for life success and career choices after high school (GLEC, 2012). The following conceptual framework (Figure 3) is advanced by the federally-funded Great Lakes Equity Center to create transformational, systemic change and design equitable and inclusive school programs (GLEC, 2012, 2016a).

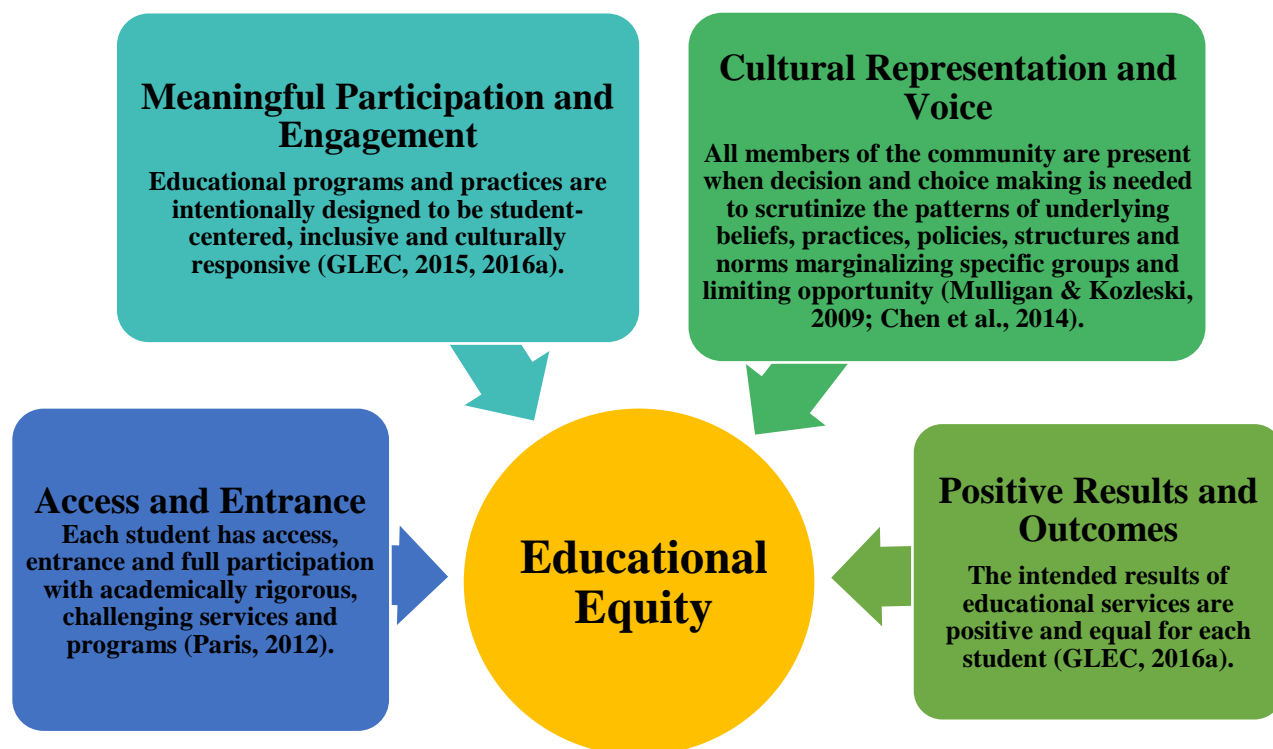


Figure 3: *A Multi-Dimensional Framework for Achieving Educational Equity* (Bustamante et al., 2009; Chen et al., 2014; Fraser, 2008; Jenlink, 2009; GLEC, 2012, 2015, 2016a; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015; Henze et al., 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Mulligan & Kozleski, 2009; Paris, 2012; Shields, 2004; Singleton, 2015; Theoharis, 2009).

The study gathered information from educators in Minnesota school districts regarding their perceptions of the implementation of equity-based practices (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015).

Study Design

The study employed a mixed-methods research design combining quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The purpose of mixed-methods research is to understand a

problem to an extent not possible using a single approach (Mills & Gay, 2015). In the first phase of the study, quantitative data were collected through an on-line survey. The purpose of the Leadership for Educational Equity survey was to collect information from school personnel about the implementation of the equity constructs in their schools or districts (Mills & Gay, 2015). The questionnaire results were analyzed to determine current understandings about the implementation of educational equity-based practices in select school districts in Minnesota (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a).

The qualitative phase of the study included interviews with six school leaders having participated in the Leadership for Educational Equity survey and provided contact information affirming their subsequent willingness to be interviewed. Through face-to-face interviews, the implementation of the core construct of educational equity was explored more intentionally. The data collected through interviews were analyzed and the emerging themes are included with the survey results (Mills & Gay, 2015).

