



— THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF —
SOUTH ORANGE & MAPLEWOOD

Update on Implementation of Rutgers Equity Audit

December 18, 2024

Dr. Kevin F. Gilbert, Assistant Superintendent of Access and Equity
Ms. Kerri Waibel, Director of Access and Equity
Mr. Tunde Adedoyin, Director of Human Resources

Rutgers Equity Audit Guided Philosophy (page 8 of Equity Audit)

“Within SOMSD, the norms of white and affluent families have historically dominated the culture of the school. **It is recommended that the district undertake a systematic push toward re-norming their school policies, pedagogy, and curriculum toward more culturally responsive and inclusive norms. In particular centering the needs of Black and Latinx populations, and Free Reduced Lunch eligible families in the school district’s programming.** This shift will take time and all stakeholders will be impacted. **Therefore, in the interim, it is crucial that the district also create spaces where all families, students, and educators can process these changes. Families who have typically had access to the most resources will struggle to adjust to a system that is more equitable; families who have typically been overlooked may struggle to build trust.** Both will need spaces where they can ask questions of district leaders and build an understanding of the new district systems and policies. These spaces and family education mechanisms will need to look different according to the stakeholder group they serve. Issues of language, timing, location, and presenters should be considered in planning these supports. BIPOC students and teachers will also need affinity spaces where they can receive support.”

— Dr. Edward Fergus and the Rutgers Team



Curriculum and Instruction Recommendations

1. Prioritize material and verbal messaging regarding math growth mindset
2. Foster heterogeneous student collaboration in math instruction
3. Ensure that low-track students receive the high-quality instruction that they need to become better math students
4. Create a clear plan and timeline to identify high-achieving students from under-represented backgrounds for higher-track math courses
5. Create enrichment and acceleration opportunities
6. Increase accessible and equitable parent involvement
7. Revisit the choice policy for math course selection



Intervention Recommendations

1. Development of a district-wide tiered system of support that includes defining academic and behavioral tiers available and processes for utilization
2. Extensive review of the I&RS Implementation Process Guide in order to address inconsistencies and redundancies
3. Develop a list of tiered interventions for academic behavioral support
4. Develop tools and protocols for the operation of intervention team meetings.



Develop Pedagogical Capacity with an Equity Lens

Recommendations

1. Develop and implement a professional development series that focuses on the continued development of cross-cultural capacity in order to replace bias-based beliefs such as color blindness, deficit thinking, and racial discomfort.
2. Continuous assessment of educator knowledge on intervention support systems, curriculum, and instruction improvements.
3. Through professional development, build teacher empathy for all students. Events such as the middle school Challenge Day create humanistic bonds between teachers and students.
4. Conduct a curriculum audit of courses in humanities, English-Language Arts, and history using a culturally responsive protocol to determine where more inclusive materials and pedagogies are needed.
5. Hire more Black teachers/teachers of color and create affinity spaces to support those teachers to increase retention.
6. Build on the successes of affinity spaces for students of color such as MAC scholars.
7. Provide affinity spaces for BIPOC students across school levels.



Intentional Integration

1. Further modeling of integration in which factors with greatest skewed patterns are weighted more intensely over other factors. For instance, household income and parent education could be weighted more than race/ethnicity.
2. The pattern of average household income and parent educational level should be examined over time in order to understand whether the III plan can be sustained
3. A staged integration that prioritizes Seth Boyden and South Mountain over the next several years.
4. Review pre-COVID quarantine school years (i.e., 2018-19, 2017-18) to understand these withdrawal patterns.
5. The III plan needs to parallel an integration of academic support services.



Rutgers Equity Audit Expected Implementation (page 8 of Equity Audit)

“The following recommendations refer to both long and short term goals that together can help create a more equitable environment for learning within SOMSD. **The recommendations provided below are intended to not be an exhaustive list but rather focused activities to continue the movement of SOMSD towards being integration ready in target areas for the next 3-5 years.**”

— Dr. Edward Fergus and the Rutgers Team



SY 23-24 (Yr 1) Progress Update



SY 23-24 Centered on Building an Infrastructure

Dr. Edward Fergus met with a team of stakeholders and District Leadership to review our 5 year plan to implement the recommendations of the Equity Audit. He was clear that before we even move toward implementation, we needed to build an infrastructure to ensure effectiveness of implementation and create sustainability.

