

LONG BEACH
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Excellence & Equity

Excellence & Equity

The Long Beach Unified School District's
Journey from the Perspectives of
Senior District Leaders



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Introduction

Setting the Stage for Long Beach’s Equity Story

By Dr. Jill A. Baker

Over the greater part of two decades, the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) has been on an equity journey. Our equity-centered commitments have profoundly shaped and are continuing to shape every facet of how we do business in our district, including professional development for leaders, teachers, and classified personnel, as well as curriculum, instruction, evaluation, and family and community engagement.

Located in Southern California, LBUSD is the fourth largest school district in California and serves approximately 67,000 students, including 88% Black and brown students and 64.3% socio-economically disadvantaged.

We see our equity journey in two parts—prior to 2020 and after 2020. Prior to 2020, our equity initiatives focused on increasing access, closing the achievement gap, and setting the standard of rigorous curriculum. The result of these efforts was student growth and consistent outperforming the state of California for Black and brown students.

Beginning in 2004, through the work influenced by visits by Broad Prize winners and then subsequent generous grants from the Wallace Foundation in the years that followed, we began our journey of creating a comprehensive system of supervision and support to principals. The work included extensive coaching, professional learning, equity audits, and principals working with their teacher teams to address issues of equity. This evolutionary work eventually grew into our Equity Leadership & Talent Development (ELTD) department, which now includes 27 programs for credentialed and classified staff.

In 2006, we updated our nondiscrimination policy to say that

we are “providing equal opportunity for all individuals in district programs and activities” (Policy Manual, 2006).

In 2010, with Long Beach City College and California State University Long Beach, we launched the Long Beach College Promise—committing to create a college-going culture for all students and increase access for our Black and brown students to Advanced Placement courses. We also began placing middle school students in accelerated math based on attainment rather than individual teacher recommendation. The Long Beach College Promise became a blueprint for other communities across the nation.

In 2018, we launched a campaign called “All Means All”—again to increase access for all marginalized students, including Black and brown students and students with disabilities. In doing so, this “campaign” also created a model for the engagement of families, which resulted in a collaboratively developed Board Resolution on “inclusiveness” that was developed by the families who participate in the District’s Community Advisory Committee.

In 2019, we put principals and principal supervisors at the center of district-wide change around equity and adopted the NYC Leadership Academy’s (now The Leadership Academy) definition of equity: “Children and adults should receive what they each need to achieve their potential, and their race, culture, and other characteristics of their identity should not prevent access to opportunities and resources” (NYC Leadership Academy, 2020). We began to ask ourselves: What does this definition of equity look like when it is actualized? What is the deep work that each person has to do in service of being an equity leader?



“Equity is not one thing. Equity needs to be everything. It needs to be the lens that we use to look through all the work that we do.” – Dr. Tiffany Brown

Then 2020 hit. Board of Education members and senior leaders quickly knew we had a lot more work to do and our moment to do it was now. The deepening inequities of the pandemic along with the impact of the murder of George Floyd were reckoning moments for our entire district community.

After the announcement on April 9, 2020 that I would become the next LBUSD superintendent, I began to transition from deputy superintendent to superintendent. And, in these important moments, as the nation faced long simmering issues of racism, I knew that in order to lead our organization as a White woman, I had to deepen my own racial identity work, inspire others to do the same and to create new paths forward in our organization. I also knew that our path forward would require the dismantling of systems, the honest account about barriers that held our Black and brown students back and a reimagining of the future for our students.

As my colleague, Dr. Tiffany Brown, deputy superintendent, reminded us often: “Equity is not one thing. Equity needs to be everything. It needs to be the lens that we use to look through all the work that we do.”

I also challenged district leaders to ask themselves a key question learned from the traditional greeting of the Maasai tribe in the eastern part of Africa: “And how are the children?” Taking it further, we asked ourselves: What are we willing to do *individually* to ensure that all of our children are well? And what are we willing to do *collectively* as a community, as a school district, and as groups within our school district, to ensure that all of our children are well? At the end of the day, we know that the true strength of a community is determined by the well-being of its children.

In July 2020, following George Floyd’s murder, the Board of Education contemplated passing a Reconciliation Resolution to express their commitment to racial equity and following similar actions by the City of Long Beach and other educational institutions. I am so grateful that they trusted my team and me to orchestrate a different approach to addressing racism and inequities in LBUSD. Rather than quickly pass a resolution, I proposed the formation of a team who would develop a forward thinking policy that could stand as the foundation for reimagining education in LBUSD, give voice to members of the community and allow the strength of the Board of Education to shine brightly. As a result, deputy superintendent Dr. Tiffany Brown, designed and led the district’s very first Equity Leadership Team, composed primarily of community members, parents and partners. This was a clear opportunity to lift up the voices of those who have had experiences that we, as system leaders, needed to learn from.

“There has never been a more important time for us to focus on relationships and the students who are farthest away from justice than at this moment. Our students are depending on us to reimagine the future.”
– Dr. Jill A. Baker

In December 2021, 18 months after the team’s work began, the Board passed the [Excellence and Equity Policy](#). The policy is a bold declaration, a common language and definition, and a framework for embedding equity in systems and structures—supporting offices and school leaders to have courageous conversations and push forward new initiatives. Every LBUSD staff member now has a role in the implementation of this policy.

Importantly, the policy includes an acknowledgment of institutional, historical, and systemic harms and a commitment to reconciliation. It states, “As we center equity, it is important that we also hold responsibility for the ways in which K-12 educational institutions have participated or collaborated in the systemic oppression of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) students and those with disabilities” (Excellence and Equity, 2021).

Alongside the work of the policy, we have learned that there is incredible power in owning the brutal facts of our data as a way to identify enduring commitments for our equity work.

I believe that the classroom is the place where students will experience equity. We should not have lighthouse schools around the district; rather, we need to build a system where educators at all levels across all schools are learning from each other. In LBUSD, we are working hard to create high, consistent instructional expectations so that every school and every classroom is a place where there is instructional excellence. We’re still far from that, but this is where we are committed to going.

There has never been a more important time for us to focus on relationships and the students who are farthest away from justice than at this moment. Our students are depending on us to reimagine the future.



Dr. Jill A. Baker
Superintendent





Purpose of this Publication

The purpose of this publication is to share our district's equity journey with other education leaders across the United States. By no means is it comprehensive nor do we in LBUSD have it all figured out. Our desire is to share the lessons and best practices we've learned so that they might spur the work.

We encourage you to use this publication as a conversation starter in senior leadership teams, in graduate programs with aspiring leaders, in coaching sessions, and in other venues where we might learn from each other.

We hope that by telling our story we can continue to be challenged and grow in LBUSD. There's too much at stake for us to be doing this work in isolation.

We would love to hear from you. Send us an email at communications@lbschools.net.

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Part One



Creating Coherence for Systemic Change

Perspective from Dr. Jill A. Baker, Superintendent

In order to reach “students farthest away from justice,” Dr. Baker has focused her leadership as superintendent on creating understanding, coherence, and alignment across key LBUSD stakeholders to bring systemic change, including the school board, the district’s senior leadership, principals, and community.

Key Lessons

Here are a few key lessons Dr. Baker and her team have learned while leading this work.

- I. **“Equity” initiatives aren’t enough. Equity is not one thing. It needs to be the lens that we use to look through all the work we do.**

Since the early 2000s, LBUSD has had a long-standing history of focusing on equity; prior to 2020, LBUSD’s equity initiatives focused on increasing access, closing the achievement gap, and setting the standard of rigorous curriculum.