A mixed-methods research approach studying educational equity included broader perspectives and produced richer insights. The survey assessed respondents' knowledge and understanding of the core constructs of educational equity, and the interviews assisted in further developing the study and provided specific examples of school leaders' work to implement the core constructs through policies, curriculum and instruction, and school culture. The combined data conceptualized the leadership strategies being operationalized in select Minnesota schools.

Research Questions

The research questions were designed to ascertain from school leaders' experiences in the successes and barriers in enacting systemic change and implementing inclusive instructional

practices and policies. It is believed the results of the study will contribute to the understanding of the leadership skills required to create and sustain equitable learning environments in Minnesota school districts.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What were the demographic characteristics of the representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in implementing school equity programs who responded to the survey?
2. To what extent did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs report their districts systemically addressed educational equity through organizational, curricular, and policy practices?
3. To what extent did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs report equity-based practices had been implemented in their district, schools, and classrooms?
4. What barriers to implementation of equity-based practices did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs report having experienced?
5. What did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs identify as effective practices to achieve educational equity in their school districts?
6. Was there a significant difference in how select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs reported systemically addressing equity-based organizational, curricular, and policy practices based on demographic characteristics?

Was there a significant difference in the perceptions of implementation of equity-based practices based on demographic characteristics?

Discussion of Findings and Conclusions

The findings and conclusions from the study of leadership for educational equity are discussed in this section. Conclusions for each of the research questions are accompanied with supporting research from the literature review.

Research Question One

What were the demographic characteristics of the representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in implementing school equity programs who responded to the survey?

The respondents to the Leadership for Educational Equity survey were predominately white (78.6%) school professionals. Most reported three or more years of experience in their current positions. Slightly less than half of the survey respondents were from metropolitan school districts. The majority of the interviewees (83.3%) were educators from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Of the six people who were interviewed, one was an assistant superintendent, one was an elementary school principal, three were program coordinators, and one was a direct service provider.

Research Question Two

To what extent did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs report their districts systemically addressed educational equity through organizational, curricular, and policy practices?

The majority of survey respondents indicated their districts' organizational, policy, and curricular practices were equity-based. However, when the researcher examined the issues in greater depth, significant differences were identified.

Significant differences in organizational practices. A significant difference in the systemic implementation of equity-based organizational practices was identified between the 7-county metropolitan areas (including Minneapolis and St. Paul) and the outstate regions in Minnesota. Specifically, the leaders in the outstate area of Minnesota indicated their districts do not have members of diverse races and cultures on their leadership teams, nor do the leadership teams disaggregate or analyze student participation rates in rigorous and challenging courses (i.e., literacy, language, science, and mathematics) by race or socioeconomic status. Sixty-three percent of all respondents indicated an absence of culturally diverse members on their districts' leadership teams. White educational leaders and policy makers may not understand the barriers experienced by those who are culturally, racially, and economically different unless they are “culturally proficient” (Lindsey, Nuri Robins & Terrell, 2009). Leaders who are “culturally proficient” are aware of their own culture and the impact that culture has on the organization in which she/he works, teaches, and leads (Lindsey et al., 2009).

The study results found that the majority of survey respondents were White (78.6%). This could be a problem because it is evident in the literature that white educational leaders may not be aware or cognizant of the patterns of implicit bias and discrimination in the educational system (Feagin, 2014; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015). A related finding from the interviews was that several of the participants reported having difficulty recruiting and hiring racially diverse staff

members in their districts which may result in the absence of diversity on district leadership teams.

Significant differences in policy practices. A significant difference was identified between the perceptions of white respondents and those of respondents of color concerning their districts' systemically addressing equity-based policies. It is important that educational policies governing the day-to-day operations of school systems have an equity perspective (Colman et al., 2001; Gay, 2002; Macey, Thorius & Skelton, 2013). Educational equity policies ensure each student's access to high quality educational experiences, full participation, feelings of acceptance, and achievement of positive outcomes (Gay, 2002; GLEC 2012, 2016; Macey et al., 2013).

Other researchers have found people of color view educational policies and practices as inadequate and discriminatory in their character (Lindsey et al., (2009). Resulting from everyday experiences of discrimination, people of color have perspectives and understandings of systemic inequities significantly different than people from the privileged dominant culture (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Someone from white culture may not recognize implicit bias, may minimize issues, and be more concerned about maintaining the status quo than recognizing inequities and prejudice (Feagin, 2014). Historically, school systems' policies have not included diverse racial or cultural representation and voices in decision and policy making (Evans, 2007; Shields, 2004; Tate, 1997). The lack of understanding of the equity vs. equality paradigms perpetuates inequities and disparities (Jordan et al., 2010; Noguera et al., 2015; Nordstrum, 2006; Singleton, 2015; Verba, 2006).

