

Madera Unified School District

Submitted to:
Madera Unified School District
Madera, CA 93637

Submitted by:
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Background

African American Student Achievement in California

The achievement gaps in California as evidenced in statewide student assessment outcomes have been well documented by the California Department of Education and others. In fact, for several decades the data have consistently shown the persistence of achievement gaps despite overall growth in performance for all students. The negative outcomes on all indicators for African American students in comparison to outcomes for white and Asian students have been among the most persistent disparities.

The California Comprehensive Center (CA CC) at WestEd was a federally-funded center to provide technical assistance to help low-performing schools and districts close achievement gaps in fulfillment of NCLB and ESSA.¹ In light of this charge, the CA CC began to extend its work to close achievement gaps by working with districts to improve the outcomes for African American students.

Quantitative Data Analysis

In April 2018, Dr. Rose Owens-West, Director of Equity Projects of the CA CC, reached out to the Madera Unified School District (MUSD) and requested to partner with the district and analyze data for the purpose of understanding of how to improve outcomes for African American students.

Superintendent Todd Lile and Mr. Babatunde Ilori, Executive Director of Accountability and Communications, agreed to work with Dr. Owens-West and Dr. Tran Keys from the CA CC. Mr. Ilori and the CA CC team discussed achievement, discipline, attendance, and climate data for all students in the district, and then began to examine the data disaggregated by race. The CA CC team worked with MUSD staff to refine the data presentation prepared for the Superintendent and Executive Cabinet. In October 2018, Dr. Owens-West and Dr. Keys participated in a two-day meeting with district leadership, including Superintendent Lile, the Executive Cabinet, all of district principals, and several school site leaders.

Initial Findings Submitted to the Superintendent

As a result of examining and discussing the data on academic and discipline outcomes, the CA CC made four suggestions about how the district could begin to address the negative outcomes for African American students. These ideas were clustered into four related themes:

1. There is a need to **create a sense of urgency** throughout the district about improving academic and other outcomes for all students, and for African American students in particular.
2. There is a need to **develop a districtwide culture of data use** for the purposes of ensuring equity for all students.

¹ <https://www2.ed.gov/about/contacts/gen/othersites/compcenters.html>. The U. S. Department of Education Comprehensive Center Program.

3. There is a need for **districtwide professional development** that includes leadership and all staff.
4. There is a need for the district to **establish a better relationship with African American students**, their families, and leaders in the community.

Focus Groups and Observations

The First Step - Gather More Information

The CA CC team recommended several next steps to address these themes. The first step was to gather additional data to gain a better understanding of what contributes to poor outcomes for African American students and to inform the improvement effort. The recommendation was to conduct focus groups at schools throughout the district to gather data from students, parents/families, and staff. In addition to the focus groups, the recommendation included conducting observations in classrooms and on campuses.

The rationale underlying the recommendation is that successful improvement efforts must engage key stakeholders. It is extremely important to hear from students and their families about their school experiences and to obtain their input for improvement. In order to foster ownership for the improvement effort, it is also important to give staff (teachers and others) the opportunity to express their concerns about the issues and obtain their ideas for improvement.

Planning

The CA CC team offered to conduct the focus groups and observations as the final tasks in the 2018 agreement with the district to use the data. Dr. Owens-West worked with Mr. Ilori to plan the focus groups during the summer of 2019. The district identified and selected seven schools to participate in the focus groups during the week of August 26-30, 2019. The elementary and middle schools were selected because they have more African American students than other schools in the district, and both comprehensive high schools were selected. The focus groups and observations were to be conducted in the following schools:

- Alpha Elementary School
- Parkwood Elementary School
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School
- Desmond Middle School
- Thomas Jefferson Middle School
- Madera High School
- Madera South High School

Dr. Owens-West participated in a virtual meeting led by Superintendent Lile and Mr. Ilori with principals to answer their questions or concerns regarding the focus groups. Mr. Ilori provided letters for the principals to send to students, parents, and staff explaining the focus groups and to encourage/invite their participation.

The Focus Groups

A focus group brings people together to share ideas about a specific topic of interest. The achievement, discipline, attendance, and climate data all indicated disproportionately more negative outcomes for African American students in MUSD. Further, the discipline data indicated severe disproportionality for African American students compared to other students in

MUSD. The focus groups were designed to address topics relative to these areas and the prompts (questions) concentrated on the following:

- Academic achievement
- Programs
- Resources
- Climate

The focus groups with adult participants addressed all areas. However, the student focus groups addressed academic achievement, programs, and climate. The sessions were designed to last 60 minutes, with separate sessions for parents, teachers, and students. The CA CC developed the protocols and prompts for use in MUSD. Copies of the prompts used for the sessions are attached to this report in Appendix B.

Limitations of the Focus Group Data

In combination with quantitative data (achievement test scores and rates of promotion, graduation, absenteeism, and suspensions), data from focus groups provides an excellent source of the perceptions of key stakeholders. Some of the benefits of focus groups:

- Researchers can interact with the participants, pose follow-up questions, or ask questions that probe more deeply.
- Results from focus groups can provide greater understanding for numerical data.
- Information is collected more quickly and efficiently than from interviews of individuals.

However, focus groups have some disadvantages that must be considered.

- The small sample size means the groups might not be a good representation of the larger population.
- Respondents may feel peer pressure to give similar answers.
- Focus group data in isolation can prove difficult to interpret.

The focus groups in MUSD were conducted for the qualitative results to be analyzed in light of the quantitative achievement, attendance, discipline, and climate data of the district to help generate greater understanding of student outcomes and the climate in the district.

The Process

Numbers of Focus Groups and Participants

The CA CC team conducted a total of 48 focus groups over the course of three days in the district. The sessions included 20 sessions with teachers, 7 parent sessions, and 21 student sessions. Of the 21 student sessions, 9 were with African American students, and 12 with students from other groups.

A total of 61 teachers and staff, 42 parents, and 139 students participated in the focus group sessions. Of the 139 student participants, 54 were African American, and 85 were students from other ethnic and racial groups. Copies of the schedules for the focus groups are attached in Appendix D.

The Observations

The CA CC team also observed in classrooms and on the campuses at each of the seven schools. The purpose of the observations was to gather information about students' engagement in learning activities, interactions with teachers, and with their peers. The district provided the CA CC team with the schedules for the schools. The CA CC developed the observation tools for use in MUSD. Copies of the observation tools are included in Appendix C.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Several steps were taken by the CA CC team to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. The sessions were not electronically recorded. Notes were taken by hand on charts in full view of the participants so that they could see what was being written. The participants were not introduced by name, only by grade level and subject (teachers) number of children (parents), and grade (students), however, these identifiers were not noted.

Further, to ensure more candid responses from the participants, the CA CC team assured the participants that the reports would not be by school, but rather by grade span level only: elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Terminology

Note throughout the report, the pronouns *they* or *their* are used for both singular and plural cases to protect the identity of respondents. This is in alignment with the decision that the pronouns *they* and *their* may be used as singular, gender neutral pronouns.

Challenges During the Process

The purpose of the focus groups and observations was to collect additional information to provide greater understanding of some of the district data on student achievement, attendance, climate, and discipline. Ultimately, the data will be used to inform the district strategic planning to improve services and outcomes for students. The Superintendent's and Board's decision to move forward with the focus groups and observations were courageous and align with other efforts the district is undertaking to improve.

Discussions between MUSD and CA CC about gathering additional data from key stakeholders, i.e., students, parents, and teachers have been occurring since October 2018. The Superintendent and Mr. Ilori collaborated with CA CC staff to answer questions posed by school administrators and central office staff and to allay fears about the purpose or process of the data gathering.

CA CC staff very intentionally stated that the focus groups' responses would not be recorded by name of individual, name of school, or with any identifying information. The staff also committed to taking notes in the full view of participants so that they could see what was being captured. Superintendent Lile further promised to share the results of the focus groups and observations with all stakeholders.

In the course of the focus groups, a number of challenges occurred which need to be noted.

- A number of parent participants indicated they did not receive letters regarding the sessions. Letters that parents did receive were addressed to their children.
- A number of the participating parents were employees of the district, whereas other parents indicated they had no knowledge or information about the sessions.
- In some cases, the schedules were not followed, and some of the sessions were shortened by as much as 30 minutes.
- Some students were scheduled to participate in more than one session.
- Some teachers were “no shows,” so the sessions had only two people.
- Some student sessions exceeded the agreed upon upper limit of 10 participants. (In a focus group, it is difficult to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to speak with more than 10 people.)
- Some staff were new employees with no history or knowledge of the district beyond their two-week tenure.
- Some parents were non- or limited-English speakers, and no accommodations were made for translators of languages other than Spanish. Each CA CC team had a fluent Spanish speaker per the agreement with the district.

It will be important going forward to emphasize for all administrators and staff that conducting the focus groups to hear from key stakeholders in the district was a very important step, in combination with other improvement efforts, to make MUSD the best district for students to learn and staff to work.

Fortunately, some of these challenges were counteracted. In the case of parent participants, some were in the school office when the CA CC team arrived, and, overhearing the team present themselves to the office staff, inquired about the meeting. Those parents in turn called other parents to come and participate, which they did. In the case of the teacher session at one site, the teachers requested specifically that we urge continuation of focus groups as a part of the on-going improvement efforts in the district. In all cases, (parents, students, and staff,) there were inquiries about whether the district would share the focus group results and next steps.

What the Process Yielded

Emergent Themes for Consideration

The achievement, discipline, attendance, and climate data all indicated negative and/or disproportionate outcomes for African American students in MUSD. Further, the discipline data indicated severe disproportionality for African American students. The focus groups and observations were designed to address topics relative to these areas and the prompts (questions) concentrated on the following:

- Academic achievement
- Programs
- Resources
- Climate

Several themes emerged across the scope of all focus groups and observations that should be considered as the district moves forward with strategic planning. It should be noted that in each of these areas, the concerns raised by parents and students were also apparent during the classroom and school observations and aligned with the data gathered during the focus groups.

While these emergent themes are described in this section of the report, a digest of each set of focus groups and a report of the classroom and school observations can be found in subsequent sections of this report. Appendix A contains crosswalks of the focus groups for students and parents.

Administrators, teachers, and staff must recognize, include, and value all student groups -- especially the African American students who are the minority in MUSD. More than one African American student stated that there is nothing in their schools for them. African American students at all levels clearly expressed their sense of isolation and lack of belonging and feeling valued in their schools. The students' position was confirmed by parents and some teachers.

Build a sense of community in MUSD to eliminate the disconnect between administrators, teachers, parents, and students. The disconnects between faculty, staff, and students, coupled with the disconnects between parents, faculty, and staff are corrosive. This is evidenced by the combination of repeated referrals to the small population of African American students; characterization of the relationship between students and staff as a "power struggle;" the clear expression of deficits of the African American students and their families; and the position that the African American parents are at fault for lack of engagement.

The fact that teacher and staff concerns did not reflect or align with parents' concerns about the lack of communication and access to information and their unanimous concerns about safety (bullying, drugs, fights), also suggests a disconnect between the adult stakeholders in MUSD.

Build a sense of community to reduce racial conflict and bullying across *all student racial groups*. The racial conflict within the district spans all student groups and negatively impacts relationships between teachers and students, security staff and students, and relationships across

student groups. Additionally, white students and their parents emphasized that they also feel isolated and discriminated against by the majority student populations due to their small numbers in MUSD.

Improve academic rigor to increase positive outcomes for all students. Parents and students pointed to the lack of information about programs, access to classes they need, and the lack of information to prepare for college. Also, the schedule suggested a lack of rigor in the science and math classes.

Improve classroom management and discipline strategies of teachers and staff to increase positive outcomes for all students. African American students and all parent groups *unanimously* talked about teachers yelling and provided examples of teachers striking students, using profanity, using racial slurs with students, and otherwise negatively interacting with students. The African American students talked a lot about punishments in contrast to other students who talked about teacher and staff support and caring. The African American elementary students called out racism in their administrators and teachers. Lastly, African American students at all levels talked about being singled out for punishment in contrast to other students.

Increase student safety and reduce/eliminate bullying/cyberbullying, fighting, and drug abuse among students. Parents were unanimous in their concerns about all of these areas, and students were unanimous about the bullying and fighting. It should be noted that during the visits to the campuses, CA CC staff observed several questionable situations between students and one clear situation of sexual harassment between two students, (which was immediately reported to Mr. Ilori).

Alignment with the Initial Findings

The themes emerging from the focus groups and observations align closely with the four initial suggestions the CA CC made to the Superintendent in October 2018 as a result of the “deeper dive” into the quantitative data:

1. There is a need to **create a sense of urgency** throughout the district about improving academic and other outcomes for all students and for African American students in particular.
2. There is a need to **develop a districtwide culture of data use** for the purposes of ensuring equity for all students.
3. There is a need for **districtwide professional development** that includes leadership and all staff.
4. There is a **need for the district to establish a better relationship with African American students**, their families, and leaders in the community.

Digests of Focus Groups by Grade Span Levels

Digest of the Elementary School Focus Groups

The CA CC team conducted focus groups at two elementary schools in MUSD. The focus group prompts (questions) covered four areas: academic achievement, programs, resources, and climate. The purpose of the focus groups is to hear from stakeholders in the district about these areas, to increase understanding of the districtwide data on student achievement, student attendance, discipline statistics, and results of students' responses on the climate survey. Separate sessions were held with African American students, other students, teachers and staff, and parents. The following is a synthesis of the responses from each elementary school group. A total of 33 elementary students participated in focus groups at the two elementary schools: 14 African American students and 19 students from other groups.

African American Elementary Students

A total of 14 African American elementary students participated in focus groups at the two elementary schools.

Overall Opinion

Each student focus group opened with the prompt:

- What do you like about your school?

The students responded with a list of things that they liked about their school, subjects such as science, writing, reading and math, social studies and band. The students included field trips but commented that there are rules about students who don't have permission slips to participate. One student commented that they liked not being the only black student, and the students commented that they liked the science fair.

While some students mentioned they liked their teachers, they also commented about what they did not like, and these included comments about teachers yelling at students in addition to a teacher hitting a student. Among those comments were examples like the "teacher yells, gets mad, and says she does it 'because she cares so much'." These students gave other examples of teachers physically hitting students including:

- A teacher who pushed a student five times, and when the student told the principal, the student was suspended.
- A teacher hit a student on the head with a book.

Academic Achievement

Because of the data on African American students' achievement, the focus groups targeted this area. The elementary school students were asked to respond to the following prompts:

- Do you think that you are learning a lot in reading?
- Do you think that you are learning a lot in math?
- When you need help with your schoolwork, how do your teachers help you?