In building infrastructure, he provided us the following guiding questions:

- **What committee/group is the work sitting with?**
- **What is the framework we are using to support the work?**
- **What system and documentation do we need to create to ensure integration of goal?**
- **What is the data that will be used to guide the goal?**
- **What is the professional learning that needs to happen?**



Process, Terms and Coding

During the October 30, 2023 meeting of the BOE, SOMSD presented its five year plan to meet the recommendations outlined in the Rutgers Equity Audit. In order to keep the district on track, we outlined several goals and activities for each year to keep our work moving. The following progress monitoring represents completion of our goals to meet the recommendation for that year.

To capture our progress on meeting the goals toward implementation of recommendations as outlined by the Rutgers Equity Audit, we will be using the following coding system:

Not started =



Planning stages =




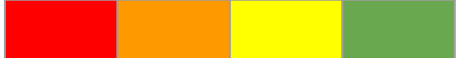

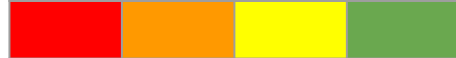



In progress =





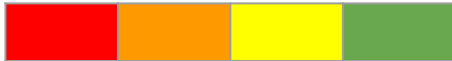

Goals completed=






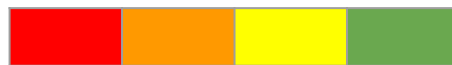



SY 23-24(Yr 1) Curriculum Recommendations Progress

Prioritize material and verbal messaging regarding math growth mindset	
Foster heterogeneous student collaboration in math instruction	
Ensure that low-track students receive the high-quality instruction that they need to become better math students	
Create a clear plan and timeline to identify high-achieving students from under-represented backgrounds for higher-track math courses	
Create enrichment and acceleration opportunities	
Increase accessible and equitable parent involvement	
Revisit the choice policy for math course selection	






SY 23-24 (Yr 1) Intervention Recommendations Progress

Development of district wide tiered system of support that includes defining academic and behavioral tiers available and processes for utilization	
Extensive review of the I & RS Implementation Process Guide in order to address inconsistencies and redundancies	
Develop a list of tiered interventions for academic behavioral support	
Develop tools and protocols for the operation of intervention team meetings	

SY 23-24(Yr 1) Develop Pedagogical Capacity with an Equity Lens Recommendations Progress

<p>Develop and implement a professional development series that focuses on the continued development of cross-cultural capacity in order to replace bias-based beliefs such as color blindness, deficit thinking, and racial discomfort</p>	
<p>Continuous assessment of educator knowledge on intervention support systems, curriculum, and instruction improvements</p>	
<p>Through professional development, build teacher empathy for all students</p>	
<p>Conduct a curriculum audit of courses in humanities, ELA, and history using a culturally responsive protocol to determine where more inclusive materials and pedagogies are needed</p>	
<p>Hire more BIPOC teachers and create affinity spaces to support those teachers to increase retention</p>	
<p>Build on the successes of affinity spaces for students of color such as MAC scholars</p>	
<p>Provide affinity spaces for BIPOC students across school levels</p>	

SY 23-24 (Yr 1) Intentional Integration Recommendations Year 1 Progress

<p>Further modeling of integration in which factors with greatest skewed patterns are weighted more intensely over other factors. For instance, household income and parent education could be weighted more than race/ethnicity (please note, race/ethnicity is not a factor used in the algorithm, although it is being monitored)</p>	
<p>The pattern of average household income and parent educational level should be examined over time in order to understand whether the III plan can be sustained</p>	
<p>Conduct a staged integration that prioritizes Seth Boyden and South Mountain over the next several years</p>	
<p>Review pre-COVID quarantine school years (i.e., 2018-19, 2017-18) to understand these withdrawal patterns</p>	
<p>The III Plan needs to parallel an integration of academic support services</p>	

Year 1 Goal Accomplishments include but are not limited to:

