

# EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE AUDIT REPORT

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ANTIOCH UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



NATIONAL CENTER FOR URBAN SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION



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# BACKGROUND

In 2005, San Diego State University founded the National Center for Urban School Transformation (NCUST) to help school districts and their partners transform schools into places where all students achieve academic proficiency, evidence a love of learning, and graduate well-prepared to succeed in post-secondary education, the workplace, and their communities. To this end, NCUST identifies, celebrates, and studies schools where all demographic groups achieve outstanding educational successes. Our annual America's Best Schools Award Program provides us the opportunity to learn from schools that exemplify both equitable and excellent learning results. We strive to disseminate all we learn from these schools as we endeavor to support other schools and districts that are eager to pursue similar outstanding results.

Our research has resulted in a substantial knowledge base regarding the beliefs, characteristics, structures, systems, and practices that lead all groups of students to excellent learning outcomes. Key findings are documented in these books: *Teaching Practices from America's Best Urban Schools* (2012), *Leadership in America's Best Urban Schools* (2017); *Five Practices for Improving the Success of Latino Students: A Guide for Secondary School Leaders* (2018); *Teaching Practices from America's Best Urban Schools, 2nd edition* (2019); and *When Black Students Excel: How Schools Can Engage and Empower Black Students* (2022). This knowledge base is the benchmark we utilize when conducting our equity audit process and is the focus of our work aimed at building the capacity of other educators. We have found impressive similarities across the high-performing schools we have studied despite differences in location, size, enrollment characteristics, grade-level configurations, expenditures, and other factors. In short, the educators in these schools improved curricula by teaching more rigorous content to a greater depth of understanding than other schools. They planned and delivered instruction in ways that were more likely to lead their students to mastery of the concepts and skills they were teaching. They fostered school cultures in which all students, teachers, parents, and support staff felt safe, cared for, valued, and respected. They built and implemented a coherent educational improvement system – a set of interdependent structures designed to support the ongoing improvement of student outcomes across a variety of indicators (e.g., achievement, extracurricular engagement, graduation, etc.). And, perhaps most importantly, these actions were guided by their shared belief in the capacity of all their students to succeed.

Between October 10, 2023, and January 24, 2024, NCUST conducted equity and excellence visits at the twenty-five schools in Antioch Unified School District. These audits were designed to explore the similarities and differences between the practices and structures in place throughout the Antioch Unified School District and those that NCUST has identified in schools that have been very successful in educating all demographic groups of students. During the audit process, NCUST examined critical school characteristics, such as school culture, student access to rigorous curricula, and the quality of teaching and learning. In each of these areas, NCUST considered how processes, structures, and systems influenced what we found and how they could influence powerful, sustained improvement efforts. What follows is a description of our audit process, key findings emerging from the data, and recommendations intended to help the Antioch Unified School District develop, refine, and prioritize their improvement plans in ways that will lead to higher levels of success for the diverse populations of students they serve.

# METHODOLOGY

Prior to each school visit, an NCUST representative contacted the principals to arrange opportunities to observe classrooms and interview teachers, parents, students, and support staff. Also, NCUST representatives compiled data regarding school demographics, achievement, attendance, student behavior, and school success.

NCUST staff conducted informal observations of common areas, offices, cafeteria, library, playgrounds, and the general school environment at each of the schools. Additionally, the equity audit team members visited most classrooms at each school. An NCUST classroom observation protocol was utilized to document the part of the lesson observed, the number and demographics of students, and the cognitive demand of the activity in which students were engaged during the observation. In addition, evidence was collected regarding the climate and culture of the classroom, a variety of teaching practices utilized, teacher clarity and focus on mastery, student engagement, and levels of understanding exhibited by various groups of students.

In addition to the observations, at each school, a member of the NCUST team interviewed the school principal and a sample of teachers, other certified/credentialed school staff members, students, and parents.

Dr. Escobedo, NCUST's Executive Director, interviewed AUSD cabinet members and board members. Standard protocols were used and included open-ended questions relevant to the expertise of participants. As well, a few questions were common across groups to gather perspectives about core practices from multiple perspectives. Generally, participants were asked about their roles and responsibilities, experiences at school, and their opinions about strengths and needs at each school. All stakeholders were thoughtful and reflective and contributed significantly to our understanding of the Antioch Unified School District. Artifacts, such as master schedules, bell schedules, curriculum documents, school profiles, and data reports, also informed our study and understanding.

Upon completion of the interviews and observations, the NCUST team examined the data collected, identified themes, and compared the school's practices with the practices found in the high-performing schools NCUST has awarded and studied. The findings in this report reflect a triangulation of the multiple data sources cited above; however, it is important to note that the findings are based upon a snapshot of each school. Teaching and learning observed on the days of the visit may or may not be representative of typical teaching and learning occurring throughout the district. Similarly, the interviews conducted may or may not be representative of the sentiments and opinions of all teachers and administrators. That said, we were able to hear from many stakeholders, and clear themes emerged from the data across multiple stakeholder groups. As well, this aligned with our observations and patterns in the quantitative data.

# FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Students in the Antioch Unified School District

According to the California Department of Education's DataQuest the Antioch Unified School District served approximately 16,171 students in TK through 12th grade in the 2022-2023 academic year. Of all AUSD students, 76.0% were socioeconomically disadvantaged in the 2022-2023 academic year. The largest racial/ethnic group served was Latino/Hispanic, comprising 49.7% of the student population. The second-largest racial/ethnic group was Black/African American, comprising 23.5% of the student population. Additionally, 10.4% of the students were White, 5.0% of the students were Two or More Races, 4.8% of the students were Filipino, 4.4% of the students were Asian, 1.6% of the students were Pacific Islander, and 0.6% of the students were American Indian or Alaska Native during the 2022-2023 academic year. Approximately 18.6% of the students were designated as English learners, and 16% received special education services during the 2022-2023 academic year. Furthermore, 0.9% of the students received foster care, and 1.7% of students were experiencing homelessness.

