

Culturally Responsive, Anti-Racist, and Equitable (CARE) District Assessment

In a culturally responsive district, students', families', and educators' cultures are included in all aspects of schooling, including supports and services that promote well-being and mental health. Anti-racist policies and practices promote equity and oppose racism and other forms of oppression. Equitable districts provide the climate and resources that enable all students and educators to perform at their highest level. Culturally responsive, anti-racist, and equitable (CARE) districts embrace cultural differences and assets; use cultural knowledge to promote wellness and academic success; mediate power imbalances based on cultural identities; and work to dismantle systems of injustice. **The 5 domains of a CARE district are: (1) Teaming and Collaboration; (2) School Climate; (3) School Discipline; (4) Curricula and Teaching Practices; and (5) Professional Development.** Each indicator includes a few ways districts may demonstrate success in each area. The included examples are not exhaustive but illustrative, and ratings in each domain can be used as a starting place for quality improvement initiatives. This assessment tool provides suggestions for action planning that can be tailored to meet your district's needs using the resources in our resource library.

Instructions: Complete this assessment with an existing team or identify a new team. Broad and diverse participation ensures meaningful assessment, successful planning, and implementation. Your team may include district/school-employed staff, community-employed staff, and other partners and stakeholders. Youth and families should have meaningful roles in your quality improvement initiatives. You may also reassess at any time with different team members who may have more information about CARE policies and practices. **If you are unable to rate the item accurately, please use the “Don’t Know” option. Teams should review items with high rates of “Don’t Know” ratings. When calculating averages by hand, exclude these items from your total score calculations.** For more detailed instructions and a glossary, visit www.theSHAPSystem.com, navigate to the CARE assessment page, and download instructions from the green box at the top of the page.

Using Your Results: You might start with low scores. Do not be discouraged! Instead, use your results to prioritize and plan key improvement areas. Use this assessment to facilitate structured conversations, drive strategic planning, provide a metric for reassessment, and optimize all aspects of your CARE policies and practices over time.

Teaming and Collaboration: Districts that work together with a variety of people from different backgrounds, including families and the community, are using effective methods to create strong teams. Districts should identify a team (or teams) to focus on promoting fair and equitable policies and practices that respect all cultures and fight against racism and other forms of oppression. A team's responsibilities may involve gathering and analyzing data; hiring staff members to coordinate districtwide initiatives; making sure money is distributed equitably; and providing district and school staff with professional development to advance CARE practices. Additionally, districts collaborate with and support schools in their advancement of CARE practices so there is an opportunity to reflect on that support within this domain as well. By setting a good example and speaking up for CARE practices, the district reinforces the importance of equitable treatment and behavior across schools.

Indicator	Don't Know	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always	Always
<p>1. District collects information from various people with different perspectives (e.g., students, family members, community organizations, etc.) to inform decisions about policies, practices, and interventions. (Examples: district uses different forms of data such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, etc., to understand and address student strengths and needs; district collects data to evaluate effectiveness of policies, practices, and interventions)</p>	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>2. District regularly reviews data by group (e.g., race, gender identity, sexual orientation, income level, immigration status, disability status, etc.) to understand and address major disproportionalities or disparities in district policies and practices. (Examples: district reviews policies such as attendance, special education, advanced course work, discipline, and participation in extracurriculars for major differences in access, use, and outcomes; shares data back to the stakeholders)</p>	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>3. District shares decision-making power with families and the community. (Examples: families and community members have important roles in the district's decision-making teams; district asks for input from caregivers, students, and community members to help plan and make decisions; families and students also have a say in creating district rules and ways of doing things)</p>	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>4. District monitors use of recruitment and retention policies and practices to hire people with shared identities of the district/local community's diversity. (Examples: implements surveys and feedback mechanisms to gather input from both staff and educators regarding their experiences with recruitment and retention policies; compares the identities of employees with the diversity of the district or local community to identify any gaps or discrepancies; establishes partnerships with community organizations and networks that promote diversity and inclusion to tap into a wider pool of candidates; monitors and provides guidance on hiring to schools)</p>	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6

