PREPARING FOR DEI STRATEGIC PLANNING

Introduction

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives require thoughtful strategic planning to enact change and yield improvements in student, staff, school, and district outcomes.[1] Organizations often use DEI strategic planning to:[2]

- Build a vibrant, inclusive climate that draws people together across differences in backgrounds, experiences, and interests;

- Expand the capability of the organization to successfully navigate a diverse work environment and global student, service, and business communities;

- Improve hiring processes that tap into relevant talent pools;

- Assess the impact of programs, services, and learning environments in contributing to the mission and organization;

- Provide tools that assist in reaching and retaining target constituencies—students, teachers, staff, community;

- Provide greater and more transparent connections between organizational goals and resource allocation for the annual budget process;

- Discover opportunities for curriculum development and classroom, advising, or outreach practices that improve the overall teaching and learning offered; and

- Increase the organization's ability to embrace change.

Hanover Research (Hanover) presents the following research brief to support a partner district seeking to create effective DEI goals in the areas of training, curriculum and programs, hiring, and future vision. This brief includes an overview of best practices for DEI strategic planning and goal development. Additionally, this brief presents examples of DEI goals from districts across the United States.

Key Findings

- **Organizations engaging in DEI strategic planning often follow the same general process.** This process includes creating a plan and committee, conducting an assessment, writing goals as part of a larger plan, and implementing the plan. Although DEI strategic planning processes may target different focus areas and metrics, each follows a similar planning approach.

- **DEI strategic planning goals should include the elements of SMART or SMARTER goals: specific and strategic, measurable, actionable, results-based, time-bound, evaluated, readjusted.** Guiding questions for goal creation ask about the data needed for evaluation and the timeline for completion and more in order to ensure goals include each of the SMART or SMARTER components.

- **When creating SMART or SMARTER goals, stakeholders must recognize and avoid common deficiencies.** Common deficiencies involve writing vague or general goals, not analyzing data, not allowing for early improvements, not beginning with a vision, and not defining a timeline. Effective DEI goals that meet the SMART or SMARTER requirements may draw from district climate data, documents from previous DEI initiatives, internal feedback, peer district data, and other sources.

- **DEI strategic plan goals often include training, curriculum and programs, and hiring focus areas but do not always include every SMART or SMARTER goal component.** Goals often lack measurable and time-bound components. For example, one sample district goal for hiring diverse and culturally proficient staff includes a strategy to increase culturally responsive and equitable practices; however, the related tasks state general actions (e.g., "Provide equity training for leadership") and lack measurable outcomes and timelines.[3]

Understanding Best Practices for DEI Strategic Planning

Schools, companies, and other organizations that carry out strategic planning include similar elements and follow the same foundational process to ensure success. According to Diversity Best Practices—a membership organization that supports leaders in improving diversity initiatives—DEI strategic planning includes eight essential elements, as shown in the figure below.[4]
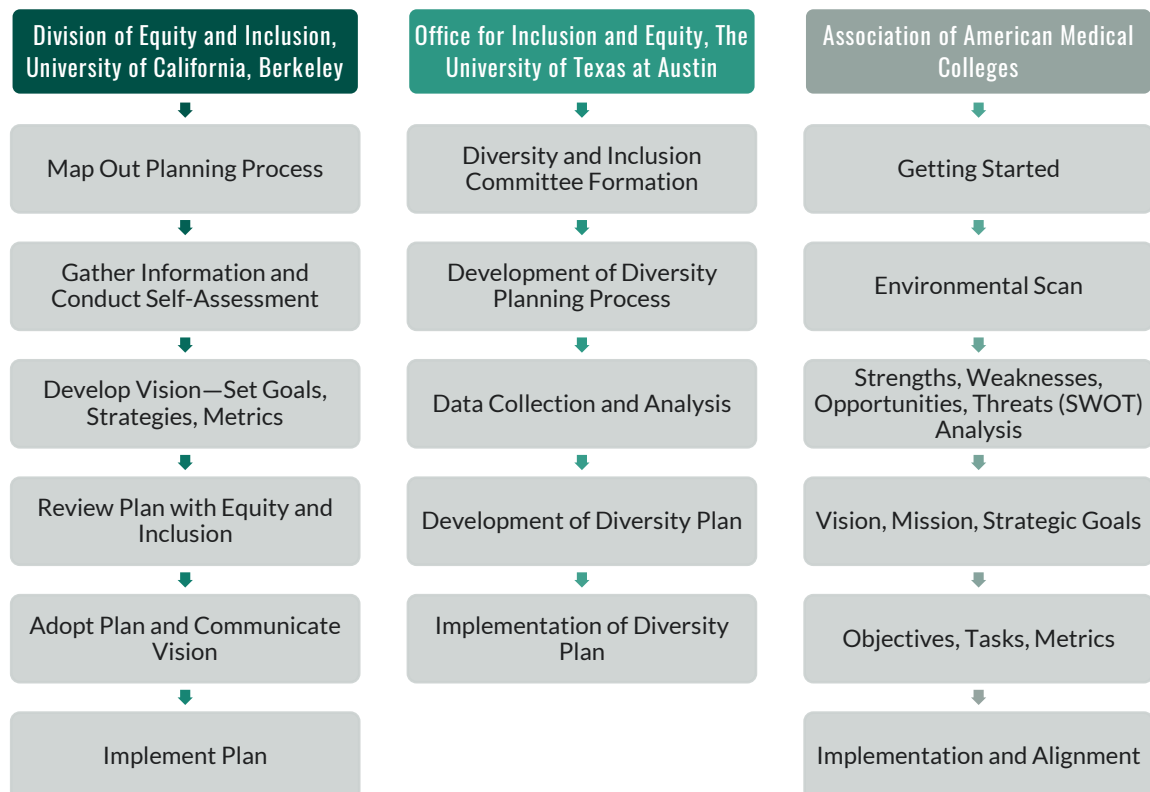
Essential Elements of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Planning