TABLE 1  
**AUSD Demographics 2022-2023**  
Source: Dataquest

Student Group	Total	Percentage
AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK	3,808	23.5%
AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKA NATIVE	92	0.6%
ASIAN	706	4.4%
FILIPINO	774	4.8%
HISPANIC/LATINO	8,043	49.7%
PACIFIC ISLANDER	254	1.6%
TWO OR MORE RACES	807	5.0%
WHITE	1,686	10.4%
TOTAL	16,171	
ENGLISH LEARNERS	2,826	18.6%
EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS	263	1.7%
FOSTER YOUTH	136	0.9%
SOCIOECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED	11,546	76.0%
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	2,436	16%

## Staff in the Antioch Unified School District

Students benefit from a team of appropriately certificated and well-experienced educators throughout the Antioch Unified School District. Staff members include music teachers, physical education teachers, and reading intervention teachers at the elementary school level. However, there is room for growth in ensuring students throughout AUSD are served by a diverse staff that reflects the diversity of the AUSD student population. In the high-performing schools NCUST awards, district leaders, school leaders, and teacher leaders establish teacher recruitment and selection processes that identify individuals who recognize the brilliance of all students, particularly students of color, low-income students, and students from historically underserved communities. Leaders hire and build teams that demonstrate the excellent capacity to create and sustain positive transformational cultures for all students. In many AUSD school sites, we saw stand-out leaders and teachers who exemplified these practices. However, there should be continued work to fill staff vacancies with individuals who have substantial capacity to help students of color and socioeconomically disadvantaged students feel a sense of belonging, love, and joy.

## Recommendation 1: Increasing Diversity of Teaching Staff

**The Antioch Unified School District should support principals by helping develop strong pools of highly qualified teaching candidates who represent the rich student diversity of the district. As well, the Antioch Unified School District should consider how it can help principals establish and sustain environments that will cause all teachers (but especially racially/ethnically diverse teachers) to choose to remain employed in the district. Additionally, the district human resource department should create a recruitment plan and monitor certificated and classified staff demographics to calibrate improved diversity.**

## Professional Development in AUSD

While one important personnel issue is the active, ongoing recruitment of talented, caring new staff members, another important issue is the professional development of existing staff members. In high-performing schools, professional development is focused on a few critical improvement issues. As well, professional development influences real improvements in practice when the same few topics are pursued until changes in practice and/or changes in outcomes are achieved. Also, the likelihood of a positive impact on student learning is enhanced by professional development that is tightly aligned to the focus of teacher collaboration efforts and the focus of classroom observations and feedback.

In Antioch Unified School District, cabinet leaders, principals and some teachers at most elementary school sites, discussed the AUSD focus on K-2 Literacy and foundational skills development utilizing new, researched-based curricula. Principals noted that this has been a new focus for this year. The NCUST equity audit team executive coaches found many instances of cohesion with phonemic awareness and phonics instruction across K-2 classrooms across individual campuses and in elementary schools in AUSD as schools utilized Heggerty, UFLI, and Secret Stories for foundational literacy instruction.

Across upper grades in elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools in AUSD, it was unclear to NCUST equity audit team members what the common professional learning threads for elevating instructional practices were.

# GENERAL INFORMATION

Across most schools at all grade and school levels, staff teams discussed additions of a Wellness Room, some professional learning around the implementation of this, and a staff member who supervises this room with a goal to center student wellness and choices for de-escalation or mental health during the school day. While implementation of the Wellness Room varied from site to site, we saw many Wellness Rooms that were highly functioning, recording student data through district-provided systems, and that work cohesively with mental health clinicians at school sites. Many students and parents spoke to their liking of the Wellness Room on their campus and the positive impact that it has on them and their children.

Other common practices from the Wellness Wheel that was evidenced included CARE Team meetings and referrals. The functionality of these varied from school site to school site. In high functioning versions of this model, teachers, administrators and families found this process to be cohesive, helpful, and solutions oriented. These CARE Teams were mostly discussed at elementary school levels.

Some school administrators and teams discussed their ongoing work on standards/mastery-based learning. This was not consistent across school-sites. Many mentioned the need for common benchmark assessments (outside of i-Ready) that could help teachers calibrate their data across common grade levels at their school site and across the district.



## Recommendation 2: Professional Development

We recommend that district leaders set aside time for principals to specify the changes they expect to see resulting from professional development efforts. Wherever appropriate, principals should specify how professional development efforts will result in beneficial outcomes for the diverse groups of students they serve. Additionally, district leaders should support principals in understanding that the likelihood of generating changes in classrooms and changes in learning results is greatly enhanced when traditional professional development efforts are aligned with A) changes in schedules, routines, and procedures; B) protocols and routines that shape teacher collaboration meetings; C) issues that are the focus of classroom observations and feedback; and D) issues that are the focus of regular oral and written communication from school leaders.

We also advise continuing to find ways to celebrate this work throughout the district through methods such as peer observations, publishing and videotaping classroom practices, interviewing teachers, and disseminating best practices through newsletters or professional development. AUSD might consider more ways to codify best practices through providing instructional playbooks, creating learning walk rubrics that incorporate specific quality indicators, or through support of school and instructional leaders in providing continued professional learning that supports the Wellness Wheel and foundational literacy work.

While we acknowledge that there may be shifts in focus with district-wide professional development efforts going forward, we suggest continuing to highlight best practices across the district with components of the Wellness Wheel and foundational literacy efforts and to build upon the current efforts if redirecting the instructional focus to other areas. Additionally, we suggest that district leaders support principals in preserving an emphasis on foundational literacy instruction and particular components of the Wellness Wheel in classroom observations with a goal of continuing to lift the level of these practices throughout the campuses.

## School Leadership: Classroom Observations and Professional Development Alignment in AUSD

In high-performing schools, instructional leaders regularly spend abundant time in classrooms observing teaching and learning and providing formative feedback to help teachers improve their craft. In many high-performing schools, principals spent 40% of the time during school days engaged in visiting classrooms and/or engaged in teacher collaboration meetings. Due to the pandemic, leaders across the Antioch Unified School District and across the nation are reporting greater difficulties dedicating time to classroom observations and feedback. Nonetheless, equity audit team members noted variation in the extent to which school leaders spent time observing classrooms and providing teachers feedback. Some school leaders reported having systems in place for informal observations ranging from paper-based methods to electronic-based methods to provide positive feedback, inquiry-based feedback, and critical feedback to educators. Outside of state-required formal observation protocols, district leaders might consider supporting principals in agreeing upon easy-to-use tools to track the time they spend in classrooms and to provide teachers with quality informal feedback. This way, principals can know with certainty that they are investing adequate time in classrooms and can track trends throughout the school. The regular, active, constructive engagement of school leaders in classrooms is essential to the district's success in providing high-quality educational services that result in excellent learning outcomes for all demographic groups of students.