Approximately half of the survey respondents reported their districts had written policies defining educational equity. The data gathered for this study did not examine specific types of policies. During the interviews, the interviewees shared a variety of policies their districts were developing. Two of the respondents indicated their districts were using the Equal Education policies required by the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) which governs accessibility as their equity policy. The ADA Equal Education policy are not standards for educational equity. Districts need policies defining and setting standards for educational equity and a commitment to transforming those policies into practice and results (Coleman et al., 2011; Gay, 2002; GLEC 2012, 2016; Macey et al., 2013; Pont, Nusche & Moorman, 2008). In the educational setting, policies are the guiding principles for actions, processes, and procedures (Coleman et al, 2011; Gay, 2002). For students to experience educational equity, a close scrutiny of current school policies and practices needs to occur (GLEC, 2012). To examine inequitable policies and practices, educators must define equity, identify the root causes of inequities, propose solutions, explore how the proposed solutions would impact all members of the school community, and determine how the impacts of the solutions would be measured (Dewey, 1938; Kivel, 2011). Students, teachers, and families need school leaders with the courage to enact policies and standards for achieving educational equity (Cooper, 2009).

Curricular practices. Curriculum is the "what" of education and critical to academic achievement (Teaching Tolerance, 2017). Culturally responsive and relevant curriculum promotes academic achievement, cultural competence, and improved outcomes for all students (GLEC, 2015; Paris, 2012). Inequities result when students are excluded or screened out of educational opportunities based on their limited background knowledge, contextual information,

income, or social skills (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Culturally responsive and relevant curriculum, instructional materials, and teaching strategies must make meaningful connections between rigorous content and the background knowledge and experiences of the learners (GLEC, 2015; Paris, 2012).

The study found that addressing systemic inequities within school organizations begins with recognizing the “gaps” arising from patterns of discrimination, implicit bias, and inequality, whether conscious or not. Achieving educational equity will require changing mindsets from viewing differences as problematic to developing a proactive perspective and embracing cross-cultural organizational, curricular, and policy practices (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a; Lindsey et al., 2009). Based on the results of the study and the current literature, school leaders should elucidate the importance of achieving educational equity for their students. School leaders should focus the efforts of all staff in the district on ensuring organizational, curricular, and policy practices are dedicated to raising the achievement of each student, closing the gap between the highest and lowest performing students, and eliminating disproportionality between student groups (Blankstein & Noguera, 2015; GLEC, 2012; Macey et al., 2013; Romo, 1986).

Research Question Three

To what extent did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs report equity-based practices had been implemented in their district, schools, and classrooms?

The third aspect of the study was to determine the extent to which representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in fostering AI programs reported equity-based practices were being implemented and successfully achieving positive outcomes in their districts,

schools and classrooms. Only about 39% of survey respondents reported their districts were fully implementing the equity-based construct of access and entrance. This construct is designed to provide access for students from diverse and low socioeconomic backgrounds opportunities to enroll in higher level courses and receive the supports they need to be successful (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a). Only about 34% of survey respondents reported their districts were fully implementing the equity-based construct of positive results and outcomes. This construct is designed to ensure that the results of educational services and program were equitable for all students (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a). The study also found about 11% of the survey respondents indicated their districts were implementing the equity construct of meaningful participation and engagement. This construct is designed to intentionally design programs and practices to be student-centered, inclusive, and culturally responsive to the needs of each student (GLEC, 2015). Furthermore, the study found that only about 5% of the respondents reported their districts were implementing the equity construct of cultural representation and voice. This construct is designed to intentionally include people of other cultures, ethnicities, and economic circumstances in decision making, ensuring their voices are valued in school matter (Mulligan & Kozleski, 2009; Chen et al., 2014).

These findings are troubling. The percentage of full implementation of these constructs should be higher. Researchers agree that this is problematic. Educational programs need to include all students in meaningful and culturally responsive and relevant instruction (Fraser, 2008; GLEC 2012, 2015, 2016; Shields, 2004). In the literature, authors advocate that much more work needs to be done to implement the research-based, multi-dimensional framework for achieving educational equity as illustrated in Figure 3 (Bustamante et al., 2009; Chen et al.,

2014; Fraser, 2008; Jenlink, 2009; GLEC, 2012, 2016; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015; Henze et al., 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Mulligan & Kozleski, 2009; Paris, 2012; Shields, 2004; Singleton, 2015; Theoharis, 2009). The low levels of implementation could be the result of the lack of agreed upon standards for defining and measuring educational equity. A research-based set of standards is outlined in the multi-dimensional framework for education equity as illustrated by Figure 3. This framework provides a structure to create transformational, systemic change and design equitable, and inclusive school programs (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a). Marginalized students will not receive the education they deserve unless purposeful steps are taken to consciously change school policies and practices to an equity and social justice perspective (Theoharis, 2007). The information from the interviews and from the survey comments reinforces the importance of strong leadership in creating the conditions for implementing the multi-dimensional framework for educational equity. Many of these comments were directly focused on elements of leadership in shifting of mindsets, providing training and coaching in culturally relevant and responsive instructional practices and meaningfully engaging families in their children's education.