The African American students replied that they are not learning in reading, they do more math. One student responded they hated reading the previous school year because “the stories weren’t good. This year the stories are much better.”

In responding about whether they are learning math, the African American students stated that they are learning a lot in math, such as decimals. One student stated, “I’m learning a lot I didn’t know”. On the other hand, they talked about their teachers: “My teacher explains it better, doesn’t just get mad about it.” Other comments were about the teachers yelling: “Be quiet!”, “Shut up!”, and using bad words in class (F-word, D-word).

When it came to the third query about how their teachers help them when they need help, the responses generally were not positive. Some students commented that teachers will review things (mistakes, the test). But again, the African American students spoke about being yelled at, including being told to “shut up,” and in one instance, a teacher told the student that they are “there for the money.” One student commented that their principal is racist, and the entire group of students nodded their heads in agreement with the statement.

Treatment

Questions about how students are treated were included because of the racial disproportionality in discipline in MUSD and the results of the climate survey. The elementary students were asked:

- How do your teachers help you learn the rules?
- What happens if you break the rules?
- Do you think the rules are fair?

The African American students said teachers go over the rules a lot. It is worth noting that the focus groups occurred during the third week of school and students discussed how rules were still being reviewed by teachers. Their comments were focused on the punishments they receive:

- Lose points
- Can’t have free time
- Call parents
- Lose both recesses
- Call parents
- Call parents, lose recess, lose points
- Lose recess
- Take note to parent

Others mentioned that when they break the rules, they receive a referral slip, warnings, suspension, or expulsion.

This question is the third prompt in which students responded that “teachers yell at them.” Thus, yelling is an experience discussed across three topic areas: overall opinion, academic achievement, and treatment. Lastly, a common theme during the focus groups with African

American students was that they either get in trouble for not doing anything or they get in trouble for doing something that everyone else is doing.

Climate

The specific climate student questions aligned with several items in the climate survey for the purpose of learning more from the students.

- How do students act toward each other here at (name of school)? Friendly? Nice? Respectful? Are students nice to each other?
- How easy is it to make friends at this school?
- Are all students included in activities in class and on the playground?
 - Are there some students who are left out of activities?
 - Why do you think that happens?
 - What happens when students are left out of activities?

In responding to whether students are nice to each other, the African American students were not positive. Students mentioned bullying, students being mean, cussing, and swearing. There was a pattern of students talking about being yelled at by teachers and other signs of disrespect. For example, when students go to a teacher or staff member about bullying or other issues, no action is taken. With respect to activities, students said “if you’re good, you can participate; everyone gets in trouble if someone does something bad.” These students also discussed reaching out to students who are shy or by themselves.

Final Question

- What would you change about your school to make it better?

Students mentioned the afterschool program needing more staff, for kids to be nice, and they would like to “change the way teachers act.” This included examples of how teachers talk to students: A teacher told a student “There is something wrong with you.” There was also another reference to the racist principal. A student also mentioned the lack of action on the part of teachers when they reported that another student had touched them inappropriately.

Also, students complained of the heat and needing more air conditioning or shade around the schools. Lastly, students again pointed out that less yelling would make the schools better. Other comments included:

- Better food and drinks, e.g., juice
- New playground equipment
- Cleaner cafeteria

Other Elementary Students

A total of 19 elementary students participated in focus groups at the 2 elementary schools.

Overall Opinion

- What do you like about your school?
- What do you not like about your school?

The elementary students talked about the personnel, including the “nice” teachers, the nurse “who checks on you,” and the substitute teachers. The students included events such as assemblies, rallies, end-of year activities, and the basketball team. They also mentioned field trips to the Madera Fair, the aquarium, and kayaking as things they like about school. They also included things like being given a second chance when they make mistakes.

These students indicated that their favorite subjects were reading, math, drawing and painting, and geography.

Academic Achievement

- Do you think that you are learning a lot in reading?
- Do you think that you are learning a lot in math?
- When you need help with your schoolwork, how do your teachers help you?

The elementary students responded that they are learning to read. They gave reading examples like learning stories, vocabulary, language, spelling, how to pronounce words, and life lessons. They also included that teachers tell them personal stories. For the most part, the students responded positively about reading. Some students reported that their teacher helps them with math while others said their parents teach them more math.

In responding to the question about how teachers help them, the elementary students stated that “teachers point out stuff you don’t understand, give examples, step-by-step” (instructions) and notes before math. They also mentioned that they can go to a table for people who need help and work in small groups at a time. Others mentioned that classmates help one another.

Treatment

Questions about how students believe they are treated were included because of the racial disproportionality in discipline in MUSD, and the results of the climate survey. Students were asked:

- How do your teachers help you learn the rules?
- What happens if you break the rules?
- Do you think the rules are fair?

In answering the question about how their teachers help them learn the rules, the elementary students said that the teachers review the rules and that they explain the rules in a fun way. They also mentioned PAWS – positive action; accountability; work ethic; support.

The elementary students said, “rules are pretty ok,” that they “get talked to,” “rules are fair,” and “they keep us safe.” In responding to what happens when you break the rules, the elementary students gave a list that included:

- Teacher plays song
- Sent to principal
- Stay in from recess
- Write up
- Call parents (student calls, parents come to class)
- Get suspended

- 3 strikes – loss of privileges
- Lunch detention

Climate

The specific student questions on climate aligned with several items in the climate survey, for the purpose of learning more from the students.

- How do students act toward each other here at (name of school)? Friendly? Nice? Respectful? Are students nice to each other?
- How easy is it to make friends at this school?
- Are all students included in activities in class and on the playground?
 - Are there some students who are left out of activities?
 - Why do you think that happens?
 - What happens when students are left out of activities?

The elementary school students' responses were mixed between positive and negative comments. For example, some students mentioned that students are nice when you are a new student and that it is easy to make friend with new students. Other comments included that it is hard to make friends when you don't speak English. However, students also mentioned that students curse, fight, gossip, and get into arguments. They mentioned Fun Friday occurs when no one has received a write up during the week, and that everyone does activities, no one is left out.

Final Question

- What would you change about your school to make it better?

The students mentioned they would have better afterschool programs, Chromebooks for first graders and a safer playground. These students generated a “more” list including more:

- Trees
- Space between desks
- Teachers
- Classrooms
- Instruments
- Sports
- Food, cleaner food
- Breaks
- Play equipment for the upper grades
- Playground activities

In one of the student sessions, the CA CC team received a note with the following suggestions for ways to make the school better:

- Keeping a clean and sanitary area – students who remain in a clean area have a better attitude and perform better academically (since a dirty place can increase stress levels.)
- Being more informative – Asking for opinions if there's a change to the school.
- Provide snacks – Being hungry during school can make someone feel drained, moody, etc.

- Breaks – Incorporating breaks can reduce boredom and stress. Breaks can also make students feel “refreshed” which would motivate us to do better on our assignments.
- Not reading all the time – Reading all the time can make us lose motivation and get bored of books we are actually interested in.
- Allowing gum – Helps relieve stress, relax, improve memory, focus, etc.

(It is noted here that given the language/wording used and the fact that the student came with a list, it is doubtful that the elementary student generated the list without assistance, however, we have included it here.)

Elementary Parents

A total of 10 parents participated in the focus groups across the two elementary schools.

Academic Achievement

- Would you say that your child is getting an excellent education here?

Only one parent answered this question directly: “I think so. My child’s scores have improved year over year and _____ isn’t a good test taker.” Most of the comments focused on the teachers, and the parents gave mixed responses. One parent mentioned that they were satisfied/pleased with the teacher, and another said that the teachers are nice to the kids -- most of the other comments were not positive:

- My daughter’s teacher said she had problems in the class (ADHD). But I asked my daughter, and she said she performs better using screens than pencil and paper. I told the teacher and I went to the principal. They asked to speak to my husband, but I said I spend time with my child and at the school. The problem is not with my daughter but with the teacher.
- Last year my daughter had a good experience. But this year everything has changed for my son. Daughter got one-on-one help and it was excellent, but I’m told that’s not possible.

The parents compared current circumstances to previous years, (previous years being better) and to other school districts where their children received more support.

- Over the last few years things have been good. This year is different. It isn’t a focused day when I ask my kids about their day.
- We need to go back to the support available last year.
- In our other district we received great support. In reading, the district provided support, and in this school it doesn’t happen. There was more motivation on the part of the staff, but that doesn’t happen here. The principal was very involved in our other school.

Some parents spoke about how the school/teachers impact the children at home and vice versa:

- How you treat my child affects them at home. As they get older the greatest part of the day is at school. Teachers tone of voice and manner of communicating affects the students.
- Experience depends on the relationship between the parent and the teacher. It starts at home and comes to school.
- There are a lot of opportunities at this school, but the parents don’t participate.

Other comments focused on how teachers treat the students, and these comments were not positive:

- A student wet himself because they weren't allowed to go to the bathroom.
- Some teachers yell at the students.

Programs

In this set of prompts, parents were asked:

- What information have parents received to make wise choices regarding programs/services for your child?
- Have you encountered barriers to your child's participation (for program) that need to be addressed?

For the most part parents had negative responses and indicated that they want improved communication between the schools and parents, such as communication being timelier and more accessible to parents; for example:

- "Events are posted the day before."
- "Communication is last minute."

Other comments focused on the need for parents to speak up more:

- "Parents don't speak up even though they complain among themselves."
- "Parents would help make suggestions to improve programs here, but they don't speak up or have time to give feedback."

In terms of barriers, parents again mentioned yelling and that they want a teacher who will not yell at their children. Other barriers include the following:

- Lack of childcare is a barrier to school meetings
- Lack of information: Office staff are sometimes unhelpful, not informed of meetings
- Language barrier: Office staff don't speak Spanish. Materials in Spanish but child has to translate for parent
- Parents being ignored, especially about issues having to do with safety - there needing to be a stop light or sign, cars going too fast by the school.
 - "We're told to complain to the district, but the district says to complain to the city."

Resources

Parents were asked about what resources are available:

- When needed, whom do you ask for assistance or information to help your child?
- What do you think administrators and teachers need to help all students succeed?

Parents expressed that they ask for resources for their children and don't get them. Better communication and sharing of educational resources is needed.

- Teachers should be free to ask or tell parents they need supplies/help. Assistance needs to come from the parents.
- A student needed to attend speech class. The mother had to investigate and find out where to go for speech class because teacher wasn't able/allowed to tell her.

- Communication about the information.
- Two-way communication between teachers and students is needed.

Climate

Parents were asked about the concerns they have with regard to climate:

- What concerns do you have about how your child is treated by teachers and school staff?
 - By other students?
- When you come to campus how are you treated by teachers, office staff, and administrators?

Parents expressed concerns about interactions between teachers and students:

- Teachers yell at students
- Students are aggressive
- Nothing is done about bullying

Parents expressed a number of concerns related to the climate of the school:

- Teachers don't show professionalism
- Some teachers don't like their jobs
- Bullying used to be handled swiftly, now it takes longer or is not handled, which affects kids saying anything because nothing happens

Parents also expressed concerns related to health and safety issues:

- More shaded areas needed to provide relief from the heat
- Recess and PE during the hottest time of the day needs to change
- Concerning lice, there should be a rule-policy that child can't be suspended while they are taking care of it.
- Lice outbreaks – school says there was nothing they could do about it until the aide talked about it.

Elementary Faculty/Staff Focus Groups

A total of 11 faculty or staff participated in focus groups across the 2 elementary schools.

Academic Achievement

Faculty and staff received the following prompt:

- What additional supports may be needed to help African American students succeed?

Staff responses were mostly positive, however, there were comments such as “We haven't focused on African American students because it's such a small population.”

Staff responses mostly focused on what parents need to do, and provided a list of needs:

- Family night instead of back-to-school night
- Parent conference before beginning of school
- Understand home life to know how to approach students

Other comments referred to those who “attend back-to-school night are not the ones teachers need to talk to.” In other comments, the staff described deficits in the students: “Students may be unmotivated but do anything non-academic (activities).”

Staff said they haven't been in contact with parents. All staff participants spoke about feeling discredited by parents.

Programs

Regarding programs, staff and faculty were asked to respond to the following questions:

- How well do teachers work with parents of African American students?
- What are barriers to participation of African American students in any program?
- How should these be addressed?

Some staff said that they “don't see color” and “treat all students the same,” while other staff said for teachers to “take students demographics into account and get to know them.” Other responses regarding addressing barriers included:

- Administration is afraid of upper level students more than lower level students
- Helping teacher communicate with parent
- Involvement and participation of African American parents in relation to sports/practice across schools
- Know more about how to approach sensitive topics
- Build rapport and “not be intimidated”
- Very open communication

Resources

Staff responded to the prompts below to describe their professional development needs:

- What training and professional learning do administrators and teachers need to help all students succeed?
 - To improve academic outcomes for African American students

Staff responded with a combination of feeling overwhelmed with professional development, to the extent that it is detrimental and at the same time, that administration needs to hold staff accountable to attend and implement the professional development.

- “There's no accountability, not everyone is doing it (professional development).”

Other training and professional learning recommendations included the following:

- Reduced class size
- More structured, job embedded professional development
- More class planning time
- Extra support for how to work with at-risk students - “training on interventions”
- Diverse books, “Hispanic students know about cultures,” incorporate cultural figures into curriculum

Staff mentioned the need for a culturally relevant curriculum several times.

Climate

Staff responded to this question on climate and discipline:

- Given the data on the higher rate of suspensions for African American students, what needs to be done to bring down the high rates of suspensions and other more serious discipline actions for African American students?

There was a mixed reaction of staff discussing how to be blind of color and making a connection, while being mindful of how they come across to African American parents (not aggressive, respectful, and nonjudgmental).

- “Are we supposed to treat them (African American students) differently?”
- Teachers see the same home life across all demographics.

There were two staff comments about the emotional intelligence of African Americans being low and that the African American students are “not taught at home.” Specifically, the respondents stated that African American students are less emotionally intelligent than other students.

Other respondents commented about African American parents and students saying, “I have a few wonderful parents and a few wonderful students” and “For some parents, they don't see the big picture or see this as a problem now.”

A positive example of a teacher engaging an African American parent was offered:

- A teacher called a family member to share good news about their student and the parent was anticipating negative news - the staff said there needs to be more of this type of outreach to families.