At all schools, we found that professional development efforts were focused on important topics. Stakeholders noted that these topics have included MTSS and (multi-tiered systems of supports) and components of the Wellness Wheel, educator-choice topics through district learning management systems, studying assessments such as i-Ready and foundational literacy skill assessments, and culturally relevant practices such as English language development, or trauma-informed practices such as restorative justice.

However, at many school sites, there was little evidence suggesting that the issues of focus in professional development were reinforced in either teacher collaboration meetings or in classroom observations and feedback. As a result, professional development is less likely to yield desired changes in practices.

### Recommendation 3: Classroom Observations and Teacher Feedback

**We recommend that district leaders work with principals to identify strategies to maximize the amount of time school leaders spend observing classrooms and providing feedback. Leaders should work together to identify simple ways to track and report the amount of time they spend in classrooms and the amount of time they spend providing feedback. Additionally, district leaders should support principals in using their classroom observations and feedback to reinforce progress in implementing strategies that have been the primary focus of professional development.**

### Communication from School Leaders

Leaders in high-performing schools communicate with constituents in ways that reinforce a strong focus on improvement efforts. Written and oral communication emphasizes improvement initiatives by celebrating progress and highlighting opportunities to build upon recent efforts. Throughout the district, in many schools, parents and staff members reported receiving clear and appropriate communication from school leaders. Parents demonstrated awareness of important improvement initiatives and school committees. Parents perceived that many district schools were continually striving to be better. Teachers and staff at each site reported similarly, noting weekly newsletters provided by most principals and open-door policies where staff can easily share ideas or concerns with most school leadership.

## Student Attendance in the Antioch Unified School District

According to the California Department of Education’s School Dashboard, during the 2022-2023 academic year, 36.6% of Antioch Unified students were chronically absent, which was higher than the statewide average of chronic absenteeism of 24.9%. This means that 36.6% of Antioch Unified students were absent from school on at least 10% of school days.

However, some subgroups of students in Antioch Unified had higher percentages of chronic absenteeism. These student groups included Pacific Islander students who had a chronic absenteeism rate of 51.9%, foster youth who had a chronic absenteeism rate of 46.8%, Black/African American students who had a chronic absenteeism rate of 45.8%, students experiencing homelessness who had a chronic absenteeism rate of 45.4%, students with disabilities had a chronic absenteeism rate of 45.0%, students of two or more races had a chronic absenteeism rate of 42.3%, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students had a chronic absenteeism rate of 39.6%. All student groups in Antioch Unified School District had chronic absenteeism rates higher than the California statewide average for their respective subgroups except for American Indian/Alaska Native students. Efforts to decrease chronic absenteeism in Antioch Unified School District may positively influence efforts to improve academic achievement.

**TABLE 2**  
**Chronic Absenteeism in AUSD 2022-2023**

Source: CDE Dataquest

Chronic Absenteeism Rates	Total in AUSD	CA Statewide
AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK	45.8% N=3,802	36.6% N=301,921
AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKA NATIVE	35.1% N=94	36.3% N=26,551
ASIAN	19.5% N=719	10.2% N=578,202
FILIPINO	19.9% N=783	13.4% N=134,249
HISPANIC/LATINO	35.5% N=7,945	28.9% N=3,344,977
PACIFIC ISLANDER	51.9% N=268	36.6% N=25,120
TWO OR MORE RACES	42.3% N=801	21.4% N=263,620
WHITE	34.8% N=1,585	19.7% N=1,221,741
ENGLISH LEARNERS	32.3% N=3,618	28.1% N=1,197,569
EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS	45.4% N=315	40.6% N=242,478
FOSTER YOUTH	46.8% N=216	39.2% N=40,747
SOCIOECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED	39.6% N=12,973	30.5% N=3,760,713
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	45.0% N=2,768	34.6% N=858,236
TOTAL	36.6% N=16,977	24.9% N=5,958,889

## Recommendation 4: Reducing Chronic Absenteeism

The district should work with school leaders to ensure that rates of absenteeism are improved upon for all schools and for all student subgroups. It is important that each school leader know which students are chronically absent (or at risk of becoming chronically absent). School leaders should be sensitive to attendance issues that might be impacting various demographic groups of students. Where appropriate, school leaders should identify specific strategies to encourage regular daily attendance. District leaders should consider how to support principals in identifying, implementing, monitoring, and refining strategies that decrease chronic absenteeism for all subgroups of students.

## English Learners in the Antioch Unified School District

According to the California Department of Education's DataQuest, as of the 2022-2023 academic year, the Antioch Unified School District served 2,826 English learners. The Antioch Unified School District utilizes the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) to determine each student's level of proficiency in communicating in English. In the 2022-2023 school year, 44.9% of English learners were making progress toward English language proficiency according to the California School Dashboard. This was below the state average of 48.7% of English learners in California making progress toward English language proficiency. Furthermore, 13.95% of English learners in Antioch Unified School District scored at the proficient level on the Summative ELPAC in the 2022-2023 academic year. This was less than the statewide average of 16.50% of English learners in California scoring at the proficient level on the Summative ELPAC. Ensuring that English learners are making regular progress helps them have access to opportunities that lead them to achieve their academic, social, and economic potential.

## Recommendations 5: English Language Development

The ELD framework should be closely aligned with the school's overall curriculum, ensuring that language development is seamlessly integrated into all subject areas. During our classroom observations, students' talk was minimal, therefore, all teachers at Antioch Unified School District need to establish critical strategies to ensure students are engaging in language throughout the day. Professional development opportunities and implementation practices should be provided to teachers to enhance their capacity and follow through to effectively teach language and content simultaneously in a sustainable capacity. Additionally, ongoing formative assessments can help monitor students' progress, allowing for timely adjustments to instructional strategies and interventions.

