



EQUITY 2000: A SYSTEMIC EDUCATION REFORM MODEL

A SUMMARY REPORT

1990 - 2000

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A SUMMARY REPORT – 1990 THROUGH 2000

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

From the time a child is born it is difficult to imagine a parent or guardian from any social class, any racial or ethnic group, any gender, or any age who does not hope for all the good in life for that child. This sense of hope is a commonality that goes without saying – almost. This vision, however, must struggle daily against realities of life that are often hard or cruel. For some children the great expectations start to lessen in their home environment. They often must deal with mixed messages regarding their capabilities and whether the future holds positive or negative outcomes. These children may or may not have adults who encourage and help them find and stay on a path to success. For other children, expectations grow even stronger in their home environment. The adults in these children’s lives often assume they will follow a path that leads to positive outcomes.

When children from these two worlds arrive at the schoolhouse door, the new set of adults in their lives – the educators – may make assumptions regarding the educational path each will follow. Simplistically, there are often two different paths. Some children will be encouraged to follow a vocational technical course and are probably lucky even to graduate from high school. These children will frequently live among low expectations. Other children will be encouraged to take a college preparatory path, go to college, and get a good job. These children will usually live among high expectations.

At the college door, only children from one of these groups can choose to enter. In order to have college as a post secondary option, a child has to have been on a track that included higher-level mathematics, among other things. The question to ask then, is: “Why don’t we, as adults – the very people children should be able to count on in their lives – provide them with all the opportunities they need t make it to high school graduation and have many options from which to choose for their future?”

EQUITY 2000 represents The College Board’s commitment to the dual principles of excellence and equity. for all students.

This type of situation represents the limitations the College Board found when it examined the gap in college attendance between disadvantaged and advantaged students. Higher mathematics is a common “gatekeeper” for college application and subsequent enrollment. Research indicates that low income and minority students who master algebra and geometry and have expectations to go to college actually enroll in college at the same rate as their non-minority peers with those same academic experiences (Pelavin and Kane, 1990). Students, who find themselves at their junior and senior years without algebra and geometry among their successful courses, find it

extremely difficult – if not impossible – to pursue college as a postsecondary option.

The discrepancy in college-going aspirations and course taking patterns between disadvantaged, and often minority, students and advantaged, and likely non-minority, students is the underpinning of the EQUITY 2000 reform program.

SECTION 2: THE EQUITY 2000 REFORM MODEL

The goal is to close the gap in college-going and success rates between minority and non-minority, advantaged and disadvantaged students so that all students will be prepared to achieve success in their formal education and in their careers.

EQUITY 2000 is the systemic districtwide (K-12) education reform initiative of the College Board established in 1990. The program is based on the belief that every student can learn and is built on the policy of enrolling every student in college preparatory classes. EQUITY 2000 uses mathematics at the middle grade level as its initial leverage for reform because mathematics is the linchpin for the overall high school curriculum. Thus, significant change in course content, instruction and student enrollment eventually occurs at all grade levels and cuts across all fields of study.

The EQUITY 2000 model focuses on comprehensive change at the classroom and the policy level – change that is absolutely essential if the traditionally underserved minority and disadvantaged students are to achieve academic success at the same rate as majority and advantaged students. It eliminates academic tracking – which locks many students out of a chance for college – and deliberately builds student aspirations to obtain a college degree through its academic and counseling programs. Moreover, the program enlists the support of the entire educational, civic and business community at the local level to ensure that students have the full opportunity to participate and excel in challenging, academically rigorous courses at all grade levels. EQUITY 2000 provides a range of tools and services to meet the school/district’s needs in support of achievement of high standards in teaching and learning for all students. Its mission is accomplished through partnerships and ongoing collaborations with school districts, colleges and universities, parents, community organizations, businesses, and other stakeholders.

The Ford Foundation, General Electric Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, DeWitt Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Hewlett Foundation, Aetna Foundation, and the National Science Foundation have invested over \$20 million in piloting this initiative.

