

EQUITABLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

A Community-Driven Equity Review

Partner Astoria School District

Team Mikkaka Overstreet, Johnette Burdette,
Shannon Davidson, Lymaris Santana, Pablo Lopez Trujillo,
Rachel Maller, Manuel Vazquez Cano, Ashley Sheppard



A strategic plan for equity

When Astoria School District in Oregon developed its latest strategic plan, district leaders knew that equity needed to be a core component. But they were less clear on *how* to work toward equity or know if they had made progress.

To carry out this work with intention, Astoria decided to begin by reviewing equity across the district, then use the evidence to prioritize their work on key focus areas. With funding from the Northwest Regional Educator Network, the district hired Education Northwest to lead an equity review and uncover opportunities to promote equity for everyone in the district.

For the district community, by the district community

Equity reviews are deeply personal journeys, so it was critical that the Astoria community drove this project. After outlining an initial plan with district leaders, Education Northwest convened an advisory group of diverse voices across the district: educators, students, staff members, leaders, and community members. This advisory group co-constructed our equity review plan, providing feedback and sharing their knowledge of the local context at every step.

After convening the advisory group, we needed to collect data to understand community perceptions of teaching practices, school climate, and culture. But first, we needed to build trust—making sure people felt safe to share their honest opinions and experiences. The Education Northwest team visited Astoria to build rapport, even holding office hours in schools so district community members could get to know our team. We also built a project team that reflected the diversity of the community in terms of race, languages spoken, and age.

Ultimately, we conducted focus groups with Astoria students, educators, and administrators. We held specific sessions for different groups, such as LGBTQ+ educators; educators of color; and classified staff. We also surveyed students, educators, and families. We included options to participate in Spanish to incorporate perspectives from the growing Latinx population. In addition, the district provided administrative data on student and staff demographics, discipline, student outcomes, and staff wages. Education Northwest did an initial analysis of all the data to make it clear and digestible for any community member.

In the final activity—the Collaborative Analysis Process (CAP)—Education Northwest guided the district community in making sense of the data. We packaged relevant data into three packets—aligned with three areas of the strategic plan—then spent a full day working with a group of 22 educators, family members, and students to analyze the data, identify key findings, and lift up priority areas for the district to focus on in the years ahead.

A clear path forward—and guides along the way

Through the CAP, Astoria community members identified five priority areas: student inclusion and belonging, disproportionately high rates of modified diplomas issued to Latinx students, misalignment between student and teacher demographics, a desire for more culturally diverse curriculum, and consistent equity training across the district.

Based on these priorities, Astoria School District now has clear direction for its equity work. To put the work into action, the district invited Education Northwest to provide two additional years of technical assistance in the form of professional learning, communities of practice, and coaching. Together, we are building the district's capacity to take ownership of community-identified goals and take concrete, strategic action toward equity.