

Rigor and Relevance Review

Madera Unified School District

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Introduction

During the 2020-21 school year, a team from WestEd, led by Dr. Rose Owens-West and Mr. Robert Rosenfeld, conducted a review for the Madera Unified School District (MUSD). A list of the team members and their bios are provided in [Appendix C](#).

The following report provides a summary of the data from that review of sample lesson plans and samples of student work from the 2020-2021 school year. The report begins with a brief description of the context about the importance of focusing on the needs of African American students. The background section provides a description about the collaboration between MUSD and WestEd, and previous activities focused on addressing the needs of African American students that provided a foundation for and led to the work reported here.

How to Use this Report

The report below contains summarized highlights regarding survey responses in addition to the results of a lesson and student work review – it does not contain the full survey responses or results of the reviews. To review the full survey, lesson reviews, and student work reviews, readers are encouraged to open the full results using the links provided in [Appendix A](#) and [Appendix B](#). **It will be helpful to have these documents open online as you read this report.**

Context – African American Student Achievement

The achievement gaps in California as evidenced in statewide student assessment outcomes and the racial climate gaps evidenced in statewide results of the California Healthy Kids Survey have been well documented by the California Department of Education and others. In fact, for several decades these data have consistently shown the persistence of achievement and climate gaps despite overall growth in performance for California 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. In fact, in 2019 the state assessment data showed that the gap between African American students and their peers increased rather than decreased.

Similar to the outcomes across the state, the outcomes for African American students in the Madera Unified School District (MUSD) have also been concerning. MUSD leadership have initiated a number of efforts to address academic rigor, cultural relevance, and climate in order to address these disparities and meet the needs of African American students.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the civil protests following the murder of Mr. George Floyd gave added impetus and urgency to the need to recognize the racial discord and inequities that persist in our nation, our communities, and our schools. Again, the Madera community was not isolated from these events. Madera's own students effectively organized and executed a peaceful, powerful, and at times poignant, protest called *Love Over Hate*, to add their voices to those of other young people across the country calling for real and sustained social change. These combined events heightened the need to continue the work that the MUSD started with WestEd in 2018 to improve services and positively change the academic and other outcomes for African American students.

It is often the case, that attention to racial inequities for one racial or ethnic group often impacts other populations as well. For example, the attention to the issue of police brutality with African American men after the Floyd murder led to an increased awareness of police brutality with African American women and Latinx males. Similarly, the focus on African American student achievement has led to more attention on achievement for Native American or indigenous students, Asian American students who are not high-achieving, Latinx students and other student groups.

Background

Deep Dive into Data

In April 2018, Superintendent Todd Lile and Mr. Babatunde Ilori, Executive Director of Accountability and Communications, Dr. Rose Owens-West, and Dr. Tran Keys of WestEd, agreed to partner to analyze data for the purpose of understanding of how to improve outcomes for African American students in the MUSD. For the preliminary work, Dr. Owens-West, Dr. Keys, and Mr. Ilori examined multiple years of achievement, discipline, attendance, and climate data for all students in the district, disaggregating the data by race. The data from multiple years provided a longitudinal view of student outcomes. They also worked together to present the data on achievement, attendance, and results from the student survey to clearly highlight outcomes for African American students in the district. Following this preliminary work, Dr. Owens-West and Dr. Keys facilitated a two-day meeting in October 2018 with the district leadership, including Superintendent Lile, the executive cabinet, all district principals, and several school site leaders. On the first day, the superintendent and executive cabinet engaged in a deep-dive activity, *The Five Whys*¹, closely examining the district-level data on African American students. On the second day, the WestEd team facilitated a fishbowl activity, engaging school site administrators in a deep dive of the data, with the superintendent and executive cabinet observing and then engaging in discussion with the school leaders.

As a result of examining and discussing the data on academic and discipline outcomes, in a report to the superintendent and the local governing board in early 2019, WestEd made recommendations about how the district could begin to address the negative outcomes for African American students. These suggestions 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.
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.

¹Five whys (or 5 whys) is an iterative interrogative technique used to explore the cause-and-effect relationships underlying a particular problem. The primary goal of the technique is to determine the root cause of a defect or problem by repeating the question "Why?". Each answer forms the basis of the next question.

Empathy Focus Groups

In alignment with these recommendations, the district and WestEd collaborated to conduct a series of empathy focus groups with students, parents, and staff at the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year. The information obtained during the focus groups complemented the findings from the quantitative data analysis and reinforced the need to improve conditions and outcomes for African American students. A key finding in the report was that the racial inequities and conflict in the district affected all students in the district, not just the African American students. The metaphor used to emphasize this point is that the African American students in MUSD serve as the “canary in the coal mine”. The report of findings from the MUSD empathy focus groups was presented to the superintendent and Board in early 2020.

Instructional Quality Validation Visits and Other Activities

It is important to note that since the report to the Board on the focus groups, the MUSD has engaged in multiple efforts addressing racial equity, and climate and inclusion for African American students. Following the focus groups in Fall 2019, the Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services and other district leaders conducted classroom observations throughout the district to validate the quality of instruction. The superintendent wrote an article on racial equity for the MUSD *We Believe* newspaper in Spring 2020, held meetings with African American students, and sent a cadre of students to the African American Student Leadership Conference hosted by the Fresno County Office of Education. The district reactivated the Black Student Union in the high schools, created the Office of School Culture and Climate, and the MUSD Anti-Racism Collaborative of staff, teachers, administrators, parents, students, and community members. In Fall 2020, the district engaged in professional development focused on the film *13th*, conducted listening sessions between district and school leaders with students, adopted a Student Bill of Rights, and administered a Panorama Education school survey to students and staff. All of these efforts focused on climate and culture issues, establishing a positive relationship between the African American students, their community, and the district.