- *Increased Access to AP Courses:* In 2010, LBUSD launched the Long Beach College Promise with Long Beach City College and California State University Long Beach—promising to

create a college-going culture for all students. Initiatives included innovations such as access for all eighth graders to take the PSAT, creating allowable time during school days to take the SATs, and increasing access for Black and brown students to Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

In the case of AP courses in particular, data revealed Black and brown students were underrepresented in these courses. However, by 2014, LBUSD students took more than 9,000 AP exams—a 20% increase from the previous year and a 154% increase from the previous 10 years.

- *Increased Graduation Rates:* The district’s continued focus on opportunity and access impacted Black and brown students most acutely. Over a span of five years, from 2014

to 2018, the district increased its graduation rate of its Black students by ten percentage points—from 74% to 84%. By 2018, this was twelve percentage points higher than the state of California average. In 2020, LBUSD continued to far surpass the state average with 85.6% graduation rate among its Black students—eight percent higher than the state of California average.

In reflecting on this period, Dr. Baker notes that significant progress was made, especially at the individual student, individual classroom and individual school level. And, across the district, there was still significant work to do to ensure that pockets of growth and bright spots turned into systematic approaches to changing student outcomes. In addition, the senior team analyzed current efforts and considered some of the challenges and trade offs that were present.

- First, AP courses/curriculum became the proxy for rigorous instruction, suggesting non-AP core classes, CTE course sequences and electives did not require or include high quality instruction. While AP courses reflect college level expectations, teachers felt pressured to ensure AP test passing as the focus of their instruction, which often equated to high expectations, but not necessarily student centered classrooms.
- Second, the incentivization and rapid expansion of AP courses created a trade-off. The district was inadvertently competing against its own Linked Learning initiative, electives and other enhancements to the student experience.
- Finally, among the different equity projects taking place at the time, there was not a coherent approach across the projects that ensured that they worked in service to the greater goal of changing the outcomes for all Black and brown students.

II. Creating a strong, consistent instructional system, including frameworks, training, and support, are at the heart of creating equity within districts.

For Dr. Baker, the systematic approach to ensuring that every classroom has high-quality instruction is the primary lever for equitable student achievement. She believes that, “The classroom is the place where students will experience equity” and “If we want students to be successful, we must align our aspirations to our intentions and our investments.”

With that, there are a few pillars to create a strong, consistent instructional system.

1. The first pillar is investing in effective teachers through professional learning around academic achievement and support at a systematic level. This investment in teacher

learning and development must be systemwide, with no “opt outs” and include data (e.g. the brutal facts), culturally sustaining practices and self-awareness and reflection embedded into the professional learning experiences.

2. Second, districts need a research-based, equity-centered curriculum.
3. Next is investing in leaders across the system, including programs for teacher leaders, aspiring and current principals, and central office leaders. It takes a commitment to develop staff with intention and by design, rather than by chance. Since 2004, this has been the approach in LBUSD, and they have seen the results in student achievement, school culture and climate, and persistence of those who assume leadership roles in LBUSD.

III. As system leaders, equity work has to be personal and requires courage before we can define and do the work of equity leadership in our organizations.

The immediacy of George Floyd’s murder in the Spring of 2020 had the district’s senior leaders rethinking how they talked about equity, including the language they were using. Prior to 2020, leaders talked about “students of color,” but not “Black and brown students.” Dr. Baker says it takes courage to call something what it is. As a White woman, she has learned the importance of taking cues from the community itself as to what is a respectful way to be called.

Leaders sometimes have to make courageous decisions in the moment, which then become the way forward. In May 2020, just a few weeks after she was appointed as superintendent, Dr. Baker asked a Black LBUSD school board member, Dr. Felton Williams, and other members of the board if they would be willing to write a statement on the killing of George Floyd. [The statement](#) was published on June 1, 2020. While LBUSD serves 88% students who are Black and brown, the surrounding community is predominantly White. This decision carried risk for her, especially as a new superintendent. But for her, this was a moment of courage and defined her leadership moving forward.

As Dr. Baker reflects on her journey as a leader in 2020, she shares, “There’s been a deepening of my own reflection on identity and practice...all while doing all of this work with my senior leadership team.”

First, she had to lead change within the organization as a new superintendent. The first year was a lot of chaos management, a lot of putting out fires.

It was also a time where the superintendent’s first year goals included a number of audits (i.e. curriculum, communication and technology), as well as the immediate development of



governance tools such as a Board Handbook and communication protocols, and new ways of working as a Senior Team.

In that first year, Dr. Kristi Kahl, assistant superintendent of curriculum, instruction and professional development, led an equity-centered audit of her department.

They then brought in Dr. Gholdy Muhammad, associate professor of language and literacy at Georgia State University, to do teaching around auditing curriculum from a racial inequity perspective. In the second year, the work led them to look deeper at systems and owning the Excellence and Equity Policy.

Also in Dr. Baker's first year, an audit was conducted in the areas of communications and the Leadership Development Office transformed its curriculum and was renamed Equity Leadership & Talent Development. This all took place as the district survived constant changes in COVID requirements, struggled to maintain educational programs through distance learning and worked with all employee groups to navigate through the pandemic.

As her first year in the superintendency was nearing an end, Dr. Baker continued to assess her own and her team's need for support. As she developed more and more systems related to her work with the Board of Education, she also realized that to develop the senior team to the depths that she desired, she would need additional support. This caused her to seek someone with experience in helping others to develop their racial identity and leadership skills, the expertise to support a team's effectiveness and someone who could guide a senior team in reimagining what improvement could look like in the organization.

After researching and talking to peers about who might fit this

profile, she found David Montes de Oca, chief of improvement at CORE Districts. After several "get to know you" meetings, David and Dr. Baker determined that they were a match for one another. He began his work with the senior team in the summer of 2022 and continues as a coach at the time of this publication. His coaching has resulted in the senior team embracing liberatory leadership, reflecting on their racial identities, working to dismantle White Dominant Culture, and using data to drive the reimagining of education in LBUSD.

Third, in her new role as superintendent, Dr. Baker continued to center student voice, using experiences that she had in previous roles to generate ideas of how to connect and listen to students firsthand. Starting in the fall of 2020, Dr. Baker met regularly with RSVP (Raising Student Voices and Participation), her student advisory representative of students in every high school in the district. Since its inception in 2020, RSVP (named by students), has achieved significant milestones including:

- Giving input during distance learning that was used to enhance student experiences
- Giving input on the District's new Pulse Survey, including ideas on how to make the survey questions interesting to students, that were immediately implemented
- Participating in discussions about data and suggesting ways to improve school processes and activities in response to the data
- Participating on the Vision 2035 Guiding Coalition to ensure students were centered in the reimagining of education in LBUSD

During the 2022-2023 school year, Dr. Baker met with 25-30 students at every high school as part of the work with her student advisory. This commitment of time modeled the way for others and created a new level of awareness and interest in listening to the voices of students. These conversations have inspired Dr. Baker to, “keep going, because at the end of the day, it is the students whose lives I am working to transform.”

IV. Equity leadership is about owning the brutal facts of our data, identifying what the problems are, and trimming the excess to get to the heart of what matters.

When Dr. Baker became superintendent in 2020, she began to focus on governance and senior leadership—or what she refers to as her three main spheres of influence and teamwork. And with the community engagement work underway under the leadership of Dr. Tiffany Brown with the Equity Leadership Team, Dr. Baker focused on her main areas of influence:

1. Board of Education
2. Senior Leadership Team
3. Strategic Planning

Dr. Baker began asking herself, “What does equity mean now?” She came to realize that it meant a transparent, systematic approach to owning the district’s data. While graduation rates were strong, 70% of Black boys weren’t reading on grade level by third grade and significant achievement gaps existed between White, Black and brown students. This meant taking a systematic approach and rethinking funding interventions.