Digest of the Middle School Focus Groups

The CA CC team conducted focus groups at three middle schools in MUSD. The questions covered four areas: academic achievement, programs, resources and climate. The purpose of the focus groups is to hear from stakeholders in the district about these areas, to increase understanding of the districtwide data on student achievement, student attendance, discipline statistics and results of students' responses on the climate survey. Separate sessions were held with teachers and staff, middle school parents, students and African American students. The following is a synthesis of the responses from each group at the middle schools.

The CA CC team conducted focus groups at 3 middle schools in MUSD with a total of 69 students. The outcomes on achievement, attendance, discipline and climate are lower for African American students in MUSD. Separate focus groups were held for the African American students for the purpose of comparing their responses to other MUSD middle school students. The following is a synthesis of the responses from all students at the middle schools, organized by African American and other student groups.

African American Middle School Students

The CA CC team conducted focus groups at 3 middle schools in MUSD with a total of 24 African American students.

Overall Opinion

Each student focus group opened with the query:

- What do you like about your school?

The African American students in middle school mentioned a number of things that they liked about their schools, including career and technical education (CTE) classes because there is something new to learn each semester. Students liked the library, football, the cafeteria food, and the fact that there is more freedom and less homework than in elementary school.

The students mentioned teachers, and their responses were mixed in that they liked some but not others. The positive comments were about teachers being helpful. The negative comments focused on teachers' yelling and threatening students. Others mentioned that teachers have favorites, and sometimes are not helpful. Students said that they don't like substitute teachers becoming regular teachers due to high absence rates of teachers.

The African American students' comments tended to be more negative as they talked more about what they did not like about school (even though the inquiry was about what they liked). For example, some students mentioned they did not like the dress code -- it is not uniformly enforced -- and they don't like being told where to sit at lunchtime. Other dislikes included fighting among students.

Lastly, regardless of the question being asked, the African American students mentioned the school rules. They indicated that the first two weeks of school had been focused on learning the school rules. Their responses were mixed about whether they liked the rules, and the negative comments had to do with the lack of uniform enforcement of the rules.

Academic Achievement

Because of the data on African American students' achievement, the focus groups were given a prompt in this area.

The middle school students were asked:

- Do you feel that you are being prepared to do well in high school? Please explain.

The students' answers were split between yes and no. However, the distinction was in the responses by school. To protect the anonymity of the respondents, the results are not reported by school, but it should be noted that there was a clear distinction between campuses.

A sample of the comments from those students who indicated they are being well prepared for high school are included below:

- Teachers care to teach students. Teachers are clear on what they want students to learn.
- Getting taught on different topics. More time to concentrate on one topic, time to ask questions instead of jumping from one topic to the next
- Teachers informing students when they will have a test, teachers prepare students for a week for upcoming tests
- Students enjoy the science classes

Some students indicated that they feel they are being prepared for high school, but provided negative conditions attached to their responses. For example:

- Yes, but (one) teacher teaches them like five-year-olds and is mean to all students.
- Understands that teachers are stressed. When there are two teachers, it is not helpful because one is monitoring behavior only.
- Yes, teachers are good and help when asked. But one teacher did not give out an assignment and grades really hard. "If you write your name wrong or in the wrong place you will get an F."

A sample of the comments from African American students who indicated they are *not* being well prepared for high school are included below:

- No, math is very difficult. The content is hard, need more support and spending more time on a specific subject.
- In one math class there were two teachers in a room. Only one (teacher) helped students that did not score well on the SPAT. This is a test done in the beginning of the year and end of the year.
- Some teachers pick favorites and only help the favorites. Has asked for help but has only gotten it sometimes.
- Felt like seventh grade teachers were better and more prepared. New teachers need extra help in the first few years.
- No, seventh grade was better. Eighth grade teachers want to be more fun. Trying to teach fast and rushing through content, talking too fast.

Other students commented specifically on the unequal attention of teachers and not getting the support they need from teachers to be successful. These respondents also addressed how teaching styles affect learning and that teachers focus more on discipline and testing rather than learning.

A second question focused on students getting support for learning:

- When you have a problem with your assignments, whom do you go to for help here at (name of school)?

The African American students' responses indicated that they will ask for help when needed. Here again, the answers were divided across the schools. While some indicated they will ask teachers for help, most of the responders indicated that they ask others for help, including parents, other family members, older students, counselors, and coaches because the teachers are not helpful. When asked to describe how the teachers provided help, those who responded described unhelpful or negative situations. For example:

- "One teacher tells students where they can find the answer but does not give the answer."
- "The teacher said they come back after school, but they didn't."
- "When I ask for help, the teacher tells the whole class, so I don't want to ask or help again."

Treatment

Questions about how students believe they are treated were included because of the racial disproportionality in discipline in MUSD, and the results of the climate survey. Students were asked:

- How do teachers help students learn the rules?
- How do teachers treat students here at (name of school) when students have broken the rules?

Learning the Rules

The African American students shared that each day the teachers make students write out the instructions for the first two weeks of school. Other comments included:

- One teacher yells a lot to help students learn the rules. Have a matrix schoolwide.
- Learn the rules from parents.
- One teacher hits the ruler on the board and makes students rewrite the rules.
- When students act out, their punishment is to write the rules.
- Every class goes over the rules many times.
- Hard to not know the rules. They constantly go over them.
- Homeroom teacher tells you the rules
- They make you sign the syllabus at the beginning of the year

The responses of the African American students in the middle schools indicated that they understand the rules. At the same time, they did not feel positive about way that teachers teach the rules, repeatedly going over the rules and in some instances being harsh.

The students talked a lot about respect and phone rules:

- Respect adults: listen and not argue with adults

- Respect to other students: listen to other students
- Not allowed to make fun of other people based on looks or appearance
- Do not use misuse technology, take care of equipment
- Makes school campus safer
- No phones rules:
 - Can't have it out
 - In bag pack
 - Turn phones off
 - Not have in the back pocket

Treatment/Consequences of Breaking the Rules

One respondent indicated that “Teachers are nice this year, even if you break the rules, they don’t call your parents.” The overwhelming majority of African American students’ comments on the consequences of breaking the rules indicated they feel the rules and consequences are not fairly and uniformly applied. Specifically, the students indicated that “teacher follow-through” is inconsistent. A sample of their comments follows:

- There are different rules for different students, which kids whose parents work in the district do not get in trouble
- Poor kids get in trouble more
- Rich people have more opportunities in general. Rules don’t apply to everyone
- One student, teacher’s child has gotten in trouble
- Some students are pampered and favored
- Get sent to a security officer for the rest of the class if they don’t follow the rules
- If you don’t remember the rule, teachers make you write it down
- Teachers make you sign the syllabus at the beginning of the year

Each group of African American students provided examples of how the rules are unfairly applied. For example, one student stated: “I was in 2nd period. A phone went off in class and I was accused of having the phone. It wasn’t mine but I still got sent to the office.” Another student mentioned that a teacher called a student the “N” word.

Climate

The specific student questions on climate aligned with several items in the climate survey, for the purpose of learning more from the students.

- How well do your teachers know you?
- Think about the teachers you like best here at (name of school). Why are they your favorite teachers?
- When you need help or have a problem, whom do you go to for help?
- How do students treat each other here (name of school)?
- How students help one another here at (name of school)?

The middle school African American students’ responses to these questions were for the most part negative. With respect to whether the teachers knew them, they responded no because it was the beginning of the school year, but that teachers were not trying to get to know them either. Those who had just come from elementary school indicated that teachers knew them because they spent the full day with them.

Again, the students referred to teachers calling them names such as “brat,” and to teachers having favorites. They also discussed how a bus driver threatened students: “I am going to kill you” because the students were loud.

When describing how students treat each other, the African American students’ responses were for the most part negative with the following examples:

- Bad, e.g., “One kid put milk in another kid’s backpack”
- Disrespectful
- Fight each other
- They bully each other
- Students do not respect other students
- Calling names are usually not about race
- Students use racial names

Final Question

The concluding question for the session was:

- What would you change about your school (name of school) to make it better?

The students provided a list that confirmed and aligned with their responses to other queries:

- More security guards
- Allow students to use phone in an appropriate way, e.g., music and math
- More teachers
- Smaller class sizes, fewer students
- Early out
- Better and newer technology
- Less fighting among students
- More sports and cheering

Other Middle School Students

The CA CC team conducted focus groups at 3 middle schools in MUSD with a total of 45 students who were not African American.

It should be noted that *regardless of the question* being asked, these student respondents mentioned fighting and/or bullying during the focus groups.

Overall Opinion

Each student focus group opened with the query:

- What do you like about your school?

The middle school students’ responses were generally positive. The students liked all of the sports that are available. The sports list was long:

- Baseball
- Volleyball
- Football
- Golf

- Basketball
- Soccer
- Softball
- Water polo

Other answers included the later start times, the nice teachers, the security staff, the cafeteria food, the library, the electives (they are “cool”), and being with their friends.

A few students indicated that they did not like school.

Academic Achievement

Students were asked the following question:

- Do you feel that you are being prepared to do well in high school? Please explain.

In response to this question, most students expressed they were being prepared to do well in high school. Some provided classes, e.g., math and history. Students described the teachers focus on organization and helping them to complete assignments. They also mentioned having more choices and responsibilities and learning to navigate a larger campus. Examples of other positive responses included:

- Yes, get an array of assignments
- Yes, teaching more than elementary school
- Yes, hold them accountable for missing work
- Yes, explain what will be different from what they teach
- Yes, they prepare you for your future by learning math to help you get a job.
- Yes, showing the next level of growing up
- Yes, stay organized

Respondents from one school were neutral, with many not responding.

Students then talked about the challenges of being on a big campus (e.g. walking a lot, falling because they feel stressed about getting to class on time, etc.) Other examples included:

- More room for passing period (people run into each other)
- Better transportation because mom has to go to three different schools
- Stop the fights
- Give us back our early out; late start is not good
- Stop punishing the whole school for some kids
 - We lose privileges (lunch and breaks)
 - Get lectured even if we’re not fighting
- More kids this year than last year
- Make the work easier
- AVID students get to go to Six Flags
- More access to field during breaks

Students were also asked:

- When you have a problem with your assignments, whom do you go to for help here at (name of school)?
- How do your teachers help you?

“The teacher” was the middle school students’ first and most frequent response to these questions and some referred to afterschool assistance the teachers provide. Others added they go to older siblings, parents, counselors, and other students for help with assignments. Students responded that teachers help them during class, talk to them, and give them work to do with other students.

Treatment

Questions on how students are treated were included because of the district’s racial disproportionality in discipline. The students were asked to describe how they learn the rules.

- How do teachers help students learn the rules?
- How do teachers treat students here at (name of school) when students have broken the rules?
- Do you think that the rules here at (name of school) are fair for all students?

In response to these questions, the middle school students in one session mentioned Refocus or SRC. They also mentioned lunchtime detention and the 5 P’s. Other students mentioned the Respect rule. In another session the middle school students also described the 5 P’s rule and noted that they were fair, but that each teacher has more rules. They considered the consequences for breaking the rules to be fair to everyone. They mentioned that teachers teach the rules, give warnings and go over the rules as ways of helping students to learn them.

Climate

The responses of MUSD students on the climate survey were lower than national levels. In an effort to learn more about why students may have responded in ways they did, the focus groups addressed climate issues similar to those addressed in the survey.

- How well do your teachers know you?
- Think about the teachers you like best here at (name of school). Why are they your favorite teachers?
- When you need help or have a problem, whom do you go to for help?
- How do students treat each other here (name of school)?
- How students help one another here at (name of school)?

The students' responses to the inquiry about how well their teachers knew them were mixed. Because it was early in the school year, students talked about teachers they had the previous year, and indicated that most of their teachers knew them. Some respondents focused on teachers knowing those students who break the rules (gum chewing, talking while the teacher is talking, and eating in class). Some respondents mentioned that teachers knew their families and names.

With respect to getting help with a problem other than schoolwork, their responses included counselors, their parents, family members. Some students admitted that they don’t ask for help.

In answer to the question on how students treat each other, the students mentioned that students threaten each other, and are disrespectful and sarcastic. The comments were generally negative, that students don't get along and it is noticeable. The students talked about bullying and cyberbullying as a big problem.

Final Question

- What would you change about your school (name of school) to make it better?

The students talked about changing some of the rules, particularly about phone use and the dress code. The students said the halls are crowded and so they would change to have more break time and time for passing to classes. The students talked about the crowded buses as well. Students also mentioned reducing the number of fights and increasing the ways students help each other as changes they would like to see.

Middle School Parents

A total of 18 parents participated in the middle school focus groups. *Research shows that the safety and security of their children while at school is the primary concern of parents.* It should be noted that *regardless of the question being asked and answered*, the middle school parents mentioned their concerns about bullying, violence, fighting, and aggression among students. Related to this, the middle school parents repeatedly mentioned the problem with drugs, including edibles, and the use and distribution of other banned substances among students. A summary of the comments and discussion among the middle school parents is provided below.

Academic Achievement

The middle school parent focus groups addressed the areas of academic achievement, programs, resources, and climate. The session began with questions addressing academic achievement. The first question was:

- Would you say that your child is getting an excellent education here in (name of school)? Please say why.

Middle school parent participants generally responded yes to this question. Their explanations included the following:

- Class size
- Before and afterschool programs such as AVID
- Teachers providing help to students, caring teachers
- It is challenging for students

The middle school parents were also asked to discuss supports provided to students to ensure their success.

- Do students in middle school receive all the support they need to be successful? Please explain.

Parent participants' responses to this question were less than positive ("Somewhat") to negative ("No"). The middle school parents' explanations addressed how teachers, the schools, and the parents could provide more support for students. Some comments representative of the middle school parents' responses are included below.

More support from teachers:

- More preparation on how to teach
- Better classroom management
- More attention to disruptive students

More support from the schools:

- More information to middle school parents
- More translators
- Better informed front office staff
- Improve the calling system to allow middle school parents to retrieve announcements regarding school services
- Update the website with upcoming events and programs

More support from middle school parents:

- The middle school parents advocating more for students
- More parent engagement and participation in meetings

Programs

Parent participants were asked to discuss programs available to students. The first question was:

- What information have you (middle school parents) received to make wise choices regarding programs/services for your child?

The middle school parents responded that they rely on their children to get information about available programs and options, and there was agreement among all participants on this point.

They also identified several areas in which more information should be made available to them and to their children. The first area was the need for more information and focus on the needs of students who are college bound, and who wish to attend the University of California. The parents also expressed the concern that career pathways may limit students, and that limited information about pathways is provided to parents and students.