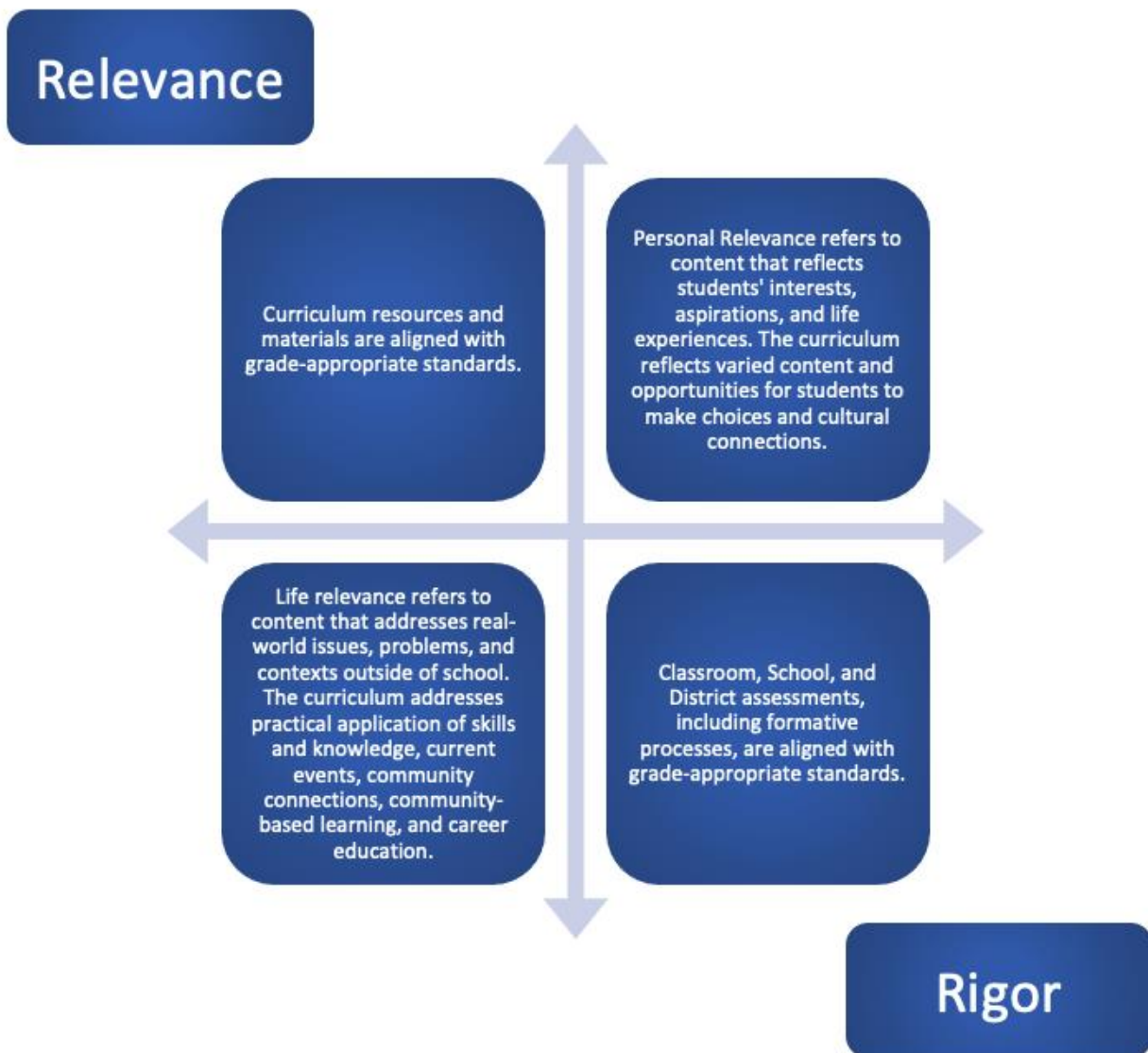
However, the issues of academic rigor and cultural relevance of what students are being taught, highlighted in the first two reports from WestEd and in the instructional quality validation visits, also needed attention as they had not yet been addressed. And in recognition of the earlier finding that all students in MUSD were negatively impacted by the racial conflict and inequities in the district, WestEd and MUSD agreed the review would address cultural relevance for African American, Latinx, and Native American² students. Schools were closed for most of the 2020-2021 school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and classroom observations of instruction were not feasible. In order to determine the rigor and cultural relevance, the MUSD administration and WestEd agreed to review lesson plans and student work. The collaboration with WestEd continued in Fall 2020 with an agreement that WestEd would conduct the review. This report, focused on rigor and relevance, is the third report of WestEd to the district.

² WestEd discussed the nomenclature for this student population with MUSD administrators, who indicated a preference for the term American Indian.

Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum

WestEd’s approach for the review was based on the understanding that a rigorous and relevant (see Figure 1) curriculum is one that is cognitively demanding and challenging to students, requiring them to apply essential concepts and skills to real world, complex and open-ended situations.

Figure 1. Cultural Relevance and Academic Rigor



The concept of academic relevance is closely aligned with the concept of academic rigor, and both rigor and relevance are necessary for creating learning situations that are stimulating and engaging for students. In fact, relevance is an essential component of academic rigor.

A rigorous curriculum aligns with state learning standards and is cognitively demanding and challenging to students. Where rigor refers to challenging instruction, relevance refers to providing content that is of personal importance to students and has real-world significance.

A curriculum that is both rigorous and relevant is interesting to students and requires them to apply concepts and skills to real-world, complex and open-ended situations. Rigorous and relevant content:

- is linked to core disciplinary standards, concepts, or skills;
- requires students to do authentic work using methods that are specific to the discipline;
- requires students to apply what they know or are learning to solve complex problems;
- involves the use of prior knowledge, development of in-depth understanding, and the ability to develop and express ideas and findings through elaborated communication;
- provides students opportunities to pursue/study content that aligns with or informs their interests or aspirations; and
- provides opportunities for students to learn about themselves, their identities, and the history, contributions, and issues that are important for their respective communities.

Relevance has two dimensions: personal relevance and life relevance. Personally relevant content refers to content that is connected to students' interests, aspirations, and life experiences. The content or curriculum reflects opportunities for students to choose what they will study and to explore their personal interests. Cultural connections: Students are allowed to make cultural connections and to explore content from the standpoint of their racial, ancestral, or cultural heritage. Students are allowed to exercise options, selecting different topics of focus or to develop different products to fulfill their assignments.³

Content with life relevance refers to content that addresses real-world issues, problems, and contexts outside of school. Life relevance equips students with practical skills, knowledge, and dispositions that they can apply in various educational, career, and civic contexts throughout their lives. Content or curriculum with life relevance allows students to:

- Learn practical skills to apply throughout their lives.
- Acquire practical applications regarding the use of data and/or information.

³ **Individual choices:** A teacher might ask students to write about the United States presidency, but then allow them to choose which president they will study. An African American student may choose to write about Barak Obama, the first African American president. **Product choices:** A teacher might allow students to demonstrate their research skills by creating different products. For example, a student interested in filmmaking might create a short documentary using archival photography. A student interested in music and technology might produce an audio podcast in the style of an old radio-news program or presidential address. Another student who aspires to be a writer might choose to write a historical essay or short work of historical fiction that incorporates period facts and details.

- Analyze or evaluate contemporary social/economic/political and other issues affecting their local community, state, nation, or world.
- Engage in Community connections/community-based learning and make community connections.
- Allows students to study local politics, history, and conditions in the areas in which they live.
- Pursue career education in business, industries, professional or vocational career paths of their interests.⁴

⁴ The Glossary of Education Reform. <https://www.edglossary.org/relevance/>

Purpose and Objectives Review

MUSD wished to obtain a clearer understanding about the cultural relevance of the content for African American students; that is, do African American students see themselves in what is being taught? More specifically, what are students learning? Given the results of the 2019 listening sessions and the Quality Validation Visits, the district wanted to focus on student work and instructional delivery to gain a deeper understanding of what students are learning.

Therefore, the purpose for reviewing the content support materials and student work was to provide information to the MUSD about the level of rigor and relevance of the curriculum, particularly for the African American and Latinx student communities within the district. Specifically, the focus of the review was to:

- Determine the degree to which students are exposed to and interact with culturally relevant, grade-appropriate content.
- Identify that accountability structures are in place to ensure that students are receiving access to grade-level rigorous instruction.
- Determine whether MUSD's student populations are reflected in the curriculum.

To focus the review on these areas, MUSD and WestEd worked together to identify key questions to guide the review of content support materials and student work:

1. Are content support materials relevant for the students' communities represented in the district?
 - Do the content support materials reflect intentional, personal relevance with breadth and depth of coverage?
 - Do the content support materials reflect intentional life relevance with breadth and depth of coverage?
2. Are content support materials aligned with the appropriate grade-level standards?
3. Does student work provide evidence of rigor, i.e., that all students, particularly African American and Latinx students, are academically, intellectually, and personally challenged?
4. Does student work provide evidence of cultural relevance for students, and particularly for African American and Latinx students?

Methodology Overview

Expert Review

WestEd implemented an expert review of the lesson plans and student work. The WestEd team conducting the review included staff with extensive expertise in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, History-Social Science, and culturally relevant curriculum. The team included staff with strong backgrounds in elementary education and secondary education with at least 10 years of classroom experience. Several of the team members had also served as district-level curriculum and instructional leadership roles. All are experienced instructional coaches and provide instructional coaching to administrators and teachers across the country.

Data Sources and Sample Size

The report includes data from three sources to provide greater assurance, verify the findings, and to eliminating potential biases. The three sources of data included:

1. A survey administered to teachers and administrators
2. A review of lesson plans
3. A review of student work corresponding to each lesson plan

A total of 486 teachers, 21 administrators, and six counselors from 11 schools participated in the survey. The information obtained from the survey informed the development of the lesson and student work review.