An entry point emerged for Dr. Baker, as a new superintendent and as she anticipated the retirement of two veteran board members. In her first few months as superintendent, Dr. Baker

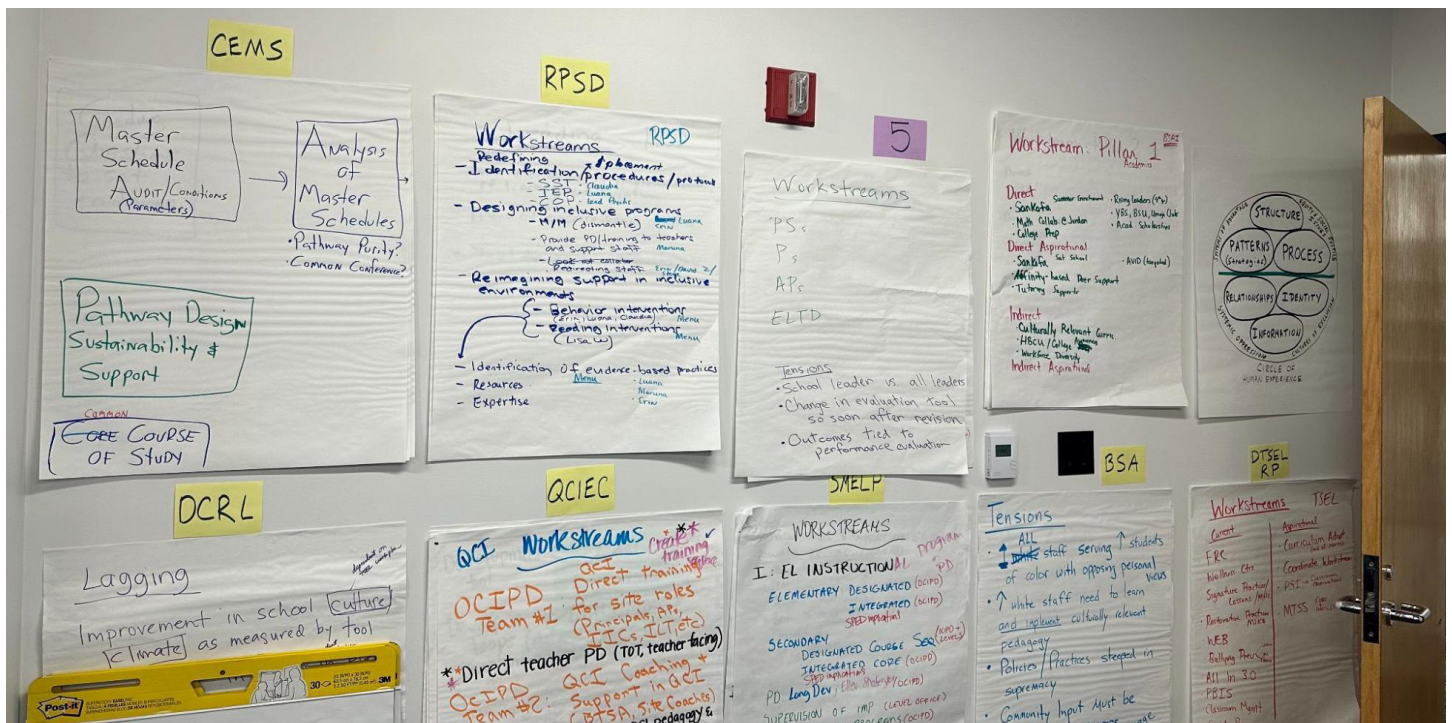
sought the board’s interest in studying the Student Outcomes Focused Governance model. To do so, she engaged with the Council of Great City Schools, specifically AJ Crabill. After some deliberation, the Board agreed to begin the process of embracing and installing the SOFG model in LBUSD.

Over the past three years, this model has transformed the governance team through the establishment of Board Goals & Guardrails, a revised board agenda, and the establishment of clear Board Bylaws. These processes have been supported by a new on-boarding and support process for new board members, clear communication systems and the establishment of Superintendent Advisory Groups.

With her senior leadership team, Dr. Baker knew that in order to make the strategic change that needed to happen, they needed to focus. The senior leadership team worked to narrow the number of district-wide initiatives from 85 to seven mission critical initiatives.

The initiatives were no longer simply “projects,” but rather they were part of a systematic approach to addressing the achievement gap between Black and brown students and White students. This prioritization was aided by a community-based strategic planning process.

The descriptions and work plans of the initiatives remain posted in a room in the central office on large chart paper—as a visual reminder not only of the complexity of the work, but also of what is of utmost importance in order for excellence and equity to happen.



Part Two



Building the Common Foundation of Equity

Perspective from Dr. Tiffany Brown, Deputy Superintendent

Through Dr. Tiffany Brown's leadership and the work of the Equity Leadership Team, the LBUSD School Board approved the [Excellence and Equity Policy](#) in December 2021, which has built a common foundation of equity that is being implemented throughout LBUSD.

Background

In 2020, the murder of George Floyd, the evolution of COVID-19, and its impact on both school operations and student/family wellness forced a breaking point of reflection for LBUSD to answer: How are our children? In terms of equity, the data—qualitatively and quantitatively—did not produce a resounding “all are well,” specifically for the 12% of Black students and their families in the district.

While the data had signaled this reality for some time, dual pandemics of COVID-19 and racial oppression brought gravity and urgency to the district's longstanding commitment of “All Means All.” According to Dr. Brown, “All Means All” had historically been about access in LBUSD. To move forward in a way that acknowledged and owned the brutal facts of the data, LBUSD's focus had to be on quality. To do that, they saw the need for a foundational equity policy that would engage all levels of stakeholders—from community up and through senior leadership—in co-creating a new reality.

I. How to Co-Create Policy

Creating an equity leadership team inclusive of community voice and participation was new territory for Long Beach. In truth, it is territory that many districts have not entered. Instead of developing a policy internally and then inviting community voice and participation for feedback after the fact, LBUSD aimed to authentically weave in stakeholder voice and ownership throughout the process. In other words, the desire was for the committee to drive the creation of the eventual policy. Embedded in this process was significant learning for all stakeholders, but especially for senior leadership at Long Beach.

The work of uncovering and addressing harm—by listening to the lived experiences of community members—required LBUSD leadership to understand and subvert the power dynamics that had created and sustained harm over time. They were presented with an important opportunity to authentically enact the equity

“I’ll say there has never been a comfortable day since this work with the Equity Leadership Team began, and that, to me, means we’re moving forward.” – Dr. Tiffany Brown

leadership dispositions that they had been introduced to through deep work with The Leadership Academy and CORE. Doing so would prove to be challenging, but would ultimately result in a foundation for equity to be sustainably redefined in the district.

How does the co-creation of an equity policy happen?

1. Invite and identify the co-creators.

Dr. Brown and her team started working to create the Equity Leadership Team. They asked themselves: Who has been historically left out of the process? Who has the system underserved?

They put out an application to the community and received 250 applications, a clear sign that there was interest. From the applicants, they selected a group of 30 people to make up the Equity Leadership Team. The majority of the team was composed of parents and non-parent community members.

2. Spend time together in the messy middle.

There was no precedent for this work. Without a script, the newly formed team co-created the parameters and intentions together.

The team began working together in January of 2021 and met regularly for eight months to develop the Excellence and Equity Policy. They started by asking: What are the core tenants that have to be in there? What has to be said to be able to put our head on the pillow at night? What is necessary for our community to know more of? How can the community really hold us accountable to both the reconciliation of harm that our system has created and also the level of oppression that is experienced all the time in our system and every other system?

The team then went on a path of looking at policies developed by other districts. They then started writing and created iteration after iteration.

3. Invite and experience discomfort.

Specific to equity work, co-creation involves the identification of prior harm done and a commitment to address it moving forward.