A RESEARCH BASED REFORM MODEL

In 1989, the Board of Trustees and the management of the College Board publicly and explicitly reaffirmed their commitment to the ideal of educational equity. To that end, they published, *Changing the Odds: Factors Increasing Access to College* (1990). This research report by Sol Pelavin and Michael Kane demonstrated “the

critical role that aspirations and taking particular courses in high school have on college attendance and completion rates among minority and poor students.” The authors also revealed that minorities and low-income students take algebra and geometry at much lower rates than white students and students in the highest income group; they also graduate at much lower rates. But when low-income and minority students

do take these courses and aspire to attend college, they not only go to college at about the same rate as whites, but they also succeed at about the same rate. The report recommended “that schools consider the strategy of requiring mastery of algebra and geometry of all students and that schools develop a plan to encourage college aspirations in all students.” It was upon this research that the College Board launched EQUITY 2000.

Beginning in 1990 as a mathematics initiative in one school district in Fort Worth, Texas, EQUITY 2000 has continued to expand and evolve. As the program evolved, it developed a componential model of reform that is intended to work on two levels. First, it works as a mathematics reform effort based on the principle that all students enroll in rigorous, well designed courses in algebra and geometry that provide them with the mathematical knowledge and skill to ensure success in college. Secondly, it is a systemic reform initiative that advocates detracking in all K – 12 courses and that goes further to involve all of the stakeholders in the school district, including the superintendent and the school board as well as school principals, teachers, guidance counselors, and parents.

In 1991, five additional pilot sites were identified in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Nashville, Tennessee; Prince George’s County, Maryland; Providence, Rhode Island; and San Jose, California (a consortium of nine school districts). The six-year pilot phase included 700 schools and nearly half a million students. Now in the dissemination stage, the program has grown to 33 sites in 22 districts.

EQUITY 2000 Sites	
(by State)	
California	San Jose (9) Sacramento
Connecticut	New Haven, Bridgeport Hartford
Florida	Hillsborough County
Illinois	Bloomington
Indiana	Fort Wayne Pike Township Perry Township
Maryland	Prince George’s County
Massachusetts	Springfield
New Jersey	Elizabeth
New York	Bronx (2) Newburgh
Rhode Island	Providence
South Carolina	Aiken County
Texas	Fort Worth
Tennessee	Nashville Memphis

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

- ☞ Catalyst for change in mathematics reform at the secondary level
- ☞ Catalyst to help districts link initiatives
- ☞ Catalyst for bringing mathematics awareness to principals and counselors
- ☞ Raises the college going rate of minority and disadvantages students
- ☞ Changes the role of Guidance Counselors from Gatekeeper to Advocate

SECTION 3: PROGRAM COMPONENTS

EQUITY 2000 model is comprised of six components. All are essential to achieving the goal of closing the gap in college-going and success rates between minority and non-minority, advantaged and disadvantaged students so that all students will be prepared to achieve success in their formal education and in their careers.

COMPONENT 1 – CHANGING POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Through policy changes that end tracking and raise standards, , schools/ districts create the environment in which academic excellence for all students can flourish. EQUITY 2000 recommends beginning with the requirement that all students complete algebra by the ninth grade and geometry by the tenth grade and changing teaching to reflect standards developed by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and other discipline based organizations. Other recommended policies and practices include:

- Creation of EQUITY 2000 team to include School Board members and Superintendent
- Establishment of site coordinator position
- Raise counselors and math teachers level of awareness regarding high expectations for and building high aspirations in all students
- Alignment of EQUITY 2000 with standards
- Empowering administrators, counselors and math teachers and chairs to join leadership team
- Aligning graduation requirements and EQUITY 2000 goals
- Use of data for policy decision making
- Refocus and align available resources (e.g. Chapter I, Eisenhower, NFS, etc.)
- Early and sustained community and business involvement
- EQUITY 2000 commitment communicated throughout the community

COMPONENT 2 – PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Cultivating changes in attitudes and expectations regarding the potential of minority and disadvantaged students to attain high levels of academic achievement and to succeed in school, and ultimately, in college are essential to the success of EQUITY 2000. Administrators, teachers and counselors, in particular, play critical roles in affecting student attitudes toward academic achievement. Paramount to the continuing improvement of education and essential to the implementation of the policy changes delineated by an EQUITY 2000 school/district is professional development.