Parents were asked to identify barriers that prevent program participation:

- Have you encountered barriers to your child's participation (for any program) that need to be addressed? What are the barriers?

The middle school parents indicated that there are indeed barriers that need to be addressed and provided a number of examples including:

- Lack of communication, e.g., replying to parent inquiries is an issue
- Front office staff non-responsive, have little to no knowledge about school activities, lack Spanish translation from front office staff
- Teachers discourage students with negative attitude
- Non-supportive teachers
- Rudeness teachers display towards students

- Lack of positive interactions with students
- Lack of motivation from teachers

Resources

The middle school parents were asked to discuss whom they ask for assistance or information to help their children, and about what teachers might need to help all students succeed.

- When needed, whom do you ask for assistance or information to help your child?

The middle school parents responded that depending on the need, they will ask the office staff, security, or teachers for assistance or information. They further indicated that teachers generally seemed to be the best source of information, but some are really helpful while others are non-responsive. Some indicated that they ask counselors for assistance and also stressed that speaking English was really important for being able to advocate for their children. *It should be noted that middle school parents, again, stressed relying on their children for information.*

- What do you think administrators and teachers here at (name of school) need to help all students succeed?

In response to this question, middle school parents indicated that they believe a more visible classroom presence from the principal and vice principals (administrators) would help with classroom management. More support for translation for students whose first language is not English was also mentioned as a need at the schools.

Climate

How school administrators, faculty, staff treat parents and students is a key determinant of school climate. In order to obtain information about the climate in MUSD middle schools, the parents were asked to comment on how they are treated when on campus, and to share their opinions on how their children are treated as well.

- When you come to campus, how are you treated by teachers? Office staff? Administrators?

Prior to answering this question, middle school parents described the front office staff as not helpful and expressed that the front office staff needs the ability to translate into other languages in order to provide information and answer questions. Parents did not express any additional concerns about their treatment when on campus.

- What concerns do you have about how your child is treated by teachers and school staff? By other students? Please explain.

In response to this question, parents commented on the improvements in how students are greeted on campus. Some parents expressed that their children were doing better in middle school than elementary school. They also described their children as comfortable and content, focused on academics and preparing for high school.

Parents expressed concerns about several things in response to this question. Several examples are provided below:

- Students do not ask questions due to teachers' attitudes
- A summer school program is needed to prepare students for the transition to middle school
- Teachers do not report the use or distribution of drugs, edible drugs, in the classroom or in school
- New hires (teachers and staff) do not report negative situations in school
- New hires need more support to control the classroom

Parents were asked one additional climate question:

- What concerns do you have about how your child is treated by other students? Please explain.

Parents expressed concerns about bullying, saying that there is “a lot” of bullying, and that school staff should do more to prohibit/address bullying. However, parents also offered their thoughts on how bullying could be reduced:

- Games to help positive interaction between students
- The students' dress code has changed and is less restrictive. This has created situations in which some students express bias toward other students because of their clothing.

Middle School Teachers and Staff

Nineteen middle school teachers and staff participated in the focus groups.

Academic Achievement

According to the district data, the African American students' scores in reading and math are lower than the district average. The first question in the area of academic achievement focused on supports that are needed to foster African American students' academic success.

It should be noted that some teachers in each session emphasized the small number of African American students in the school, or that they had little interaction with African American students as qualifiers for their responses.

- What additional supports may be needed to help African American students succeed?

In response to this query, the comments from the middle school teachers and staff tended to focus on the students, highlighting deficiencies in characterizing the African American students and in some cases, their middle school parents. For example, some respondents listed the poverty, broken homes, and strife that African American students face as reasons for low achievement. Some suggested that African American students segregate themselves from other students and that they have no positive role models. Others offered that the African American community needs to be more involved in schools, and that Madera's changing demographics also contribute to the issues facing African American students.

Some participants attempted to counter these negative comments by highlighting positive attributes of African American students, including such things as their ability to discern whether teachers are caring, that many try to build relationships with teachers, and that they want to be heard or “have a voice”. However, participants in this session focused on the supports needed to help students succeed. One participant in the session expressed the desire to have opportunities to learn about African American culture.

In another session, the respondents mentioned that the “students who are having a hard time are white and black kids.” Others mentioned the widespread use of the “N” word by many different students, and stated that when this occurs, teachers react by talking with the students and questioning them. Other commented that the students are segregated on campus.

When respondents were redirected to focus on *support for students*, some teachers/staff stated that they needed resources, direction/communication from school administration, or general knowledge about how to effectively support their students. Other teachers stressed the lack of support from district and school administrators for teachers and characterized the relationship between teachers and students as a power struggle that the teachers were losing.

While the majority of comments from the teachers and staff in response to this question tended to have a negative focus, there were some ideas about support for students that were positive. These included:

- Home visits to students who are struggling
- Donations are made for homeless students
- Students need to see themselves in the curriculum
- The need for more African American teachers
- The need for more parent involvement, e.g.,
 - The middle school parents asking students what they did at school
 - Having a working phone number

Programs

The lower academic performance data for African Americans highlighted the need to learn more about the information parents and students receive about curricular and extra-curricular programs and classes/courses available at the school or district. The questions in this category focused on whether or not parents and students have the information necessary to make wise choices, and about possible barriers to student participation. Middle and high school teachers/staff were asked to respond to the following questions:

- How does (name of school) ensure that middle school parents have all the information they need to make wise choices regarding programs?
- What are the barriers to participation of African American students in any program? How should these be addressed?

Informing Middle School Parents

The responses of the middle school teachers and staff were typical of what you would expect and included such strategies as mass communications to parents including phone calls, email, and text messages. Additional strategies included notifications about events such as Back-to-School Night, English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC) meetings for EL students/middle school

parents, or Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) programs and meetings. They also mentioned that counselors send home packets of information about classes and the students' most recent test results. Other approaches included:

- Automated messages
- School website
- Social media
 - Facebook - The athletics program page
 - Instagram
- Syllabi that teachers, middle school parents, and students sign

The teachers and staff mentioned outreach from programs and across the grade spans. For example, the AVID program does outreach to the elementary schools and sports programs recruit elementary students. They also mentioned that middle school site administrators conduct outreach activities with the elementary schools in January and February of each year, but that the high schools do not have outreach to the middle schools.

Generally, the responses to this question were positive, and with the exception of ELAC, there was no mention of outreach to inform or encourage any specific groups of students or middle school parents to participate in programs.

Barriers to Participation

The reports on student activities indicated little to no participation on the part of African Americans students in many school programs or activities. Given that, it is important to learn about the barriers that inhibit their participation in school programs.

Here again, the respondents linked the lack of participation of African American students in school activities or programs to the small African American population in MUSD. The teachers did not describe any participation barriers that may exist or how to address the barriers. Rather, their responses blamed the defiant attitudes of students and focused on their own needs to be valued and problems within the district.

Resources

The district data on student achievement and the climate survey responses from students raise concerns about areas the MUSD needs to improve. Given the more negative outcomes for African American students' achievement and engagement, the concerns are even greater. The questions on resources were included to attempt to learn more about what the district needs to provide for administrators and teachers to improve these outcomes. The questions were:

- What training and professional learning do administrators and teachers need to help all students succeed?
- What training and professional learning do administrators and teachers need to improve academic outcomes for African American students?

Help for All Students' Success

- More teachers with other languages background to help EL students, e.g., Mandarin
- More tutors, translators, translated materials
- Make better use of social media to help middle school parents

- Professional learning communities (PLCs)
- More CLAD training

The middle school teachers also mentioned that “Good teachers leave because they don’t have experience in multicultural environment.” Given this, they raised the question “How can you replace lived experiences?” In a similar vein, the teachers pointed out that the district administration sends a strong message that teachers should focus on relationships with students, but asked the question, “How do you relate to kids who growing up in the Obama/Trump era?”

Help for African American Students’ Success

While some respondents started with “how can you fix issues that society has not addressed?”, other middle school teachers expressed that more is needed:

- Staff training on being aware of their own biases
 - Training on biases are absent here at this district
- Staff training on trauma-informed practices, e.g.,
 - Hands on, practical training to apply the practices
 - What do trauma-informed practices look like?
 - Support for first year teachers on trauma-informed practices

Other topics for training included:

- Emotional intelligence of adults and students
- Effects of social media
- Multi-cultural education

The teachers also discussed that usually they receive only “basic training,” and are not provided in-depth training on topics, and suggested that perhaps partnering with other districts would be a way to get more in-depth training on topics.

Climate

There is significant disproportionality in the discipline data for African American students in MUSD. The following question was included for the purpose of trying to learn more about why this is true.

- Given the data on the higher rate of suspensions for African American students, what needs to be done to bring down the high rates of suspensions and other more serious discipline actions for African American students? Please explain.

Some middle school teachers described the Restorative Justice program that is designed to address this issue but talked about the problems with implementation, stating that it is not effective. They also mentioned the student advocate team with one student advocate for 50-70 Tier III students. Others described the inconsistent implementation of positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS). Previously, administrators did not focus on PBIS, but now it is resuming, but there is no training or support. Further, PBIS was described as limited in scope because it does not address character, and there needs to be a focus on character. The teachers described the ineffectiveness of the Student Resource Center stating that students do something just so that they can be sent to the SRC.

Others spoke at length about their own safety concerns, the power struggle teachers have with students, and the fact that when the PLCs meet, they do not address classroom management. When asked what changes they would like to see, the teachers responded that they want the adult's voice to be recognized as the authority. They also mentioned that the students are not well-prepared coming into middle school, and that middle school parents also struggle with students.

Climate Survey Data

While the responses of all students on the climate survey were lower than national trends, the responses of African American students were markedly lower than other MUSD students on particular items, including:

- How often are people disrespectful to others at your school?
- How fair or unfair are the rules for the students at this school?
- At your school, how much does the behavior of other students hurt or help your learning?

The question in this area was designed to further explore the results of the climate survey:

- The overall responses of students on the climate survey were lower than the national average. What needs to be (or can be) done to improve the school so that students' responses are more favorable?

Here again, the teachers' responses began with the statements the "African American population is low" and there is a "small percentage" of African American students. Another comment was "the majority of the student population is Mexican." However, one teacher mentioned that "statistics was not the case here." This helped to shift the discussion, and teachers mentioned the district has started a Black Student Union, (BSU). Teachers also mentioned a disconnect between students and classroom teachers. They also added that there is a need for more relevant history, positive role models, and racial sensitivity training.

The respondents were also asked to consider why fewer African American students responded favorably to the following questions:

- How well do people at your school understand you as a person?
- How often are people disrespectful to others at your school?
- How fair or unfair are the rules for the students at this school?
- At your school, how much does the behavior of other students hurt or help your learning?

The respondents were the asked to share their reactions to these items and consider what can be done for African American students to improve their experiences in these areas.

The respondents' initial replies focused on the administration of the survey:

- Make sure students understand survey questions
- Survey administered in different classrooms very differently e.g., "Some teachers said we have to get through this quickly – get it over with."

Some respondents emphasized the need to understand the history of the community and the district as factors that still impact school climate:

- Institutional history being forgotten

- This middle school built to house “little Mississippi” south of river and freeway
- Thought gangs would be part of school
- Madera Ranchos became own school district
- One middle school is thought to be ideal, while the other middle schools are pitted against each other
- Historically for 20-30 years there is strife that comes from the history of the African Americans in the area

Other responses focused on the need for more culturally relevant curriculum and counseling:

- History classes that teach about stereotypes
- Classes that address issues of internal racism (Mexicans/Oaxacans)
- Getting teachers to understand racism with/in Mexican history and culture
- Classroom management through a multicultural lens
- The need for more money for counseling
- The African American students should play more sports, they are under-utilized in sports

A variety of other responses focused the climate from the adult perspective. Comments included:

- Teachers interpret investment or caring for students differently
- Some teachers have skills to deal with these situations and some don't
- Staff are not cohesive
- With respect to relationship building:
 - “It's not my job to build a relationship with them”
 - “You care too much”
 - “You shouldn't be so invested”

Some responses highlighted the need for better implementation of school and district improvement and systems change.

Digest of the High School Focus Groups

The CA CC team conducted focus groups at the 2 comprehensive high schools in the MUSD with a total of 37 students. The outcomes on achievement, attendance, discipline, and climate are lower/more negative for MUSD African American students. Therefore, for the purpose of comparing their responses to other students in MUSD, separate focus groups were held for the African American students. The following is a synthesis of the responses from all students at the high schools, organized by African American and other student groups.

African American High School Students

The CA CC team conducted 3 focus groups at the 2 comprehensive high schools in the MUSD with a total of 16 African American students.

Overall Opinion

Each student focus group opened with the query:

- What do you like about your school?

In the focus group with the African American high school students, one answered the question that they liked their friends and sports (basketball, track, tennis, and golf). A student mentioned that the AVID teachers are helpful, and another said that the teachers are nice.

Although the query was about what students liked about their schools, the African American students' responses were most frequently about what they did *not* like. A student indicated that they were a good student in some of the more rigorous classes and said, "I like learning, but teachers are annoying. I am ready to graduate." In one session, a student answered, "There is nothing to like here." A student in another session replied, "There is nothing for us here," and the other participants in that session nodded in agreement.

In all three high school sessions, the African American students generated a long list reasons that they don't like the schools. Students in at least two of the sessions, and sometimes all three had the following responses:

- Teachers
 - are rude and disrespectful
 - talk negatively too much about students
 - show favoritism
 - have bad attitudes
 - demand respect but are disrespectful themselves
 - sometimes won't provide help when asked
 - have assumptions about African Americans; too much negative focus on race
 - separate students by race and language
- Security guards
 - patrol in the areas where the African American students are as opposed to other students
 - are harder on the African American students
 - racial profiling
- Lack of engagement
 - "You don't see us in anything -- videos, sports"

- Not being selected to participate in sports or activities
- Lack of clubs
- Sign up for clubs but clubs not as described
- No BSU sponsor, BSU inactive
- Some clubs seem only for certain groups of kids
- Bullying
- Drug use
- Crowded busses
- Facilities
- Dirty restrooms
- Cockroaches and spiders
- Cleaner food
- Locker rooms are not safe

Academic Achievement

Because of the data on African American students' achievement, the high school student focus groups were asked:

- Do you feel that you are being prepared to do well after high school? Getting a good job? Getting into college? Going into a training program? Please explain.