1. [K-5 teachers provided professional learning on the Growth Mindset aspects of the math program including but not limited to rich math tasks and math talk \(CR 1\)](#)
2. Conducted a review of current Middle School Math to explore reframing pathway (CR2)
3. Conducted professional development around collaborative learning, rich math tasks and math talk (CR2)
4. Explored the use of consultation model in special education as a way to increase student access to general education as well as higher level course (CR 2)
5. Provided curriculum writers professional learning in the area of higher level tasks and building essential questions (CR3)
6. Provided teachers and curriculum writers professional learning to break apart and understand the New Jersey Learning Standards (CR3)
7. [Began using the Naglieri test as a way to identify students who may benefit from a Gifted Action Plan \(CR4\) and determine students in need of a Gifted Action Plan in Middle School \(CR5\)](#)
8. Continued our partnership with EOS at the high school in an effort to increase BIPOC student course selection in higher level courses (CR4)
9. Supported teachers on the Universal Design for Learning to support enrichment (CR5)
10. Ensured our courses aligned with the New Jersey State Learning Standards (CR5)
11. Created a system of outreach for all families who needed additional support in math course selection including phone calls and in person meetings (CR 6)
12. Began looking at a equitable matrix to support entrance into higher level courses in math (CR 7)
13. [Examined existing practices across schools and built a tiered system of supports throughout the district but particular to support the areas of Math, ELA, and Behavior \(I1\)](#)
14. [Completed redesign and restructuring of I & RS manual \(I 2,3,4\)](#)
15. Completed training for all school leaders and I & RS teams (I 2,3,4)
16. Developed data template and survey for I & RS to examine effectiveness and equitable practices (I 2,3,4)



17. Implemented equity professional learning for administrators through multiple mediums including book studies, [Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity \(SEED\)](#), Hanover research and teacher led equity professional learning around anti-racism (EPCR 1)
18. Implemented SEED seminars for teachers as a regular practice in the district including a SEED level 1 and a SEED level 2 (EPCR 1)
19. Assistant Superintendent of Access and Equity and Director of Access and Equity supported leaders in building cultural capacity (EPCR 1)
20. [Created a professional learning for the next five years to build equity capacity across the district](#) (EPCR 2)
21. [Worked with teachers and leaders to support Social Emotional Learning at the classroom level](#) (EPCR 3)
22. [Began reframing restorative justice through book studies, through faculty and community meetings, and public awareness](#) (EPCR 3)
23. Continued to build practices during morning meetings in all preK-5 schools (EPCR 3)
24. [Supported rapport building for all teachers and students through “first two weeks” work in the classroom](#) (EPCR 3)
25. [Began culturally responsive curriculum audit in four content areas of Math, Science, Social Studies, and ELA](#) (EPCR 4)
26. Provided culturally responsive curriculum professional learning to curriculum writers (EPCR 4)
27. Developed a five-year workforce diversity plan, which includes a plan for BIPOC teacher affinity spaces (EPCR 5)
28. Created understanding of MAC scholars program among staff (EPCR 6)
29. Conducted various focus groups among BIPOC students to determine affinity needs (EPCR 7)
30. Conducted meeting with Dr. Fergus and Alves to inform plans to align III with Equity Audit Recommendations (III- R 1,2,3,4 and 5)


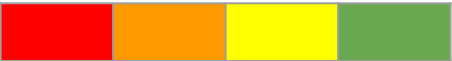





SY 24-25 (Yr 2) Progress Update




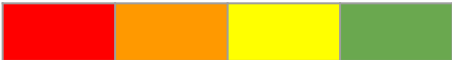


Curriculum Recommendation 1: Prioritize material and verbal messaging regarding math growth mindset.

Goal: Using a variety of teaching strategies, including direct instruction on growth mindset, low floor high ceiling problem solving and other tools, teachers will increase student’s understanding and use of a growth mindset as measured in student growth mindset surveys and feedback groups.

C1.1 Teachers and/or Coaches will attend Stanford Mathematical Mindsets Course	
C1.2 Provide a variety of options to understand growth mindset for students.	
C1.3 K-5 teachers will be provided professional learning on the Growth Mindset aspects of the math program including but not limited to rich math tasks and math talk	
C1.4 Meet with Teachers and Principals to obtain feedback on the plan and make adjustments as needed.	
C.1.5. Use survey to understand the use of Growth Mindset after professional learning.	




Curriculum Recommendation 2: Foster heterogeneous student collaboration in math instruction.

Goal: Reframing the current middle school math course pathway, will create more heterogeneous opportunities for students .