Research Question Four

What barriers to implementation of equity-based practices did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs report having experienced?

The purpose for this question was to identify the barriers interfering with the implementation of equity-based practices and gather suggestions for how to address the barriers. The study respondents identified ten barriers which were obstructing the implementation of

equity-based practices. Based on the frequency of the responses three barriers emerged as noteworthy in relation to inhibiting implementation of equity-based practices. Systemic racism and discrimination were identified as barriers to achieving educational equity. The respondents interviewed for the study reported patterns of ineffective instruction and bias in policies and practices embedded in their schools and districts. Research recommends that all educational policies and practices be examined from an equity perspective (Coleman et al., 2011; Gay, 2002; Macey et al., 2013). Another barrier identified in the study was the need to shift educators' mindsets from an equality paradigm to an understanding of educational equity. Research suggests it is important for educators to develop "cultural proficiency" and a cognitive framework for educational equity (Jenlink, 2009; Lindsey et al, 2009). The study found some teachers have low expectations for students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds or low socioeconomic circumstances. Deficit-thinking on the part of educators has a negative impact on learners (Jenlink, 2009). Leaders must address inaccuracies in the mental models some educators may have about students' abilities or inabilities to achieve in school (GLEC, 2015).

Addressing the barriers to achieving educational equity requires eliminating the structural obstructions by creating the conditions for effective change (Blankstein & Noguera, 2015; Lindsey et al., 2009). Districts and schools cannot overcome barriers and create the conditions for change without effective leadership (Lindsey et al., 2009). Knowing the barriers to creating equitable learning organizations assists in overcoming the resistance to them (Lindsey et al., 2009). When a leader understands the impediments to achieving the organization's goals, the leader can address the root causes of the challenges and create solutions that enable the organization to overcome the barriers (Dewey, 1938; Lindsey et al., 2009). The results of the

study pointed out that empowering school and district leaders to courageously enact systemic changes which move “beyond the words” and “beneath the practices” can create equitable learning environments. School leaders need to confront systemic inequities by creating written policies and strategic plans for achieving educational equity and communicating that vision to all staff and the community (Lindsey et al., 2009).

Current literature on leadership for systemic change has identified models for exemplary management including establishing a sense of urgency, creating a guiding coalition, developing a vision and strategy, communicating, empowering employees, generating short-term wins, and developing a new culture in the workplace (Fullan, 2011). Kouzes & Posner (2012) outline five leadership practices imperative to enacting systemic changes including modeling, inspiring, challenging, enabling, and encouraging. These authors also stress that a leader must “clarify values” and “find their own voice” (Fullan, 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Theoharis’ (2007) research outlines the actions school leaders must take to create and sustain a student-centered, inclusive and culturally responsive instructional environment providing every learner with access to quality instruction. According to Theoharis (2007), a school leader must employ a “lens of equity” and challenge the status quo. Effective school leadership is essential to improve educational equity and overcome structural barriers (Pont et al., 2008).

Research Question Five

What did representatives of select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs identify as effective practices to achieve educational equity in their school districts?

The results of research question five were insightful in understanding why achieving educational equity is challenging. The respondents to the Leadership for Educational Equity survey did not come to a general agreement when identifying effective practices which were achieving positive outcomes in their schools or districts. “Each student is treated as intellectually capable” was the highest ranked practice, however, less than 50% of the survey respondents indicated this as an effective practice for achieving positive outcomes for students. Although the research proves providing each student with high-quality, rigorous, and culturally relevant learning experiences as important, the fact that there was not a consensus by survey respondents regarding effective instructional practices indicates survey respondents were unclear as to which practices would achieve educational equity.