Tiered instruction is an educational strategy that involves tailoring teaching methods and content to meet the diverse needs and abilities of students in a classroom. This approach is particularly relevant in the context of English Language Development (ELD) for English language learners (ELLs). The concept of tiered instruction typically involves three levels or tiers of instruction: foundational, intermediate, and advanced.

## Student Discipline in the Antioch Unified School District

In the high-performing schools NCUST awards, the numbers of students suspended and the total number of days students are suspended are remarkably low for every demographic group (less than one day of suspension for each student in the demographic group). The low rate of suspension is indicative of a culture in which students and teachers work well together. The low rate of suspension also ensures better school attendance and better academic achievement.

According to CDE’s DataQuest, during the 2022-2023 school year, 7.7% of students in the Antioch Unified School District were suspended at least once. This means that 7.7% of the AUSD’s students missed one or more days of school because of a disciplinary incident. Furthermore, this was higher than the statewide average suspension rate of 3.8%. Some Antioch Unified Schools had suspension rates higher than the AUSD average suspension rate of 7.7%. These schools included Black Diamond Middle (21.40% suspension rate), Park Middle (20.20% suspension rate), Antioch Middle (18.0% suspension rate), Dallas Ranch Middle (18.0% suspension rate), Antioch High (9% suspension rate), and Marsh Elementary (7.9% suspension rate). Moreover, ten Antioch Unified Schools had suspension rates below the statewide average suspension rate of 3.8%. These schools include Lone Tree Elementary, Dozier-Libbey Medical High, Kimball Elementary, Muir (John) Elementary, Belshaw Elementary, Sutter Elementary, Diablo Vista Elementary, Prospects High, Turner Elementary, and Thomas Gaines Virtual Academy. The low suspension rates at these school sites are a strength that should be celebrated.

Additionally, some student groups in Antioch Unified School District had suspension rates higher than the AUSD’s average suspension rate of 7.7%. These student groups included foster youth (18.70% suspension rate), Black/African American students (15.10% suspension rate), students with disabilities (10.90% suspension rate), American Indian/Alaska Native students (10.20% suspension rate), students experiencing homelessness (9.40% suspension rate), students of two or more races (8.70% suspension rate), and socioeconomically disadvantaged students (8.30% suspension rate). This means that Antioch Unified School District’s foster youth, Black/African American students, students with disabilities, American Indian/Alaska Native students, students experiencing homelessness, students of two or more races, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students were suspended at disproportionate rates.

**TABLE 3**  
**Suspensions by Ethnicity/Subgroup**  
Source: CDE Dataquest

Ethnicity/Student Group	AUSD Enrollment	Total Suspensions	Unduplicated # of Suspensions	AUSD Suspension Rate	Suspension Rate for Ethnicity/ Student Group
ANTIOCH UNIFIED	16,628	2,139	1,285	7.70%	3.80%
AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK	4,015	1,124	606	15.10%	8.90%
AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKA NATIVE	98	15	10	10.20%	7.50%
ASIAN	745	18	16	2.10%	1.10%
FILIPINO	806	17	15	1.90%	1.30%
HISPANIC/LATINO	8,193	689	465	5.70%	3.90%
PACIFIC ISLANDER	281	19	14	5.00%	5.00%
TWO OR MORE RACES	826	124	72	8.70%	3.40%
WHITE	1,659	129	86	5.20%	2.90%
ENGLISH LEARNERS	3,717	258	177	4.80%	3.80%
EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS	329	58	31	9.40%	6.50%
FOSTER YOUTH	257	106	48	18.70%	13.90%
SOCIOECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED	13,394	1,896	1,107	8.30%	4.60%
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	2,998	605	326	10.90%	6.00%

### Recommendation 6: Reducing Disproportionalities in Suspensions

School leaders should be expected to monitor the number of suspensions, the demographics of students suspended, and the reasons for suspensions or other disciplinary actions. District leaders should support school leaders (and their leadership teams) in developing and refining plans for proactively reducing behavior incidents. As well, district leaders should support school leadership teams in continuing to implement more effective strategies for responding to behavior incidents (e.g., restorative justice strategies, trauma-informed care, and mediation).

### Student Achievement in the Antioch Unified School District

In 2022-2023, Antioch Unified School District students took the California Assessment for Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11 in both English language arts and mathematics. Additionally, students in grades 5, 8, 11, and 12 took the California Science Test (CST). At every grade level and in every subject area, the percentage of Antioch students who met or exceeded standards was lower than the state-wide percentage of students who met or exceeded standards, as indicated below in Table 1.4. AUSD's highest-performing subject was English language arts, followed by science, then followed by mathematics. In English language arts, grade 11 students performed the highest with 44.78% of 11th grade students meeting or exceeding standards. In mathematics, third-grade students performed the highest at 21.04% of third-grade students meeting or exceeding standards. In science, 11th graders performed the highest, with 18.20% of 11th graders meeting or exceeding standards.

**TABLE 4**  
**AUSD/CA CAASPP Assessment Data 2022-2023**  
Source: CAASPP Test Results

Grade	AUSD % Met or Exceeded Standards in ELA	State of CA % Met or Exceeded Standards in ELA	AUSD % Met or Exceeded Standards in MATH	State of CA % Met or Exceeded Standards in MATH	AUSD % Met or Exceeded Standards in SCIENCE	State of CA % Met or Exceeded Standards in SCIENCE
ALL GRADES	26.32%	46.66%	13.70%	34.62%	15.54%	30.18%
GRADE 3	21.50%	42.96%	21.04%	45.11%		
GRADE 4	21.29%	43.74%	16.97%	40.80%		
GRADE 5	25.92%	46.68%	11.73%	33.38%	14.39%	31.86%
GRADE 6	20.75%	44.17%	13.31%	33.19%		
GRADE 7	27.56%	49.22%	12.84%	32.04%		
GRADE 8	20.91%	46.64%	8.34%	29.24%	13.90%	28.76%
GRADE 11	44.78%	54.80%	11.73%	26.97%	18.20%	31.67%
GRADE 12					10.84%	26.91%

Additionally, the state assessment data for Antioch Unified School District students reveal variations in the performances of students from different demographic groups as indicated in Table 1.5 below. For example, the overall percentage of AUSD students meeting or exceeding grade level in English language arts was 26.32%. However, only 18.43% of Black/African American students, and only 22.76% of students meeting low-income criteria performed at the proficient or advanced level on the same assessment. Similarly, the overall percentage of AUSD students meeting or exceeding standards in mathematics was 13.70%. However, only 8.22% of Black/African American students, only 11.78% of Latino/Hispanic students, and only 10.89% of students meeting low-income criteria performed at the proficient or advanced level on the same assessment.