5. District monitors use of recruitment and retention policies and practices to hire people committed to CARE learning environments. (Examples: incorporates CARE in hiring management systems; revises job descriptions and interview questions to assess cultural competence; employs qualified teachers who are knowledgeable about CARE practices being included in educational content; provides CARE professional development training program for new staff; monitors and provides guidance on hiring to schools)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. District provides staff with space and opportunity to engage with one another to support their well-being. (Examples: establishes and maintains mentorship programs; utilizes learning communities; provides space and opportunities for communities who have been historically marginalized to engage with one another through affinity groups, social activities, and networking opportunities)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. District uses a process to ensure that funds are spent equitably. (Examples: looks at the budget regularly to make sure money is spent equitably; keeps track of the budget and makes changes if needed; is open when making decisions; asks the district community for input on how money should be used; makes sure there is enough money for mental health support based on what the district needs)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. District teams up with the community to get funding and keep programs running that support student success. (Examples: establishes ongoing partnerships across the district to make sure all students have equal opportunities; develops a plan to maintain partnerships with local businesses, colleges, universities, and neighboring districts to keep programs going)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. District provides staff to coordinate and support districtwide initiatives related to CARE policies and practices in schools. (Examples: hires additional staff to oversee efforts or appoints someone to coordinate efforts; recruits staff with content knowledge and/or relevant experiences; welcomes and incorporates feedback from individuals with lived experience)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. District establishes and disseminates written, standard policies and procedures for CARE policies and practices in each domain to schools. (Examples: develops policies and procedures to reflect CARE policies and practices best practices; ensures policies and procedures are trauma-informed and healing-centered; ensures policies and procedures are culturally responsive and anti-racist; disseminates policies and procedures to all districts in an accessible format and in first languages of district community)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. District supports the implementation of CARE policies and practices in schools. (Examples: uses comprehensive implementation supports in all schools: participation of administration; protects staff time for implementation;	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6

provides resources and ongoing professional development; provides technical assistance, consultation, and coaching)							
12. District monitors CARE policies and practices in schools. (Examples: uses a transparent and systematic process in all schools for monitoring the structure and process of district CARE policies and practices including district observation of school team meetings; has regular reporting by schools of CARE structures, staffing, and processes; assesses fidelity to district policies and procedures by assessing the utility, equity, and effectiveness of district supports via a transparent and systematic process that includes school feedback from diverse stakeholders, ensuring that district supports reflect current best practices; and implementing a quality improvement process to refine district supports)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6

Teaming and Collaboration Total Score ____
Teaming and Collaboration Average (Total Score/12) ____

School Climate: Creating a safe and inclusive environment that welcomes everyone is an important part of promoting cultural responsiveness, anti-racism, and equity. Students, staff, families, and community members all work together to make sure the district is a place where everyone feels safe, respected, and included. This means celebrating differences, getting input from experts in the community, communicating in ways that respect culture and language, and standing up for social justice issues that matter to students and families.

Indicator	Don't Know	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always	Always
<p>13. District provides resources and supports to foster an environment where students most impacted by social injustices (i.e., racism, classism, ableism, cisnormativity, heteronormativity, sexism, etc.) and historical trauma feel physically and emotionally safe and welcome in school. (Examples: district provides professional development for working with diverse communities in affirming ways; district adheres to trauma-informed best practices to create a trauma-responsive district; students are treated equitably; staff believe all students can succeed; district celebrates diversity through district-sponsored activities)</p>	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>14. District provides additional supports to promote academic success and well-being. (Examples: provides and makes staff aware of supports and/or lists of referrals to assist families with financial stressors such as food insecurity, transportation, and child care challenges, housing resources, college, and FAFSA and college scholarship applications; provides access to mental health services; has procedures in place such as credit recovery to support success for retained students; school outlines and ensures caregivers' awareness of opportunities for students exceeding academic milestones)</p>	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>15. District provides equitable and barrier-free access to resources, school grounds, and classrooms. (Examples: monitors schools' access to opportunities such as extracurricular activities, enrichment, additional staff or partners, and equipment and takes action to reduce disparities; ensures classrooms and activities are accessible to students with disabilities)</p>	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>16. District provides resources and support for positive self-identity development. (Examples: provides professional development to staff on positive identity development; supports the development of mentorship programs; promotes curricula where students engage in the development of their cultural self-awareness and identity; provides opportunities and guidance for students to develop understanding and skills to meaningfully advocate for social justice)</p>	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>17. District adjusts how they communicate with families to make sure everyone can understand and be understood, regardless of their communication style or language abilities. (Examples: translates information that's sent home; learns a few words in</p>	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6

families' languages; has interpreters; discovers effective communication strategies and uses them regularly such as robocalls, newsletters, e-newsletters, social media, texts, presentations, and home visits; establishes positive two-way communication between home and district)							
18. District creates and maintains connection with the community. (Examples: hosts events to foster a connection between the district and community; district administration and staff participate in community events; makes consistent, predictable efforts to ensure families and community members feel welcomed)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6