Implementation of the equity-based practices perceived as being effective and achieving positive outcomes for youth in schools were ranked differently depending upon the survey respondents’ years of experience in their current roles. Survey respondents in their current positions 6 to 32 years most often indicated their districts as fully implementing the equity-based practices. Survey respondents in their current position 3 to 5 years most often indicated their districts were fully to partially implementing the equity-based practices. Survey respondents with 0 to 2 years in their current positions more often ranked their districts as partially implementing the equity-based practices. The results of the interviews provide perspective on the practices that may be closing gaps and demonstrating effectiveness in some districts. The interviewees indicated implementing standards-based, culturally responsive instruction, college- and career-readiness programs, and enrichment programs designed for students who have been historically underrepresented in rigorous and challenging courses were realizing positive outcomes. Research

recommends analyzing instructional and assessment data and collaboration between educators through grade-level teams or professional learning communities linked to equity outcomes (Popham, 2010; Riester et al., 2002; Skrla, McKenzie & Scheurich, 2009).

The multi-dimensional framework for achieving educational equity as identified in Figure 3 illustrates the key constructs for effective programs and practices. Research suggests this framework is a model for transformative change toward educational equity (GLEC, 2016a). The interview participants indicated that in order to create transformational, systemic change and implement effective practices, staff at all levels must be engaged in high-quality professional development and receive on-going coaching and support. The study found that when educators provide standards-based, culturally-responsive and -relevant learning opportunities for each student in the classroom outcomes, improve for all learners. The multi-dimensional framework for educational equity (Figure 3) is a conceptual framework for designing and delivering professional development (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a).

Research Question Six

Was there a significant difference in how select Minnesota school districts involved in developing school equity programs reported systemically addressing equity-based organizational, curricular, and policy practices based on demographic characteristics? Was there a significant difference in the perceptions of implementation of equity-based practices based on demographic characteristics?

A comparative analysis of the survey results was conducted to determine whether or not a statistically significant difference between representatives' roles in their district, years in current roles, race/ethnicity, and the systemic implementation of the equity framework for achieving

educational equity constructs of access and entrance, meaningful participation and engagement, cultural representation and voice, and positive results and outcomes as illustrated in Figure 3. The study found there were significant differences between superintendents' and assistant superintendents' and program coordinators' perceptions of the implementation of the equity constructs in the framework (Figure 3). Furthermore, the study found there were significant differences between the perceptions of survey respondents with fewer years in their current roles and those with longer careers in education regarding the implementation of the equity constructs.

The data gathered for this study from the interviewees indicated school districts were in the early stages of their understanding and dialoguing about equity-based practices. Researchers in this area indicate the need for a commitment to achieving equity and excellence requires addressing the systemic inequities by removing the barriers to learning for students of color and from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Blankstein & Noguera, 2015; Linton, 2011). The study also identified a significant difference between survey respondents' perceptions of the implementation of the equity constructs of access and entrance, cultural representation and voice, and positive results and outcomes by race. Educators from the dominant white culture may not recognize, acknowledge, or understand the biases perpetuating unequal access to quality educational opportunities (Feagin, 2014). However unintentional, the system of white privilege is maintaining the status quo while denying the existence of racism and oppression (Lindsey et al, 2009).

The majority of school leaders and classroom educators in Minnesota are White; consequently, the involvement of people of color in policy and decision making is marginal. The study found that practices and interventions focused on solving the problems of failing students

rather than examining the systemic issues creating these disparities are problematic. When school personnel are unaware of the need to address systemic inequities, the school culture and outcomes for students of color remain unchanged (Lindsey et al., 2009). An educational equity context for decision making ensures equal access to participate in and make progress in high-quality relevant and rigorous learning experiences preparing each student for life success and career choices after high school (GLEC, 2012).

Limitations

According to Roberts (2010), limitations of the study are aspects affecting results or the interpretation of the results. Generally, these are factors over which the researcher has no control. The study's limitations are as follows:

- The study's initial response rate to the survey was 175/295 (59.3%) participants; 131/295 (44.1%) of the survey responses were usable for analysis. Completed surveys with 10 or more missing responses were eliminated from the data sample. For surveys missing fewer than 9 responses, the missing values were replaced with the overall sample average for that item.
- The majority of respondents to the Leadership for Educational Equity survey were White (78.6%). These respondents may be unaware or incognizant of their patterns of bias and discrimination. The reader should take this limitation into consideration when reviewing the study results.
- During the implementation of the study, some of the respondents attended state-sponsored professional development sessions related to the topic. The information and

knowledge they received at the training could have influences pertaining to their responses.

Recommendations for Further Research

Several areas for further research have been identified based on the findings of the study:

1. A follow-up study should be conducted to pinpoint the organizational, curricular, and policy practices perpetuating systemic inequities which impede student learning (e.g., biased organizational structures, disproportionate discipline, systems of tracking, eligibility criteria for higher level, rigorous courses, and educator mindsets and expectations).
2. A qualitative study should be conducted examining the written policies defining educational equity. The study should include a large sample group of districts from multiple regions in Minnesota.
3. A qualitative study should be conducted to gather information regarding the barriers and challenges educators experience when implementing the multi-dimensional framework for achieving educational equity as illustrated in Figure 3. (Fraser, 2008; GLEC, 2012, 2016a).