Informed and committed leadership	Comprehensive scope of goals and activities	Integration of objectives within business plans throughout the organization	Dedicated resources
Focused education and training opportunities	Policy review and development	Shared responsibility and individual accountability	Measurement and evaluation

Source: Diversity Best Practices[5]

Additionally, the processes that organizations follow during DEI strategic planning incorporate comparable steps, though plans may divide or combine steps and present different stages. The following figure presents three DEI strategic planning processes from education and nonprofit institutions, demonstrating how the foundational sequence of steps remains consistent.[6]

Examples of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Planning Processes

Division of Equity and Inclusion, University of California, Berkeley	Office for Inclusion and Equity, The University of Texas at Austin	Association of American Medical Colleges
Map Out Planning Process	Diversity and Inclusion Committee Formation	Getting Started
Gather Information and Conduct Self-Assessment	Development of Diversity Planning Process	Environmental Scan
Develop Vision—Set Goals, Strategies, Metrics	Data Collection and Analysis	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis
Review Plan with Equity and Inclusion	Development of Diversity Plan	Vision, Mission, Strategic Goals
Adopt Plan and Communicate Vision	Implementation of Diversity Plan	Objectives, Tasks, Metrics
Implement Plan		Implementation and Alignment

Source: Division of Equity & Inclusion, University of California, Berkeley; Office of Inclusion and Equity, The University of Texas at Austin; Association of American Medical Colleges[7]

Preparing for Goal Setting

Regardless of the exact steps that an organization follows during DEI strategic planning, the process requires stakeholders to design clear goals and metrics. This stage explicitly appears in the first two processes illustrated above and falls within the University of Texas at Austin's fourth step: Development of Diversity Plan.[8] Setting goals remains important across DEI planning settings as it fulfills the three purposes shown in the following figure.[9]

Purposes of Goal Setting in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Planning

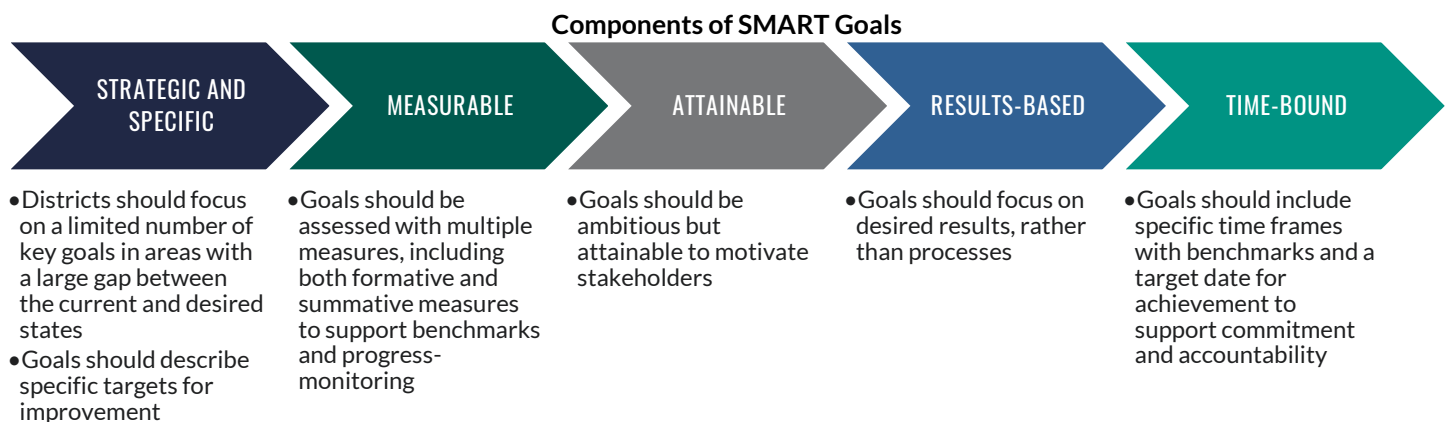|		
To enable an organization to articulate its aspirations in equity, inclusion, and diversity	To improve an organization's ability to reach its goals on equity, inclusion, and diversity	To set benchmarks that will act as the guiding lights on an organization's path toward achieving its aspirations, marking successes as well as needed changes in direction