There were hard questions from the start. At the first meeting, Dr. Brown was asked, “Why you? A White woman, you’ve worked here 28 years, you’re every bit as much of a part of the problem as you could be to any solution. What are you doing here?” Through this experience, she had to come to terms with her own racism and privilege. Reflecting on the past couple of years, Dr. Brown shares, “I’ve been on a path of a lot of deep work and study... And more than that, like really to live in a space of owning who I am, what I’ve done, what I’ve not done, when I speak, when I don’t speak. I’ll say there has never been a comfortable day since this work with the Equity Leadership Team began, and that, to me, means we’re moving forward.”

4. Process affords power. Mind historical gaps and expect internal pressures.

When shifting power dynamics, those who have historically held decision-making authority will have their own equity dispositions and commitments challenged—especially more senior leaders. Use these opportunities for learning, as well as to anchor back into those commitments in real time. The change management involved in mining for and attending to all levels of stakeholder need cannot be understated.

The creation of the Excellence and Equity Policy shifted the power structure in the LBUSD community. There were some wonderings from administrators who were not specifically asked to “weigh in” on the document. They wanted to know: When are you going to ask me for input? This was an important question reflecting that the process was a change from how the district had always done things. Dr. Brown believes that, “If we’ve never done it before, it’s probably the right thing for right now.” The team also received pushback from the White community,

Defining Equity:

Equity is our moral imperative to create a student-centered and anti-racist school experience that guarantees academic achievement, student agency, advancement and a sense of belonging for all. We achieve this imperative by eliminating individual and institutionally biased/racist practices.

Diversity, including: race, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and/or expression, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, religion, ability level, age, citizenship status, language and an openness to other identifiers is viewed as an asset to a dynamic learning experience.

Our work is driven by consideration of those who are being left out in traditional school practices and operations. With all students in mind, we uplift groups of students that have been historically marginalized. We amplify the voices of our students and embrace our community as true partners in education. The results create academic, social and emotional growth.

LBUSD, 2021

which in Long Beach is very small (12% of the student population). Dr. Brown reflects, “So just the creation of White discomfort that came in the development of this policy has been, in my perspective, the greatest part of the work, the opportunity to really push forward with new thinking and in change that comes from making privileged people feel discomfort, which usually doesn’t happen.”

II. How to Systemize the Policy

The Equity Leadership Team created what Dr. Brown describes as a “really brave document.” But the real challenge was when they had to figure out how to operationalize it.

Coherence and alignment are critical components of being able to actualize an equity policy. A co-created and community-driven policy may require districts to take a non-traditional approach to casting vision for, aligning responsibilities to, and embedding accountable measures within a process for rollout and implementation. Leaders should be mindful of this and can pre-plan for the structures necessary to support internal stakeholders amidst a paradigm shift.

1. Buy-in should be pre-planned, intentional, and focus on alignment and seeing the policy in action.

Linking policy to action lays the groundwork for all stakeholders to have clarity on the role they are being asked to play.

Within the policy there are [10 implementation areas](#). Each area is intentionally connected to core department work, including the curriculum office, the research department, hiring, workforce diversity efforts, student support services, and the business office. In other words, “Every large department that reflects a body of work is reflected there.”

The Equity Leadership Team asked for ownership of the work in the Excellence and Equity Policy in a more explicit way than with past policies. According to Dr. Brown, “With this document, we were actually talking about how we embody the work, what equity looks like in each school, what we want the narrative within our schools to be, and how we connect with the community.”

2. Accountable measures begin with role-based clarity and competence to execute the work.

LBUSD created the runway to actualize the work by equipping leaders across the system with the skills to do it. This work took time, foresight, and resources. Additionally, it often required external support to accelerate organizational learning.

As the district strengthened its overall systematic approach to excellence and equity, in 2021 the leadership development office became the Equity Leadership & Talent Development (ELTD). Through this office, LBUSD had been providing training

10 Equity Policy Implementation Areas:

1. Integration of student voice and community input in the decision making at the school site and district level.
2. Assessing student performance semi-annually based on data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, disability and language background and responding to this data with focused outreach efforts, equitable access and differentiated support, and awareness of district programs.
3. Implementing evidence based research that highlights restorative practices and a lens toward reconciliation and healing over punishment for students on campus.
4. Providing access and opportunities for all students to enroll and participate in curricular and extracurricular courses that increase their opportunities and encourage success on the life path that they choose.
5. Conducting program evaluations that focus on equity (to include attendance, discipline, graduation rate) and address the academic outcomes for students with particular focus on BIPOC and students with disabilities. As a part of these evaluations, LBUSD will conduct focus groups to include students, parents and staff members to gather feedback across experiences.
6. Building a positive school culture and climate that celebrates the diversity that all students bring as measured by students, caregivers, and staff input.
7. Analyzing expenditures and allocating financial resources in a manner that provides all students (and particularly BIPOC and students with disabilities) with equitable access to district programs, support services, and opportunities for success. This should also include analysis of data regarding funds that are procured by outside groups and used for learning activities (e.g. PTA, school site foundations).
8. Adopting curriculum and instructional materials that are culturally relevant and accurately reflect the diversity among student groups.
9. Promoting the recruitment of a diverse staff that reflects the demographics of the community. Providing staff with ongoing professional development that includes outside community stakeholder groups with lived experience so that we can continually develop as culturally competent and responsive educators.
10. Providing staff with ongoing professional development that includes outside community stakeholder groups with lived experience so that we can continually develop as culturally competent and responsive educators.



around the dispositions of an equity leader for years. With the Excellence and Equity Policy, it was time for principals and principal supervisors to take the work they had been engaged in during this training and “go forward as leaders in our system.”

The work that David Montes de Oca, chief of improvement at CORE Districts, had been doing with the senior team also became crucial. For about 18 months, he worked with the senior team around the principles of equity and what White dominant culture looks like in an organization. This learning and growth laid the foundation for the senior team to execute the work of the policy. Dr. Brown shares, “We’ve really just been on a path of operationalizing together, like what does equity look like in our schools? And what are we standing for?”

III. What Can Impact Look Like?

Equity work never arrives and ever evolves. A co-created policy should clarify starting points and hopeful outcomes.

1. LBUSD’s process clarified a need to center Black students, their families, and the community-at-large.

Through the Excellence and Equity Policy, LBUSD clearly centered the needs of Black students. Since then, district leaders have had to continuously re-commit to centering Black students. In addition to the development of the policy itself, other important factors led LBUSD leaders to making this collective decision about where their focus and resources should lie, including examining deeply Black student achievement data (“owning the brutal facts of the data” as Dr. Baker says) and sitting with and listening to disempowered parents/community members.

In their current strategic planning process, stakeholders have asked: But what about our English language learners? And what about students with disabilities? And what about LGBTQ+? According to Dr. Brown, this was a critical moment to say, “Centering Black students not only addresses the needs of those who have been the furthest from justice in our system, but it lifts the experience for everyone. And if we do this work, then everyone will benefit. But if we center everyone, not only are we centering no one, but we are decentering Black students.”

In terms of structure and strategy, LBUSD will be co-creating a Center for Black Student Excellence alongside community members to operationalize new-found commitments driven by the equity policy. Dr. Brown sees the new center, “as a place to capture and center the work that’s happening in our system for Black students.”

However, even with the creation of this new office, the work can’t be siloed. It has to be coherently owned by stakeholders both internal and external to the organization. Dr. Brown explains, “We have a policy, we have a superintendent who’s connected the equity lens of our policy into her goals. Those goals become the goals of our principals and schools. We have principal supervisors who are focused on this work. And then we have what will be a supportive office, that is a hub for how we engage the community, which has been the piece that has just really been absolutely demanded and left out. So, that’ll be our next step.”