C2.1 1. Create a plan to provide professional learning through direct instruction, coaching	
C2.2 2. Professional learning around collaborative learning, rich math tasks, and math talk.	
C2.3 3. Revise 6th grade math curriculum.	
C2.4 Explore the use of consultation model in special education as a way to increase student access to general education as well as higher level courses	



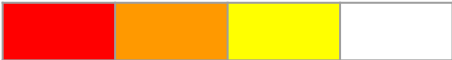
Curriculum Recommendation 3: Ensure that low-track students receive the high-quality instruction that they need to become better math students

Goal: Begin to review and revise all academic math curriculum in order to align the goals, essential questions, learning tasks to higher level cognitive skills as measured by the curriculum board approved in August 2023 and provide training for teachers in this area.

C3.1 Review and update current academic math curriculum to incorporate higher level tasks, essential questions, skills and goals	
C2.2 Provide curriculum writers professional learning in the area of higher level taks, building essential questions	
C3.3 Provide teachers and curriculum writers professional learning experience to unpack the new New Jersey Learning Standards.	








Curriculum Recommendation 4: Create a clear plan and timeline to identify high-achieving students from underrepresented backgrounds for higher-track math courses

Goal: Continue the implementation of the Equal Opportunity Schools (EOS) methodology to increase the number of students of color and/ or our most marginalized students' participation in upper level courses.

<p>C4.1 Create a plan to increase collaboration with families in math course selection at the middle school including varied times for math information sessions, recorded sessions in multiple languages with closed captioning.</p>	
<p>C4.2 Using survey and other data, examine barriers to course selection and identify action steps to remove barriers for students.</p>	
<p>C4.3 Implement <i>trusted adult</i> data and other student data to examine the course selection process.</p>	






Curriculum Recommendation 5: Create enrichment and acceleration opportunities

Goal: The district will implement enrichment and acceleration in mathematics through professional learning, additional options and additional courses over a 5 year period.

<p>C5.1 Identify supports that coaches can use to implement professional learning on UDL to support enrichment</p>	
<p>C5.2 Plan for additional acceleration opportunities.</p>	
<p>C5.3 Adjust Scope and Sequence for Summer Geometry</p>	
<p>C5.4 Implement summer Geometry course in summer 2025.</p>	
<p>C5.5 Continue to develop an acceleration plan for middle school. Identify any course or enrichment for the curriculum.</p>	
<p>C5.6 Write curriculum for new course offerings in STEM.</p>	
<p>C5.8 Explore various STEM cycle course options for middle school.</p>	




Curriculum Recommendation 6: Increase accessible and equitable parent involvement

Goal: To increase parent involvement in the math selection process as well as at home strategies to support math achievement at home as measured by participation in information sessions, parent seminars and selection process.

<p>C6.1 Create multiple opportunities for the math information session for families including various times of day and a virtual option.</p>	
<p>C6.2 Create a virtual presentation with CC in various languages</p>	
<p>C6.3 Create a system of outreach for all families who need additional support in math course selection including phone calls and in person meetings.</p>	
<p>C6.4 Create surveys for families after information sessions.</p>	
<p>C6.5 Explore opportunities to provide information sessions for students to accelerate in high school.</p>	







Curriculum Recommendation 7: Revisit the choice policy for math course selection

Goal: To increase parent involvement in the math selection process as well as at home strategies to support math achievement at home as measured by participation in information sessions, parent seminars and selection process.

C7.1 Pilot matrix with a small group of students.	
C7.4 Work with stakeholders to create a matrix for parents to examine when choosing classes for their child.	
C7.5 Gather feedback from teachers and parent focus groups on matrix draft.	





Intervention Recommendation 1: Development of a district-wide tiered system of support that includes defining academic and behavioral tiers available and processes for utilization.

Goal:The district will develop a tiered system of support in which both support academic and social/emotional/behavioral needs within 3 years.

I.1.1 Examine and expand on district tiered system of supports.	
I.1.2 Identify automatic interventions across schools and grades.	
I.1.3 In the I&RS Manual, outline existing tiered support.	
I.1.4 Identify any areas in need of additional tiered support in math including possible intervention teacher.	
I.1.5 Evaluate high school intervention class in math and ELA	
I.1.7 Monitor special referral numbers	








Intervention Recommendations 2-4: Extensive review of I&RS Implementation Process Guide in order to address inconsistencies and redundancies; develop list of tiered interventions for academic behavioral supports; and develop tools and protocols for the operation of intervention team meetings

Goal: Grade level demographic data broken down by (gender, race/ethnicity, general ed and special service designations including SDW, MLL, etc); I & RS data including referral to special education data; progress monitoring data, Monitoring checklist

<p>I.2.1 Continue to develop tiered interventions for academic and behavior support</p>	
<p>I.2.2 District will implement data meetings</p>	
<p>I.2.3 District will use monitoring teams to examine practices during I&RS.</p>	
<p>I.2.4 Create family communication regarding I&RS from general information to the entire process.</p>	


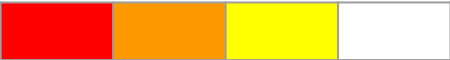

Equity Pedagogical Capacity Recommendation 1: Develop and implement a professional development series that focuses on continued development of cross-cultural capacity in order to replace bias-based beliefs such as color blindness, deficit thinking, and racial discomfort

Goal: SOMSD will develop a sustained DEI professional development track within the district over the next five years.

<p>P.1.1 Implement Equity professional learning for administrators in the following ways: Book Study, SEED, Hanover Research, Equity Lens for all professional learning (I&RS, HIB, BTAM...) teacher lead equity professional learning around anti-racism</p>	
<p>P.1.2 Implement SEED seminars for teachers as a regular practice including: SEED 1 and SEED 2.</p>	
<p>P.1.3 Using a team of stakeholders, gather information on the professional learning needs around equity to develop an equity series for sustained professional learning.</p>	
<p>P.1.4 Assistant Superintendent and Director of Access and Equity will support leaders in building cultural capacity.</p>	
<p>P.1.5 Continue to create courses for professional learning around equity</p>	
<p>P.1.6 Y1 of sustained professional learning series.</p>	
<p>P.1.7 Provide surveys to teachers and admin</p>	






Equity Pedagogical Capacity Recommendation 2: Continuous assessment of educator knowledge on intervention support systems, curriculum, and instruction improvements.

Goal: Using the observation models for staff and administrators, coaching input and other data, the district will examine the understanding of curriculum, instruction and intervention support systems.

<p>P.2.1 Build professional learning opportunities around knowledge gaps for teachers around: areas of curriculum, instruction and intervention services to support teaching and learning.</p>	
<p>P.2.2 Build professional learning around tiered intervention to support teaching and learning.</p>	
<p>P.2.3 Using the I&RS monitoring team, gather information from observations of meetings to understand I&RS implementation.</p>	

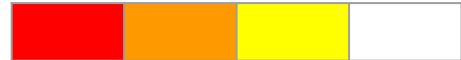

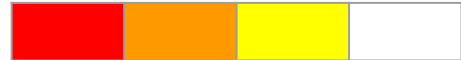
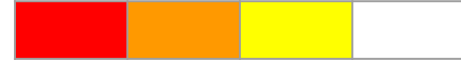


Equity Pedagogical Capacity Recommendation 3: Through professional development, build teacher empathy for all students.

Goal: To build teacher empathy by integrating restorative justice work and social emotional learning into student and teacher daily experience within 5 years.

<p>P.3.1 Work with teacher leaders to support Social Emotional Learning at the classroom level.</p>	
<p>P.3.2 Build administrative capacity in restorative justice and belonging through a book study.</p>	
<p>P.3.3 Reframe Restorative Justice through faculty meetings.</p>	
<p>P.3.4 Support professional learning around restorative justice</p>	
<p>P.3.5 Implement direct instruction around Social Emotional Learning in grades 6-12</p>	

Equity Pedagogical Capacity Recommendation 4: Conduct a curriculum audit of courses in humanities, English-Language Arts, and history using a culturally responsive protocol to determine where more inclusive materials and pedagogies are needed.

Goal: The students will take part in culturally responsive learning experiences through a culturally responsive curriculum developed over 5 years.

<p>P.4.1 Support culturally responsive curriculum and the audit tools for Y2 audit participants</p>	
<p>P.4.2 Take part in a culturally responsive curriculum audit in the area of PE, Fine Arts, STEM, World Languages</p>	
<p>P.4.3 Create recommendations for the curriculum writing teams around culturally responsive audit findings</p>	
<p>P.4.4 Write curricula which aligns to the recommendations</p>	
<p>P.4.5 Support professional learning around curriculum updates.</p>	
<p>P.4.6 Provide culturally responsive curriculum professional learning to curriculum writers</p>	

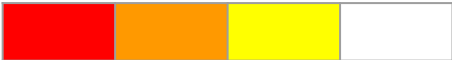



Equity Pedagogical Capacity Recommendation 5: Hire more BIPOC teachers and create affinity spaces to support those teachers to increase retention.

Goal: Create and implement a workforce diversity plan that intentionally focuses on the recruitment and retention of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) educators

<p>P.5.1 Attend PWI and HBCU (in-state and out-of-state) recruitment events with an eye toward BIPOC educators</p>	
<p>P.5.2 Attend various job fairs throughout NJ, DE, PA, MD, and GA an an eye toward BIPOC educators</p>	
<p>P.5.3 Create partnerships with Seton Hall University and Montclair State University</p>	
<p>P.5.4 Host a job fair in SOMSD specifically directed toward BIPOC educators</p>	
<p>P.5.5 Collect hiring, recruitment, and retention data broken down demographically</p>	


Equity Pedagogical Capacity Recommendation 6: Build on successes of affinity spaces for students of color such as MAC scholars

Goal: Expand the MAC Scholars program to support more students over five years.

P.6.1 Provide professional learning to affinity leaders.	
P.6.2 Pilot the expansion.	
P.6.3 Student interest meetings	
P.6.4 Provide teacher understanding about framework	

Equity Pedagogical Capacity Recommendation 7: Provide affinity spaces for BIPOC students across school levels






Goal: Examine current affinity space opportunities for BIPOC and create more opportunities through expansion

P.7.1 Monitor participation rates in affinity groups	
P.7.2 Conduct focus groups with students	
P.7.3 Convene feedback sessions with affinity group sponsors and leads to make necessary adjustments	

III Recommendation Progress SY 24-25 (Yr 2)



Intentional Integration Recommendations Year 2 Progress

<p>Further modeling of integration in which factors with greatest skewed patterns are weighted more intensely over other factors. For instance, household income and parent education could be weighted more than race/ethnicity (please note, race/ethnicity is not a factor used in the algorithm, although it is being monitored)</p>	
<p>The pattern of average household income and parent educational level should be examined over time in order to understand whether the III plan can be sustained</p>	
<p>Conduct a staged integration that prioritizes Seth Boyden and South Mountain over the next several years</p>	
<p>Review pre-COVID quarantine school years (i.e., 2018-19, 2017-18) to understand these withdrawal patterns</p>	
<p>The III Plan needs to parallel an integration of academic support services</p>	

Funding

SOMSD budgeted \$350,000 toward the implementation of the Rutgers Equity Audit. The dollars can be spent on professional development, educational support, supplies, books, and any professional development travel. To date, we have used the dollars to support Wayfinder (providing Social Emotional Learning grades 6-8); Imagine Learning (Edgenuity virtual learning to support academic intervention support for struggling learners at Columbia High School); Holding Spaces (providing restorative justice training to teachers and administrators); and books to support behavior intervention work. These dollars will also support Hanover Research (providing equity professional development to leadership); Equal Opportunity Schools (assisting in helping more BIPOC students get into higher level courses); Upstart (who will be conducting a staff survey in 2025); and and other professional development, initiatives, or supports necessary to implement the Rutgers Equity Audit. **(Expenditures to date: \$128,919)**

Additionally, **SOMSD received an additional \$250,000** in state aid toward our efforts to implement the Intentional Integration Initiative. The district chose to assign those dollars toward the implementation efforts of the Rutgers Equity Audit through the recommendations made by Dr. Fergus in regards to III. Particularly in the aligning our intervention and tiered system of supports with our integration efforts (see III recommendation four). These dollars will also be used to support the work of the Alves group with the district, including the purchase of additional administrative rights so Alves group can use our transportation software (Transfinder) in assisting with placement of students, and Dr. Fergus's continued individual support of the district to implement recommendations with fidelity. **(Expenditures to date: \$26,400)**



Dr. Edward Fergus Support

SOMSD is fortunate to have the support and guidance of Dr. Edward Fergus. He met with stakeholders and district leadership on three occasions last year to review our plan for meeting the recommendations of the Rutgers Equity Audit and made suggestions on our best approach. He has continued to work with us this year, meeting with all administrators during one of our monthly District Administrator Training sessions and will be making six visits starting to support district and building leadership in building the necessary equity capacity to successfully implement the recommendations. These visits will include individual school visits to assist leaders in using data to meet the needs of all learners and staff in the buildings and throughout the district.

Dr. Fergus is making plans to visit our district on the following dates:

January 22, 2025

February 5, 2025 (possible)

February 26, 2025

April 2, 2025

April 23, 2025

May 28, 2025



Questions