**TABLE 5**  
**AUSD/CA CAASPP Data 2022-2023**  
(Overall and Student Groups)

Overall AUSD 2022-23 (CAASPP)*	AUSD % PROF. OR ADV. ELA	State of CA % PROF. OR ADV. ELA	AUSD % PROF. OR ADV. MATH	State of CA % PROF. OR ADV. ELA
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>26.32%</b>	<b>47.06%</b>	<b>13.70%</b>	<b>33.38%</b>
AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK N=1,764	18.43%	30.33%	8.22%	15.93%
AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKA NATIVE N=40	20.00%	33.85%	12.20%	21.95%
ASIAN N = 339	39.82%	75.27%	26.02%	69.46%
FILIPINO N=409	52.32%	70.02%	31.04%	54.16%
HISPANIC/LATINO N= 3,887	24.57%	36.40%	11.78%	21.24%
PACIFIC ISLANDER N=123	20.32%	38.52%	14.64%	25.54%
TWO OR MORE RACES N= 275	28.53%	59.88%	15.78%	47.05%
WHITE OR CAUCASIAN N= 724	34.11%	61.36%	20.74%	48.18%
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS N=1,535	7.30%	12.47%	4.69%	9.71%
EVER-ENGLISH LEARNER N= 2,636	24.92%	36.48%	11.40%	23.39%
EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS N=128	17.97%	25.80%	9.78%	16.15%
FOSTER YOUTH N=64	12.51%	19.43%	1.56%	10.47%
SOCIOECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED N=5,860	22.76%	35.24%	10.89%	21.23%
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES N=1,207	5.64%	15.61%	3.40%	11.41%

\*N= students with scores in ELA

### AUSD Graduation Data

In Antioch Unified School District, there are six high schools, including Antioch High, Bidwell Continuation High School, Deer Valley High, Dozier-Libbey Medical High, Live Oak High (Continuation), and Prospects High (Alternative). Antioch Unified School District’s 2022-2023 four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate was 81.8% which was below the statewide cohort graduation rate of 86.2%. Some high schools in Antioch Unified School District had graduation rates that exceeded the statewide cohort graduation rate. These schools included Deer Valley High (89.10% graduation rate) and Dozier-Libbey Medical High (99.30% graduation rate).

Furthermore, the statewide average percentage of graduates who met the UC/CSU requirements was 52.40%. In Antioch Unified School District, 20.4% of graduates met the UC/CSU requirements in the 2022-2023 academic year, which was significantly lower than the state average. The high school with the highest percentage of graduates meeting UC/CSU requirements rate was Dozier-Libbey Medical High (40.80% of graduates meeting UC/CSU requirements). This was followed by Deer Valley High, where 21.7% of graduates met UC/CSU requirements, and Antioch High, where 20.4% of graduates met UC/CSU requirements. Additionally, Dozier-Libbey Medical High had the highest percentage of graduates in the district who earned a Seal of Biliteracy (9.2%) and who earned a Golden State Seal Merit Diploma (43.00%).

**TABLE 6**  
**AUSD Graduation Rates 2022-2023**  
Source: CDE’s DataQuest

Name	Cohort Students	Regular HS Diploma Graduates	Cohort Graduation Rate	Graduates Meeting UC/CSU	Graduates Earning a Seal of Biliteracy	Graduates Earning a Golden State Seal Merit Diploma
ANTIOCH UNIFIED	1,306	1,068	81.80%	20.40%	3.80%	23.30%
STATEWIDE TOTAL	495,492	427,241	86.20%	52.40%	12.40%	31.40%
ANTIOCH HIGH	464	393	84.70%	20.90%	3.30%	26.20%
BIDWELL CONTINUATION HIGH	104	67	64.40%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
DEER VALLEY HIGH	403	359	89.10%	21.70%	4.20%	23.70%
DOZIER-LIBBEY MEDICAL HIGH	143	142	99.30%	40.80%	9.20%	43.00%
LIVE OAK HIGH (CONTINUATION)	110	68	61.80%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
PROSPECTS HIGH (ALTERNATIVE)	65	38	58.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Variations of graduation rates among student groups in Antioch Unified School District during the 2022-2023 school year can be viewed below in Table 1.7. For example, the graduation rate for Antioch Unified School District’s White students was 85.40% in 2022-2023, while only 75.40% of Antioch Unified School District’s Black/African American students graduated in the same year. Additionally, 26.10% of Antioch Unified School District’s White graduates met UC/CSU requirements upon graduation, while only 11.60% of Antioch Unified School District’s Black/African American students met UC/CSU requirements upon graduation.

Similarly, the graduation rate for Antioch Unified School District’s Asian students was 93.00% in 2022-2023, while only 81.00% of Antioch Unified School District’s Latino/Hispanic students graduated in the same year. Moreover, 39.40% of Antioch Unified School District’s Asian graduates met UC/CSU requirements upon graduation, while only 19.40% of Antioch Unified School District’s Latino/Hispanic students met UC/CSU requirements upon graduation. It should also be noted that for all Antioch Unified School District’s student groups, the percentage of statewide graduates meeting UC/CSU requirements exceeded the percentage of AUSD graduates meeting UC/CSU requirements for the same student group. For example, only 26.10% of White graduates in Antioch Unified School District graduated meeting the UC/CSU requirements, while the statewide average of White students meeting UC/CSU requirements was 57.90%. Similarly, the overall average of socioeconomically disadvantaged students in California who graduated meeting UC/CSU requirements was 44.30%. However, only 17.9% of Antioch Unified School District’s socioeconomically disadvantaged students graduated meeting UC/CSU requirements in the 2022-2023 academic year.