Content, pedagogy, and equity are the cornerstones of EQUITY 2000 professional development. Our institutes and workshops offer the following benefits:

- for mathematics teachers, the programs strengthen their content knowledge of mathematics and enhance their ability to teach effectively in heterogeneous classes, i.e. classes characterized by wide disparities in students' backgrounds and proficiency levels in mathematics;
- for guidance counselors, the programs focus on strategies for encouraging students to pursue college degrees, such as advising students to enroll in college preparatory classes, involving parents in students' academic development, and disseminating information about college options and costs to all students; and
- for principals, the programs focus on creating supportive academic environments for all students, including the development of teacher-counselor teams to meet the needs of individual students, and providing the necessary leadership for the implementation of EQUITY 200 in their schools.

EQUITY 2000 has established the following institutes and workshop series to facilitate attitudinal and administrative and instructional changes:

- Leadership Institutes for Administrators
- Guidance Institute and Workshop series for Counselors
- Mathematics Teaching Workshops
- Parental Involvement Workshop
- "Safety Nets" Implementation Training
- Data Driven Decision Making Workshops

Networking/Articulation meetings are held semi annually to provide EQUITY 2000 districts the opportunity to share lessons learned during the course of implementing the model, jointly solving problems identified by local schools/districts, examine new program developments and refinements, plan and assess.

COMPONENT 3 - "SAFETY NETS"

Because of the traditional practice of tracking, academic enrichment programs (i.e. "Safety nets") are necessary to improve the academic skills and raise the expectations of students who are "underprepared" in mathematics. The following programs form the core of EQUITY 2000 academic support:

- Saturday Academies – Saturday morning program convened at a local university that students can focus on skill building activities across all disciplines. It utilizes college and university staff and master public school teachers as instructors, and. Parents work with their children on specific academic exercises.

- ☞ Summer Scholars Program – Three- to five-week summer program convened at a local college or university that supports and enriches regular academic coursework, especially in mathematics and science. Program is team-taught by college and university staff and master public school teachers.
- ☞ Academic Enrichment Laboratories – Program that utilizes college students as mentors and role models for middle school and high school students
- ☞ Other enrichment components include tutoring, partnerships with other student programs (AVID, MESA, etc), partnerships with businesses, Test Prep activities, Career/College Resource Centers, College/University Fairs, and counselors addressing math phobia, math anxiety, and self-esteem issues of students.

COMPONENT 4 - PARENT AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

The involvement of parents is a key element in the EQUITY 2000 program because a child's parent or caregiver is his or her most influential teacher. Literature abounds with studies linking parental involvement with student success (Comer 1984, Epstein 1991). EQUITY 2000 promotes five types of parental involvement, as defined by J.L. Epstein (1986). These are:

- ☞ basic obligations of parents (responsibility for children's safety, health, discipline, nurturing, supervision, and readiness for school)
- ☞ basic obligations of schools to communicate with the home about children's progress;
- ☞ parental involvement as supporters, volunteers, and spectators at school events;
- ☞ parent involvement in learning activities at home (helping children with homework, reading to them, and listening to them read; and
- ☞ parent involvement in governance, decision making, and advocacy.

EQUITY 2000 activities/programs which are especially helpful in preparing and supporting parents to increase the college going rate of their children include Family Math, Saturday Academies for Parents, Parent Training Workshops, Parent Centers, Parent to parent training/coaching, College Awareness Workshops/ College Nights.

COMPONENT 5 - EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS

The EQUITY 2000 model calls for the creation of partnerships between the school district/school, postsecondary education institutions, businesses, and community organizations to gain broadbased support for the goal of academic excellence for all students. To this end, the program provides for the creation of a Local Advisory Board that is composed of educators, parents, and representatives from business, industry, and community organizations. This board is the vehicle for obtaining local business and community support as well as the mechanism for local fund raising and the development of partnerships among representatives to promote the goals of EQUITY 2000. Additionally, it calls for the formation of partnerships between colleges and universities and school districts to provide facilities, laboratories, equipment, and faculty for the Saturday Academies and Summer Scholars Programs; campus field trips; and college student mentors and tutors.