Part Three



Building an Equity Leadership Development Pipeline

Perspectives from Dr. Jill A. Baker, Superintendent, and Dr. Kelly An, Assistant Superintendent, Human Resource Services

Background

In 2004, when LBUSD was a repeat nominee for the Broad Prize for Urban Education, feedback from the visiting team was cause for pause and contemplation. While the district was lauded for its commitment to teacher professional development over the course of the prior two decades, there was a notable lack of attention to the significant role that leaders played in achieving student success, and few internal methods of ensuring that leaders were intentionally developed.

The research is clear that having an effective principal in a school building is the second most powerful influence on student achievement (Leithwood et. al, 2004). A recent study found that, “Effective principals affect achievement at levels similar to an effective teacher – but across an entire school. Replacing a low-effectiveness with a high-effectiveness principal would boost student learning by nearly 3 months in math and reading” (Grissom et al., 2021). In addition to the academic boost of an effective principal, schools saw better student attendance,

less exclusionary discipline, and less staff turnover. Dr. Baker, then an assistant superintendent, began to ask herself: Why aren't all districts investing in a leadership pipeline aligned to the research?

In 2005, the leadership development pipeline program started with two programs, one that focused on coaching first-year principals and another that engaged all principals in studying school culture and climate through the Southern Regional Education Board's curriculum. By all accounts, the initial year of the LBUSD pipeline programming opened a door of possibilities and set the district on a course of work that has impacted thousands of teachers and leaders and hundreds of thousands of students.

For most of the years between 2006 and 2014, leadership development was supported by a significant federal grant and led by a former high performing principal, Dr. Kristi Kahl. Under

Dr. Kahl's leadership, effective programs were developed for teachers who aspired to become school leaders and those who aspired to move from a more junior leadership position to the principalship. Dr. Kahl connected research to programming and curriculum, selected text for leaders to study, and developed hundreds of leaders who are still in the district leading schools today.

Since 2015, under the leadership of Dr. Kelly An, then director, the leadership development office reached a number of significant milestones, including:

- serving certificated staff, including teacher leaders, aspiring and new administrators, principals, central office mid-level leaders, and district senior-level leaders;
- serving full-time permanent classified staff, including managers, supervisors, directors, etc.;
- partnering with universities to transform the credentialing experience for candidates and to elevate a doctoral degree program for current leaders; and
- developing programs for teachers who want to remain as teachers, but who desire the opportunity for continued development.

As the district strengthened its overall systematic approach to excellence and equity, in 2021 the leadership development office became the [Equity Leadership & Talent Development \(ELTD\) office](#), reflective of a revised curriculum across all of

its programs. ELTD has been essential in ensuring that equity considerations are integrated into decisions about hiring, evaluation, and the professional development of the district's leaders and administrators.

Within the current 27 ELTD programs, all certificated staff in LBUSD—and more recently classified staff—can find a place for their leadership trajectory. The district's equity leadership programming is designed with a journey in mind. That journey includes different opportunities for staff to learn and grow, to stop and pause, to consider new possibilities, and to be supported throughout one's career.

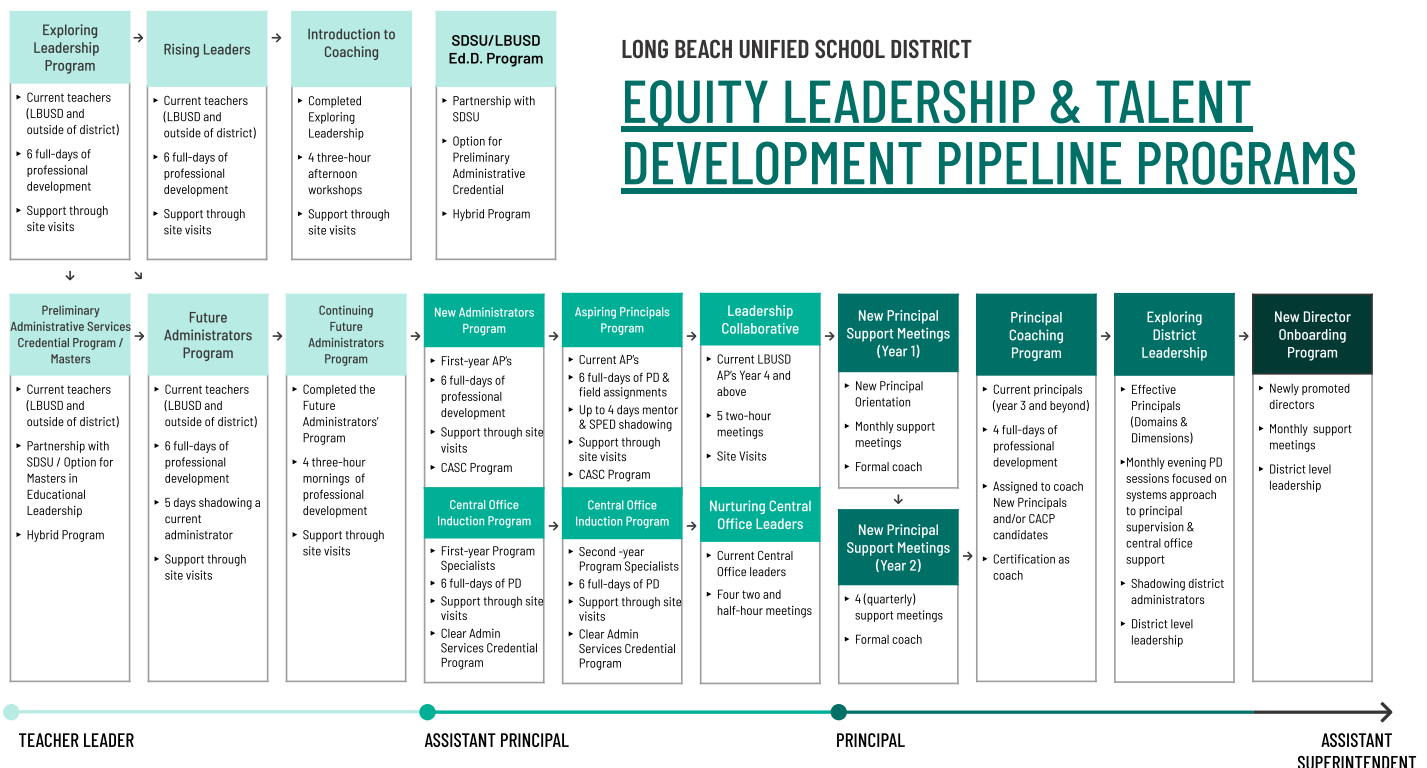
Best Practices

Here are seven best practices and lessons LBUSD has learned along their journey that may be helpful to other district leaders engaged in this work.

I. Build your programming around current and future leaders' needs.

From the beginning, the LBUSD leadership pipeline has been centered around what their educators need to grow in their careers.