**TABLE 7**  
**AUSD Graduation Rate by Demographic Group 2022-2023**

Source: CDE Dataquest

Demographic Group	AUSD # of Cohort Students	AUSD # of Regular HS Diploma Graduates	AUSD Cohort Graduation Rate	Statewide Cohort Graduation Rate	% of AUSD Graduates Meeting UC/CSU Requirements	% of Statewide Graduates Meeting UC/CSU Requirements
ANTIOCH UNIFIED	1,306	1,068	81.80%	86.20%	20.40%	52.40%
AFRICAN AMERICAN/BLACK	309	233	75.40%	77.90%	11.60%	42.60%
AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKA NATIVE	N/A <11	N/A	N/A	79.10%	N/A	32.20%
ASIAN	71	66	93.00%	94.50%	39.40%	79.10%
FILIPINO	68	65	95.60%	94.60%	27.70%	71.80%
HISPANIC/LATINO	617	500	81.00%	83.90%	19.40%	44.60%
PACIFIC ISLANDER	17	15	88.20%	84.30%	20.00%	43.00%
TWO OR MORE RACES	58	48	82.80%	88.50%	25.00%	60.70%
WHITE	157	134	85.40%	89.70%	26.10%	57.90%
ENGLISH LEARNERS	242	179	74.00%	72.50%	4.50%	26.60%
EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS	60	43	71.70%	72.70%	14.00%	28.10%
FOSTER YOUTH	27	14	51.90%	61.20%	0.00%	19.60%
SOCIOECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED	1,100	886	80.50%	83.30%	17.90%	44.30%
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	218	147	67.40%	71.90%	0.7%	21.10%

### **Recommendation 7: Student Learning Outcomes**

Each Antioch Unified School District school should strive to generate outstanding learning outcomes for every racial, ethnic, income, and language group served. Regardless of the size of the demographic group, school leaders should work to help their staff members develop a sense of collective efficacy for improving learning results for all students. District and school leaders can promote this sense of collective efficacy by 1) ensuring that all students experience a positive transformational culture where they feel valued, respected, and capable while also ensuring that all school personnel work in an environment that nurtures trust, collaboration, and mutual respect; 2) ensuring that all students access rich and rigorous curricula; and 3) ensuring that all students benefit from engaging and effective instruction. District leaders should also support school leaders by providing them with strategies, structures, and processes that help monitor progress in a formative way.



## POSITIVE TRANSFORMATIONAL CULTURE

The NCUST teams found many indicators of positive, transformational cultures at many schools. Students reported feeling welcome, supported, and part of a community. Students and parents believed that teachers and other school personnel cared sincerely about all students. Principals should be commended for creating and sustaining school environments in which teachers feel respected and valued. Similarly, teachers should be commended for creating and sustaining classroom environments in which students feel respected and valued.

District-wide efforts connected to the AUSD Wellness Wheel and focus on “Healing and Resilient Centered Schools” were evident as the NCUST teams audited and observed each campus. While effectiveness and implementation varied from site to site, there were clear trends that had positive impacts on the school culture experienced by AUSD students. The NCUST team observed elements aimed to positively impact school culture, including designated physical education teachers and music teachers at each elementary site, social and emotional learning curriculum, “mindfulness” programming for whole classes and for higher-need individual students, restorative practices including specialized facilitators in middle schools, classroom community circles, advisory classes, school rallies, and “girls empowerment” programming. Furthermore, impressively structured, staffed, and data-driven CARE Team processes and Wellness Room programming, in cohesion with active counseling departments, were observed at each school site and were cited often by students, parents, and teachers as a benefit to the campus and to students’ learning and socio-emotional outcomes.

In some schools, particularly in many AUSD elementary schools, Antioch Unified School District parents/caregivers in our focus groups reported on active Parent Teacher Associations (PTA), African American Parent Advisory Councils (AAPAC), English Learner Advisory Committees (ELAC), School Site Councils (SSC) and collaborative school leaders who helped parents to feel part of the school community. In contrast, in some schools, when we interviewed parents/caregivers they requested more opportunities to have a voice and to be involved in their students’ schools.

Evidence suggests that positive classroom environments weaken and may even become negative when students struggle academically. In many classrooms, struggling students disengage or misbehave in response to their academic concerns. Some teachers might have difficulties finding ways to help struggling students progress and succeed. This challenge has important equity implications because often (but not always) the struggling students are students of color or meet low-income criteria.

## Recommendation 8

In the area of positive transformational culture for 22 out of 25 schools, the NCUST team recommended that educators in AUSD agree upon and implement a strategy for leading students to perceive themselves as young scholars who are capable of learning challenging academic content.

- A. Professional Development:** Educators should consider engaging in professional development that helps them learn about strategies that have worked well to help diverse groups of students think of themselves as capable scholars. For example, some approaches can be found [here](#). AUSD does not necessarily need to replicate one of these programs. Instead, the professional development should lead educators to consider the following questions:
- What are the habits of young scholars that all AUSD students should develop? Specific scholarly habits should be specified, displayed prominently in classrooms and hallways, and discussed regularly.
  - How can educators and support staff acknowledge and celebrate the progress of students in demonstrating the habits of young scholars? Educators should agree upon specific strategies for recognizing students who exhibit scholarly behavior. There should be frequent opportunities to celebrate students as they exhibit scholarly behavior. Educators should be thoughtful about ways to engage parents in the celebration of students' scholarly behavior.
  - How can educators structure tasks and questions in ways that challenge students to grow as young scholars? Educators should commit to offering students challenging tasks and questions that push them to apply the concepts they are learning to real-life situations. Each day, in every class session, there should be at least one task that encourages students to feel like they are being empowered to use what they are learning to address real and important issues.
- B. Schedules, Routines, Procedures:** Based upon insights acquired through the professional development described above, district officials could consider supporting principals in agreeing upon and committing to specific schedules, routines, and procedures that might help ensure that all AUSD students perceive themselves as capable scholars. All school personnel should develop a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in contributing to a powerful, school-wide effort to influence how students perceive themselves.
- C. Teacher Collaboration:** Based on the school-wide commitments made (regarding the changes to schedules, routines, and procedures described above), teacher collaboration teams should support each other in developing and implementing lesson strategies that are likely to lead students to perceive themselves as capable scholars and leaders.
- D. Classroom Observation and Feedback:** Classroom observations and feedback should be structured to acknowledge and celebrate teachers' progress in implementing agreed-upon strategies and promoting students' sense of academic efficacy. As well, observations and feedback should offer teachers practical, useful suggestions for improving their implementation of agreed-upon strategies. Additionally, more frequent classroom observations and feedback should be given to teachers serving students in credit-recovery courses, intervention classes, or academic labs that serve students who are working toward meeting grade-level standards.
- E. Communication from Leaders:** Written and oral communication from school leaders should emphasize progress observed throughout AUSD schools in establishing environments in which students are more likely to perceive themselves as young scholars and leaders.