COMPONENT 6 – DATA-DRIVEN DECISIONMAKING

Excellence for all students is the EQUITY 2000 performance standard. At the core of the program's effort is the systemic, ongoing evaluation of its impact on students and of project progress. This is accomplished through formative and summative evaluation methods that enable informed decision making about how successfully project goals and objectives are being met.

Through effective use of disaggregated student enrollment and achievement data, districts/schools are better able to make programmatic and policy decisions and monitor progress toward reform goals. Disaggregating data by ethnicity, race, and gender provides districts/schools with the ability to make instructional decisions in the best interest of all children at each level – student, classroom, school building, and district – and to monitor the progress of reform.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EQUITY 2000 DISTRICT

- ☞ The district superintendent, school board, and principals are committed and give total support to the goal of academic excellence and equity for all students
- ☞ All middle and high school students are in a college preparatory program. Each student has the option to pursue a college degree or enter the high tech work force on completion of high school. “Watered-down” courses, such as consumer mathematics and general science, are eliminated.
- ☞ Elementary grade students receive equal preparation in all subjects. There is no ability grouping.
- ☞ Crucial academic subjects, such as mathematics, reading and writing, are recognized as a priority at the elementary grade levels.
- ☞ Teachers at all grade levels are committed to the full academic development of every student, foster energy and enthusiasm in the classroom, and encourage students to set their sights on a college degree.
- ☞ A variety of pedagogical techniques are used to create an enriching learning environment for every student, including cooperative learning, strategic questioning, and use of manipulatives.
- ☞ Classrooms are heterogeneous – students have a wide variety of experiences and backgrounds.
- ☞ Schools collaborate with local colleges and universities to offer programs on college campuses such as Saturday Academy, Summer Scholars Program, in-service courses for teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators, and college student mentors and role models.
- ☞ The entire community supports the program; parents become advocates for reform by demanding high standards for all students and helping generate community resources; businesses support the project by raising funds, sponsoring field trips and providing speakers who can be role models for students.

SECTION 4: LESSONS LEARNED

1990-2000

From the standpoint of theory and practice, EQUITY 2000 is one of the more complete reform efforts underway in US education today. This program undertakes changing student achievements levels by influencing educational policies and practices with respect to tracking, professional development, guidance and counseling, and educational leadership. Lessons learned from the pilot phase make the following assertions about the effective implementation of the program.

First and foremost, EQUITY 2000 involves a long-term commitment – no quick fixes. It establishes high standards of all students as a goal and changes the culture of teaching and learning in the district to be supportive of meeting that goal. It targets resources for all students to reach the high standards. Additionally, the program:

1. Is a powerful lever for districtwide change. It serves as a catalyst to “scale up” and brings cohesion within a district to many effective yet isolated projects and programs aimed at helping students reach high standards. It fosters alignment of goals, resources, programs, and evaluation. Further, it builds on what is already working in a district. It does not try to reinvent wheels.
2. Is focused. It uses the power of mathematics as a lever, initially at the middle grade level to change algebra and geometry from gatekeepers blocking access to high standards to linchpins opening access and driving reform from kindergarten to grade 12 and across all disciplines.
3. Works top-down, bottom-up and in the middle. It draws on the leadership, involvement and support of all in the district from the planning phase through the implementation and evaluation phases.
4. Uses guidance counselors as part of the leadership team to achieve the goal of all students reaching high standards. It is one of the only national education reform initiatives to foster this role for counselors. In doing so it changes the role, vision and assessment of guidance counseling.
5. Establishes as a norm the need to invest in the ongoing professional development of school and district personnel – the human capital – those who must deliver the reform – those who must change themselves and the environment in ways that result in excellence and equity.
6. Is data driven. It uses disaggregated student enrollment and achievement data to inform decisions and guide reform. With limited dollars, it increases the likelihood of shifting resources to what is working and away from what is not.
7. Is comprehensive. Each of the components taken alone is nothing new. But put together, they are more than the sum of parts and address the critical pressure points that must receive attention for all students to reach high standards.