Recommendations for Practice

The following recommendations for implementing effective practices to achieve educational equity are presented based on the results of the study and its discussion:

1. School leaders should take action by intentionally promoting equity within the schools, districts, and communities. When guiding systemic change for equity, leaders must model inclusion, inspire confidence, challenge inequities, enable

collaboration, and encourage dialogue to include the voices of students, families, and the community in decision making (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Leaders need to be strong, patient, and understand change takes time and shifting mindsets is a personal journey as well as professional journey (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006).

2. School leaders should focus the efforts of all staff on implementing the multi-dimensional framework for achieving educational equity as illustrated in Figure 3.
3. The federally-funded Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center should conduct professional development to promote implementation of the multi-dimensional framework for achieving educational equity as illustrated in Figure 3. This professional development should include coaching and supports for embedding student-centered, inclusive, rigorous, and culturally responsive and relevant teaching and classroom management procedures into all learning experiences.

Summary

The title of the study is “Leadership for Educational Equity: Seek Understanding beyond the Words and Beneath the Practices.” This title was chosen intentionally as the researcher wanted to explore “beyond” the current rhetoric and explore “beneath” the current organizational structures, policies, and curricular practices to “understand” the fundamental requirements for a school system to offer an excellent and equitable education to each child (Shields, 2004). John Dewey (1910) wrote “understanding is the result of facts acquiring meaning” for the learner. The researcher wanted to understand the reasons for the current implementation of educational pedagogy and practices that continue to leave learners behind, especially children with black or brown skin or those living in poverty (AECF, 2014, 2015).

Current literature has identified multiple underlying causes for disproportionate and widespread underachievement among student groups; the history of racial inequities in American education (Noguera, 2012; Singleton, 2015), a prevailing white racial frame worldview and systemic racism producing racially-biased educational policies and practices (Lawrence & Keleher, 2004; Feagin, 2014), and opportunity gaps perpetuating lower educational achievement and attainment by students of color and students from impoverished backgrounds (Jordan et al., 2010; Noguera, 2012). Educators must critically reflect on the obstacles related to equity and lack of access to quality instructional opportunities for students from diverse racial and socioeconomic backgrounds and the impact those barriers have on students' lives (Nieto & Bode, 2012). The creation and sustainability of equitable classrooms and schools will require educators and leaders to place the core constructs of educational equity at the center of their conversations (GLEC, 2012, 2016; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015). Lewis (2001) suggested educational institutions nurture students both socially and intellectually, while providing real opportunities to learn in environments fostering appreciation for diversity and critical educational experiences to help all students better understand their places in a global context.

The study found leadership for educational equity requires leaders to be aware of and act upon their core values and convictions because there are multiple-layers to explore and examine when addressing equity. Equity policies and practices must be planned, systemic, and focus on the organizational process, as well as the core teaching and learning processes, curriculum, and school environment and culture. Linda Darling-Hammond (2010) advised that in order to create equitable learning environments, educators “must teach our way out” and establish a purposeful education system preparing each child for success in a global, knowledge-based society.

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

Martin Luther King, Jr.

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Appendix A: Leadership for Educational Equity Survey



Leadership for Educational Equity

Informed Consent

Procedures

The research project is part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Educational Administration and Leadership through St. Cloud State University. Please complete the survey which should take less than 15 minutes.

Research Use and Results

The purpose of the research is to gather information from school representatives in Minnesota about the extent to which school districts systemically address educational equity, the equity-based practices being implemented and perceived as being successful in achieving positive outcomes for learners from diverse racial, ethnic and low socio-economic backgrounds.

Benefits

The results of the study will help to better understand how to address educational equity issues in our schools.

Contact Information

Upon completion, the researcher's dissertation will be electronically available for you to review the results. If you have any questions regarding the research, contact Cindy Shevlin-Woodcock, (612) 240-2627, cnshevlinwoodcock@stcloudstate.edu or Dr. John Eller, Director of Center for Doctoral Studies and Advisor, (320) 308-4220, jfeller@stcloudstate.edu.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of the information gathered during your participation in this study will be maintained. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study will remain anonymous. Your contact information will be kept confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Subject identities will be kept confidential and all records of this study will be kept private. The results of the study will not include any information that would make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept on a password protected computer.



Leadership for Educational Equity

Educational Equity Definition

For purposes of this study, educational equity is defined as each student receiving the supports needed to be successful in school (Linton, 2011). According to current literature, the key constructs of educational equity are identified as: access to rigorous, challenging courses; meaningful participation and engagement; cultural representation and voice; and positive academic and social results and outcomes for each learner especially those from diverse racial, ethnic and low socio-economic backgrounds (Fraser, 2008, Great Lakes Equity Center, 2012, 2016).