Source: Division of Equity & Inclusion, University of California, Berkeley[10]

Once stakeholders identify the framework for DEI strategic planning and complete the initial step, members begin setting goals.[11] The certified public accounting (CPA) firm BGW CPA specifies that organizations should establish the following needs before setting goals:[12]

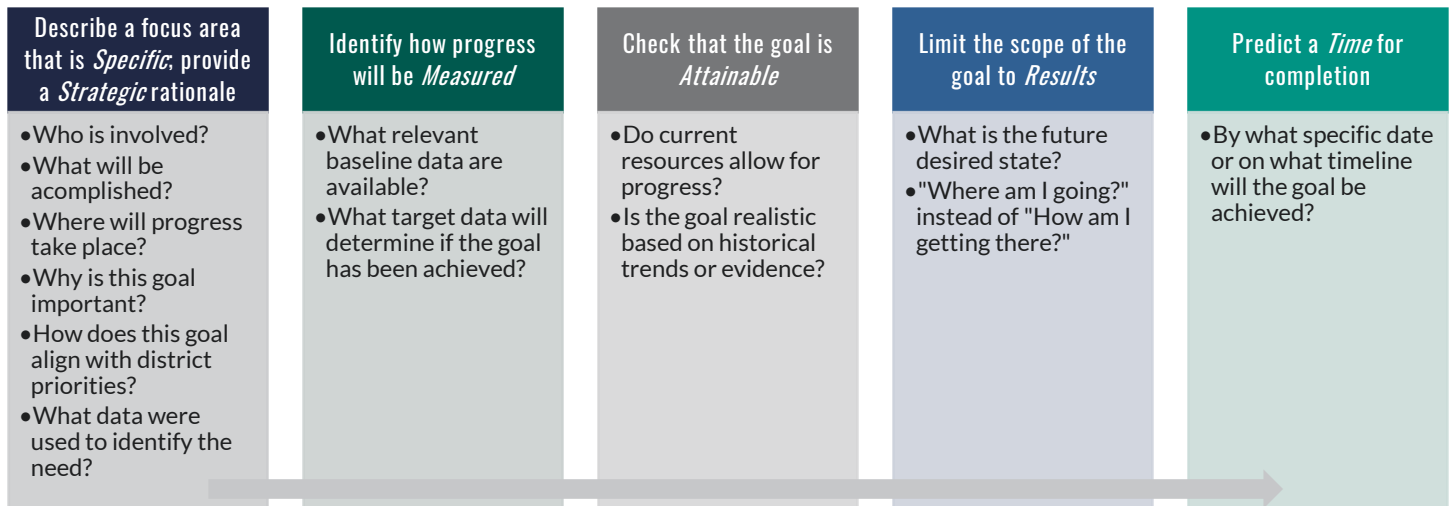|				
Mission statement	Vision statement	Priorities	Strategies	Monitoring and managing meetings
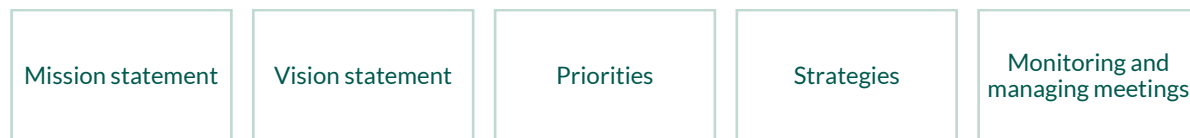
Creating SMART Goals

Strong goals identify desired outcomes and how organizations measure progress toward and achievement of those outcomes.[13] The acronym SMART identifies key areas in effective goal setting: **S**trategic and Specific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**esults-Based, and **T**ime-Bound. With the SMART structure, goals use baseline and target data to hold stakeholders accountable through effective communication and an established system for evaluating progress.[14] The following figure details the components of SMART goals.

