



— THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF —  
SOUTH ORANGE & MAPLEWOOD

Update on Implementation of Rutgers Equity Audit

September 25 2025

Dr. Kevin F. Gilbert, Assistant Superintendent of Schools

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

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

— Dr. Edward Fergus and the Rutgers Team



# Curriculum and Instruction Recommendations

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



# Intervention Recommendations

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



# Develop Pedagogical Capacity with an Equity Lens

## Recommendations

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



# Intentional Integration

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



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

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

— Dr. Edward Fergus and the Rutgers Team



# Curriculum Recommendations Progress



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



Intervention Recommendations Progress

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

# Develop Pedagogical Capacity with an Equity Lens Recommendations Progress

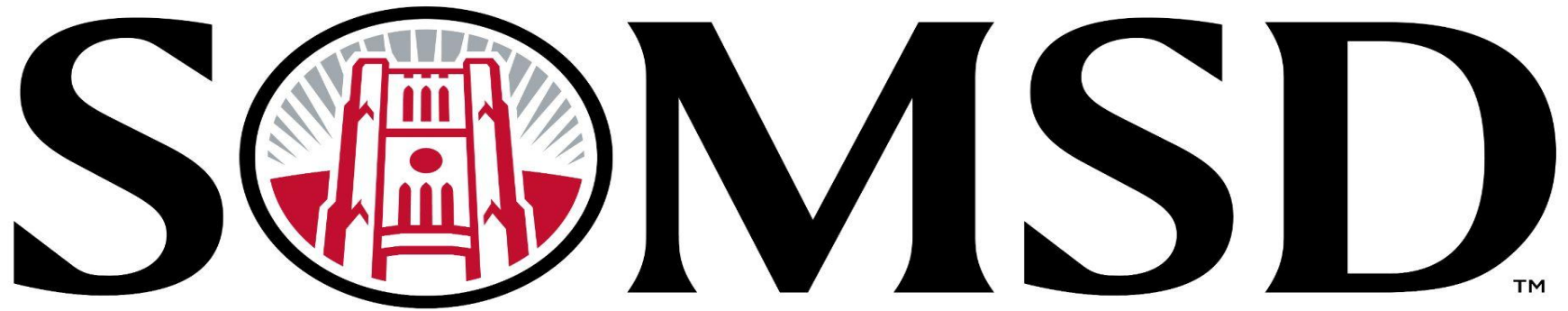
Open	In Progress	Completed
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Develop and implement a professional development series that focuses on the continued development of cross-cultural capacity in order to replace bias-based beliefs such as color blindness, deficit thinking, and racial discomfort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

# Intentional Integration Recommendations Progress



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



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Major Activities To Date ( Please Note: This is not an exhaustive list)

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



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



31. Revision of grade level math curriculum conducted (CR 2)
32. Continued training curriculum writers given professional learning in area of higher level tasks, building essential questions (CR 3)
33. Created a plan to increase family participation in course selection of middle school math including varying times for informational sessions, recorded sessions in multiple languages with closed captioning. (CR 4)
34. Created uplift process and team to identify students who may benefit from higher level math courses. (CR 4)
35. Columbia High School in conjunction with EOS continues to survey students to identify barriers to advanced course and the identification of trusted adults to assist in supporting students (CR 4)
36. Created multiple opportunities for the math information sessions for families including various times of day with a virtual option (CR 6)
37. Implemented a multiple measured matrix to make recommendations on placement in middle school math (CR 7)
38. Conducted various equity learning opportunities for school leaders including providing leaders with a data tool to breakdown data demographically (EPCR 1)
39. Leaders creating equity context, theory of action, and look fors as part of their goal development (EPCR 1)
40. Professional learning built around knowledge gaps for teachers in the areas of curriculum and instruction and intervention supports (EPCR 2)
41. Trained teachers and leaders in restorative justice (EPCR 3)
42. Implemented direct instruction around social emotional learning in grades 6-8 (EPCR 3)



43. Attended various in state and out of state recruitment events at Predominately White Institutions, Minority Serving Institutions, and Historically Black College and Universities (EPCR 5)
44. Created partnership with Montclair State University for leadership development (EPCR 5)
45. Implemented procedure to capture hiring, recruitment, and retention data broken down demographically to inform hiring and retention strategies (EPCR 5)
46. Conducted student interest meetings and established additional student affinity spaces at CHS, while developing plan to expand spaces into middle school (EPCR 6 & 7)
47. Explored option of changing weights within the algorithm to determine if there was a significant impact on Intentional Integration Initiative (III) (IIIR 1)
48. Developed a process to capture household income and parent educational level to ensure that data is examined over time to determine impact on III (IIIR 2)
49. Continued to review yearly reports from Alves group on III to monitor integration patterns at schools, with an eye toward the patterns occurring at both Seth Boyden and South Mountain Elementary Schools (III R 3)
50. Continued work in aligning integration work throughout entire school experience through the implementation of other recommendations (III R 5)





# Questions