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Leadership for Educational Equity

* 2. What is the number of your school district?

3. Does your district have a written policy defining educational equity?

Yes

No

Don't Know

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Leadership for Educational Equity

4. Please rate each statement below based on how your school district SYSTEMICALLY ADDRESSES EDUCATIONAL EQUITY through organizational, curricular and policy practices.

Please rate each statement based on the realities you have observed and experienced in your current position.

		Somewhat	Somewhat		
	Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Agree	
Our district leadership team has members who are racially and/or ethnically diverse.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Our district leadership team examines disaggregated student academic achievement data on a regular basis (weekly, monthly, or quarterly).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Our district leadership team examines school climate (i.e., students' feeling of safety, belonging, engagement and environment) disaggregated by student groups based on race, ethnicity and socioeconomic factors on a regular basis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Our district leadership team examines disaggregated student behavioral data (i.e., office discipline referrals, in and out of school suspensions) on a regular basis (weekly, monthly, or quarterly).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Our district has implemented district-wide initiatives to address disparities in student achievement outcomes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Our district has implemented district-wide initiatives to address disparities identified through school climate surveys.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	
Our district has implemented culturally responsive classroom management practices to address disparities in student behavioral outcomes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree
Our district leadership team disaggregates and analyzes student participation rates in rigorous and challenging courses (i.e., literacy, language, science and mathematics).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our district has established standards for student-centered instruction (i.e., teaching methods that facilitate learning for individual students or groups of students).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our district has established standards for culturally responsive teaching strategies (i.e., relating content and teaching methods to cultural background of students).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our district has established standards for universal design for learning (i.e., access to curriculum designed for all learners).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our district has established standards for curriculum content that are inclusive and reflect the cultural, ethnic and gender diversity of society.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our district monitors whether results of educational services are equitable for all students groups.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our district leadership intentionally pursues input from families to ensure that multiple perspectives and voices are represented in decision-making.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our district leadership intentionally pursues input from the community to ensure that multiple perspectives and voices are represented in decision-making.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In our district each student is career or college ready upon graduation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Leadership for Educational Equity

5. For the following statements, please indicate the EQUITY-BASED PRACTICES THAT ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED AND SUCCESSFULLY ACHIEVING POSITIVE OUTCOMES in your district/school. You may add comments pertinent to any of the practices listed or add information about additional equity-based practices at the end of this section.

In your district/school, which of the following equity-based practices are being implemented?

	Fully Implemented	Partially Implemented	Not implemented at this time
A) Ensuring that instruction is culturally relevant for each student to build on prior knowledge, experiences, cultural background and language skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B) Developing a school climate that fosters respect for cultural diversity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
C) Creating school environments that reflect the diversity of all members of the school community in non-stereotypical ways.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
D) Implementing instructional practices that are inclusive of all students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
E) Staff use data that measures learning outcomes to inform instruction.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Select **ONE** response (Letter) as having the most significant impact toward achieving positive outcomes.



Leadership for Educational Equity

7. For the following statements, please indicate the EQUITY-BASED PRACTICES THAT ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED AND SUCCESSFULLY ACHIEVING POSITIVE OUTCOMES in your district/school.

In your district/school, which of the following equity-based practices are being implemented?

	Fully Implemented	Partially Implemented	Not Implemented at this time
A) Educational staff collaborating (i.e., grade level teams, professional learning communities) to develop learning opportunities for students who struggle academically at school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B) Educational staff collaborate (i.e., grade level teams, professional learning communities) to develop learning opportunities for students who struggle socially at school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
C) Educational staff collaborate (i.e., grade level teams professional learning communities) to develop learning opportunities for students who struggle behaviorally at school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
D) Implementing culturally responsive positive behavior interventions and supports.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
E) Providing teachers with adequate professional development and training to be proficient in culturally responsive teaching.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
F) Providing teachers with adequate professional development and training to be proficient in cross-cultural communication.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. Select ONE response (Letter) as having the most significant impact toward achieving positive outcomes.

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Leadership for Educational Equity

9. For the following statements, please indicate the EQUITY-BASED PRACTICES THAT ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED AND SUCCESSFULLY ACHIEVING POSITIVE OUTCOMES in your district/school.

In your district/school, which of the following equity-based practices are being implemented?