Components of SMART Goals

STRATEGIC AND SPECIFIC	MEASURABLE	ATTAINABLE	RESULTS-BASED	TIME-BOUND
• Districts should focus on a limited number of key goals in areas with a large gap between the current and desired states • Goals should describe specific targets for improvement	• Goals should be assessed with multiple measures, including both formative and summative measures to support benchmarks and progress-monitoring	• Goals should be ambitious but attainable to motivate stakeholders	• Goals should focus on desired results, rather than processes	• Goals should include specific time frames with benchmarks and a target date for achievement to support commitment and accountability

Source: Solutions Tree Press[15]

Additionally, the figure on the following page presents guiding questions that stakeholders can use to write SMART goals. When drafting a SMART goal, stakeholders should ensure that the goal represents a significant need for improvement to meet the Strategic SMART component and includes a specific time frame for completion to meet the Time-Bound SMART component. To be Measurable and Attainable, evidence and data should show whether a school or district reaches a SMART goal.[16]

Process Model for Developing SMART Goals

Describe a focus area that is *Specific*; provide a *Strategic* rationale	Identify how progress will be *Measured*	Check that the goal is *Attainable*	Limit the scope of the goal to *Results*	Predict a *Time* for completion
• Who is involved? • What will be acomplished? • Where will progress take place? • Why is this goal important? • How does this goal align with district priorities? • What data were used to identify the need?	• What relevant baseline data are available? • What target data will determine if the goal has been achieved?	• Do current resources allow for progress? • Is the goal realistic based on historical trends or evidence?	• What is the future desired state? • "Where am I going?" instead of "How am I getting there?"	• By what specific date or on what timeline will the goal be achieved?

Source: Solutions Tree Press[17]

Furthermore, schools and districts can improve the quality of goals by avoiding common deficiencies, such as those in the figure below, that prevent goals from aligning with SMART goal components.[18]

Common Deficiencies in SMART Goals

SPECIFIC
- Lack of specificity often comes from a lack of true understanding of underlying problems and makes it difficult to address other SMART criteria, such as "measurable"

MEASURABLE
- When sets of data are not analyzed, goals often lack specific targets

ATTAINABLE
- Stretch goals are commendable but do not provide opportunities for early success

RESULTS-BASED
- Starting with a strategy instead of a goal often leads to a process-based rather than a results-based goal

TIME-BOUND
- The absence of a timeline and deadline will lead to a lack of focus and motivation and the inability to hold stakeholders accountable for progress

Source: Georgia Department of Education[19]

Building on SMART goals, certain organizations recommend SMARTER goals. These goals add **E**valuate and **R**eadjust to guide stakeholders in reviewing goals and incorporating feedback. The following figure presents reflection questions that stakeholders may ask to support the evaluated and readjust components of SMARTER goals.[20]

Guiding Questions for the Evaluated and Readjust Components of SMARTER Goals

EVALUATED	READJUST
• How often do you plan to evaluate progress toward your goals? • What will you do to evaluate progress? • How will you evaluate your performance once your goal is achieved in order to optimize your next goal setting process?	• How will you readjust if you are experiencing difficulties implementing or making progress toward your goal? • How will you navigate challenges that come your way? • What adjustments will you make to your approach to stay true to your initial goal?

Source: Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Indiana University, Purdue University Indianapolis[21]

Additionally, the following sources offer examples of data that may help stakeholders integrate the SMARTER goal elements:[22]

- Historical documents or resources related to past and current diversity efforts since diversity strategic plans can include both continued and new efforts;
- District climate data;
- Internal feedback or data sources tracked within the district; and
- Data or information you may find or be aware of from peer districts as you set goals and to benchmark against.