District-level leaders might consider how they can support principals in pursuing this recommendation with their teachers. District-level leadership could help principals identify teachers in the Antioch Unified School District who foster exemplary classroom environments where students of all racial/ethnic groups, students with mild disabilities, students with diverse language backgrounds, and students meeting low-income criteria perceive themselves as young, capable scholars who are able to learn rigorous academic content. District-level leadership might consider helping principals record these teachers' best practices and consider how they could help their teachers across the campus integrate those best practices into their repertoires. As well, district-level leaders could help principals identify practical strategies that could help teachers promptly identify when students are beginning to struggle and intervene constructively without damaging students' sense of worth or ability.



## ACCESS TO CHALLENGING CURRICULA FOR ALL STUDENTS

Equity audit teams found evidence that students were being taught state standards and had access to district-adopted curriculum at all school sites. At many elementary school sites, we saw consistency across the district of the newly adopted research-based curriculum for foundational literacy skills in K-2 classrooms that energized both teachers and students (Heggerty, UFLI, Secret Stories). In contrast, some educators expressed a desire for more updated and culturally relevant district-adopted curriculum for their respective subject areas.

On the other hand, the teams found substantial evidence that the rigor observed was insufficient to lead all students to master the state standards with a deep level of understanding and engagement. In many cases, the equity audit teams observed that students had access to the curriculum, yet the instructional methods did not lead students to engage with the curriculum in ways that would lead all students to master state standards.

Sometimes, in such situations, students who have benefitted from rich exposure to concepts and skills (perhaps through family experiences, extensive exposure to books at home, or other activities) manage to demonstrate academic proficiency on state standards, even when classroom instruction does not lead students to demonstrate the more complex cognitive skills required by the standards. In contrast, students who have not benefited from such exposure outside of the classroom are likely to perform at basic or below basic levels if classroom instruction is not deliberately focused on helping students exhibit the cognitive skills required.

As the chart linked below indicates, many of the lessons observed did not have lesson activities that aligned with the lesson objectives and, therefore, were not as likely to lead students to master grade-level standards. Also, in many of the lessons observed, the cognitive demand of lesson activities and the cognitive demand of teachers' questions were not likely to prepare students for the rigor of today's state assessments. It is important to note that the equity audit teams observed some impressive lessons that helped students think deeply about and apply challenging concepts; however, there is considerable opportunity to improve curricular rigor throughout the Antioch Unified School District schools.

The chart linked below shows each school's measurement of whether or not lesson activities were aligned with the lesson objective. During our classroom observations, we rated each lesson from "one" to "five," where "one" indicated that the activities observed were not aligned with the objective and, therefore, were not likely to lead any students to grade-level mastery and where "five" indicated that the activities observed were aligned to the objective and therefore more likely to lead all students to grade-level mastery. Additionally, we rated the cognitive demand of lesson activities from "one" to "five," where "one" indicated that the classroom activities observed only required memorization and recall of basic facts, and "five" indicated that the classroom activities observed required students to extend their thinking and address and solve real problems. Lastly, the chart indicates each school's percentages of the cognitive demand of teachers' questions during the lesson and whether they were likely to prepare students for the rigor of today's state assessments. We rated the cognitive demand of the questions students were expected to answer from "one" to "five," where "one" indicated that the questions only required memorization and recall of basic facts, and "five" indicated that the questions required students to extend their thinking and address and solve real problems.

### [Live Link 1: AUSD Measures of Rigorous Curricula](#)

The lack of rigor in some classrooms may have a negative effect on educational equity throughout the Antioch Unified School District. In the absence of deliberately designed efforts to ensure that all students develop deep understandings of challenging concepts, instruction may be sufficient to ensure that students with abundant prior knowledge and experience (related to the concepts presented) will develop proficiency. In contrast, students who have not benefited from such prior knowledge and experience may need more structured opportunities to engage with concepts, talk about issues, and build connections between the concepts presented and the students' everyday experiences.

## Recommendation 9

In the area of curricula, NCUST recommended that 14 of 25 schools in Antioch Unified School District should ensure that educators engage in a comprehensive effort to improve the extent to which every lesson models a strong focus on understanding and mastery so that students are more likely to master challenging objectives after initial instruction.

**A. Professional Development:** AUSD teachers would benefit from intensive, sustained professional development that helped them understand how the questions they asked students and the tasks they asked students to perform influenced the extent to which the lesson helped students focus upon and master the specific objective to be learned. Professional development should be designed to help ensure that teachers understood how their questions and their lesson activities should align with the rigor and the depth of understanding required by their instructional objectives. This professional development might be supported through the use of Chapters 2 and 5 from *Teaching Practices from America's Best Urban Schools, 2nd edition* and from *Understanding by Design* by Wiggins and McTighe.

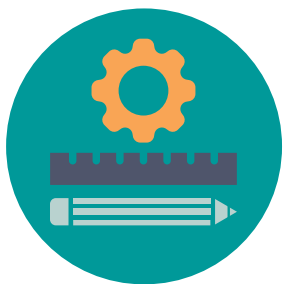
**B. Schedules, Routines, Procedures:** Based upon the concepts and strategies learned through the professional development described above, teachers should agree upon the use of specific routines or procedures for asking questions or assigning tasks that ensure that students will be challenged in ways that align with rigorous instructional objectives.