Led initially by Dr. Baker and then Dr. Kahl, the first decade of the pipeline programming centered primarily around individual leader development. It was focused on helping people get to the principalship and having a successful experience in the early years of their principalship. In addition, Dr. Baker and her team



LONG BEACH UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

CLASSIFIED TALENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

VOLUNTARY WORKSHOPS

Classified Coaches Program

- ▶ **Minimum of three years** as a site office or plant supervisor
- ▶ Recommendation from site principal to provide one-on-one guidance
- ▶ Commitment to **attending three coach training** sessions

Classified Credential Program

- ▶ **Minimum bachelor's degree**
- ▶ Recommendation from site principal/supervisor
- ▶ Commitment to pursue a teaching credential in an area of need in the district
- ▶ Maintain GPA in university program

Custodial Services Course

- ▶ **Partnership with LBSA**
- ▶ Six week course
- ▶ Three-hour course meetings
- ▶ Two Leadership Development components within course

Classified Technical Skills Studio

- ▶ **Partnership with OCIPD**
- ▶ **Permanent employees**
- ▶ Supervisor Recommendation
- ▶ **Single session,** in-person workshops
- ▶ Google tools, Microsoft Excel, Business Writing

Introduction to Leadership

- ▶ **Permanent employees**
- ▶ Supervisor recommendation
- ▶ **Three four-hour** in-person workshops and two hour long Zoom meetings
- ▶ Fieldwork aligned to best equity leadership practices

Foundations of Classified Leadership

- ▶ **Permanent employees**
- ▶ Supervisor recommendation
- ▶ **Four four-hour,** in-person workshops
- ▶ Fieldwork aligned to best equity leadership practices

Classified Leaders

- ▶ **Permanent supervisors, managers, and other rising leaders**
- ▶ Supervisor recommendation
- ▶ **Five full-day ,** in-person workshops
- ▶ Fieldwork aligned to best equity leadership practices

Advanced Classified Leaders

- ▶ **Completed Classified Leaders**
- ▶ Supervisor recommendation
- ▶ **Four five-hour ,** in-person workshops
- ▶ Fieldwork aligned to best equity leadership practices

New Managers Onboarding

- ▶ **New LBUSD managers**
- ▶ Supervisor recommendation
- ▶ Six in-person workshops
- ▶ Site visits, coaching, and mentoring aligned to best equity leadership practices

experimented early on with a Southern Regional Education Board module about school culture. It was the first time the district brought K-12 principals together around school culture.

Beginning in 2015 through 2023, under Dr. An's leadership, programs were expanded on both ends of the pipeline, and have centered around system-wide leadership and the advancement of excellence and equity. The pipeline seeks to provide all employees with the opportunity to explore a wide range of leadership opportunities across the district.

For example, often teachers will express interest in growing their leadership but are not interested in becoming a principal. Through the ELTD pipeline, teachers can explore careers in the central office and find the support and experiences they need to be successful in these roles.

Thanks to the pipeline, one interesting trend that is happening for some leaders, like principals, is that they are self-demoting into other leadership roles that may be less stressful and create more balance in their lives. This is one powerful way that LBUSD is able to retain—and not lose entirely like most other districts—strong talent in the system.

II. To develop equity-centered leaders, create a common set of expectations, including defining equity leadership dispositions and creating a framework for culturally responsive practices to which leaders are held accountable.

In 2018, LBUSD adopted The Leadership Academy's six dispositions for leadership (The Leadership Academy, 2022). Drawing on years of research on cultural competence and responsiveness, The Leadership Academy developed a list of

six actions “crucial for leaders to build a path toward creating a school community by, with and for every student.”

Each action or disposition is important in its own right, but, as evidenced in the programming of the office's 27 pipelines, ELTD believes that leaders must be willing and able to exhibit all six in order to truly disrupt educational inequities in their schools or departments.

In 2021, the ELTD office completed an equity audit, conducted by Dr. Bradley Portin of the University of Washington, to identify inequitable practices and ensure alignment with LBUSD's Excellence and Equity Policy.

Six Dispositions for Leadership

1. Reflect on personal assumptions, beliefs, and behavior
2. Publicly model a personal belief system that is grounded in equity
3. Act with cultural competence and responsiveness in interactions, decision-making, and practice
4. Purposefully build the capacity of others to identify and disrupt the inequities in the school
5. Confront and alter institutional biases of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with minoritized populations
6. Create systems and structures to promote equity with a focus on minoritized populations

(Adopted from the The Leadership Academy, 2022)

Recommendations included:

- broadening the profile of a successful LBUSD school leader as an equity-driven school leader;
- establishing partnerships with organizations serving the BIPOC community;
- extending the leadership pipeline to include classified employees; and
- establishing affinity groups for networking, training, and mentorship opportunities.

The Principal Domains and Dimensions, the district’s principal

and assistant principal evaluation system, already reflected the principal behaviors summarized in “How Principals Affect Students and Schools” (Grissom, et al. 2021, ix) that link to positive student outcomes. In 2020, its seven domains, and all its twenty-one dimensions, were considerably edited to include descriptions of equity-driven leadership in every evaluation standard. For example, the Professionalism, Disposition, and Ethics domain had defined excellence as the leader’s ability to “develop a climate of trust, establish respectful relationships,” but the revision goes further, pushing leaders to also “make decisions grounded in equity and access.”

In addition, below is a framework to support leaders in further creating culturally responsive leadership.

Culturally Responsive School Leadership Framework

Critically Self-Reflects on Leadership Behaviors	Develops Culturally Responsive Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is committed to continuous learning of cultural knowledge and contexts (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006) • Displays a critical Consciousness on practice in and out of school; displays self-reflection (Gooden & Dantley, 2012; Johnson, 2006) • Uses school data and indicants to measure CRSL (Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004) • Uses parent /community voices to measure cultural responsiveness and schools (Ishimaru, 2013; Smyth, 2006) • Challenges Whiteness and hegemonic epistemologies in school (Theoharis & Haddix, 2011) • Using equity audits to measure student inclusiveness, policy, and practice (Skrla et al., 2004) • Leading with courage (Khalifa, 2011; Nee-Benham, Maenette, & Cooper, 1988) • Is a transformative leader for social justice and inclusion (Alston, 2005; Gooden, 2005; Gooden & O’Doherty, 2015; Shields, 2010) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing teacher capacities for culturally responsive pedagogy (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000; Voltz, Brazil, & Scott, 2003) • Collaborative walkthroughs (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012) • Creating culturally responsive PD opportunities for teachers (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000; Voltz et al., 2003) • Using school data to see cultural gaps in achievement, discipline, enrichment and remedial services (Skrla et al., 2004) • Creating a CRSL team that is charged with constantly finding new ways for teachers to be culturally responsive (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006) • Engaging/reforming the school curriculum to become more culturally responsive (Sleeter, 2012; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) • Modeling culturally responsive teaching (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012) • Using culturally responsive assessment tools for students (Hopson, 2001; Kea, Campbell-Whatley, & Bratton, 2003)
Promotes Culturally Responsive/Inclusive School Environment	Engages Students, Parents, and Indigenous Contexts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepting indigenized, local identities (Khalifa, 2010) • Building relationships; reducing anxiety among students (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012) • Modeling CRSL for staff in building interactions (Khalifa, 2011; Tillman, 2005) • Promoting a vision for an inclusive instructional and behavioral practices (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006; Webb-Johnson, 2006; Webb-Johnson & Carter, 2007) • If need be, challenging exclusionary policies, teachers, and behaviors (Khalifa, 2010; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012) • Acknowledges, values, and uses Indigenous cultural and social capital of students (Khalifa, 2010, 2012) • Uses student voice (Antrop-Gonzalez, 2011; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012) • Using school data to discover and track disparities in academic and disciplinary trends (Skiba et al., 2002; Skrla et al., 2004; Theoharis, 2007) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing meaningful, positive relationships with community (Gardiner & Enomoto, 2006; Johnson, 2006; Walker, 2001) • Is a servant leader, as public intellectual and other roles (Aston, 2005; Gooden, 2005; Johnson, 2006) • Finding overlapping spaces for school and community (Cooper, 2009; Ishimaru, 2013; Khalifa, 2012) • Serving as advocate and social activist for community-based causes in both the school and neighborhood community (Capper, Hafner, & Keys, 2002; Gooden, 2005; Johnson, 2006; Khalifa, 2012) • Uses the community as an informative space from which to develop positive understandings of students and families (Gardinaer & Enomoto, 2006) • Resists deficit images of students and families (Davis, 2002; Flessa, 2009) • Nurturing/caring for others; sharing information (Gooden, 2005; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012) • Connecting directly with students (Gooden, 2005; Khalifa, 2012; Lomotey, 1993)

Figure 1: Culturally Responsive School Leadership Framework (Organizational Leadership, Policy and Development, 2018)

III. In addition to your certificated employees, build a leadership pipeline for your classified staff.

Beginning in 2021, LBUSD launched a leadership pipeline for its classified staff, acknowledging how valuable these employees are to the system. ELTD's classified talent development system now includes nine programs.

Through the programming, classified staff are taught critical leadership skills to support and build their capacity. Employees are provided workshops around coaching, excellence, and equity. According to Dr. An, this provides the district with a “common language on both sides of the house.”

While still in its early days, the programming for the classified pipeline is bringing impact. ELTD leveraged \$5 million in state grants to create a classified-employee teacher pipeline, with 20 employees currently working on their teaching credentials in high-need areas such as special education and bilingual authorization. Two university partners support that work, which is projected to grow teacher candidates for the district through 2026.

IV. Make coaching at the heart of all your leadership development support.

As one of the biggest levers for professional growth, coaching is now a way of being in LBUSD and a cornerstone of the district's culture. Whether it is a teacher, a bus driver, or a principal, coaching focuses on adaptive change, capacity building, relationship building, sustaining district culture, and providing a common language of support.

According to Dr. Baker and Dr. An, coaching is “not a one-size-fits-all process” and employs “strategies that depend entirely on the individual being coached.” Since coaching partnerships are made based on areas of need, the pipelines may take the direction of including coaches centered on equity, inviting more guest speakers, or ensuring that equity-centered leaders are also effective operational leaders—depending on the needs of the leader.

Now in mature form, the district's coaching methodology is used throughout the organization in reflective practice, trusting relationships, interdependence, and personal development—with a laser focus on each individual's role in excellence and equity. Specifically for principals, coaching has resulted in an array of benefits, including:

- effective transitions of new leaders into their assignments
- higher degrees of retention
- student achievement gains

- the perception of the principalship as a manageable job
- deepened relationships between principal supervisors and principals
- an ability for everyone to be seen as a coach for someone else
- strengthening of an organizational culture where relationships are central

In addition, including coaching for school leaders in the pipelines presents yet more opportunities to champion the lessons of equity: of the six equity leadership dispositions, the action of “purposefully build[ing] the capacity of others to identify and disrupt the inequities in the school” is central to ELTD's approach to coaching. This purposeful building of capacity recalls [a framework by the National Equity Project](#), which highlights the intersection of personal or individual sources of inequity and its broader, more systemic roots.

While coaching often comes naturally to leaders, developing a consistent coaching approach across a district requires an investment in training and follow-up. Executive coaching helps to reduce leaders' blind spots and increase coaches' effectiveness, especially in addressing issues of equity and performance. If great athletes have coaches, so should aspiring and current administrators.

V. Establish a leadership pipeline that serves as both a recruitment and retention tool—with a particular focus on attracting and retaining BIPOC educators and staff.

LBUSD knows that the key to attracting and retaining great educators and classified staff is to create a climate and culture where people want to come and stay. A large part of climate and culture is providing opportunities for growth and development that are meaningful and can lead to career advancement. While most districts are currently struggling with recruitment and retention, LBUSD has fared better—thanks in large part to the pipeline, which affords pathways for current and future employees to envision their future in the district.

Word has also gotten out about the ELTD pipeline. Several candidates from outside the district have shared that they have been trying for five, 10, or even 15 years to secure a coveted spot to work in LBUSD.

To support the district's priority to attract educators, especially BIPOC educators and leaders, the district has created three certificated programs that take outside applicants in addition to internal candidates, including:

1. *Exploring Leadership Program*: This program provides professional development to candidates who are interested

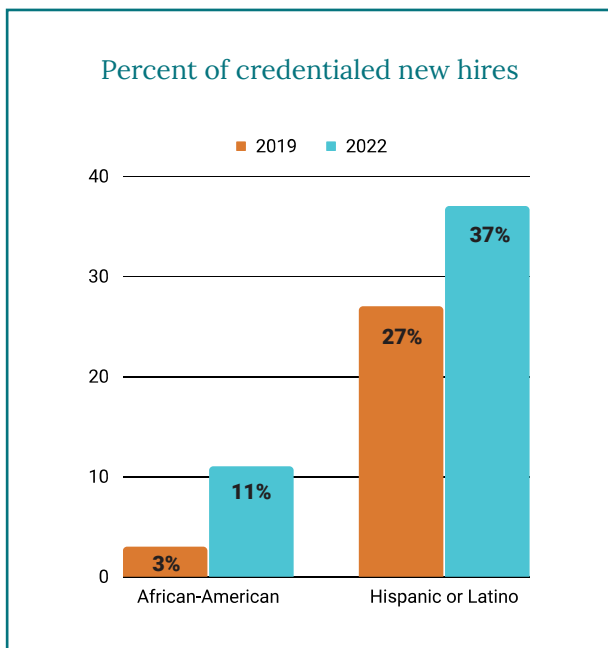
in pursuing leadership opportunities. It aligns with the district's priority to develop a steady stream of teacher leaders who are current in district philosophy and practice.

2. *Future Administrators Program*: This program provides workshops that focus on the knowledge and skills necessary to prepare them for the assistant principalship at any level and program participants are mentored by assistant principals at school sites different from their own.
3. *Aspiring Principals Program*: This program provides professional development, shadowing, and mentoring support to program participants. Workshops will focus on developing the qualities and skills of an effective principal, so that all participants are prepared to successfully lead safe, inclusive, diverse campuses where all students thrive socially, emotionally, and academically.



Danyett Lee, a middle school principal, said her experiences in the pipeline, especially with her coaches and her cohort, prepared her well for her recent promotion to the role. Lee says, “I feel like I was under some good leadership that helped to prepare me.” Lee reflected how her shadowing experiences in the Future Administrators Program, as well as her current connection with an experienced principal coach through the New Principals Program, provided her with many opportunities to “talk through scenarios.” She also enjoyed collaborating with colleagues during the workshops to discuss readings and best practices.

Dr. Baker reflects that through these programs, LBUSD “has attracted and recruited a more diverse pool, including those from outside the district.” In 2019, 3% of certificated hires were African-American. In 2022, that number was up to 11%. Similarly, the district went up from 27% of Hispanic new hires in 2019 to 37% in 2022.



VI. To support your BIPOC leaders in feeling a true sense of belonging and connection, consider hosting racial affinity groups.

LBUSD launched racial affinity groups in 2022 with a focus on principals in years two through four. For example, “Dinner and Dialogue” evenings, organized by the ELTD team and the California Conference for Equality and Justice (CCEJ), a community partner, teamed up to create a space that offers support and community for BIPOC leaders in LBUSD.

VII. Building a leadership pipeline can be overwhelming. Start where you are and keep persevering.

To the question of where to start, as simple as it sounds, Dr. Baker’s advice is always, “Start where you are.” The act of becoming what you want to be requires starting somewhere. Find a starting place that will immediately have an impact.

Dr. Baker continues, “It’s really thinking about quality, not quantity to get started. So where you start is probably less important than starting grounded and doing something well, rather than having a lot at the onset.”

In addition, this work is a gift to employees. As senior leaders in LBUSD, Dr. Baker and Dr. An reflect on the beauty of this work: how it has been an honor to watch the evolution of employees’ leadership as they engage in the various programs, getting to know them both personally and professionally, walking alongside, and supporting them the whole journey.

As Dr. Baker says, “This work is an investment worth its weight in gold. So don’t give up.”

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About the Long Beach Unified School District

With over 64,000 students, Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) is the fourth largest in California. The Children’s Defense Fund-California and Public Counsel called LBUSD “one of America’s best urban school districts” (Children’s Defense Fund-California and Public Counsel, 2018). The accolades over the years speak to the success the district has achieved and continues to achieve in enacting system change in order to improve student outcomes.