> For printable tools that support stakeholders in developing and reviewing DEI goals, please visit the following links:
> Worksheet to Brainstorm Goals for Each Diversity Indicator (Page 34)[23]
> Assessment: Goal Setting (Page 12)[24]

Exploring DEI Strategic Planning Goals in Other Districts

In this section, Hanover presents examples of goals that align with the partner's DEI strategic planning focus areas: training, curriculum and programs, hiring, and future vision. These goals originate from DEI strategic plans and roadmaps in peer and non-peer districts. To identify peer districts, Hanover used its Datalab Peer Generator Dashboard. This dashboard, last updated on March 2, 2020, uses data from the National Center for Education Statistics and the Census Bureau to list districts most similar to the partner based on the following factors:[25]

- Student enrollment;
- Percent of minority students;
- Percent of English language learners;
- Percent of special education students;
- Percent of children in poverty; and
- Median household income.

Using the dashboard's top 20 peer districts, Hanover searched for peer districts with publicly available DEI strategic planning goals. Due to the limited availability of this information, Hanover also identified other U.S. public school districts with DEI strategic planning goals

The figures below highlight DEI strategic planning goals from peer and non-peer districts. An asterisk(*) next to a district name indicates that this is a peer district. Because district plans often include multiple focus areas, strategies, goals, etc., Hanover presents a select number of examples that align with the partner's focus areas. Additionally, districts organize goals using different formats and terms for goals and actions. Therefore, the following figures reproduce goals as true to the sources as possible while maintaining consistency. To review districts' full DEI plans, please visit the websites linked to each district name.

Training

Examples of District Goals Related to DEI Training

DISTRICT	RELEVANT GOAL
Community School District 308[26] (Oswego, IL)	Increase awareness and sensitivity for cultural differences - Plan and implement required training for every staff member each year - For each school building, have a cultural liaison who is well aware of and versed in the various situations that might occur. Cultural and language barriers need to be addressed on a case-by-case basis

Ferndale Public Schools*[27] (Ferndale, MI)	Cultural Education: Trainings, events, and other opportunities to share experiences and learn about how we interact with each other across differences
	- Increase cultural awareness and competency of the Ferndale Public School family (parents, teachers, students, community) through quarterly educational activities
	   o The number of culturally-related student conflicts
	   o Parent cultural awareness scores from the Midwest Equity Survey
	   o The number of diverse identity books/projects utilized in classrooms/curricula

DISTRICT	RELEVANT GOAL
Iowa City Community School District[28] (Iowa City, IA)	Diverse and Culturally Proficient Teachers, Administrators, and Staff ▪ Increase teachers, administrators, and staff use of culturally responsive and equity informed practices 　o Provide differentiated professional development 　o Provide supports for implementation 　o Provide equity training for leadership
Jefferson County Public Schools[29] (Louisville, KY)	School Culture and Climate ▪ Provide training for staff to positively impact disproportionality (e.g., implicit bias, cultural competence, trauma-informed, social emotional, restorative practices, etc.) 　o 10% decrease in suspensions of students of color (from 77% in 2019 to 67% in 2020)—1,800 fewer suspensions for students of color 　o 5% increase in reported sense of belonging for students of color (from 75% in 2018 to 80% in 2020)—over 1,200 more students of color reporting sense of belonging
Lake Oswego School District[30] (Lake Oswego, OR)	Safe and supportive professional development for staff ▪ Provide meaningful and effective coaching and professional growth opportunities for all staff. These could include: Culturally responsive trainings, Instructional Rounds, supports for English language learners and special education students in Tier 1, trauma-informed practices, teaching with an equity lens 　o Provide culturally responsive trainings at each building 　o Survey staff on their perceptions of professional development in November, assess their perceptions of Instructional Rounds, and professional learning community time 　o Student performance improvements in subgroup populations

Source: Multiple sources cited within the figure.

Curriculum and Programs

Examples of District Goals Related to DEI Curriculum and Programs

DISTRICT	RELEVANT GOAL
Chandler Unified School District[31] (Chandler, AZ)	Instructional Practices: The classroom strategies, materials, and activities encompass a variety of backgrounds and life experiences in order to connect with a diverse student population ▪ Utilize material and resources that engage and reflect whole student population 　o Review curriculum and materials through equity and cultural lens 　o Utilize curriculum and materials that encompass a wide variety of backgrounds and cultural experiences and meet state standards as required
Ferndale Public Schools*[32] (Ferndale, MI)	Student Equity ▪ Ensuring that there is equitable access to honors programs and that disciplinary actions are fair and equitable 　o Increase number of African American students in secondary honors and AP classes in each of the next two academic years (2018-2020)
Jefferson County Public Schools[33] (Louisville, KY)	Diversity in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment ▪ Ensure that each school has systems in place to support students in becoming transition ready 　o 25% increase in students enrolled in courses specifically designed to consider other cultures' contributions and perspectives (from 939 in 2018 to 1,174 in 2020)—235 more students 　o By 2020, 3,940 books reflecting cultural diversity will be purchased for schools district-wide to ensure that traditionally underrepresented or marginalized groups see themselves reflected in school library collections 　o By 2020, 3% decrease in the gap in proficiency rates between African American and White students
Niles Township High School District 219*[34] (Skokie, IL)	Ensure D219 is a safe space for everyone to be heard through clubs, forums, and professional learning communities

Source: Multiple sources cited within the figure.