Additionally, school leaders should commit to expending a considerable amount of time each week observing teachers as they seek to implement specific routines or procedures maximize a focus on mastery and understanding. Every classroom teacher should benefit from at least two short observations each week.

**C. Teacher Collaboration:** Collaboration meetings in AUSD should be refined to include efforts to pre-identify mid- to high-level questions teachers will ask students. Collaboration meetings could also pre-identify ideal student responses so that teachers might be mindful of the kind of thoughtful responses they want to hear from students. Next, collaboration meetings should help teachers plan rigorous tasks teachers will use to support students in achieving the deep levels of understanding required by many academic objectives. The planning should also include pre-determination of the evidence that will be accepted to indicate that students have learned the objective well. Concepts and skills learned in the professional development activities described above should be emphasized and supported in collaboration meetings. Lesson planning should result in teachers providing students multiple opportunities to articulate their understanding.

**D. Classroom Observation and Feedback:** Frequent classroom observations and feedback should emphasize the extent to which the questions asked by teachers, the activities included in lessons, daily exit slips, and the items included in common formative assessments all align in ways that help students demonstrate mastery of rigorous academic objectives. Findings from classroom observations should be used to refine professional development efforts and strengthen the quality of support provided through professional learning communities.

**E. Communication from Leaders:** Regular written and oral communication from administrators should acknowledge and celebrate progress observed in implementing lessons with questions, activities, and tasks that are likely to lead students to acquire the depth of understanding and levels of rigor associated with the performance-based objectives being taught. There should be regular written communication to teachers that reinforces the importance of aligning questions, activities, and tasks to the level of rigor required by learning objectives. As well, communication to teachers should acknowledge and celebrate classrooms, departments, and/or grade levels that exhibit progress in elevating the rigor of questions, activities, and tasks.



## EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION THAT LEADS TO ENGAGEMENT AND MASTERY

In some AUSD schools, equity audit team members found strong instructional practices that contribute to educational equity and excellence. Consistent with our findings related to the positive, transformational culture of each campus, we found many classrooms where there was considerable or exemplary evidence that teachers were leading students to feel both valued and capable. As well, we found considerable evidence that classrooms were oriented in ways that were leading Antioch Unified students to love learning. These are important strengths that should be celebrated and sustained.

On the other hand, at each school, there are opportunities for improving instructional practices. For example, at some schools, teachers were less likely to give students opportunities to discuss their understanding of concepts and build fluency with critical lesson vocabulary. At some schools, teachers were less likely to check students' level of understanding before releasing students to practice concepts and skills independently. The following chart shows the percentages of classrooms at each school where observers found considerable or exemplary evidence of each of the eight practices that were the focus of our observations.

[Live Link 2: Teaching Practices that Influence Engaging/Effective Instruction](#)

## Recommendation 10

In the area of instruction, in 15 of 25 AUSD schools, NCUST equity audit teams recommended that educators in AUSD should work together to exemplify a focus on understanding and mastery, with a high level of fidelity, and in ways that are likely to generate higher levels of student success.

District leaders should endeavor to ensure that a focus on understanding and mastery becomes a strength of Antioch Unified School District educators. Every educator should be encouraged to commit to exemplifying this practice. Teachers can focus on understanding and mastery only when they have great clarity about what they want their students to master. District leaders should help guide professional learning and support in deconstructing standards so school leaders and teachers know specifically what students will need to know and understand in order to demonstrate mastery of standards (especially in English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies). It is not enough for teachers to write or post a standard. They must know what the standard implies their students must learn.

Leaders should help teachers understand that they are not truly providing an objective-driven lesson unless they are constantly adjusting their teaching so that each and every student is making visible progress toward understanding and mastery. District leaders should work together with principals and instructional leadership teams to establish a rubric that helps them identify the attributes of lessons that enhance a strong focus on understanding and mastery. Teachers should have ongoing professional learning that provides them the opportunity to read about, see, discuss, try, and receive feedback related to the attributes described in the rubric.

In order to ensure that teachers receive abundant support, it might be necessary to focus on a few teachers at a time as they seek to implement a deep focus on understanding and mastery. The first teachers who receive support should receive special attention from administrators, district specialists, and teacher collaboration teams. As some teachers develop strength, they can become resources to help their colleagues.

As well, collaboration meetings should be designed to help teachers describe the mental road map students must follow in order to arrive at the destination (what the student should know and be able to do as a result of the lesson). In the high-performing schools NCUST has studied, this type of deconstruction conversation is a team activity. The work of de-constructing standards can be supported by PLC leaders, coaches, administrators, and teachers themselves. This work will inform what students should know, the design of performance-based objectives, the level of rigor required in questions the teacher will ask, and the assignments and tasks teachers want students to complete.

## NEXT STEPS

While this district report specifies opportunities for improvement, it is critically important for Antioch Unified School District leaders to acknowledge and celebrate the many strengths underscored throughout these reports. School leaders, teachers, and other school personnel should know their efforts to create equitable and excellent learning environments are bearing fruit.

As well, it is important to keep in mind that the report compares the Antioch Unified school with schools that NCUST has awarded, where every demographic group outperforms state averages. This high bar is likely to suggest areas of improvement that would not be specified in more typical audit reviews. If there are questions regarding any of the findings or recommendations, we encourage district leaders and school leaders to contact NCUST to discuss any questions or concerns.

Finally, we acknowledge this report includes many recommendations. It is important for the Antioch Unified School District leaders to review and prioritize these recommendations in collaboration with teachers. Additionally, it is important for district leaders to consider how they can support school leaders in addressing the recommendations in their school reports. The recommendations specified in this report necessitate system change. If the district leaves the responsibility for the implementation of these recommendations to principals, the district is likely to achieve uneven improvements or no improvement at all. To achieve system change, we encourage the Antioch Unified School District leaders to consider how you might build the capacity of your district team in a way that supports principals with these important challenges.

The Antioch Unified School District is providing wonderful learning opportunities for the students you serve. We see outstanding potential for the district to become a model for educational equity and excellence in California and the nation. We are honored to have this opportunity to support your efforts to grow and improve.