8. Connects educators to a network of colleagues from across the country who are facing the same challenges and provides on-going opportunities for joint brainstorming and problem solving.
9. Is backed by The College Board's reputation for high standards. This lends credibility to the assertion that academic success for all students can be achieved while maintaining high standards.

Finally, the program makes high expectations for all students a primary focus for the whole effort. It does this not just in words, but through plans addressing the implications of making success for all a reality throughout the district. One of the most powerful variables affecting student achievement is expectations – particularly the expectations of teachers. Expectations reflect the standard to which students are held and they are self-fulfilling prophecies.

SECTION 5: THE IMPACT OF EQUITY 2000

With the goal of academic excellence for all students in mind, the College Board's Equity 2000 educational reform program was designed to test the hypothesis that low-income and minority students who master algebra and geometry and have expectations to go to college will actually enroll in college at the same rate as their non-minority peers with those same academic experiences. Over the past decade, The College Board has carefully monitored the progress of EQUITY 2000 districts and their students. The data shows that the EQUITY 2000 program is effective at closing the gap in college-going rates of the aforementioned populations.

EVIDENCE OF PROGRESS

Recent data from a six-year summative evaluation illustrate that EQUITY 2000 has had an important impact in the pilot sites. By the end of the pilot period, the 1995-96 school year, more students were enrolled and successfully completing algebra or higher mathematics than were even enrolled in those courses at those grades at the start of the pilot. As well:

- ☞ Participation in PSAT/NMSQT, SAT, ACT, and AP programs increased significantly.
- ☞ The percentage of students indicating that they plan to attend college after graduation from high school was substantially higher.
- ☞ Significantly greater numbers of students enrolled in higher mathematics such as algebra 2, trigonometry, pre-calculus, and calculus, than the national enrollments.

SECTION 6: MAKING THE EQUITY 2000 COMMITMENT

WHY IMPLEMENT EQUITY 2000?

The College Board's EQUITY 2000 program encourages school districts to invest in themselves and to make the necessary changes in policy and practice. The program is one of the few school reform efforts in the nation that is comprehensive enough to affect all students in a school district rather than those in individual classrooms and schools.

With guidance from The College Board, Equity 2000 districts learn how to end tracking in the mathematics curriculum, beginning with the requirement that all students enroll in algebra by ninth grade and geometry by the tenth grade. They learn how to pursue a series of comprehensive policy changes and are provided leadership and professional development opportunities for their administrators, teachers and guidance counselors. EQUITY 2000 is a process that works in the initial stages to help districts assess what they currently offer and what needs to be accomplished; to map out a multi-year strategy for change; and to prepare a small team of leaders to introduce EQUITY 2000 across the entire school district.

Districts who implement EQUITY 2000 believe:

- ☞ All students can learn at high levels if provided adequate support in an environment of high expectations
- ☞ The elimination of tracking, combined with rigorous college prep academic course work is the foundation for excellence and equity
- ☞ Resources must be allocated or reallocated to ensure that all students have equal access
- ☞ The support and involvement of parents and community are vital to bringing about reform

BECOMING AN EQUITY 2000 SITE

Adoption of EQUITY 2000 takes place when the key decision makers of a school district demonstrate the district's commitment to implementing a plan for closing achievement and college enrollment gaps according to EQUITY 2000 principles and guidelines. Completing a self-assessment and having a school district team of up to five members complete a Leadership Institute does this.

EQUITY 2000

Leadership

R. Stephen Green, Executive Director
School Level Services

Contact

Lawrence J. Dolan, Director

Telephone/Email/Internet

(202) 822-5930 Fax: (202) 822-5939

E-mail: equity@collegeboard.org

Internet: <http://www.collegeboard.org>

Mailing Address

The College Board
Washington Office
1233 20th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036