While one student replied "Generally, yes," most of the African American students indicated that they are not being well prepared for college. For example:

- We need to learn things we are going to do in life like real life skills
- I don't feel supported by counselors
 - They are too busy
 - They only call us when our grades are bad
 - We do not get a response from them in a timely manner
- Only a few teachers are able to support you
- I hope I am ready to graduate to go to college, but some teachers aren't respectful.
- I feel these classes aren't going to be beneficial. I would like to focus on useful classes like life skill classes.
- I feel I am learning the same stuff I was in sophomore year.
- My teacher expects us to know everything. If we don't know something, we don't get help.
 - "Some people are slow learners, like me."
 - "We feel uncomfortable asking"
 - Teachers do not teach students

Several students commented on the extensive use of computers and worksheets and that there is "no teaching" in some classes. "The energy is dull in some classes."

They also indicated that they don't get information about colleges except in certain classes. Some pathways provide more information than others about college. And generally, to get information, they have to seek out the counselors.

Students listed a number of classes by subject area in which they experienced problems, but in order to protect their anonymity, the classes are not listed because the students also mentioned they are often the only African American students or one of very few in their classes.

A second question focused on students getting support for learning:

- When you have a problem with your assignments, whom do you go to for help here at (name of school)?

The African American students' indicated that they sometimes ask their parents, but most frequently ask their teachers for help, although they also said that teachers, at times, are not helpful. Students mentioned being ignored when asking for help or being made to feel uncomfortable, so they don't ask for help. Other examples include:

- Teachers do not teach students
- Teacher got irritated because students did not understand the material
- Teachers expect students to rely on computers to self-teach
- Last year teachers did not know how to teach
 - 20 missing assignments and yet passing the class in chemistry
 - On the other hand, students who were turning in their work were failing
- Assignments posted on Aeries
 - Turned in assignments and yet failed
 - No feedback provided

Treatment

Questions about how African American students believe they are treated were included because of the racial disproportionality in discipline in MUSD, and the results of the climate survey. Students were asked:

- How do teachers help students learn the rules?
- How do teachers treat students here at (name of school) when students have broken the rules?

Learning the Rules

In response to the query about learning the rules, the African American students indicated that some teachers used a slide show to describe the rules while others shared the rules after someone has done something wrong, and some said the teachers did not review the rules. In another session, students relayed that teachers focus on the rules during the first two weeks of school. These respondents also commented that the rules make sense, but no one follows them. Students indicated that they have no input into the rules.

Participants in all sessions stressed that the rules are applied inconsistently. The most thought-provoking statement from all sessions was, "Teachers put more effort in rules than in actual school or teaching."

Treatment/Consequences of Breaking the Rules

The responses to this question were similar across the three sessions with African American students:

- We are not treated like other students.
- We are not part of the community; we're just there.
- More focused on African American students

One example the students gave was that as they were waiting outside the cafeteria, the security guard questioned them about what they were doing because “he believed that something was going to happen.” Other comments included:

- I don't like that I was told I don't belong here and they would send me to the South.
- Not many African Americans here.
- There are many suspensions.
- I got in an argument with a girl and I was suspended, the girl was not.
- I tried out and was not selected for a team. I feel is because I am black. Only Mexican and white students make the teams and you never see a person like us.

Climate

The specific questions for students on climate aligned with several items in the climate survey, for the purpose of learning more from the students:

- How well do your teachers know you?
- Think about the teachers you like best here at (name of school). Why are they your favorite teachers?
- When you need help or have a problem, whom do you go to for help?
- How do students treat each other here (name of school)?
- How students help one another here at (name of school)?

With respect to whether the teachers knew them, the African American students responded that teachers knew them best who had them for longer periods of time. Their responses varied, with some saying since it was only the third week of school, there had not been enough time for teachers to get to know them. Then others said that teachers put no effort into getting to know their students.

When describing how students treat each other, the African American students again expressed that they don't feel part of the school, e.g., “I don't feel comfortable.” Other examples:

- Students exposing life of one another
- Cyberbullying
- Bullying on campus.
- A lot of tension between races

Final Question

The concluding question for the session was:

- What would you change about your school (name of school) to make it better?

The students provided a list that confirmed and aligned with their responses to other queries. Their first ideas included positive things they would add to the school to make it better, including a system in which students would be treated fairly, the punishments would be fair, and students would be given second chances. Other positive changes included:

- More involvement for the African American students
- Black trivia survey in the last day of black history month
- Send African American students to Fresno to listen to motivational speakers
- Learned more about opportunities in the conversation than in school

There were also things students would eliminate:

- Less racial profiling
- Less tension between the races

Other High School Students

The CA CC team conducted focus groups at 3 high schools in MUSD with a total of 21 students who were not African American.

Overall Opinion

Each student focus group opened with the query:

- What do you like about your school?

The high school students' responses were generally positive and in one session started by saying they liked their school pride. Students commented that their experience at the school was positive, they liked the staff and teachers, "teachers make connections." Favorable comments about the teachers also included:

- Students can talk with teachers even when not in class
- Teachers always try to help with school life
- Teachers will help you, they are not just doing their job

Others mentioned different classes they liked including math, science, and AP classes. Students showed enthusiasm as they described their pathways, and included the clubs, robotics, and AP classes as things they liked about their schools.

Other answers included what they don't like: cafeteria food, long cafeteria lines, and the lack of shade. Students in these sessions also talked about the crowded buses and crowded hallways. The packed hallways coupled with the distance across campus made it difficult to get to class on time.

Academic Achievement

Students were asked:

- Do you feel that you are being prepared to do well in high school? Please explain.

In response to this question, one student shared that they earned college credit by completing courses in the pathway. Most of the students expressed they were being prepared to do well in high school. Their comments include:

- Yes, everything is fine.
- They're preparing us well.
- I like it here.
- School helps us get to college.
- We take surveys to find out what school is good for us.

- I want to be a nurse. When I picked my elective, I didn't know what I wanted so I'm going to try to change it. Currently I am in another class.
- There are many career pathways. I like different things.

Students were also asked:

- When you have a problem with your assignments, whom do you go to for help here at (name of school)? How do your teachers help you?

The students replied that they go to their counselors, teachers, and other students for help with assignments. Some agreed that teachers are available. When describing how teachers helped, the students listed the following:

- Walk around see if help needed
- Explain a different way if multiple don't understand
- Ask students to demonstrate on white board
- Try to break down and explain more
- Give examples similar questions processing

However, some students also replied that while they generally feel supported, there are some teachers who are not helpful. In other comments, the students shared that a teacher made them feel "dumb."

Treatment

Questions on how students are treated were included because of the district's racial disproportionality in discipline. The students were asked the following:

- How do teachers help students learn the rules?
- How do teachers treat students here at (name of school) when students have broken the rules?
- Do you think that the rules here at (name of school) are fair for all students?

Learning the Rules

The students shared that some teachers give them syllabi that contain the rules. Others mentioned that the teachers give them and their parents contracts that list the rules, and they are expected to sign these contracts. The students mentioned other things including:

- The teachers give the rules at the beginning of the year and then give reminders.
- Print outs are given to students to help them by repeating the rules or as reminders.
- Teachers give them examples.
- Some teachers have them visible on the walls.

In one session the students all agreed that the rules are fair. However, in other sessions the students were not as positive. These students reported that teachers treat students preferentially not by race but by their interest in sports or art.

Climate

The responses of MUSD students on the climate survey were lower than national levels. In an effort to learn more about student responses, the focus groups addressed climate issues similar to those in the survey:

- How well do your teachers know you?
- Think about the teachers you like best here at (name of school). Why are they your favorite teachers?
- When you need help or have a problem, whom do you go to for help?
- How do students treat each other here (name of school)?
- How students help one another here at (name of school)?

The students' responses varied by session. In one session, several students commented that their teachers knew them well. The students also made the following comments:

- Teachers want to know us.
- They are available to us.
- All teachers like to know students.
 - They remember me. Only a few don't.
 - Some want to know you home life.
- Some want to know me, some just teach.
- Some do.

With respect to getting help with a problem other than schoolwork, their responses included counselors, parents, and family members. Some students admitted that they don't ask for help.

In answer to the question on how students treat each other, the students mentioned bullying, yelling and rudeness. Some commented that "everyone is nice to the Special Education students." Another reflected that students stay to themselves by grade level. Students also mentioned the fighting but stressed that most of the fights are among freshmen, and by 12th grade the students have fewer fights.

Final Question

- What would you change about your school (name of school) to make it better?

The students talked about changing some of the rules, particularly about phone use and dress code. The students said the halls are crowded and so they would like more break time and passing time. The students talked about the crowded buses as well. Students also mentioned reducing the number of fights and increasing the ways students help each other as changes they would like to see.

High School Parents

A total of 14 high school parents participated in the focus groups at the high schools.

Academic Achievement

The focus groups with high school parents addressed the areas of academic achievement, programs, resources, and climate. The session began with questions addressing academic achievement. The first question was:

- Would you say that your child is getting an excellent education here in (name of school)? Please say why.

In one session, the parents gave positive responses. Some mentioned the electives are challenging, and one parent added that the counselor has been helpful in steering the student academically. Several indicated that their children had challenges getting the classes, and others mentioned that students may select a pathway only to find that classes were not available. Almost all these parents mentioned that students have difficulty getting the electives that they need.

In the other session, the parents responded negatively about the rigor of the curriculum. Parents indicated that their children are not academically challenged. Another parent stated that they are not a fan of the curriculum as it has been “dumbed down.” All of the other parents quickly agreed. The parents also agreed that assignments are given without clear expectations around due dates or timelines. Parents also mentioned that some teachers do not give homework, and that the afterschool program does not have enough staff available to help students. Other responses included:

- Teachers do not keep up with students’ grades, and when the grades go down, teachers do not provide assistance to raise their grade.
- Counselors do not provide information about scholarships or programs that are available.
- There are only 6-8 counselors for 3,400 students.
- Basic life skills are not taught/part of the curriculum.

Parents were asked were asked about the supports students receive:

- Do students in high school receive all the support they need to be successful? Please explain.

Parents did not respond positively to this question. Several mentioned that teachers did not provide information about classes needed for college readiness, college application deadlines, or scholarships. Others mentioned the counselors have information but do not make it available to all students. They also relayed that there is a lack of information about the pathways, especially helping students map out the classes they need to take. The parents were critical of the website, stating that it contained limited information.

Programs

Parent participants were asked to discuss programs available to students. The first question was:

- What information have you (high school parents) received to make wise choices regarding programs/services for your child?

The responses focused on the lack of information from teachers and counselors. The parents agreed that the counselors are not available and are “adverse to meeting with parents.” The parents mentioned the automated phone system may not be available to all parents. The parents said that the needs of the different populations of students who attend the school are not being met.

Parents responded to a second program prompt:

- Have you encountered barriers to your child’s participation (for any program) that need to be addressed? What are they/those barriers?

The high school parents stressed the lack of information as a key barrier. Information dissemination is inconsistent at best, and parents have removed students from some programs and supplemental activities (such as camps) because of the lack of communication about requirements. Parents described what they called “racial roadblocks” to students participating in programs. These include:

- Dark skin students experience racial block.
- A dark skin student was not selected for a team sport but a student with lighter skin student was, although these students have played together for a while in the past
- MUSD sports program overlook students with dark skin (Parents expressed general agreement on this point.)
- Spanish Language Development (SLD) is reserved for Spanish speakers and is not available for students from other racial backgrounds.
- There is a lack of room for students to attend Spanish classes.
- Bilingual ability is important in the Central Valley and Spanish classes should be available.

Resources

The high school parents were asked to discuss whom they ask for assistance or information to help their children:

- When needed, whom do you ask for assistance or information to help your child?

The high school parents responded that they most often reach out to the counselors, but that the counselors are “out of reach.” They also mentioned leaving voicemails for counselors without getting responses. In one session the parents stressed that one of the counselors the previous year had been excellent (others agreed), but that person had left the district. They felt this was a real loss. Other parents mentioned that they are not informed about whom to approach when they need help.

Parents continued to express the lack of information provided to them on important events and other key information.

Parents were asked about what teachers might need to help all students succeed:

- What do you think administrators and teachers here at (name of school) need to help all students succeed?

In response to this question, high school parents indicated a great need for sensitivity trainings (for both teachers and students). Parents also discussed the need for the schools and the district to find ways to involve/include students from different cultural backgrounds, to include “the minorities and improve the culture and climate of the schools.” They also stressed that clubs and extracurricular activities could be used to create more inclusion and a sense of belonging in the school. They acknowledged that more resources are needed for clubs and other activities to help the student bond to the school.

Climate

Parents were asked:

- When you come to campus, how are you treated by teachers? Office staff? Administrators?

The parents used the focus groups as an example of the lack of information available to them. These parents indicated that the letters (explaining the focus groups) that were intended for them were addressed to their children.

- What concerns do have about how your child is treated by teachers and school staff? By other students? Please explain.

The high school parents expressed concerns about reporting serious incidents to the school staff and having the office staff ignore them or be unhelpful. The high school parents also expressed concerns about several things in response to this question.

- What concerns do have about how your child is treated by other students? Please explain.

In discussing how their children are treated by other students at the school, parents expressed concerns about bullying, fights and drugs. Comments included:

- Racial conflict: parents talked about the racial conflicts among students, including discrimination and bullying against white students because they are a minority, usage of the “N” word, and racially-based conflicts among students.
- Fights: parents expressed how dangerous the fights among students can be. One parent indicated that their child was stabbed with a pencil by another student.
- Drug abuse: parents spoke of concerns about edibles being distributed among students as a very serious problem.
- Discipline/suspensions are inconsistent
 - Student was caught vaping, not given suspension
 - Fights among students: five fights in first two weeks
- Security
 - Only 7 security guards for 3,400 students
 - Security are snatching students during fights
 - Aggressive towards students
 - More security is required

High School Teachers and Staff

A total of 31 high school teachers and staff participated in the focus groups across the 2 comprehensive high schools. It should be noted that some participants were new employees in the district/schools and could not contribute to the discussion.

Academic Achievement

According to the district data, the African American students’ scores in reading and math are lower than the district average. The first question in the area of academic achievement focused on supports that are needed to foster African American students’ academic success.

It should be noted that some teachers in each session emphasized the small number of African American students in the school, or that they had little interaction with African American students.

- What additional supports may be needed to help African American students succeed?

Again, some teachers stressed that they had few African American students. “Our demographics have changed. Before the African American population was higher. Before there was more of a black culture. Now there’s not much of a sense of community. A lot of African American families don’t live here anymore.”

Some also discussed the students in terms of deficiencies such as being low-income. Some mentioned that help is available but that the students don’t show up for the help. Some stated that the elementary and middle schools should do a better job of preparing the students for high school. Expanding on this issue, the teachers commented that 220 freshmen read at the 3rd grade level or lower, and that the district should revisit the social promotion policy.