School Climate Total Score ____
School Climate Average (Total Score/6) ____

School Discipline: Discipline is the structure, supports, and safety created in the environment to implement strategies that address behavior, repair harm, and restore relationships. How districts choose to promote prosocial behaviors and address behaviors that impact student success are essential components of a CARE district. Use of exclusionary discipline policies and practices disproportionately impacts Black and brown students, results in losses in academic gains, feeds the school-to-prison pipeline, contributes to a culture of unfairness and less school connectedness, and reinforces negative stereotypes about marginalized students. Key strategies to transform how schools approach discipline include (1) collaborative relationships between students, families, and educators; (2) positive school climate created through the use of social and emotional learning curricula, student-centered learning, and trauma-informed practices; and (3) use of a multitiered system of support to address student behavior and promote positive relationships between all school community members. Schools impact how students learn they should be treated and how they can advocate for themselves in the larger community. It is important that districts not only reduce the use of ineffective policies but create a culture that allows restorative practices to thrive. This takes changes in attitudes, relationships, policies, and procedures.

Indicator	Don't Know	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always	Always
<p>19. District collaborates with students, families, behavioral and medical health providers, and/or community members to review and revise discipline policies and practices. (Examples: students and families teach and model desired behaviors; students and families participate in the planning and implementation of multitiered system of supports focused on behaviors; district establishes and maintains proactive and positive communication with caregivers; <i>Note: example policies for bullying and harassment: Model Laws and Policies GLSEN</i>)</p>	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>20. District promotes social and emotional learning for students and district and school staff. (Examples: staff know how to handle their feelings and solve problems well, and staff teach students how to do the same; teachers learn about how their emotions can affect their relationships with students and families; district encourages students to show appropriate behaviors that fit their own backgrounds; <i>Note: review CASEL competencies with cultural analysis resource: Equity & Social and Emotional Learning: A Cultural Analysis CASEL</i>)</p>	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>21. District uses policies and practices that consider the effects of trauma and aim to create a healing environment. (Examples: staff engage in ongoing professional development about the role of stress and trauma in student behavior; staff and students are knowledgeable about trauma reactions; staff receive ongoing professional development on how to respond to difficult behaviors without causing more distress; staff are trained to deescalate situations)</p>	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>22. District continuously works to eliminate use of ineffective and harmful discipline practices by monitoring and reducing their usage. (Examples: monitor and reduce criminalization of student behavior; monitor and reduce use of student resource officers and metal detectors; monitor and reduce the use of suspension and expulsion)</p>	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
<p>23. District identifies alternative strategies to zero tolerance and exclusionary policies and practices. (Examples: identifies and implements evidence-based or practice-based</p>	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6

strategies and frameworks that suit the district such as restorative practices or culturally responsive positive behavior intervention supports)							
24. District monitors and reviews discipline data (office discipline referrals, suspensions, expulsions) for disproportionalities and disparities. (Examples: district looks at information about students to see if certain groups of students are affected more than others by discipline policies; district is fair and transparent, so they share this information with students and families; district also works to understand why these differences exist and find ways to fix the problem)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. District monitors and reviews use of special education services and supports data for disparities. (Examples: reviews special education data to monitor disproportionalities and disparities in access, assignment to disability categories, and outcomes; includes trauma screening in initial assessment for special education; ensures that all students referred to special education also receive resources about available community mental health supports; ensures students are educated in least restrictive environments)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. District staff receive training to understand how racism and other forms of oppression and bias affect discipline policies and practices in general. (Examples: history of racism and discrimination in school discipline; understanding of effective and ineffective discipline strategies; understanding the impact of implicit/unconscious biases and power structures on discipline choices)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. District staff receive training to understand how racism and other forms of oppression and bias affect discipline policies and practices in their specific district. (Examples: district staff reflect on how their cultural lens impacts perceptions of student behavior; district shares data related to discipline with stakeholders; staff learn and implement culturally responsive discipline strategies)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. District provides training in classroom management skills. (Examples: rewarding positive behaviors; maintaining clear behavioral expectations and consequences; strategies to help students problem solve; strategies to identify underlying issues related to disruptive behaviors)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6

School Discipline Total Score ____
School Discipline Average (Total Score/10) ____

Curricula and Teaching Practices: A district that follows CARE policies and practices pays attention to how they teach and what they teach. They work together with students, families, and the community to decide what should be taught and how it should be taught. They make sure to include the perspectives and experiences of people from different backgrounds. They focus on local history and knowledge, using what students already know and are good at to create a variety of learning opportunities. They use books and materials that talk about different cultural groups in a positive way and encourage discussions that help students think critically about important issues in society, history, and their own identities.