The review of lesson plans and student work focused on four content areas: English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and History-Social Science. At the secondary level, the review included samples of lessons and student work for all four subject areas from grades 9 and 11. At the elementary level, the review focused on grades 3 and 6, English Language Arts and Mathematics lessons, and whether the lessons integrated Science or History-Social Studies. The sample lesson plans and samples of student work were submitted by two high schools, two middle schools, and 7 elementary schools in MUSD. A total of 60 lessons and corresponding class sets of student work were reviewed for rigor and relevance.

Phases of Work

The review of lesson plans and student work took place in four phases. During Phase 1, the WestEd team engaged in pre-work to design the staff survey and lesson and student work review focus. During Phase 2, the staff survey was administered. During Phase 3, WestEd worked with the district to collect sample lessons and student work and conducted the review. During Phase 4 the review data was analyzed and findings and recommendation were written.

Details about the work accomplished during each phase are included in the following table.

Table 1. Phases of Work

Phases	Details
<p>Phase 1: Pre-Work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pilot survey administered to sample of instructional staff including principals, teachers, and coaches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop survey ○ Determine the sample size • Finalize the planned content support materials review process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review the content support materials review process with stakeholders
<p>Phase 2: Staff Survey</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staff survey was administered to 11 schools • 521 teachers and administrators participated
<p>Phase 3: Content Support Materials Review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials collected • Content Support Materials Review takes place
<p>Phase 4: Data Analysis and Report</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop process • Develop outline for the report • Report Writing • Report to District <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Written Report ○ Report Briefing

Limitations of the Review

The entire school 2020-2021 school year was disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and as a result, all teaching was provided virtually. MUSD administration requested that the review take place during the 2020-2021 school year, and the agreement with WestEd was that the review would be conducted remotely, with surveys of administrators and teachers, and document reviews focusing on the curriculum content. The surveys were administered first, and it should be noted that it may have impacted staff decisions about which curricular materials they chose to submit for review.

Per the agreement between MUSD and WestEd, instruction was not a focus of the review, and observations of the remote instruction were not included in the review. Therefore, the full extent to which teachers address rigor and cultural relevancy through in-person interactions could not be fully measured. It should be noted that curricular and lesson elements that were discovered to be occurring at a lower or higher frequency than desired may not fully reflect what occurs during a normal school year.

Questions Addressed on the Teacher and Administrator Staff Survey

Rigor

- How often do your English Language Arts/Mathematics/History-Social Science/Science materials meet the needs of:
 - Struggling Students
 - On-Grade-Level Students
 - Above-Grade-Level Students
 - English language learners (ELL)
- Overall, how well is the curriculum aligned with California's standards?
- How well is the curriculum aligned with California's standards by:
 - domain?
 - strands?
 - core ideas within the standards?
- How well does the curriculum provide students opportunities to practice higher-order thinking skills, such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating?
- How well does the curriculum provide students opportunities to be creative?

Relevance

- With what frequency does the curriculum in your school include activities, assignments, or prompts that:
 - encourage each student to make connections to their own life;
 - allow students to make choices connected to their interests;
 - provide opportunities for students to share their personal experiences as they relate to the real world, current events, or issues;
 - encourage students to engage in discourse with peers regarding their life experiences; and
 - help students see their communities reflected in the content?

- With what frequency does the curriculum in your school include suggestions for teachers to ensure lessons are:
 - culturally relevant for African American students;
 - culturally relevant for Latinx students; and
 - culturally relevant for Native American/American Indian students?
- How often do your lessons reflect contributions from:
 - the African American community;
 - the Latinx community; and
 - the Native American/American Indian community?
- What importance do you as a teacher (or administrator) place on your students' understanding of why they are learning specific content?
- The curriculum in our school is free from stereotypes, misrepresentations, or negative portrayals of:
 - African Americans;
 - members of the Latinx community;
 - members of the Native American/American Indian community; and
 - any group.
- The curriculum in our school is free of language that is derogatory toward:
 - African Americans;
 - members of the Latinx community;
 - members of the Native American/American Indian community; or
 - any group.
- How often do you provide opportunities for students to learn about:
 - people with disabilities in leadership roles;
 - women and girls in leadership roles;
 - African Americans in leadership roles;
 - members of the Latinx community in leadership roles; and
 - Native Americans/American Indians in leadership roles?

- Which materials in your school do *the best job* of addressing cultural relevance for:
 - African American students;
 - Latinx students; and
 - Native American/American Indian students?
- Which materials in your school do a *poor job* of addressing cultural relevance for:
 - African American students;
 - Latinx students; and
 - Native American/American Indian students?
- Open-ended question: Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about any of the topics in this survey?

Questions Addressed on the Lesson and Student Work Reviews

Rigor

- Does the lesson/student work list and address standards on the district "priority standards" list?
- Does the lesson/student work align with the district scope and sequence for this course/grade in terms of content (e.g., standards/content/topics listed on the scope and sequence)?
- Does the lesson/student work align with the district scope and sequence calendar for this course/grade (when the content is supposed to take place in the semester/school year)?
- Does the lesson/student work address California's standards in the English Language Arts/Mathematics/History-Social Studies/Science?

- Overall, is the lesson/student work aligned with California’s standards at the appropriate grade level?
- Does the lesson/student work include scaffolding to meet the needs of:
 - students who may be below grade level;
 - students who may be above-grade-level; and
 - ELL?
- Does the lesson/student work list any ELD standards?
- Does the lesson/student work provide students opportunities to practice higher-order thinking skills, such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating?
- Does the lesson/student work provide students opportunities to be creative?

Mathematics Lessons/Student Work

- Is the lesson/student work mainly geared toward procedural skill and fluency, or does it also address conceptual understanding and application of mathematics to solve real-world problems?
- Overall, is the lesson/student work well-aligned with California’s eight standards for mathematical practice?

History-Social Science Lessons/Student Work

- Does the lesson/student work address intellectual, reasoning, reflection, and research skills?
- Does the lesson/student work make use of biographies, original documents, diaries, letters, legends, speeches, or other narrative artifacts to foster students’ understanding of historical events?

Science Lessons/Student Work

- Is the lesson/student work three-dimensional (i.e., it provides students opportunities to use disciplinary core ideas, through the lens of crosscutting concepts, while engaging in science and engineering practices)?
- Does the lesson/student work leverage science phenomena in the context of driving learning and student performance?
- Does the lesson/student work leverage engineering problems in the context of driving learning and student performance?

Elementary English Language Arts and Mathematics Lessons

- Which other subjects are integrated in the lesson/student work (English Language Arts, Science, History-Social Studies, Mathematics)?

Relevance

- Does the lesson/student work include activities, assignments, or prompts that:
 - encourage each student to make connections to their own life;
 - allow students to make choices connected to their interests;
 - provide opportunities for students to share their personal experiences as they relate to the real world, current events, or issues;
 - encourage students to engage in discourse with peers regarding their life experiences; and
 - help students see their communities reflected in the content?
- Does the lesson include suggestions for teachers to ensure lessons are:
 - culturally relevant for African American students;
 - culturally relevant for Latinx students; and
 - culturally relevant for Native American/American Indian students?
- Does the lesson/student work reflect contributions from the:
 - African American community;
 - Latinx community; and
 - Native American/American Indian community?
- Does the lesson communicate to students why they are learning specific content, knowledge, or skills?
- Is the lesson/student work free from stereotypes, misrepresentations, or negative portrayals of:
 - African Americans;
 - Members of the Latinx community;
 - Members of the Native American/American Indian community; or
 - any group?
- Does the lesson/student work reflect opportunities for students to learn about:
 - people with disabilities in leadership roles;
 - women and girls in leadership roles;

- African Americans in leadership roles;
- members of the Latinx community in leadership roles; and
- Native Americans/American Indians in leadership roles?