Hiring

Examples of District Goals Related to DEI Hiring

DISTRICT	RELEVANT GOAL

Chandler Unified School District[35] (Chandler, AZ)	Institutional Design: The core values of the school district articulate the vision of educational equity and appropriate policies and practices are advocated across the district
	▪ Recruit and retain a diverse, culturally responsive workforce
	   ○ Create opportunities for voluntary Employee Resource Groups to bring together employees with common interests and contribute to a culture of inclusion
	   ○ Develop a long-term plan to diversify the workforce
	   ○ Create interview and selection processes to guard against bias and promote the employment of a diverse, culturally responsive workforce
	   ○ Expand Grow Your Own Teacher program
	   ○ Annually use focus groups to gather information about working environment
	   ○ Foster cultural ambassadors to provide diverse role models for students

Iowa City Community School District[36] (Iowa City, IA)	Diverse and Culturally Proficient Teachers, Administrators, and Staff
	▪ Increase the recruitment of underrepresented teachers, administrators, and staff
	   ○ Establish "Grow Your Own" program with current staff and students
	   ○ Expand relationships with universities, colleges, search firms, and other educational programs within the state and nation
	   ○ Expand advertisement protocol for positions
	   ○ Maintain diverse recruitment team
	   ○ Embed equity in the hiring process

Lake Oswego School District[37] (Lake Oswego, OR)	Safe and supportive professional environment for staff
	▪ Aggressively recruit and actively support teachers and staff from diverse backgrounds and cultures
	   ○ Increased percentage of diverse staff members in all employee categories
	   ○ Improved retention rate of diverse staff members
	   ○ Closing the gap between the percent of diverse students and the percent of diverse staff (staff reflects student population)

Source: Multiple sources cited within the figure.

Future Vision

Examples of District Goals Related to DEI Future Vision

DISTRICT	RELEVANT GOAL

Chandler Unified School District[38] (Chandler, AZ)	Institutional Design: The core values of the school district articulate the vision of educational equity and appropriate policies and practices are advocated across the district
	▪ Establish an equity focus at the Governing Board and Superintendency Level
	   ○ Measure student success by multiple subgroups
	   ○ Communicate and articulate a message of equity and inclusion from Superintendent and Governing Board
	   ○ Meet regularly as District leadership team to collaborate and guide efforts
	   ○ Listen to the varies voices of stakeholders and consider input as decisions are made

Iowa City Community School District[39] (Iowa City, IA)	Culturally Responsive and Equity-Informed District Policies and Practices
	▪ Develop a shared district and community understanding, definition, and goals for diversity, equity, and inclusion
	   ○ Publish and communicate the Comprehensive Equity Plan (CEP)
	   ○ Implement an accountability system for continued implementation of the CEP at district, building, and classroom levels (i.e., Comprehensive School Improvement Plan)

DISTRICT	RELEVANT GOAL

Jefferson County Public Schools[40] (Louisville, KY)	Central Office Commitment—Policy and Implementation
	
	▪ Support schools by providing training on the equity scorecard and helping principals design school level equity plans
	   o By 2020, provide funding of at least $2 million on initiatives focused on students of color
	   o Increase number of staff participating in culturally responsive/equity professional development opportunities from 3,919 in 2018 to 8,000 in 2020
	   o Increase number of district and school policies, procedures, and practices that have been reviewed using the Racial Equity Analysis Protocol from zero in 2018 to 300 by 2020

Niles Township High School District 219*[41] (Skokie, IL)	Excite and Engage graduates, parents, and teachers to share, spread, and motivate us through their stories and journeys as culturally conscious, lifelong learners

Source: Multiple sources cited within the figure.

For additional examples of DEI strategic plans and initiatives from peer districts that do not present SMART goals but provide actions in focus areas similar to the partner's focus areas, please visit the following links:

Racial Equity Initiative, University Place School District[42]

Call to Action, Woodbridge Township School District[43]

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Endnotes

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