A five-time finalist and national winner (in 2003) of the prestigious Broad Prize for Urban Education, LBUSD has been consistently recognized by Broad for both outstanding student achievement and significantly reducing achievement gaps among students from lower-income and higher-income families. The district’s status as a “disruptor and innovator” was recognized by national business news publisher Industry Dive and its publication, Education Dive, when it selected LBUSD as its District of the Year in 2017 (Jacobson, 2017). On the equity front, LBUSD was tipped by the nonprofit Learning Policy Institute as a “positive outlier” district where Hispanic, White, and Black students achieved at higher than predicted levels (Burns et al., 2019).



LBUSD Facts at a Glance

OPENED 1885

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

- 64,000+ Students

STUDENT DIVERSITY

- 59% Hispanic
- 12% African American
- 12% White
- 7% Asian
- 5% Two or More Races
- 3% Filipino
- 1% Pacific Islander

-
- 16.5% English Language Learners
 - 60% Socio-economically Disadvantaged

FACILITIES

- 84 schools in Long Beach, Lakewood, Signal Hill and Avalon (Catalina Island)

BUDGET

- \$1.3 billion operating budget for 2023-24

LONG BEACH
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Excellence & Equity

About the District Leaders

Dr. Jill A. Baker Superintendent



Dr. Jill A. Baker was unanimously selected by the Board of Education as superintendent of LBUSD effective August 1, 2020.

With 30 years of experience in LBUSD, Dr. Baker worked for 28 of those years as a successful teacher, principal, and central office administrator before her appointment as superintendent. Her leadership contributed to increased student achievement, the development of multiple district-wide initiatives and systems, and a culture of continuous improvement.

Dr. Baker's appointment as superintendent occurred during the difficult first months of the global COVID-19 pandemic, but LBUSD would go on to become the first large school district in California to reopen campuses for in-person learning. As part of LBUSD's pandemic recovery effort, Dr. Baker led the development of the district's first Learning Acceleration and Support Plan, blending together various resources—including significant pandemic recovery funding from the state and federal governments—to provide the best possible learning opportunities. In support of this work, LBUSD's Board of Education adopted an Excellence and Equity Policy, the district implemented a Black Student Achievement Initiative, and Dr. Baker guided the restructuring of Board of Education meetings to allow a greater focus on student outcomes. She also created the Superintendent's Student Advisory Committee, resulting in student voices being elevated into many settings traditionally occupied by adults.

Dr. Baker has been recognized by several community-based organizations for her encouraging leadership and her advocacy for high expectations and support for students in need.

Dr. Baker served as deputy superintendent of schools for six years prior to becoming superintendent. During that time, she provided leadership, supervision, and support to multiple departments in LBUSD, including early learning, leadership development, curriculum and instruction, and school supervision and support. She led the implementation of the principal supervisor learning community, a multi-year effort that focused on educational excellence and equity by improving coaching and support for principals. Her work with new and aspiring administrators was recognized nationally and was credited with building a high-quality leadership pipeline that would benefit local schools for many years to come. She helped to author several nationally published, scholarly articles on LBUSD's work, particularly on the topic of leadership development.

A teacher at heart, Dr. Baker spends much of her time in local schools, maintaining an "in-the-field" perspective and interacting with teachers and administrators.

Prior to her work as deputy superintendent, Dr. Baker held various assistant superintendent positions and was chief academic officer while LBUSD saw several critical milestones: an increase in the school district's elementary promotion standards; the implementation of a collaborative K-12 walk-through process for school visitations; refinement of standards-based report cards; launching Transitional Kindergarten; co-leadership of the principal evaluation system development team; and other efforts to cultivate a leadership pipeline.

Starting as an exemplary teacher at Burnett Elementary School (now Smith Elementary) in 1992, Dr. Baker then worked as a successful principal at Garfield Elementary School from 1998 to 2005 before serving as a central office administrator in LBUSD for 14 years.

In 2005, Dr. Baker completed her tenure as a fellow in the Broad Urban Superintendents Academy. She earned her doctorate in educational leadership at the University of Southern California in 2004, master's degree in school administration at California State University, Long Beach in 1998, and her bachelor's degree in sociology at University of California, Irvine in 1991.

About the District Leaders

Dr. Tiffany Brown

Deputy Superintendent



Dr. Brown is a resident of Long Beach and the mother of a district student. She has been recognized by numerous community groups for her commitment to the broader community of Long Beach and has received several accolades for her work, including the “Impact Award” issued by City Prosecutor Doug Haubert’s Office, recognition by “End Abuse Long Beach” for a history of working toward the rights and positive treatment of all children, and acknowledgement of being a “Student Champion” by Californians for Justice.

Education is Dr. Brown’s life-long work and hobby. She welcomes the challenges of this new day and will remain steadfast in the pursuit of equity and justice for the most marginalized children in LBUSD.

Dr. Brown prides herself on working with families, community members, and schools in a manner that creates a “village approach” toward educating our youth. Throughout her 26 years with LBUSD, a central theme in Dr. Brown’s work has been the belief that applying an equity lens to decisions allows for groups that are traditionally not acknowledged to have full voice and access to opportunities. In her role as deputy superintendent, Dr. Brown continues her focus on equity through engaging youth, community groups, and District staff around the belief that equity should be at the core of all we do.

Dr. Brown began working for the district in 1997 as a school psychologist and has held various positions within the School Support Services office, including senior psychologist, director of Student Support Services, and assistant superintendent of School Support Services. She has had considerable success helping schools assess and design intervention systems to support struggling students while efficiently using available resources.

Dr. Brown earned an undergraduate degree in applied behavioral science from UC Davis, a master’s degree in counseling and a school psychology credential from San Diego State University, and doctorate in educational leadership from UCLA.



About the District Leaders

Dr. Kelly D. An

Assistant Superintendent, Human Resource Services



Dr. Kelly An provides leadership and support to multiple departments in LBUSD, all in service to ensuring that every student graduates from LBUSD college and career ready. Dr. An's strategic leadership of Human Resource Services includes the growth of a diverse and inclusive talent development strategy to recruit and retain a highly qualified workforce that is reflective of our students and community.

Dr. An's focus is to cultivate the capacity of all adults in the system in the service of equity and excellence for students. Throughout an employee's journey of recruitment, onboarding, evaluation, and development, Dr. An collaborates with all sites and departments to ensure that the system's staff and leaders promote a culturally affirming, empathetic, and assets-based culture for all students.

Previously, Dr. An oversaw a historic growth in the recruitment and retention of school leaders as director of Equity Leadership & Talent Development (ELTD). That department was moved to Human Resource Services in August of 2023.

Dr. An's effort focused on expanding the pipeline of qualified candidates ready to step into the principalship or director level positions. In her role, Dr. An regularly collaborated with other departments in an effort to ensure K-12 alignment.

Since 2015, as Director of ELTD, Dr. An has implemented the following programs to expand the leadership pipeline:

- Developed an Exploring District Leadership program
- Created a New Director Onboarding program for certificated staff
- Created a New Manager Onboarding program for classified staff
- Co-wrote a Wallace Exploratory Test grant to incorporate a foundation of equity into pipeline programs
- Facilitated Coaching to scale for all Principals, Assistant Principals, Curriculum, Reading Recovery, and Restorative Justice Coaches
- Co-Developed a Classified Talent Development System of nine programs that spread the culture of coaching to key classified staff such as office and plant supervisors
- Oversaw a team's writing of two Classified Credential Grants to create opportunities for support staff to become teachers
- Co-Developed a Preliminary Administrative Credential program to create opportunities for teachers, counselors, and other certificated staff to become school leaders

Dr. An began her career in LBUSD as a college aide, teacher, then served as assistant principal, followed by principal, director of elementary schools, director of ELTD, and assistant superintendent of Human Resource Services. She earned her Doctorate in Educational Leadership at LaVerne University and her Masters in Curriculum and Instruction at California State University, Long Beach.



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UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
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