Indicator	Don't Know	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always	Always
29. District asks students, families, and the community for their opinions and uses feedback to make sure the curricula, lessons, and materials in class represent different cultures within the community. (Examples: students co-create learning spaces; families and respected community members such as elders and local leaders are sought out for their expertise and included in planning and carrying out curricula)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. District makes sure the curricula and teaching methods focus on content that relates to the students' everyday lives. (Examples: builds on students' existing knowledge and skills; includes diverse perspectives, authors, and topics of significance to student and families in the curricula)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
31. District understands and includes the local culture in creating curricula and teaching methods. (Examples: understands and respects the traditions and practices of the local community; includes different types of knowledge in their curricula, such as indigenous knowledge, local knowledge, and scientific knowledge; provides resources and supports for schools to offer diverse learning opportunities inside and outside of the school building)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
32. District ensures representation of diverse cultures, languages, and abilities in curricula content. (Examples: content reflects different traditions, religions, spirituality, names, languages, clothes, gender identities, and sexual orientations in major components of the curriculum and images, and it is not just an add-on; provides multiple perspectives of the same event, particularly those from marginalized groups; includes positive messaging that confronts stereotypes and shows cultural strengths)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
33. District ensures representation of diverse cultures, languages, and abilities in materials. (Examples: displays, media, and printed materials show different students, cultures, and abilities)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
34. District acknowledges and addresses the impact of racism and other forms of oppression, power, and inequity throughout curricula and teaching practices. (Examples: understands the difference between key terms such as racism,	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6

discrimination, and prejudice and their impact on learning environments; understands how power and privilege impact learning environments and relationships between staff, students, and families at multiple levels (interpersonal, institutional) and addresses disparities)							
35. District uses policies and practices that grade and evaluate students fairly, considering their different backgrounds and abilities. (Examples: educators use tests and tools that are fair and consider different languages spoken by students; educators look closely at assessment results and separate the data by different groups to see if there are any biases, disproportionality, or inequities)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
36. Educators have resources to help make the classroom a welcoming place for everyone. (Examples: educators have access to materials that reflect diverse communities)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6

Curricula and Teaching Practices Total Score ____
Curricula and Teaching Practice Average (Total Score/8) ____

Professional Development: Staff professional development is crucial to ensuring that a district maintains a learning environment focused on CARE policies and practices. This means providing training, resources, and ongoing coaching to help staff incorporate CARE principles into their daily work. The district needs to have experts who can lead this training or access individuals with the necessary training to engage the community effectively. Some important topics for professional development include understanding and partnering with the local community, implementing CARE teaching practices and developing inclusive curricula, and recognizing how identity and culture shape education for both staff and students. It's also important for staff to actively engage in their own learning and participate in activities that support CARE policies and practices, as this helps make them sustainable over time.

Indicator	Don't Know	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always	Always
37. District provides opportunities for staff members to engage in individual development. (Examples: staff engage in their own learning about systems of injustice and their role in the current education system; staff engage in their own learning about their own identities and biases and the impact on their work)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
38. District provides professional development opportunities in CARE practices. (Examples: provides CARE training to new staff; provides professional development activities that create collaboration and support amongst staff such as learning collaboratives or mentorship programs; caregivers and community members co-lead trainings with district staff; administration engages school staff in selection of professional development activities as collaborators)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
39. District provides professional development activities that foster learning about and partnering with the local community. (Examples: includes an orientation to the students, local community, and languages as part of onboarding new staff; provides professional development opportunities to improve understanding of how local culture enriches learning experiences; enhances understanding of how systemic racism and systems of oppression have contributed to health and mental health outcomes in the community)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6
40. District evaluates professional development activities to measure effectiveness in increasing educator knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors related to promoting equity. (Examples: invites staff to provide feedback on professional development activities in multiple formats; evaluates staff knowledge and skill acquisition in relation to outcomes)	DK	1	2	3	4	5	6

Professional Development Total Score _____
Professional Development Average (Total Score/4)

Domain	Average Score
Teaming and Collaboration	
School Climate	
School Discipline	
Curricula and Teaching Practices	
Professional Development	

Categories to Assist with Interpreting Averages:

Not Established – Domains where contributors reported the practices within the domain do not exist yet within the organization or they are rarely observed. The overall mean falls between 1.0-1.9.

Emerging – Domains where contributors reported that many practices within the domain are happening much less often than there is opportunity to do so. The overall mean falls between 2.0-2.9.

Progressing – Domains where contributors reported many practices within the domain are carried out at least some of the time there are opportunities do so. The overall mean falls between 3.0-4.9.

Advancing – Domains where contributors reported many practices within the domain are happening often and are likely part of everyday practice. The overall mean falls between 5.0-6.0.