One teacher spoke of the family liaisons who reach out to parents and translate in Spanish when parents attend events or meetings at school.

However, most of the high school teachers listed the supports that are provided for African American students. The teachers spoke of the tutoring but said that it is a combination of recreational and academic activities, and that the recreation should be cut back to focus more on academic services. Summer school, the AVID program, and the Student Resource Center were mentioned as resources for students. They also referred to the Student Advocates, and counselors. Some other examples are provided below:

- Peer tutoring
- Credit recovery
- Weekly check-ins with teachers

Support suggestions included hiring more African American teachers, more community outreach, and more family interaction.

Programs

The lower academic performance data for African Americans highlights the need to learn more about the information high school parents and students receive about curricular and extra-curricular programs and classes/courses available at the school or district. The questions in this category focused on whether parents and students have the information they need to make wise choices and about possible barriers to student participation. High school teachers/staff were asked:

- How does (name of school) ensure that high school parents have all the information they need to make wise choices regarding programs?
- What are the barriers to participation of African American students in any program?? How should these be addressed?

Informing High School Parents

Teachers and staff included such things as newsletters, Connect Ed, the Parent Resource Center, and parent access to Aeries and email in their responses. Other identified communication strategies:

- Website (however might not be updated)
- Bulletins sent home
- Parent portal for assignments and attendance
- Calls to parents
- Absence audits
- Back to School night
- Robotics has a big community presence
 - They participate in fair and it's an opportunity for parents and students to approach them
 - African American students have participated in the past. However, not this year.
 - Anyone can join this group, even from other schools. Although transportation can be a barrier for participation
- Facebook, Twitter
- Assignments are available to students who are absent, this is another way parents can connect
- There are many resources, but teachers are unaware if parents receive the information.
 - Communication could be an issue, e.g., students might not be giving information to parents

Barriers to Participation

The reports on student activities indicated little to no participation on the part of African Americans students in many school programs or activities. Given that, it is important to identify barriers that inhibit their participation in school programs.

The teacher's answers varied. Some gave examples of efforts to break down barriers with parents. Others described the parents' behavior as creating barriers: Many African American parents didn't participate in Back-to-School night, and those who did were parents of children who are doing well.

- One sided effort on the part of teachers.
- Teachers try and parents don't meet them halfway.
- Sometimes teachers feel they need to co-parent and it can be emotionally exhausting.
- People in education are demonized, and it's frustrating when you have good intentions.
- Some parents yell at staff.
- Some parents feel that teachers don't respect students.

Some teachers commented that teachers also create barriers:

- I think it goes both ways. There are some teachers who don't care and make students feel less. For example, they are authoritarian, disrespectful, and disconnected.
- One teacher said teachers can be both strict and respectful. I have seen both cases.
- Several students talk about certain teachers and that does raise a red flag. I mean there's bad teaching and there's being disrespectful (like personal demeaning).

Teachers in other sessions offered the following:

- If grades aren't good, students don't get to participate in the high visible groups like robotics or sports
 - We need to somehow create an effort to help students get involved even if grades aren't there so they become interested and visible
- Often times children do good academically because they want to participate
 - We need a mentorship program
- Counselors are too stressed to focus on getting students to participate in programs or get them connected
- One teacher stated "most of my African American students are high achieving academically"
 - In my mainstream classes, I don't have any this year
 - Some students are involved in band
- Another teacher stated, "I get the other spectrum, non-successful students"
 - I'd like to know the stats
- And another commented, "My African American students do ask for help, especially the girls"

And the comments from another session included the following:

- Not a lot of parents' support.
 - Don't show up to events.
 - Lack of interest or capability.
- Once students get to high school, parents seem to not be involved anymore.
- Many families don't have vehicles.
- Poverty
 - There's a big difference between Madera High and South Madera High.
 - South is lower socio-economic families
 - Parents even less involved
- One teacher said that they could not think of any. The teachers make accommodations for them and gets the community to donate things.

Resources

The district data on student achievement and the climate survey responses from students raise concerns about areas the MUSD needs to improve. Given the more negative outcomes for African American students' achievement and engagement, the concerns are even greater. The questions on resources were included to attempt to learn more about what the district needs to provide for administrators and teachers to improve these outcomes. The questions were:

- What training and professional learning do administrators and teachers need to help all students succeed?
- What training and professional learning do administrators and teachers need to improve academic outcomes for African American students?

Help for All Students' Success

Teachers described professional learning that is already taking place including:

- KAGAN strategies
- Good on-site professional development

- Learning and teaching strategies
- Action research
- Positive engagement strategies to help students
- AVID conferences
- Working on professional learning communities
- PLC conferences

Some high school teachers also mentioned that the district is urging the security staff to build relationships with students and includes training on Verbal Judo which addresses how to talk with people. There is also an interest in looking at different ways to work and implement it in the community, however, there has been no interactions with teachers on this training.

Help for African American Students' Success

After responding that they don't have many African American students, the high school teachers mentioned the following:

- Bias among the kids. They talk about their skin color.
 - This happens among all kids.
 - They worry about standing in the sun because they might get darker.
 - Students notice their skin color. Those darker are made fun of. For Mexicans, the darker they are it means they are out in the fields or are from Southern countries. This trickles down to the African American students.
- The darker you are the more native you are (we see this among Hispanics)
 - Some students are very proud. One of my students is very proud and speaks three languages.
- I see kids getting along in my classes no matter the race.
- There is a current of racism going on; or why are African American students the ones being suspended more than other groups?

Climate

There is significant disproportionality in the discipline data for African American students in MUSD. The following question was included for the purpose of trying to learn more about why this is true:

- Given the data on the higher rate of suspensions for African American students, what needs to be done to bring down the high rates of suspensions and other more serious discipline actions for African American students? Please explain.

The high school teachers included the following suggestions:

- We need budget for the Career Technical Education program to go to events
- More activities for all cultures
- Mentors
- Intervention to handle outburst because we do not have any consequences
 - Personal attacks. Mexican students use the "N" word a lot and use it as an insult

Climate Survey Data

While the responses of all students on the climate survey were lower than national trends, the responses of African American students on the climate survey were markedly lower than other MUSD students on particular items. Teachers and staff were asked:

- How often are people disrespectful to others at your school?
- How fair or unfair are the rules for the students at this school?
- At your school, how much does the behavior of other students hurt or help your learning?

The question in this area were designed to provide some insight into why this was true.

- The overall responses of students on the climate survey were lower than the national average. What needs to be (or can be) done to improve the school so that students' responses are more favorable?

The teachers provided a list of issues regarding the climate in the high schools. Examples of their comments are included below:

- There are a lot of racial slurs. Also, sexist insults.
- Derogatory comments towards LGBT community.
- They use the "N" word all the time.
- Racial tensions.
- Teachers haven't seen fights at Madera High.
- The way the SPED students are treated is good.
- A lot of tolerance, respect and support.

One teacher expressed that things are going downhill:

- The discipline is not consistent and that influences how kids respond.
- District do not allow school to act because they must decrease the suspensions rate.
- The few students who are constantly in trouble and cannot be suspended influence others.
- We are afraid to suspend.
- These kids take instructional time from others.
- Always the same kids.

Other teachers discussed a number of ways to reduce suspensions and build a better climate for the African American students:

- Bring more people that they can connect to.
- More roles models.
- More celebration of them.
- Speaker come speak to African American students.
- Make students feel more connected.
- Create a club for African American students.
- Have more staff to relate to the students.
- There are four female student advocates for females, so male advocates would help to relate to male students.
- Revise the dress code, students complain.
 - No hoodies in class have some respect

- Don't wear your hat this or that way
- Less strictness on dress code

The teachers also discussed how to help students understand rules.

- Vape pens are a huge issue
- Dress code is an issue for students
- Snack calls
- Before marijuana and Xanax was a problem, edible was a problem too
- Biggest issue is vaping pens
 - Some students will do it in class
 - Charging vaping pens in class hiding vape pens in backpack
- Information regarding vape pens has been shared to staff
 - How to identify them

Report of Classroom and School Observations

Elementary Level Classroom Observations

The CA CC team conducted observations in two elementary schools. Each observation lasted approximately 45 minutes and a total of eight classrooms were visited. The observers focused on student engagement, treatment and climate. The observations were intended to collect qualitative data at a single point in time to create “snapshots” of classrooms across the district.

OBSERVATIONS	
Students	Count
1. Number of African American boys	11
2. Number of African American girls	6
3. Total Number of African American students	17
4. Total number of students in class observations	211
TOTAL NUMBER OF CLASS OBSERVATIONS	8

Student Engagement

The rationale for focusing on student engagement was to capture how actively African American and other students participated in the classroom learning and other activities. The table below provides information about the observations of student engagement in the elementary schools.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT	YES	NO
5. Are students working productively?	5	3
Seat work	6	2
Small group discussion/group work	5	3
Large group discussion	6	2
Using technology	4	4
6. Are students engaged in the learning activity?	5	3
7. Is the teacher positively responding to students who appear to need assistance?	5	3
8. Do all students appear to have what they need for the learning activity?	8	0

Examples:

During a class lesson, the teacher spent a lot of time explaining the instructions and walking through different scenarios saying, “Don’t tell me you’re energetic, tell me how” and “If someone doesn’t understand what a student is explaining, ask them to explain it in a different way and remain polite.” In a calm voice, a teacher approached a non-engaged student and said, “What has you so distracted?”

The observed elementary school students appeared to be engaged and excited to learn, however both observers noted that African American students were specifically not called upon despite the fact that those students raised their hands to participate.

Treatment

The rationale for focusing on treatment was to capture how teachers engaged with students. The table below provides information about the observations on treatment of students in the elementary schools.

TREATMENT	YES	NO
9. Is the teacher's tone positive?	7	1
10. Does the seating arrangement suggest that students are being isolated or singled out?	1	7
11. Is negative feedback to non-engaged specific students used for classroom management?	3	5
12. Is positive reinforcement used to uphold classroom norms?	6	2
13. Are there indicators that the teacher is building positive relationships with the students?	1	7
14. Are there indications that the teacher is effectively connecting with the students?	0	8
15. Do any African American students appear to have leadership roles or responsibilities?	0	8

Examples:

In one class, an African American student raised their hand four times to ask for tissue and was ignored by the teacher. On the fourth ask, the teacher acknowledged the student and asked why the student wanted a tissue. The student responded, "to blow my nose," which he did.

In another class, a teacher called on an African American student who wasn't participating. After which, the same African American student was the first to raise a hand for every question yet was not called on by the teacher until the class was about to end. When finally called on, the student got to move a class clip with their name on it to the top of a class scale indicating they were the highest achiever in the class.

Observers noted various examples of classroom management strategies that effectively kept the students engaged or refocused their attention. The following examples included: "If you hear me clap one time, if you hear me, clap two times" and "zip it, lock it, put it in your pocket."

School Climate

The observations that focused on climate were to determine whether and how African American students were positively engaged with other students, and whether the classroom reflected the diversity of Madera's student population.

CLIMATE	YES	NO
16. Do African American students appear to be positively (socially) engaged with other students?	6	2
17. Is student work displayed?	6	2
18. Do the classroom materials and displays reflect the diversity of the students? (books, wall displays, etc.)	6	2
19. Are multi-cultural themes reflected in the materials and displays in the classroom?	4	4
20. Are there graffiti or other derogatory written comments in the classroom?	0	8

Examples:

Classroom lesson observed: *What traditions or cultures do your families practice? What does your family cook? What do you celebrate?* The teacher projected pictures of different cultural traditions such as making pots, drumming, and Hawaiian dancing.

The elementary school lessons included multicultural themes. As observations were conducted during the third week of school, the observers did not see much student work posted in the classrooms.

The observers noted an abundance of the Madera USD “We Believe” post cards throughout all the elementary school classrooms, in which students wrote down their aspirations and goals such as attending college. In one location the principal brought “We Believe” wristbands to a classroom.

Middle School Classroom Observations

The CA CC team conducted observations in three middle schools and 14 classrooms. Each observation lasted for the duration of each class period. The observers focused on student engagement, treatment and climate. The observations were intended to collect qualitative data at a single point in time to create “snapshots” of a classrooms across the district.

OBSERVATIONS	
Students	Count
1. Number of African American boys	8
2. Number of African American girls	15
3. Total Number of African American students	23
4. Total number of students in class observations	471
TOTAL NUMBER OF CLASS OBSERVATIONS	14

Student Engagement

The rationale for focusing on student engagement was to capture how actively African American and other students participated in the classroom learning and other activities. The table below provides information about the observations of student engagement.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT	YES	NO
5. Are students working productively?	9	5
Seat work	13	1
Small group discussion/group work	7	7
Large group discussion	8	6
Using technology	8	6
6. Are students engaged in the learning activity?	11	3
7. Is the teacher positively responding to students who appear to need assistance?	10	4
8. Do all students appear to have what they need for the learning activity?	14	0

Examples:

A teacher said, “I appreciate you being quiet, or you are gonna get a warning.”

As a teacher says, “Ladies & gentlemen!” and all students respond, “Yes SIR!!”.

A teacher said, “Please stop talking. That's enough talking.”

The observers noted that multiple teachers used the classroom management strategy: “Clap once if you hear me, clap twice if you hear me.”

Treatment

The rationale for focusing on treatment was to capture how teachers engaged with students. The table below provides information about the observations on treatment.

TREATMENT	YES	NO
9. Is the teacher's tone positive?	9	5
10. Does the seating arrangement suggest that students are being isolated or singled out?	5	9
11. Is negative feedback to non-engaged specific students used for classroom management?	11	3
12. Is positive reinforcement used to uphold classroom norms?	7	7
13. Are there indicators that the teacher is building positive relationships with the students?	4	10
14. Are there indications that the teacher is effectively connecting with the students?	3	11
15. Do any African American students appear to have leadership roles or responsibilities?	1	13

Examples:

The program Google docs was being used in one classroom and the teacher explained to the class how to use it. One student said, "I already know how to use it" and the teacher replied, "that wasn't a question." In the same classroom, a different student played an audio reading of the class assignment out loud as students were silently reading or using headphones to read and the teacher called an officer to the class to take the student away. From what was observed, this was the student's first infraction during that class and the Refocus protocol was not used during the class period.

The observers were told that the middle schools' policy regarding student fights is that when there is a fight, all students lose their morning break. The observers saw this policy in action and the very negative reaction from students which made managing the classrooms very difficult for teachers. For example, in a third period classroom of students who had their morning break taken away, six students simultaneously requested to go to the bathroom. In that class it took the teacher thirty minutes to calm the classroom down enough for the students to take a test. Additionally, staff observed the Refocus policy posted in all the classrooms but did not see it uniformly implemented. For example, some teachers sent students out of class with security escorts without using the Refocus protocol as described.

School Climate

The observations that focused on climate were to determine whether and how African American students were positively engaged with other students, and whether the classroom reflected the diversity of Madera's student population.

CLIMATE	YES	NO
16. Do African American students appear to be positively (socially) engaged with other students?	9	5
17. Is student work displayed?	8	6
18. Do the classroom materials and displays reflect the diversity of the students? (books, wall displays, etc.)	3	11
19. Are multi-cultural themes reflected in the materials and displays in the classroom?	2	12
20. Are there graffiti or other derogatory written comments in the classroom?	0	14

Examples:

As noted, observations occurred in the third week of school and teachers were observed reviewing classroom rules. Although it appeared that in some classes, there were different rules. For example, in one classroom the teacher strictly enforced a rule of no gum chewing. However, students appeared to make a game out of this rule to see who could keep their gum without the teacher catching them.

High School Classroom Observations

The CA CC team conducted observations in two high schools. Each observation lasted one class period and a total of fourteen classrooms were visited. The observers focused on student engagement, treatment and climate. The observations were intended to collect qualitative data at a single point in time to create “snapshots” of a classrooms across the district.

OBSERVATIONS	
Students	Count
1. Number of African American boys	14
2. Number of African American girls	17
3. Total Number of African American students	31
4. Total number of students in class observations	435
TOTAL NUMBER OF CLASS OBSERVATIONS	14

Student Engagement

The rationale for focusing on student engagement was to capture how actively African American and other students participated in the classroom learning and other activities. The table below provides information about the observations of student engagement.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT	YES	NO
5. Are students working productively?	8	6
Seat work	11	3
Small group discussion/group work	6	8
Large group discussion	8	6
Using technology	11	3
6. Are students engaged in the learning activity?	10	4
7. Is the teacher positively responding to students who appear to need assistance?	4	10
8. Do all students appear to have what they need for the learning activity?	12	2

Examples:

As students retrieved scientific calculators and got rowdy, a teacher calmly said, “This is the third time I’ve asked you to listen.” Students responded by telling other students to “shut up!” and students appeared to respond well to the teacher who calmly spoke to them and did not have an authoritative approach as observed in other classrooms.

In one classroom, the teacher used a projector to teach a foreign language, and the class remained completely dark during the entire period. Some students were observed to be asleep with their heads down or listening to headphones attached to their cell phones. The teacher remained at the front of the class most of the period, did not walk around the class or address the students who were not engaged.

In another classroom, a teacher was observed making a joke about gay people at a student’s expense. When another student made a similar joke, the teacher told the student “What you said was inappropriate and what I said was a joke.”

Many students appeared bored in class; e.g., yawning, sleeping with heads down, using their phones, or talking with friends. The cause of this cannot be determined through observations, but it was observed that students would finish their worksheets early and have no work to do.

Treatment

The rationale for focusing on treatment was to capture how teachers engaged with students. The table below provides information about the observations on treatment.

TREATMENT	YES	NO
9. Is the teacher's tone positive?	8	6
10. Does the seating arrangement suggest that students are being isolated or singled out?	2	12
11. Is negative feedback to non-engaged specific students used for classroom management?	2	12
12. Is positive reinforcement used to uphold classroom norms?	7	7
13. Are there indicators that the teacher is building positive relationships with the students?	5	9
14. Are there indications that the teacher is effectively connecting with the students?	4	10
15. Do any African American students appear to have leadership roles or responsibilities?	1	13

Examples:

“You can listen to a single play list (during this work period), with phones face down. If I see swiping or typing, I have veto power and you will lose that privilege.”

“When are you guys gonna stop talking?”

As a teacher rips paper from student's hand, they said, “Why? Why are you doing this? Is it just laziness?” and then rips the paper up into little pieces in front of the entire class.

While observing the high school classrooms, staff saw teachers having dualistic responses to students' misbehavior either using unproductive approaches, such as being sarcastic or demanding improved behavior, or completely ignoring students being disengaged or misbehaving. It was also observed that there are little to no hard science classes offered, such as chemistry or physics and some classes offered were entitled, “Living Earth” and “Chem Earth.”

School Climate

The observations that focused on climate were to determine whether and how African American students were positively engaged with other students, and whether the classroom reflected the diversity of Madera's student population.

CLIMATE	YES	NO
16. Do African American students appear to be positively (socially) engaged with other students?	8	6
17. Is student work displayed?	5	9
18. Do the classroom materials and displays reflect the diversity of the students? (books, wall displays, etc.)	6	8
19. Are multi-cultural themes reflected in the materials and displays in the classroom?	6	8
20. Are there graffiti or other derogatory written comments in the classroom?	0	14

Examples:

The observers noted that at the middle and high schools when students need to go to the restroom, they are required to wear a bright orange and yellow vest, similar to those construction workers wear. The observers noted security staff yelling loudly at many students to get back to class even though those students were wearing the vests while on break.

The high schools had student body government campaign posters placed all over the campuses. However, based on the pictures of the students who were running for office, the observers did not see images of students who were African American.

Report Of School Observations

Two observers visited a total of seven schools: two elementary schools, three middle schools, and two high schools. In conducting observations around the schools, they visited the libraries, cafeterias, courtyards, and front office areas. They also ate lunch at one of the schools. The numbers in the chart below are based on what the two observers noted at the schools.

SCHOOL OBSERVATION	YES	NO
1. Are there African American teachers, staff or administrators on campus?	6	8
2. Do African American students appear to be positively (socially) engaged with other students?	8	6
3. Do all other students appear to be positively (socially) engaged with each other?	8	6
4. Do there appear to be identifiable cliques that have clustered together? (e.g., jocks, nerds, goths, clowns, gangstas, etc.) <i>Middle and high schools only, 5 schools observed total.</i>	0	10
5. Do there appear to be identifiable groups of students or individuals that other students avoid? <i>Elementary only, 2 schools observed total.</i>	0	4
6. Do the library materials and displays reflect the diversity of the students? (books, wall displays, etc.)	1	13
7. Do the school displays reflect the diversity of the students?	1	13
8. Are multi-cultural themes reflected in the school displays?	1	13
9. Is the messaging on bulletin boards positive and uplifting?	6	8
10. Is the messaging on bulletin boards filled with negative content?	0	14
11. Is signage in the public areas of the school available in multiple languages?	0	14
12. Are graffiti or other derogatory written comments on the walls?	0	14
13. Are the school grounds clean and orderly?	14	0

Examples:

One school had books in the library about MLK Day, Barak Obama, and Emmitt Smith. Two of the schools had messaging posted that promoted school and district pride. One school had multiple posters in the school front office displaying images of students from diverse backgrounds. On one campus a student was observed flipping another student off and a second student was observed sexually harassing a student with unwanted physical advances (kissing).

As noted above, staff ate lunch while at one school. The lunch options were delicious, however the cafeteria was closed due to a meeting, so all students ate lunch outside, even though the temperature was 105 degrees. There was not enough shade for students to sit and eat. Some students were sitting in the entry way of the restrooms to be in the shade, and other students tried to sit in the entry way of the library and were told to move by library staff.

Appendix A – Focus Group Crosswalks

Madera 2019 Focus Group Crosswalk
African American Elementary School Students

POINT OF DISCUSSION	RESPONSES
OVERALL OPINION - SCHOOL	
• CURRICULUM/CLASSES	●
• EXTRA CURRICULAR/SPORTS ACTIVITIES	●
• TEACHERS	●
• OTHER	●
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT	
• LEARNING TO READ	●
• LEARNING MATH	●
TREATMENT	
• LEARN THE RULES	●
• CONSEQUENCES FOR BROKEN RULES	●
CLIMATE	
• RESPECT	●
• BULLYING	●
• FIGHTING	●
• INCLUSION	●
OVERALL OPINION - CHANGES	
• YELLING	●
• RACISM	●
• TEACHER BEHAVIORS	●



















Yes/Positive	●
Neutral or No Response	●
No/Negative	●
Mixed Positive/Negative	●
Mixed Positive/Neutral	●






Madera 2019 Focus Group Crosswalk
Other Elementary School Students

POINT OF DISCUSSION	1	2
OVERALL OPINION - SCHOOL		
• CURRICULUM/CLASSES	●	●
• EXTRA CURRICULAR/SPORTS ACTIVITIES	●	●
• FRIENDS	●	●
• TEACHERS	●	●
• OTHER	●	●
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT		
• LEARNING TO READ	●	●
• LEARNING MATH	●	●
• HELP AVAILABLE	●	●
TREATMENT		
• LEARN THE RULES	●	●
• CONSEQUENCES FOR BROKEN RULES– SECOND CHANCE	●	●
CLIMATE		
• BULLYING	●	●
OVERALL OPINION - CHANGES		
• KEEP THE SCHOOL CLEAN	●	●
• FOOD	●	●
• PLAYGROUND	●	●
• STUDENT MISBEHAVIOR	●	●

Yes/Positive	●
Neutral or No Response	●
No/Negative	●
Mixed Positive/Negative	●
Mixed Positive/Neutral	●

**Madera 2019 Focus Group Crosswalk
African American Middle School Students**

POINT OF DISCUSSION	RESPONSES
OVERALL OPINION - SCHOOL	
• CURRICULUM/CLASSES	
• EXTRA CURRICULAR	
• FOOD	
• TEACHERS	
• SPORTS	
• TEACHERS YELLING	
• TEACHERS THREATENING	
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT	
• PREPARED FOR HIGH SCHOOL	
ACADEMIC SUPPORT	
• TEACHERS	
• FAMILY	
• OTHER	
TREATMENT	
• LEARN RULES	
• CONSEQUENCES OF BROKEN RULES	
CLIMATE	
• TEACHERS KNOW STUDENTS	
• BULLYING	
• FIGHTING	
• INCLUSION	
OVERALL OPINION -CHANGES	

Yes/Positive	
Neutral or No Response	
No/Negative	
Mixed Positive/Negative	
Mixed Positive/Neutral	


















Madera 2019 Focus Group Crosswalk






Other Middle School Students

POINT OF DISCUSSION	RESPONSES
SCHOOL	
• EXTRA CURRICULAR/SPORTS	●
• FOOD	●
• TEACHERS	●
• SECURITY	●
• FRIENDS	●
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT	
• PREPARED FOR HIGH SCHOOL	●
• ACADEMIC SUPPORT	●
• TEACHERS	●
TREATMENT	
• LEARN RULES	●
• CONSEQUENCES OF BROKEN RULES	●
CLIMATE	
• TEACHERS KNOW STUDENTS	●
• BULLYING/CYBERBULLYING	●
• FIGHTING	●
CHANGES	
• DRESS CODE	●
• PHONE	●
• CROWDED HALLS	●
• CROWDED BUSES	●

Yes/Positive	●
Neutral or No Response	●
No/Negative	●
Mixed Positive/Negative	●
Mixed Positive/Neutral	●

Madera 2019 Focus Group Crosswalk African American High School Students

POINT OF DISCUSSION	RESPONSES
OVERALL OPINION - SCHOOL	
• FRIENDS	
• SPORTS Basketball, Track, Tennis and Golf	
• INCLUSION	
• TEACHERS	
• SECURITY	
• SECURITY	
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT	
• PREPARED FOR COLLEGE	
• HELP	
TREATMENT	
• LEARN RULES	
• CONSEQUENCES FOR BROKEN RULES PREFERENCES BY RACE	
CLIMATE	
• RACIAL TENSION	
• BULLYING/CYBERBULLYING	
• FIGHTING	
• DRUG ABUSE	
CHANGES	
• MORE INVOLVEMENT FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS	
• LESS RACIAL TENSION	
• LESS RACIAL PROFILING	













































Yes/Positive	
Neutral or No Response	
No/Negative	
Mixed Positive/Negative	
Mixed Positive/Neutral	






Madera 2019 Focus Group Crosswalk Other High School Students

POINT OF DISCUSSION	RESPONSES
OVERALL OPINION - SCHOOL	
• TEACHERS	●
• CLASSES	●
• AP CLASSES	●
• CLUBS	●
• SCHOOL PRIDE	●
• FOOD	●
• CAFETERIA LONG LINES	●
• CROWDED HALLWAYS	●
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT	
• PREPARED FOR COLLEGE	●
• HELP	●
TREATMENT	
• LEARN RULES	●
• CONSEQUENCES FOR BROKEN RULES PREFERENCES BY ACTIVITY	●
CLIMATE	
• KNOWN BY TEACHERS	●
• BULLYING/CYBERBULLYING	●
• RUDENESS	●
• YELLING	●
CHANGES	
• PHONE RULE	●
• CROWDED HALLS	●
• CROWDED BUSES	●
• DRESS CODE	●

Yes/Positive	●
Neutral or No Response	●
No/Negative	●
Mixed Positive/Negative	●
Mixed Positive/Neutral	●

Madera 2019 Parent Focus Group Crosswalk

POINT OF DISCUSSION	ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	MIDDLE SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL
ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT			
• EXCELLENT EDUCATION			
• CLASS SIZE			
• CURRICULUM			
• BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS			
• TEACHERS			
• SUPPORT			
PROGRAMS - INFORMATION PROGRAM DECISIONS			
• TIMELINESS			
• COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS			
RESOURCES - INFORMATION ASSISTANCE			
• FRONT OFFICE STAFF			
• NON-RESPONSIVE TEACHERS AND/OR COUNSELORS			
ADMINISTRATOR /TEACHER NEEDS			
• PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT			
• PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT			
• PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT			
CLIMATE			
• TEACHERS			
• HEALTH: HEAT, LICE, SUN			
• BULLYING			
• FIGHTING			
• DRUG ABUSE			
• YELLING			
• RACIAL CONFLICT			
• SECURITY			

Yes/Positive	
Neutral or No Response	
No/Negative	
Mixed Positive/Negative	
Mixed Positive/Neutral	

Appendix B - Focus Group Protocols

Prompts for FACULTY AND STAFF

1. Academic achievement
 - **What additional supports may be needed to help African American students succeed?**
 - What is *(name of school)* doing to support students academically?
2. Programs
 - **For middle and high school teachers:** How does *(name of school)* ensure that parents have all the information they need to make wise choices regarding programs?
 - **For elementary school teachers:** How well do teachers work with parents of African American students? Please explain.
 - **For all:** What are the barriers to participation of African American students in any program?? How should these be addressed?
3. Resources
 - **What training and professional learning do administrators and teachers need to help all students succeed? to improve academic outcomes for African American students?**
 - What training should be available for (all other categories of) staff?
4. Climate
 - **Given the data on the higher rate of suspensions for African American students, what needs to be done to bring down the high rates of suspensions and other more serious discipline actions for African American students? Please explain.**
 - **The overall responses of students on the climate survey were lower than the national average. What needs to be (or can be) done to improve the school so that students' responses are more favorable?**
 - **On the student climate survey, fewer African American students responded favorably on the following questions:**
 - a. *How well do people at your school **understand you as a person**?*
 - b. *How often are **people disrespectful to others** at your school?*
 - c. *How **fair or unfair are the rules** for the students at this school?*
 - d. *At your school, how much does **the behavior of other students hurt or help** your learning?*

Please share with us your reactions to their responses. What needs to be done for African American students to improve their favorable responses in these areas?

Prompts for PARENTS

1. **Academic achievement**
 - **Would you say that your child is getting an excellent education here in *((name of school))*? Please say why.**
 - Do students in *(name of school)* receive all the support they need to be successful? Please explain.
2. **Programs**
 - **What information have you (parents) received to make wise choices regarding programs/services for your child?**
 - Have you encountered barriers to your child's participation (for any program) that need to be addressed? What are they?
3. **Resources**
 - **When needed, whom do you ask for assistance or information to help your child?**
 - What do you think administrators and teachers here at *(name of school)* need to help all students succeed?
4. **Climate**
 - **When you come to campus, how are you treated by teachers? Office staff? Administrators?**
 - **What concerns do have about how your child is treated by teachers and school staff? By other students? Please explain.**
 - **What concerns do have about how your child is treated by other students? Please explain.**
 - What activities do you participate in here at school? If none, please explain.

Prompts for: MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Overall opinion

What do you like about your school?

Academic achievement

1. **For upper middle school students** Do you feel that you are being prepared to do well *in high school*? Please explain.
For high school students Do you feel that you are being prepared to do well *after high school*? Getting a good job? Getting into college? Going into a training program? Please explain.
2. When you have a problem with your assignments, whom do you go to for help here at *(name of school)*?
3. How do your teachers help you?

Treatment **Remind students that they should not use names.**

1. How do teachers help students learn the rules?
2. How do teachers treat students here at *(name of school)* when students have broken the rules?
3. Do you think that the rules here at *(name of school)* are fair for all students?

Climate

1. How well do your teachers know you?
2. Think about the teachers you like best here at *(name of school)*. Why are they your favorite teachers?
3. When you need help or have a problem, whom do you go to for help?
4. How do students treat each other here *(name of school)*?
5. How students help one another here at *(name of school)*?

Overall opinion

What would you change about your school *(name of school)* to make it better?



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Prompts for ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

Overall Opinion

What do you like about your school?

Academic achievement

1. **Do you think that you are learning a lot in reading?**
2. **Do you think that you are learning a lot in math?**
3. **When you need help with your schoolwork, how do your teachers help you?**

Treatment

1. **How do your teachers help you learn the rules?**
2. **What happens if you break the rules?** Do you think the rules are fair?

Climate

1. **How do students act toward each other here at (name of school)?** Friendly? Nice? Respectful? Are students nice to each other?
2. **How easy is it to make friends at this school?**
3. **Are all students included in activities in class and on the playground?**
 - Are there some students who are left out of activities?
 - Why do you think that happens?
 - What happens when students are left out of activities?

Overall Opinion

What would you change about your school to make it better?

Appendix C – Observation Tools

School Name _____ Classroom _____ Date _____ Time _____

OBSERVATION	YES	NO	COMMENTS
Number of Students	#	#	
1. Number of African American boys			
2. Number of African American girls			
3. Total number of students in class			
Student Engagement			
4. Are students working productively?			
Seat work			
Small group discussion/group work			
Large group discussion			
Using technology			
5. Are students engaged in the learning activity?			
6. If not, what are the non-engaged students doing?			
7. If not, how is the teacher responding to non-engaged students?			
8. Is the teacher positively responding to students who appear to need assistance?			
9. Do all students appear to have what they need for the learning activity?			
Treatment			
10. Is the teacher's tone positive?			
11. Does the seating arrangement suggest that students are being isolated or singled out?			
12. Is negative feedback to non-engaged specific students used for classroom management?			
13. Is positive reinforcement used to uphold classroom norms?			
14. Are there indicators that the teacher is building positive relationships with the students?			
15. Are there indications that the teacher is effectively connecting with the students?			
16. Do any African American students appear to have leadership roles or responsibilities?			
Classroom Climate			
17. Do African American students appear to be positively (socially) engaged with other students?	YES	NO	
18. Is student work displayed?			
19. Do the classroom materials and displays reflect the diversity of the students? (books, wall displays, etc.)			
20. Are multi-cultural themes reflected in the materials and displays in the classroom?			
21. Are there graffiti or other derogatory written comments in the classroom?			
Other			
Additional Classroom Notes			

School Name _____ **Date** _____

	YES	NO	
1. Are there African American teachers, staff or administrators on campus?			
2. Do African American students appear to be positively (socially) engaged with other students?			
3. Do all other students appear to be positively (socially) engaged with each other?			
4. Do there appear to be identifiable cliques that have clustered together? (e.g., Jocks, Nerds, Goths, Clowns, Gangstas, etc.)			Middle and High School Only
5. Do there appear to be identifiable groups of students or individuals that other students avoid?			Elementary Only
6. Do the library materials and displays reflect the diversity of the students? (books, wall displays, etc.)			
7. Do the school displays reflect the diversity of the students?			
8. Are multi-cultural themes reflected in the school displays?			
9. Is the messaging on bulletin boards positive and uplifting?			
10. Is the messaging on bulletin boards filled with negative content?			
11. Is signage in the public areas of the school available in multiple languages?			
12. Are graffiti or other derogatory written comments on the walls?			
13. Are the school grounds clean and orderly?			

Appendix D – Schedules



Focus Group Schedules

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Team Information

Madera Unified School District

Babatunde Ilori, Executive Director of Accountability & Communications

Estrella “Star” Cortez, Accountability & Communications Administrative Assistant

WestEd

Team A - Edith Gurrola & Malachy McCormick

Team B - Rose Owens-West & Victor Garibay

Team C - Mari Shikuzawa & Gaby Garibay

Team D - Francesca Delgado-Jones & Kimkinyona Cully

Team A Schedule - Day 1

Edith & Malachy

Location: Library at Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School, 601 Lilly St

Tuesday, August 27, 2019

7:30-8:00	Entrance Meeting - MUSD Office, 1902 Howard Rd
8:00-8:30	Travel / Prep
8:30-9:30	Parent Focus Group
9:30-9:45	Break
9:45-10:45	Student Focus Group
10:45-11:00	Break
11:00-12:00	Student Focus Group
12:00-1:30	Long Lunch
1:30-2:30	Student Focus Group
2:30-3:30	Staff Focus Group
3:30-4:30	Staff Focus Group
4:30-4:45	Break / Travel
4:45-5:15	End-of-day Meeting - MUSD Office

Team A Schedule - Day 2

Edith & Malachy

Location: (Morning) Library at Alpha Elementary School, 900 Stadium Rd /
(Afternoon) Room 404 at Parkwood Elementary School, 1150 E Pecan Ave

Wednesday, August 28, 2019

8:15-9:15	Alpha Parent Focus Group
9:15-9:30	Break
9:30-10:30	Alpha Student Focus Group
10:30-11:30	Alpha Student Focus Group
11:30-12:30	Lunch
12:30-1:30	Parkwood Student Focus Group
1:30-1:45	Break
1:45-2:45	Parkwood Student Focus Group
2:45-3:15	Travel
3:15-4:15	End-of-day Meeting- MUSD Office

Team A Schedule - Day 3

Edith & Malachy

Location: (Morning) Room 404 at Parkwood Elementary School, 1150 E Pecan Ave /

(Afternoon) Library at Alpha Elementary School, 900 Stadium Rd

Thursday, August 29, 2019

8:00-9:00	Parkwood Parent Focus Group
9:00-10:00	Parkwood Staff Focus Group
10:00-10:15	Break
10:15-11:15	Parkwood Staff Focus Group
11:15-12:15	Lunch
12:15-1:15	Alpha Staff Focus Group
1:15-1:30	Break
1:30-2:30	Alpha Staff Focus Group
2:30-3:15	Travel
3:15-4:15	End-of-day Meeting - MUSD Office
4:15-5:30	Dinner

Team B Schedule - Day 1

Rose & Victor

Location: Conference Room at Desmond Middle School, 26490 Martin St

Tuesday, August 27, 2019

7:30-8:00	Entrance Meeting - MUSD Office, 1902 Howard Rd
8:00-8:30	Travel / Prep
8:30-9:30	Parent Focus Group
9:30-9:45	Break
9:45-10:45	Student Focus Group
10:45-11:00	Break
11:00-12:00	Student Focus Group
12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:00-2:00	Student Focus Group
2:00-2:15	Break
2:15-3:15	Staff Focus Group
3:15-3:30	Break
3:30-4:30	Staff Focus Group
4:30-4:45	Travel
4:45-5:15	End-of-day Meeting - MUSD Office

Team B Schedule - Day 2

Rose & Victor

Location: Portable 2 at Madera South High School, 705 W Pecan Ave

Wednesday, August 28, 2019

7:45-9:00	Parent Focus Group
9:00-9:15	Break
9:15-10:15	Student Focus Group
10:15-10:30	Break
10:30-11:30	Student Focus Group
11:30-12:30	Lunch
12:30-1:30	Student Focus Group
1:30-1:45	Break
1:45-2:45	Student Focus Group
2:45-3:15	Travel
4:45-5:15	End-of-day Meeting - MUSD Office

Team B Schedule - Day 3

Rose & Victor

Location: Portable 2 at Madera South High School, 705 W Pecan Ave

Thursday, August 29, 2019

9:35-10:20	Staff Focus Group
10:20-10:35	Break
10:38-11:25	Staff Focus Group
11:25-11:35	Break
11:35-12:25	Staff Focus Group
12:25-1:25	Lunch
1:25-2:11	Staff Focus Group
2:11-2:18	Short Break
2:18-2:55	Staff Focus Group
2:55-3:15	Travel
3:15-4:15	End-of-day Meeting - MUSD Office
4:15-5:30	Dinner

Team C Schedule - Day 1

Mari & Gaby

Location: Library at Thomas Jefferson Middle School, 1407 Sunset Ave

Tuesday, August 27, 2019

7:30-8:00	Entrance Meeting - MUSD Office, 1902 Howard Rd
8:00-8:30	Travel / Prep
8:30-9:30	Parent Focus Group
9:30-9:45	Break
9:45-10:45	Student Focus Group
10:45-11:00	Break
11:00-12:00	Student Focus Group
12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:00-2:00	Student Focus Group
2:00-2:15	Break
2:15-3:15	Staff Focus Group
3:15-3:30	Break
3:30-4:30	Staff Focus Group
4:30-4:45	Travel
4:45-5:15	End-of-day Meeting - MUSD Office

Team C Schedule - Day 2

Mari & Gaby

Location: Room 207 at Madera High School, 200 S L St

Wednesday, August 28, 2019

8:00-9:15	Parent Focus Group
9:15-9:40	Break
9:40-10:30	Student Focus Group
10:30-10:40	Break
10:40-11:30	Student Focus Group
11:30-11:40	Break
11:40-12:30	Student Focus Group
12:30-1:20	Lunch
1:20-2:10	Student Focus Group
2:10-3:15	Travel
3:15-4:15	End-of-day Meeting - MUSD Office

Team C Schedule - Day 3

Mari & Gaby

Location: Room 207 at Madera High School, 200 S L St

Thursday, August 29, 2019

8:40-9:30	Staff Focus Group
9:30-9:40	Break
9:40-10:30	Staff Focus Group
10:30-10:40	Break
10:40-11:30	Staff Focus Group
11:30-11:40	Break
11:40-12:30	Staff Focus Group
12:30-1:20	Lunch
1:20-2:10	Staff Focus Group
2:10-3:15	Travel
3:15-4:15	End-of-day Meeting - MUSD Office
4:15-5:30	Dinner

Team D Schedule - Day 1

Francesca & Kimkinyona

Location: (Morning) Madera High School, 200 S L St /
(Afternoon) Madera South High School, 705 W Pecan Ave

Tuesday, August 27, 2019

7:50-8:49	1st Period
8:55-9:54	2nd Period
9:54-10:04	Students on Break
10:10-11:09	3rd Period
11:10-12:10	Lunch
12:10-12:30	Travel to Madera South - Students on 2nd Lunch
12:30-12:57	End of 5th Period
1:04-2:01	6th Period
2:08-3:05	7th Period
3:05-3:15	Travel
3:15-4:15	End-of-day Meeting - MUSD Office

Team D Schedule - Day 2

Francesca & Kimkinyona

Location: (Morning) Alpha Elementary School, 900 Stadium Rd /
(Mid-day) Madera South High School, 705 W Pecan Ave /
(Afternoon) Desmond Middle School, 26490 Martin St

Wednesday, August 28, 2019

8:00-9:25	Alpha Classrooms
9:25-9:35	Travel to MSHS
9:35-10:21	2nd Period
10:21-10:31	Students on Break
10:38-11:25	3rd Period
11:30-12:30	Lunch
12:30-12:50	Travel to Desmond
12:50-1:22	Students on Lunch
1:28-2:19	5th Period
2:23-3:05	6th Period
3:05-3:15	Travel
3:15-4:15	End-of-day Meeting - MUSD Office

Team D Schedule - Day 3

Francesca & Kimkinyona

Location: (Morning) Parkwood Elementary School, 1150 E Pecan Ave /
(Mid-day) Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School, 601 Lilly St /
(Afternoon) Thomas Jefferson Middle School, 1407 Sunset Ave

Thursday, August 29, 2019

8:00-9:30	Parkwood Classrooms
9:30-9:45	Travel to King
9:45-10:29	2nd Period
10:29-10:39	Students on Break
10:43-11:32	3rd Period
11:36-12:25	4th Period
12:30-1:30	Lunch
1:30-1:40	Travel to Jefferson
1:40-2:17	5th Period
2:21-3:05	6th Period
3:05-3:15	Travel
3:15-4:15	End-of-day Meeting - MUSD Office