Findings

Teacher & Administrator Staff Survey – Rigor

For full survey results with graphs and charts, see the links in [Appendix A](#). The following in Table 2 are key highlights regarding rigor from the Teacher and Administrator Survey.

Differentiation

All Respondents

Teachers and administrator responses together show that across all subject areas curricular materials are not perceived as meeting the needs of various learner groups.

The percentages below represent materials reported as “Very Frequently” meeting the needs of each identified student group.

Table 2. Percentage of materials “Very Frequently” meeting the needs of Various Student Groups

Meeting the Needs of Student Groups	Struggling Students	ELL	Above-Grade-Level Students	On-Grade Level Students
English Language Arts	10%	20%	13%	22%
Mathematics	11%	9%	11%	19%
History-Social Science	14.5%	17%	16%	21%
Science	5%	12%	10.5%	13%

For English Language Arts, the greatest difference is between **Struggling Students** and On-Grade Level Learners (10 percent versus 22 percent).

For Mathematics, the greatest difference is between **ELL** and On-Grade Level Learners (9 percent versus 19 percent).

For History-Social Science, the greatest difference is between **Struggling Students** and On-Grade Level Learners (14.5 percent versus 21 percent).

For Science, the greatest difference is between **Struggling Students** and On-Grade Level Learners (5 percent versus 13 percent).

For complete data regarding materials meeting the needs of:

- **Struggling Students**, see staff survey questions 28, 62, 95, and 125.
- **ELL**, see staff survey questions 31, 65, 98, and 128.
- **Above-Grade-Level Students**, see staff survey questions 30, 64, 97, and 127.
- **On-Grade-Level Students**, see staff survey questions 29, 63, 96, and 126.

Teacher Responses Compared to Administrator Responses

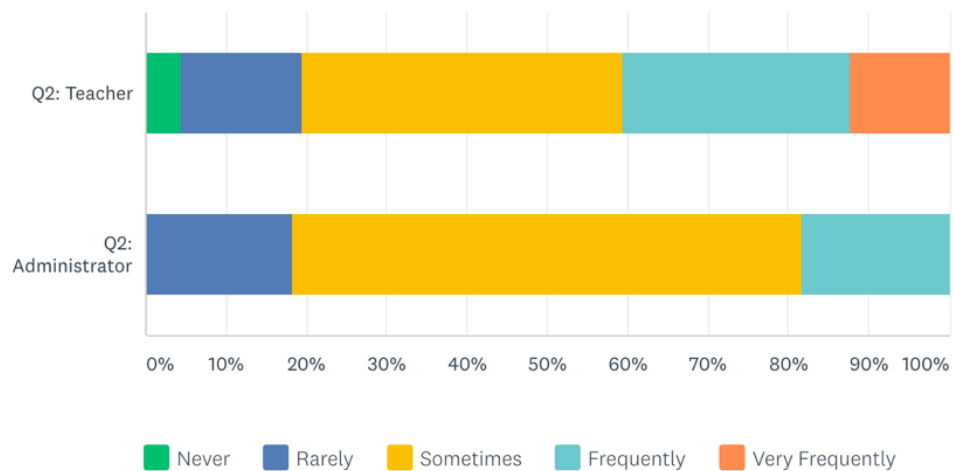
Across all subject areas, a higher percentage of teachers rated materials as “Very Frequently” meeting students’ needs as compared to administrators.

For example, 12 percent of teachers as compared to 0 percent of administrators reported that mathematics materials “Very Frequently” meet the needs of struggling students.

Figure 2. Mathematics Materials Meeting the Needs of Struggling Students

For the grade(s)/course(s) you teach, how often do your mathematics materials meet the needs of your struggling students?

Answered: 149 Skipped: 348

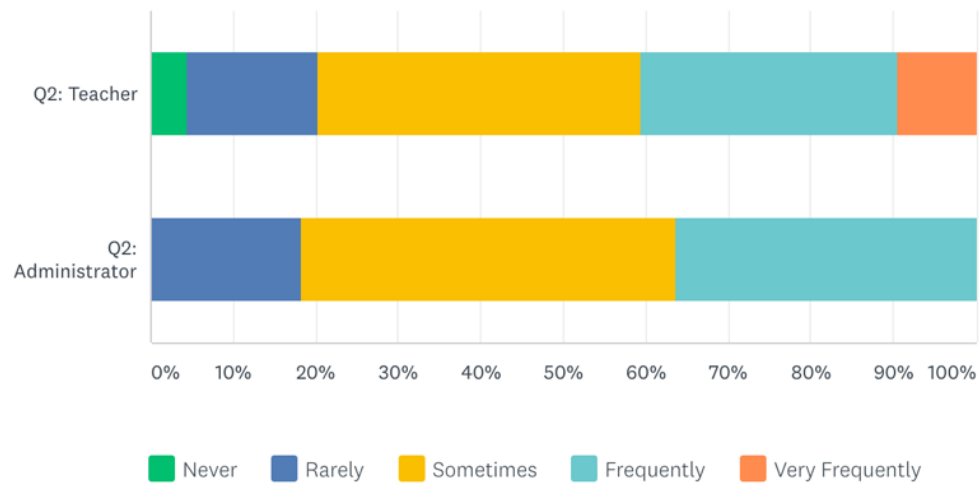


Likewise, 9.5 percent of teachers as compared to zero percent of administrators reported that mathematics materials “Very Frequently” meet the needs of ELL.

Figure 3. Mathematics Materials Meeting the Needs of ELL

How often do your mathematics materials guide teachers to scaffold instruction to meet the needs of English learners?

Answered: 149 Skipped: 348



The same pattern of teachers rating materials more strongly than administrators holds true across all subject areas and student groups. See staff survey questions 28, 62, 95, and 125 at this link which compares teacher and administrator responses:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-7NCYH7LV9/>

Standards Alignment

Alignment to California's content standard was **less than 85 percent** in all subject areas surveyed. Percentages of respondents reporting "True" or "Very True" regarding materials being well aligned to California's content standards was:

- **62 percent** in Mathematics
- **75 percent** in History-Social Science
- **82 percent** in English Language Arts
- **84 percent** in Science

(From staff survey questions 32, 66, 99, and 129)

Higher-Order Thinking

When asked whether they “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” that curriculum provides students opportunities to practice **higher-order thinking skills**, such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating, there was a wide range of responses that varied significantly across subject areas:

- **48 percent** in Mathematics
- **75 percent** in History-Social Science
- **81 percent** in English Language Arts
- **84 percent** in Science

(From staff survey questions 39, 72, 102, and 130)

The following are quotes related to rigor from the open response question, “Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about any of the topics in this survey?”

Mathematics

“...the math book...is more procedural.”

English Language Arts

“Many students are below grade level and the grade-level curriculum can be too difficult for many because of this.”

Science

“...testing also forces teachers to sacrifice student creativity to make sure all the standards are covered before the unit assessment(s).”

Teacher/Administrator Survey – Relevance

For full results with graphs and charts, see the link in [Appendix A](#). Following are key highlights from the Teacher/Administrator Survey regarding relevance.

Student Choice and Connections to Own Life

Aggregated teacher and administrator responses across all subject areas indicate that allowing students to make choices connected their interests is not emphasized in the curriculum. When asked “With what frequency does the curriculum in your school include activities, assignments, or prompts that allow students to make choices connected to their interests?”, the percentage of respondents reporting “Often” or “Always” was:

- **17 percent** in Mathematics
- **30 percent** in Science

- **31 percent** in History-Social Science
- **33 percent** in English Language Arts

(From staff survey questions 9, 43, 76, and 106)

As compared to student choice, all subjects reported a higher percentage of students making connections between the curriculum and their own life. When asked, “With what frequency does the curriculum in your school include activities, assignments, or prompts that encourage each student to make connections to their own life?”, the percentage of respondents reporting “Often” or “Always” was:

- **36 percent** in Mathematics
- **61 percent** in Science
- **64 percent** in History-Social Science
- **64 percent** in English Language Arts

(From staff survey questions 8, 42, 75, and 105)

Community Reflection in Materials

Although all subject areas reported low frequencies with respect to the curriculum helping students see their communities reflected in the content, **mathematics showed significantly lower percentages than English Language Arts or History-Social Science**. When asked, “With what frequency does the curriculum in your school include activities, assignments, or prompts that help students see their communities reflected in the content (e.g., based on culture, nationality, language, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identification, disability, socioeconomic status, or religion, etc.)?”, the percentage of respondents reporting “Often” or “Always” was:

- **7 percent** in Mathematics
- **18 percent** in Science
- **22 percent** in English Language Arts
- **36 percent** in History-Social Science

(From staff survey questions 12, 46, 79, and 109)

For data regarding community connections broken down by demographic groups, see survey questions 110-115 in [Appendix A](#).

Free From Stereotypes, Misrepresentations, or Negative Portrayals

When asked how true the following statement was, “The curriculum in our school is free from stereotypes, misrepresentations, or negative portrayals of African Americans/Latinx/Native American/Any group,” across all subjects and student groups the highest percentage answering “Very True” was **42 percent** (Math for “Any group”) and the lowest percentage was **25 percent** (History-Social Science for Latinx and Native American students).

Table 3. Curriculum Free from Stereotypes, Misrepresentations, or Negative Portrayals

Respondents answering “Very True”	African American	Latinx	Native American	Any group
English Language Arts	28%	28%	27%	29%
Mathematics	38%	40%	41%	42%
History-Social Science	28%	25%	25%	26%
Science	36%	38%	36%	35%

For additional detail, see the following corresponding staff survey questions:

Table 4. Survey Questions Regarding Stereotypes, Misrepresentations, or Negative Portrayals

English Language Arts	Mathematics	History-Social Science	Science
Questions 20-23	Questions 54-57	Questions 87-90	Questions 117-120

Leadership Role Models Aggregated Across all Subject Areas

When respondents were asked how often they provide opportunities for students to learn about various demographic groups in leadership roles, the demographic group with the highest percentage of responses “Never” and “Rarely” was People with Disabilities at **51 percent**, followed by Native Americans at **35 percent** and Latinx at **32.5 percent**.

Table 5. Opportunities for Students to Learn about Various Demographic Groups in Leadership Roles

Leadership Role Models	Never	Rarely	Total of “Never” and “Rarely”
People with disabilities	13.5%	37.5%	51%
Woman and girls	4.5%	17%	21.5%
African Americans	5.5%	16%	21.5%
Latinx	12%	20.5%	32.5%
Native Americans/American Indians	12%	33%	35%

See staff survey questions 135-139 for all responses and charts for all demographic groups.

The following are quotes related to relevance from the open response question, “Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about any of the topics in this survey?”

Mathematics

“Other than eliminating hate speech from the curriculum (which already appears to have been done), I don't see the need for cultural relevance in math.”

“It is difficult to answer some of these questions when focusing on math because the math book usually just has names but no back stories or other information. It is more procedural.”

English Language Arts

“I am pleased with the steps MUSD is taking in making a change for the better. My...choice not to live and teach here because of [their] experience with racism at Madera Unified schools. Another was a substitute teacher last year and had two negative experiences related to race while doing so. [Their] words, ‘Honestly it seems nothing has changed.’ Thank you for moving in the right direction!”

“As a minority referenced in this survey, I find the survey disturbing; almost as much as the pressure to provide my input.”

“I would like to mention that the English Language Arts curriculum is aligned with the California standards, but it lacks cultural relevance. As a Mestiza or Latina teacher who teaches culturally

diverse learners, my students nor myself often see ourselves represented in the lessons, stories, or topics in the English Language Arts curriculum. Thank you so much for offering this survey.”

“I appreciate that this issue is being addressed and hopeful that we are given space and time to make our lessons more culturally relevant and significant. Meaning that we can expand our resources beyond mandated core curriculum that is extremely lackluster in this area.”

History-Social Science

“Our textbooks for history are pretty much useless and not inclusive whatsoever. I am fortunate to be in a PLC that plans and works together to create more culturally inclusive lessons, but if you don't have a PLC like that, you are completely on your own. Whether a teacher has culturally inclusive curriculum is entirely up to the individual and there is no accountability or cohesion.”

Science

“This is science, we discuss the laws that govern physics, nature and the universe at large. I do not believe there is any racial, gender, or cultural biases.”

“After taking this survey I realized that maybe I should step back sometimes and incorporate for culturally relevant activities. About three years ago I did a PBL with my students and this gave my students freedom to discuss science on their own turns and I think I need to do this again with my students but this time, giving them more opportunities to empower them to use their cultural backgrounds to enhance their projects.”

“Something you need to realize is there is no new textbook for science in this district that has the content standards in it. The curriculum used has been researched, created, and brought to the class by the teachers. The district needs to find texts with the cultural differences and standards to meet the needs of today's society. However, I also I think when you look for cultural/racial difference you are not looking at the person. I believe you need to look at the person, their story, and their character. With that in mind I believe that the majority of teachers at this school site are compassionate and do everything in their power to be respectful of cultural/racial differences and allow conservations [sic] to happen when needed.”

“Our science teachers do an excellent job for our students, regardless of their backgrounds. We believe in our students, even in tough times, in spite of their obstacles, and regardless of their cultural backgrounds. I have seen farm labor students, sleepy eyed and fighting to stay awake (after an evening of working the night grape harvest) come into class and ace an Honors Chemistry test. I have seen farm labor kids become successful doctors...in spite of the conditions he was faced with. I have seen African American students go on to successful business ventures or working in their communities to help young people. I have witnessed a

great many things in my students because I believe in them. Does our district really believe in these kids or not?”

Cross-Curricular

“I think all teachers need a professional development course on cultural relevance. There is a huge gap of knowledge when it comes to cultural relevance with staff.”

“I would not say that our curriculum...caters to any race. It seems this survey's results are biased/unfair before it was ever taken... as there were no questions regarding Caucasians or other races.”

“I feel that some subjects are universal and to try to infuse these topics artificially with teaching about cultural differences does not seem important or valid.”

“...until we intentionally select publishing companies that target inclusiveness from Black, Latinx, Native American, Asian, and Indian groups, we will continue to lack in culturally inclusive exposure for our students. Additionally, even if we do obtain culturally relevant curriculum, the testing info needs to change. It also needs to be diverse and not reflect the dead white man narrative. We need more scenarios of leaders with disabilities and different cultures. Think beyond MLK, who was one of the greatest humans, but there are so many other great African American leaders that our students need to learn about. This also applies to Latinx and all the other ethnic groups I mentioned in my answers. We have to do better in our curriculum choices so that all of our students have the chance to see excellence in other cultures.”

“There is a vast disconnect between the way teachers are expected to follow the curriculum and the way they would like (and know best) to teach. I have watched as educators have had their creative and professional integrity stifled in favor of strict adherence to the lessons spelled out in the teacher's guides. Culturally relevant education would be far more prevalent if teachers were allowed to bring their gifts and passions into the classroom instead of following a script that may or may not apply to, or engage, their students.”

“THANK YOU for asking these questions, they're vital to the inclusive success of our students, families, teachers and staff of color in our District.”

Lessons and Student Work Review with Comparisons to Teacher/Administrator Survey

Rigor

For full results with graphs and charts, see the links in [Appendix B](#). Following are key highlights.

Standards Alignment

Percentage of lessons and student work aligned with California's content standards.

Table 5. Standards Alignment

	All Components Aligned to the Standards	Most Components Aligned to the Standards	Total of "All" and "Most"	Parallel Staff Survey Question "True" + "Very True"
English Language Arts Lessons	73%	18%	91%	82%
Student Work	77%	4.5%	81.5%	–
Mathematics Lessons	52%	43.5%	95.5%	62%
Mathematics Student Work	57%	38%	95%	–
Mathematical Practice Standards: Lessons	4.5%	26%	30.5%	48.5%
Mathematical Practice Standards: Student Work	33%	43%	76%	–
History-Social Science Lessons	57%	14.5%	71.5%	75%
History-Social Science Student Work	43%	28.5%	71.5%	–
Science Lessons	75%	12.5%	87.5%	84%
Science Student Work	62.5%	25%	87.5%	–
Three-Dimensional Science Lessons	0% (Yes)	12.5% (Yes, but insufficient)	12.5%	74%
Three-Dimensional Science Student Work	0% (Yes)	12.5% (Yes, but insufficient)	12.5%	–

Comparison to Teacher/Administrator Survey Responses

For most areas reviewed, the lesson alignment to the content standards reported on the staff survey was close to what was submitted in the lessons with two exceptions:

1. The standards for mathematical practice, which were reported on the survey as being well aligned by 48.5 percent of respondents, were only strongly represented in 30.5 percent of lesson plans.
2. The three-dimensional nature of the science standards, which were reported on the survey as being well aligned by 74 percent of respondents, was only represented in 12.5 percent of lesson plans.

Differentiation

The percentages below represent lessons and student work that provided sufficient scaffolding or other strategies to meet the needs of various student groups, and whether the lesson listed English Language Development (ELD) standards.

Table 6. Lessons and Student Work that Meet the Needs of Student Groups

Meeting the Needs of Various Student Groups	Below Grade Level Students	ELL	ELD Standards Listed on Lesson Plan	Above-Grade-Level Students
English Language Arts Lessons	36%	18%	5%	5%
English Language Arts Student Work	38%	38%	–	5%
Mathematics Lessons	4.5%	4.5%	13%	0%
Mathematics Student Work	0%	0%	–	0%
History-Social Science Lessons	14.3%	28.5%	0%	0%
History-Social Science Student Work	0%	14.5%	–	0%
Science Lessons	0%	12.5%	12.5%	0%
Science Student Work	12.5%	12.5%	–	0%

Comparison to Teacher/Administrator Survey Responses

For all subjects, lessons and student work revealed a low level of scaffolding or differentiation – similar to the low levels reported on the staff survey. **However, for mathematics, the lessons and student work showed a significantly lower level of scaffolding than was indicated on the staff survey** (9 percent to 19 percent on the staff survey as compared to 4.5 percent to 13 percent when looking at student work). In addition, the rigor of the elementary mathematics lessons was mainly focused on procedures at Depth of Knowledge (DOK) 2 or lower.

Scope and Sequence

For the most part, lessons were well aligned to the scope and sequence documents provided in terms of the standards addressed and most were well aligned in terms of timing on the calendar. However, the scope and sequence documents provided by the district were not always consistent from grade to grade, as well as between units within grade levels. For example, some scope and sequence documents listed instructional units in order but did not indicate when on the calendar those units would take place, thus it was not always possible to make an exact determination of alignment. As an additional example, for some grades and subjects there was a copy of the full California State standards document that served as the scope and sequence, while in other grade levels the scope and sequence took the form of a district-created table or flow chart, and yet other courses used the tables of contents from curricular materials as the scope and sequence.

Finally, this study was not designed for reviewers to be able to assess the overall alignment of lessons to the scope and sequence across the entire year, given that the submitted lessons only represented a snapshot in time (typically a one-week window).

Integration of Science or Social Studies into Elementary English Language Arts and Mathematics Lessons

At grades 3 and 6, English Language Arts and Mathematics lessons were reviewed to determine if they integrated other subject areas. Of the 28 lessons reviewed:

- Two mathematics lessons integrated English Language Arts
- Two English Language Arts lessons integrated Science
- Two English Language Arts lessons integrated History-Social Science

Relevance

For full results with graphs and charts, see the links in [Appendix B](#). Following are key highlights.

Student Choice and Connections to Own Life

Across all subject areas, **12 percent** of lessons included activities, assignments, or prompts that allowed students to make choices connected to their interest, and **10 percent** of student work samples show that all or most students made choices connected to their interests.

The following chart provides a breakdown by subject area and a comparison to the responses on the staff survey for the same topic.

Table 7. Student Choice

	Lessons reflecting choice	Student work showing that “all” or “most” students made choices	Staff Survey responses “often” and “always”
English Language Arts	18%	27.5%	33%
Mathematics	9%	0% (8.3% if including “some”)	17%
History-Social Science	12.5%	0% (25% if including “some”)	31%
Science	0%	0%	30%

Furthermore, **17 percent** of lessons included activities, assignments, or prompts that encouraged each student to make connections to their own life, and **16 percent** of student work samples reviewed show evidence that “All” or “Most” students made connections to their own life. An additional **8 percent** of student work samples showed that “Some” students made connections to their own life (see [Appendix B](#)).

The following chart provides a breakdown by subject area and a comparison to the responses on the staff survey for the same topic.

Table 8. Connections to Each Student’s Life

	Lessons that encourage students to make connections to their own life	Student work showing that “all” or “most” students made connections to their own life	Staff Survey responses “often” and “always”
English Language Arts	23%	36%	64%
Mathematics	4.5%	0% (4% if including “some”)	36%
History-Social Science	12.5%	12.5%	64%
Science	37.5%	0% (12.5% if including “some”)	61%

Comparison to Teacher/Administrator Survey Responses

For all subjects reviewed, the lessons and student work showed a level of choice and connections to students’ lives at a much lower level than what was reported on the staff survey.

Community Reflection in Materials

Across all subject areas, **8.3 percent** of lessons included activities, assignments, or prompts that allowed students to see their communities reflected in the content and **6.5 percent** of student work samples show that all or most student work showed evidence that students engaged in activities or prompts that helped them see their community reflected in the content.

The following chart provides a breakdown by subject area and a comparison to the responses on the staff survey for the same topic.

Table 9. Community Reflection

	Lessons that allow students to see own community reflected in the content	Student work showing that “all” or “most” students engaged in activities that help them see their community	Staff Survey responses “often” and “always”
English Language Arts	23%	18%	22%
Mathematics	0% (9% if including superficial examples)	0% (4% if including “some students”)	7%
History-Social Science	0% (25% if including superficial examples)	0% (37.5% if including “some students”)	36%
Science	0%	0%	18%

Comparison to Teacher/Administrator Survey Responses

For English Language Arts, the lessons and student work showed a level of community reflection similar to the level reported on the staff survey (22 percent).

For all other subjects, the lessons and student work showed a level of community reflection at a much lower level than what was reported on the staff survey.

For data regarding community connections broken down by demographic groups (African American, Latinx, and Native American/American Indian), see:

- Survey questions 110-115; link in [Appendix A](#).
- Lesson review questions 80-85; link in [Appendix B](#).
- Student work review questions 63-68; link in [Appendix B](#).

Free From Stereotypes, Misrepresentations or Negative Portrayals

Apart from two lessons, lessons reviewed were free from stereotypes, misrepresentations, or negative portrayals. The two exceptions were:

- History-Social Science lesson – The lesson included a propaganda video "Commando Duck," that students viewed, which had negative Japanese stereotypes. Few students noted the racism/bias in the cartoon.
- Mathematics lesson – The lesson included a practice word problem where a mother, Kate, buys pizza for her children. Kate is portrayed as a stereotypical female caretaker.

Leadership Role Models Aggregated Across all Subject Areas

Following are the percent of lessons and student work that provide opportunities for students to learn about various demographic groups in leadership roles.

Table 11. Leadership Role Models in Lessons

Leadership Role Models:	No	Yes	Yes, but not explicitly
People with disabilities	98%	0%	2%
Woman and girls	95%	3%	2%
African Americans	92%	3%	5%
Latinx	97%	3%	0%
Native Americans/American Indians	100%	0%	0%

Table 12. Leadership Role Models in Student Work

Leadership Role Models:	No	Yes	Yes, but not explicitly
People with disabilities	98%	0%	2%
Woman and girls	95%	5%	0%
African Americans	92%	3%	5%
Latinx	97%	3%	0%
Native Americans/American Indians	100%	0%	0%

Comparison to Teacher/Administrator Survey Responses

Across the above demographic groups, 14 percent to 34 percent of respondents on the staff survey stated that they “Often” or “Always” provide opportunities for students to learn about various demographic groups in leadership roles, which is a higher frequency than what was found in the submitted lessons and student work (3 percent to 5 percent).

Recommendations

The concepts of academic rigor (i.e., challenging instruction), and cultural relevance (i.e., content that is of personal importance to students or that has real-world significance) are closely aligned. Both rigor and relevance are necessary for creating learning situations that are stimulating, challenging, and engaging for K-12 students. We hereby recommend the following to improve rigor and cultural relevance for MUSD students.

Rigor

To increase levels of quality and rigor of instruction, MUSD can provide professional learning opportunities for teachers and instructional leaders around:

- articulating clearly and communicate learning objectives and success criteria with students, including the development of model products (i.e., exemplars) at various levels for each assignment, so that students can see what growth and success look like;
- using a rigor framework, such as Hess’s Cognitive Rigor Matrix, to help in the development and refinement of lessons to ensure proper level of rigor;
- including ELD standards and language objectives in all lesson plans, across all subject areas;
- building scaffolding and other forms of differentiation into lesson plans that address universal design for learning (UDL) elements;
- addressing explicitly the standards for mathematical practice in mathematics lesson plans and student assignments;
- implementing the five themes in the new California mathematics framework: plan teaching around big ideas, use open and engaging tasks, teach toward justice, invite student questions and conjectures, and focus on reasoning and justification; and
- incorporating formative assessment instructional strategies, processes, and practices into daily instruction. the california department of education defines formative assessment as, “a deliberate process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides actionable feedback that is used to adjust ongoing teaching and learning strategies to improve students’ attainment of curricular learning targets/goals”.

To maintain the level of quality and rigor of instruction, MUSD can:

- include the development of learning progressions in the next cycle of updates to MUSD scope and sequence documents. This can be followed by professional development around how to use the learning progressions in daily, weekly, and yearly instruction to differentiate instruction based on students' current level of skill and understanding around key concepts; and
- establish a system of teacher peer observations so that teachers can benefit from seeing examples of quality teaching that they can bring back to their own classrooms.

To monitor the level of quality and rigor of instruction, MUSD can:

- conduct an ongoing review of the elementary grades science curriculum to ensure that science is being taught regularly and consistently at all elementary grade levels;
- gather ongoing monthly random samplings of lesson plans from all schools across the district to conduct a finer grain size measurement of the degree of alignment between scope and sequence documents, assessments, and instruction taking place over the course of the school year; and
- establish an ongoing in-depth review of in-person instruction. A district curriculum team, in collaboration with representatives from school sites, can develop a classroom observation protocol that addresses the topics reviewed in this report. Once the protocol has been piloted and refined in a random selection of classrooms, a cadre of observers can be trained until inter-rater reliability is achieved. All classrooms in the district can then be observed at least twice over the course of each school year, and professional development opportunities can be adjusted according to the findings.

Relevance

Provide professional learning for all instructional leaders and teachers across the grade span and in all subject areas to build their capacities to:

- provide students with opportunities to explore and develop their own identities (i.e., the histories and contributions of their communities);
- provide students with opportunities to explore and develop their own interests (e.g., expose students to different areas of interest including a range of careers, the arts, sciences, etc.);
- provide examples or models of Black, Indigenous, and Other People of Color (BIPOC) in the fields of mathematics and the sciences, who excel in academic pursuits and in various fields; and
- focus students' attention on social conditions and critical real-life issues in their respective local communities, the nation, and the world.

Create a cross district curriculum team to:

- review content materials for cultural relevance, ensuring that relevance is emphasized in all subject areas including Mathematics, Science, English Language Arts/Reading and History-Social Science, as well as in Honors and Advanced Placement courses;
- review interdisciplinary resources to develop relevant curriculum;
- explore and use resources such as the UC Davis California History-Social Science Project and the National Writing Project;
- identify local resources (community assets, higher education, and other institutions libraries, local historians, local civic organizations that can provide or serve as curricular resources;
- identify local leaders, historians or other community members who can serve as speakers or provide rich content that is relevant to student; and
- “tune” published lessons to include greater opportunities for student choice and connections to their communities and backgrounds. (Lesson tuning is the process of first unpacking a published lesson to determine the underlying structure and learning objectives, and then “repacking” the lesson to increase missing or desired components, such as cultural relevance).

Create a cross-district team to develop a K-12 ethnic studies program for the district following the guidelines established in the following resources:

- *California History-Social Science Framework*
- *English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework*
- *California Common Core State Standards (CA CCSS)*
- *California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum*

A short list of professional readings (including articles and books) that focus on cultural relevance is provided in [Appendix D](#).

Conclusion

The Madera Unified School District started its pursuit of equity for African American students in 2018. From the outset, the issues of rigor and relevance were central to the discussion about creating a more equitable system for students. In 2020, the nation experienced the COVID-19 pandemic and entered into a time of intense focus on racial justice in response to the murder of Mr. George Floyd. Both the pandemic and the call for racial justice resulted in the recognition that schools would be changed from what they were prior to the pandemic.

In April 2021, a coalition of California-based family and student engagement organizations, education associations, research institutes, education civil rights and equity organizations jointly released *Reimagine and Rebuild: Restarting School with Equity at the Center*.⁵ The purpose of the brief is to help districts move forward to alleviate the devastating effects of the pandemic on students of color, students from low-income families, ELL, youth in foster care, students experiencing housing insecurity, students with disabilities, and other marginalized children and youth.

The brief describes five key restorative practices that all California school districts should implement to rebuild our education systems, one of which is to make teaching and learning relevant and rigorous. It urges districts to:

- **Advance racial equity in the curriculum** with high-quality and culturally relevant curriculum.
- **Advance racial equity in teaching**, providing all educators with professional learning to reflect upon their own identities and biases, and to acquire concrete strategies and tools for addressing racism, privilege, and bias in their classrooms.
- **Offer students choice and voice in their learning**, encouraging students to explore topics of interest independently, with peers, and through projects.
- **Focus on priority standards and lessons to support student learning**. Ensure rigor, accelerate learning rather than remediate, and teach all students grade-level content.⁶

These points in the brief closely align with the recommendations of this report and reinforce the importance of MUSD's efforts to improve the academic experience for African American and other students of color, and to raise the level of rigor and relevance in the district's curriculum.

⁵ *Reimagine and Rebuild: Restarting School with Equity at the Center*. April 2021. https://reimaginecaschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Reimagine_and_Rebuild_Brief.pdf. Retrieved June 24, 2021.

⁶ *Reimagine and Rebuild: Restarting School with Equity at the Center*. April 2021. Page 8. https://reimaginecaschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Reimagine_and_Rebuild_Brief.pdf. Retrieved June 24, 2021.

Appendix A: Links to Teacher and Administrator Staff Survey Results

All Data, Unfiltered, No Comparisons

- Displayed mainly as pie charts: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-HJHW59KV9/>
- Displayed mainly as bar graphs: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-C93WJL2L9/>

Comparing teachers to administrators: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-7NCYH7LV9/>

Appendix B: Links to Lesson Review Data & Student Work Review Data

Lesson Review Data

- All data: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-SRJ9HD9V9/>
- Disaggregated by subject: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-XZ65FD9V9/>

Student Work Review Data

- All data: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-TSWRVJ9V9/>
- Disaggregated by subject: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-X9368J9V9/>

Appendix C: Staff Biographies

WestEd Content Review Team

WestEd assembled a team of diverse, highly experienced, educators with extensive expertise in curriculum and instruction to review the lesson plans and student work samples for academic rigor and cultural relevance. All of the team members who conducted the reviews for academic rigor are well-versed in the California academic standards and the California Curriculum Frameworks for Reading, English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. Those team members who reviewed the lesson plans and work samples for cultural relevance are equally well versed in criteria to determine the cultural relevance of those materials. All of the team members currently or have recently served as instructional coaches in districts and schools across the country.

Alicia Bowman has over 25 years of experience in K-12 public education including Elementary Education, Continuous Improvement, Equity Leadership, Coaching, Supervision, Professional Development, and District Assessment and Accountability. Her current WestEd projects include providing instructional coaching to elementary school principals to enhance equitable, culturally responsive instructions to students. Prior to joining WestEd, Ms. Bowman was a district administrator in several California school districts, an elementary school principal, and a Senior coach with the National Equity Project. Most relevant for this project, her past experience includes serving as a Network Administrator responsible for providing coaching and professional learning for a cadre of principals and teachers in one of the largest districts in the Bay Area. She earned her Administrative Services Credential and MA in Educational Leadership from Saint Mary's college of CA, and her BA in Ethnic Studies from Mills College.

Jose Franco has decades of experience in K-12 mathematics pedagogy, providing technical assistance to educators throughout the country. He creates an environment for teachers to reflect on their practices, beliefs in students, and application of theory into practice. With equity at the core of his work, when working with teachers who teach ELL (ELL), Mr. Franco helps them plan lessons that teach the content and English language development in tandem.

Mr. Franco enjoys designing professional development and he supports teachers and administrators in the implementation of professional learning communities, common planning time, and lesson study. Beyond his charge of instructional coach, Mr. Franco is the Director of Mathematics Pathways & Pitfalls, a K-8 mathematics enrichment program that interweaves the tenets of improving students' mathematics comprehension and academic language development.

Mark Jutabha partners with states, districts, and schools to coordinate and deliver research-based professional development and coaching services in Mathematics and English Language

Learning. He currently leads WestEd's efforts with Teacher Practice Teams, a problem-solving process to sustain solutions for site-based mathematics challenges.

Dr. Jutabha has created and supported design of district-, school- classroom-level curriculum and assessments aligned to the CCSS, ELD, NGSS, and Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium protocols for over 100 public and charter schools and districts including New York Public Schools, NY; Los Angeles Unified, CA; Clark County, NV; Buffalo Public Schools, NY; Lake County, CA; Racine Unified, WI; Lyon County, NV; and Red Clay Unified, DE.

Dr. Jutabha has conducted needs assessments to identify site-based assets and priority areas for turnaround efforts for state, district, and stand-alone schools in California, Nevada, Wisconsin, Delaware, and New York. He holds an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from UCLA.

Bejanae Kareem provides professional learning, technical assistance, and project management for multiple projects, clients, subcontractors, and staff at WestEd. Ms. Kareem provides project management support for a \$10M US Department of Education charter school monitoring project, \$7.5M National Institute of Justice school safety grant and serves as a co-facilitator for WestEd's English Language Learners with Disabilities Institute.

With 20 years of experience in PK-12 and postsecondary education programs, Ms. Kareem has served in various leadership and coaching capacities with an emphasis on education equity and building culturally-responsive practices. Prior to joining WestEd, she served as an education consultant, practitioner in urban PK-12 schools, adjunct faculty member, and project manager for postsecondary teacher preparation programs.

She holds an Ed.S. degree in Educational Leadership, MEd in Early Childhood Ed, and BS in Biology; teaching certifications in Reading and English to Speakers of Other Languages, as well as a graduate certificate in Project Management and Bronze level Kirkpatrick Evaluation certificate.

Susan Levenson has designed and implemented a broad spectrum of unique instructional supports for schools and districts in her role as School Improvement Facilitator, including systems-level innovations in curriculum and assessment, disciplinary literacy, culturally responsive pedagogies, and writing framework development. Ms. Levenson was awarded Master Teacher designation by the state legislature of Georgia, earned National Board Certification in English Language Arts, and completed post-graduate specialist certifications in Reading and Early Literacy and Gifted and Talented Education. She served as the Georgia State Coordinator for the implementation of Common Core, facilitated assessment item research and analysis for Pearson Education, and worked as a consultant for The College Board, training Advanced Placement educators and contributing to the College Board's SpringBoard middle grades English Language Arts curriculum design. Her key competencies include a facility for building rapport with clients, building long-term accountability for impacts into scopes of work, and effecting change not just in practices, but in systems.

Robert Rosenfeld leads teams to support districts, schools, and those who work with them to plan, implement, and monitor evidence-based, comprehensive improvement efforts based on quality teaching and learning, strong school leadership, engaged families and communities, active district support, and a safe and supportive culture. His current WestEd projects include providing instructional coaching to elementary school leadership teams to enhance equitable, culturally responsive instruction for all students. Prior to joining WestEd, Mr. Rosenfeld managed the development of educational toys and educational software. He is a former mathematics and science teacher and is bilingual (Spanish and English). Mr. Rosenfeld received his Master of Arts in Education from Stanford University and his B.A. in Ecology, Behavior, and Evolution from the University of California, San Diego.

Rose Owens-West helps educators understand the multiple dimensions of educational equity, to develop data using cultures to inform decisions and implementation for continuous improvement, and to monitor for effectiveness and sustainability. At WestEd, Dr. Owens-West has served as Director of the Region IX Equity Assistance Center, Co-Director of the California Multiple Pathways Feasibility Study, Director of the Smaller Learning Communities Technical Assistance Center, and Associate Director of the California Comprehensive Center, in addition to other federal and state-funded projects. Dr. Owens-West has worked extensively with state departments, county offices, districts, and schools to implement various ESEA programs and to comply with Title IV of the Civil Rights Act. Before coming to WestEd, Dr. Owens-West worked for the Illinois State Board of Education and the RMC Title I Technical Assistance Center. She holds a PhD in Education Administration and Policy from Stanford, an MA in Anthropology from the University of Illinois at Urbana, and a BA in Anthropology from Rhodes College.

Appendix D: Selected Professional Reading Materials on Cultural Relevance

Briggs, S. (2014). *How To Make Learning Relevant To Your Students (And Why It's Crucial To Their Success)*. InformEd.

<https://www.opencolleges.edu.au/informed/features/how-to-make-learning-relevant/>.

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Delpit, L. D., & Ladson-Billings, G. (1996). The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children. *Contemporary Sociology*, 25(2), 240. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2077209>.

Dixon, A. & Fasching-Varner, K. (2009). This is How We Do It: Helping Teachers Understand Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in Diverse Classrooms. *International Reading Association*, 109-124.

Duncan-Andrade, J. (2009). Note to Educators: Hope Required When Growing Roses in Concrete. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(2), 181–194.

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Duncan-Andrade, J. (2016). *All Together Now: Academic Rigor and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy*. Teach for America. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OzNI4unAe20>.

Emdin, C. (2012). *Reality Pedagogy: Christopher Emdin at TEDxTeachersCollege*. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Y9tVf_8fqq.

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Sims Bishop, R. (1990). Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors. *Perspective: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom*, 6(3).

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