	Fully Implemented	Partially Implemented	Not Implemented at This Time
A) Engaging all families actively in the school to help families support student academic success.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
B) Engaging community members actively in the school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
C) Examining student outcomes and results with equity in mind.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
D) District or school-based leaders actively promote educational equity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
E) Each student is treated as intellectually capable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Select **ONE** response (Letter) as having the most significant impact toward achieving positive outcomes.

11. Please add comments on any of the equity-based practices listed or add additional successful practices you have observed.



Leadership for Educational Equity

Demographic Information

* 12. What is your role in the district?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Superintendent | <input type="radio"/> Assistant Principal |
| <input type="radio"/> Assistant Superintendent | <input type="radio"/> Equity Coordinator or
Cultural Coordinator or
Integration Coordinator or
Diversity Coordinator or
Achievement and Integration Coordinator |
| <input type="radio"/> Director of Curriculum or
Director of Teaching and Learning or
Director of Curriculum and Instruction | <input type="radio"/> Coordinator of Academic Programs |
| <input type="radio"/> Director of Equity or
Director of Equity Services | <input type="radio"/> Cultural Liaison |
| <input type="radio"/> Principal | <input type="radio"/> Collaborative Coordinator |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) | |

* 13. How many years have you served **in your current role** in this district (include this year)?

* 14. Which race/ethnicity best describes you?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific
Islander, Hmong | <input type="radio"/> Hispanic or Latino |
| <input type="radio"/> American Indian or Alaskan Native | <input type="radio"/> Multi-Race |
| <input type="radio"/> Black, African or African American, Somali | <input type="radio"/> White |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) | |



Leadership for Educational Equity

The researcher will conduct four to six follow-up interviews regarding the implementation of equity-based practices in Minnesota school districts. If you would agree to participate in the follow-up interview with the researcher, please click on the link below.

[Interview follow-up link](#)

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Leadership for Educational Equity Interview

Please complete the contact information below.

Name:

Title:

School District:

Email address:

Work phone
number:

Mobile phone
number:

Thank you for your thoughtful responses to the survey questions.

Done

Powered by



See how easy it is to [create a survey](#).

**Appendix B: Leadership for Educational Equity
Interview Questions**

Name:

Date:

District:

1. Please tell me about the work you do for your school district? What are your primary responsibilities? How long have been in your current position?
2. From the survey, 50% of districts responded indicating their district has a written policy regarding standards for education equity? Does yours? How was it developed? May I have a copy of the policy?
3. Specifically, what organizational practices are being systemically implemented to address educational equity in your school or district? For purposes of this study, organizational practices are defined as those school management structures impacting student learning and monitor educational services and outcomes to ensure they are equitable for all student groups.
4. The survey results indicated there was a significant difference in agreement between the perception of White respondents and respondent of color regarding the systemic implementation of equity-based policies. Why do you think this is?
5. How are equity issues being addressed in the curriculum?
6. What equity-based instructional practices are being implemented and evaluated? Are these practices similar or different among the schools, grade levels? If yes, what are the reasons for the differences?
7. Which equity-based instructional practices are showing the most significant outcomes for your students? How do you know?
8. What barriers to achieving educational equity have you experienced as a leader in your school or district?
9. How did you address the barriers or what changes have you made to address the challenges?
10. What advice would you give to others in education as they lead equity-based systemic changes?

Appendix C: Institutional Review Board Approval



Institutional Review Board (IRB)

720 4th Avenue South MC 204K, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

Name: Cindy Shevlin-Woodcock
Address 5017 89th Crescent
 Brooklyn Park, MN 55443 USA
Email: cnshevlinwoodcock@stcloudstate.edu

**IRB PROTOCOL
 DETERMINATION:
 Exempt Review**

Project Title: Leadership for Educational Equity

Advisor Dr. John Eller

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol to conduct research involving human subjects. Your project has been: **APPROVED**

Please note the following important information concerning IRB projects:

- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of participants in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).

- For expedited or full board review, the principal investigator must submit a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated on this letter to report conclusion of the research or request an extension.

- Exempt review only requires the submission of a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated in this letter if an extension of time is needed.

- Approved consent forms display the official IRB stamp which documents approval and expiration dates. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.

- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc.). The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

If we can be of further assistance, feel free to contact the IRB at 320-308-3290 or email ri@stcloudstate.edu and please reference the SCSU IRB number when corresponding.

IRB Institutional Official:

Dr. Latha Ramakrishnan
 Interim Associate Provost for Research
 Dean of Graduate Studies

OFFICE USE ONLY

SCSU IRB# 1615 - 2019	Type: Exempt Review	Today's Date: 9/21/2016
1st Year Approval Date: 9/21/2016	2nd Year Approval Date:	3rd Year Approval Date:
1st Year Expiration Date:	2nd Year Expiration Date:	3rd Year Expiration Date: