



## Step 3: Act

# Planning for School Improvement and Promoting Equity Template

**Directions:** Respond to the prompts below (no more than 5 pages). Type your responses within the brackets following each prompt. Do not delete or alter the prompts.

1. For the student equity gap you identified in Step 1, describe the potential strategies you identified for equitable school improvement and how they are to be applied.

[Strategies:

1. Intentionally focus on ethnicity data when discussing and analyzing suspension rates. Administration should monitor how the suspension rates of various subgroups compare to the overall suspension rates. Are they trending with the overall trend or do they see significant rises or drops that the overall trend?
2. Address the policy of suspensions counting as unexcused absences. Form a committee or explore the idea of making suspensions “excused” absence in regard to being able to complete work that is missed and no longer being able to leave it up to teachers discretion.
3. On campus there is a “Peer Resource Class” in which student peer coach other students through difficult times. In order to address the situation at hand, the Peer Resource coordinator could create a position within the Peer Resource class that is specially designed to work with students who have recently been suspended in order to help them collect their missing work and create a re-integration plan of sorts. In addition to creating this role, it would ideally be staffed by a student of color.]

2. Explain how your potential strategies address the equity gap described in your problem statement.

[ The number below correspond to the number above:

1. By intentionally focusing on ethnic data, administration would be able to recognize trends and pause to seek understanding. Additional questions could be asked, data deep dives could be conducted, and additional information sought as to why a particular sub-group is doing poorly in comparison to the rest of the population. As it stands, if the overall trend is “normal” or decreasing, but a particular subgroup is increasing, then there may be an issue and it needs to be addressed, however, if you are not attune to the sub-groups, you will never know to dig deeper or create interventions designed at helping that particular sub-group.
2. As it stands, whether teachers accept work from students who are suspended is up to teacher discretion. When a policy leaves something to the “discretion” of an individual, unfortunately biases can get in the way. How a teacher feels about a student personally, the perception of the teachers into how much effort is put forth, personal connections,



etc...all factor into how a teacher handles a situation. This discretion can create inequity based on those biases and in turn the policy becomes inherently unfair. If a policy were to be put into place it would bring more equity to the process since there would be no personal bias involved. Then specifically to change the policy so that work would be accepted would make suspension less punitive to the academics of a students.

3. In the studies described in step 2 of this cycle, Cheng recognizes that the more positive touch points a student has with people of color, the better they do. By having the peer resource class have this role in their class and have it staffed by a student of color helps in many ways. The first is that it helps students who do not have the skills to navigate re-entry. Many students lack the communication skills or confidence to approach their teachers about what they missed. In addition to this, they may be embarrassed by their actions and not wish to approach adults due to this. This position helps to coach students to advocate for themselves and help to ensure that they are aware of the work they missed and the timeline in which they must follow-up to turn it in.]

3. Explain how your potential strategies for improvement address or take into account the potential contributing factors—including institutional and/or structural factors—and how they align with the school vision, mission, and/or goals.

[ AHS Mission: To promote excellence by offering challenging curriculum and programs which enable all students to communicate effectively, become responsible citizens, demonstrate positive relationship and solve problems.

AHS Vision: To empower all students to acquire positive academic, social, and emotions skills in order to allow them to become productive citizens and lifelong learners.

The aforementioned solutions address both structural and institutional factors. To begin, it addresses the institutionalized thought that “the roles are the rules,” which may sound fair can actually be nowhere near equitable. While the rules are the rules, schools must take into account many factors when deciding the best course of action for a student. One thing AHS does not take into consideration when reviewing the suspension data is ethnicity, foster status, counseling status, etc...while it is true that there must be a tightly adhered to set of expectations on campus, these factors must be accounted for to understand if suspension is really the best way to deal with the situation. While currently, students can be referred to other services if one thinks to refer them, but if it becomes routine and part of the process to find alternatives then it slowly chips away at this idea that a one-size-fits-all approach to discipline is the correct one. However, in order to do this, these factors must be consistently reviewed with the data.

As well, AHS’ mission wants to give all students the best possible chance to acquire an excellent education. By changing the policies and giving them the scaffolds they need (the Peer Resource re-integration coordinator) students learn how to “communicate effectively” and “become responsible citizens.” The skills that students would receive from this change in policy and support speak directly to the mission of the school.]

4. Describe the targeted feedback you received from your supervisor or other key stakeholder(s), and explain how you would adjust your proposed strategies to address the needs of the student group and inform equitable school improvement based on that feedback.

[ In speaking with key stakeholders, the feedback I received was this:



1. The culture of the campus is strong, and “tradition” and “the things that work” are held in high esteem. Many do not see the suspension issue as an issue at all. It has decreased over the years and the fact that one subgroup has seen a rise does not negate the overall drop. While the administration is always willing to listen to an issue, to get them to change how they review their data may present challenges since it is not perceived as an issue given we all have them same access to the same data and have seen it.
2. Asking teachers to give up an type of autonomy is met with a great deal of backlash typically. Teachers have their systems, and when they perceive that the administration is requiring change, it can cause a rift in the policy and unhappiness among the staff.

These were the two biggest pieces of feedback that I received. The Peer Resource teacher was identified as someone who is willing to try new things and the only caution I received was that if they were unwilling to try this then how would I navigate that situation in order to see something similar go forward?

Given those pieces of feedback, I think there would need to be an adjust to my plan in the way of education. The staff needs to understand this is an issue, however, when we do data reviews, we simply breeze over the suspension rates. During the next data review, I'd ask that we review the suspension data in detail in order to help the staff understand the issue of sub-groups. In addition, to prepare for the data review, I'd ask that teachers read some key excerpts from studies that discuss the harm of suspension and remedies for the issue.

To adjust the plan even further, I think I'd break it into two separate phases. The first phase would include the intentional review of sub-groups during administrative data review and the creation of the re-integration coordinator. The second phase, based on results would be to ask for a change in policy regarding late work. Given the shift in this, the role of the re-integration coordinator would change slightly:

- A. The re-integration coordinator would meet with students and fill out a sheet together that goes over the following for each of the students' teachers:
    - i. Is homework, classwork, and/or tests that were missed during suspensions able to be made up?
    - ii. If yes, what work was missed?
    - iii. When is the missed work due?
    - iv. Were there notes takes during the missed class period?
    - v. If yes, then from whom can they copy the notes from so they have all the information they need?
    - vi. Can they attend after school tutoring to get help understanding the context of any work missed?]
5. Describe steps you would take to create school-level and community stakeholder buy-in to the final adjusted set of proposed strategies. What potential implications for proposed strategies do you anticipate encountering as you address the equity gap at the school?  
[The steps taken to create buy-in would consist of the following:



- A. Develop a data review session that zeros in on suspensions specifically. A special focus would be given to analyzing sub-groups and a note would be given that AHS' suspension rates are significantly higher than the rest of the district.
- B. Once complete, and the context set, I would approach the Peer Resource coordinator and discuss the position of the reintegration counselor. Upon agreement, we would set-up goals and measurements for success together so we could track the results of the program.
- C. I would then encourage teachers to accept all work missed during suspensions without yet making it mandatory.
- D. I would conduct a survey to see who will be accepting work from students who are suspended so that the success of those students could be tracked against those who have teachers who do not accept work when suspended.
- E. Based on the results from A-D I would work with the admin team to discuss the benefits and draw-backs of making the policy change mandatory. ]