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# Disrupting Educational Inequities: Voices from the Field

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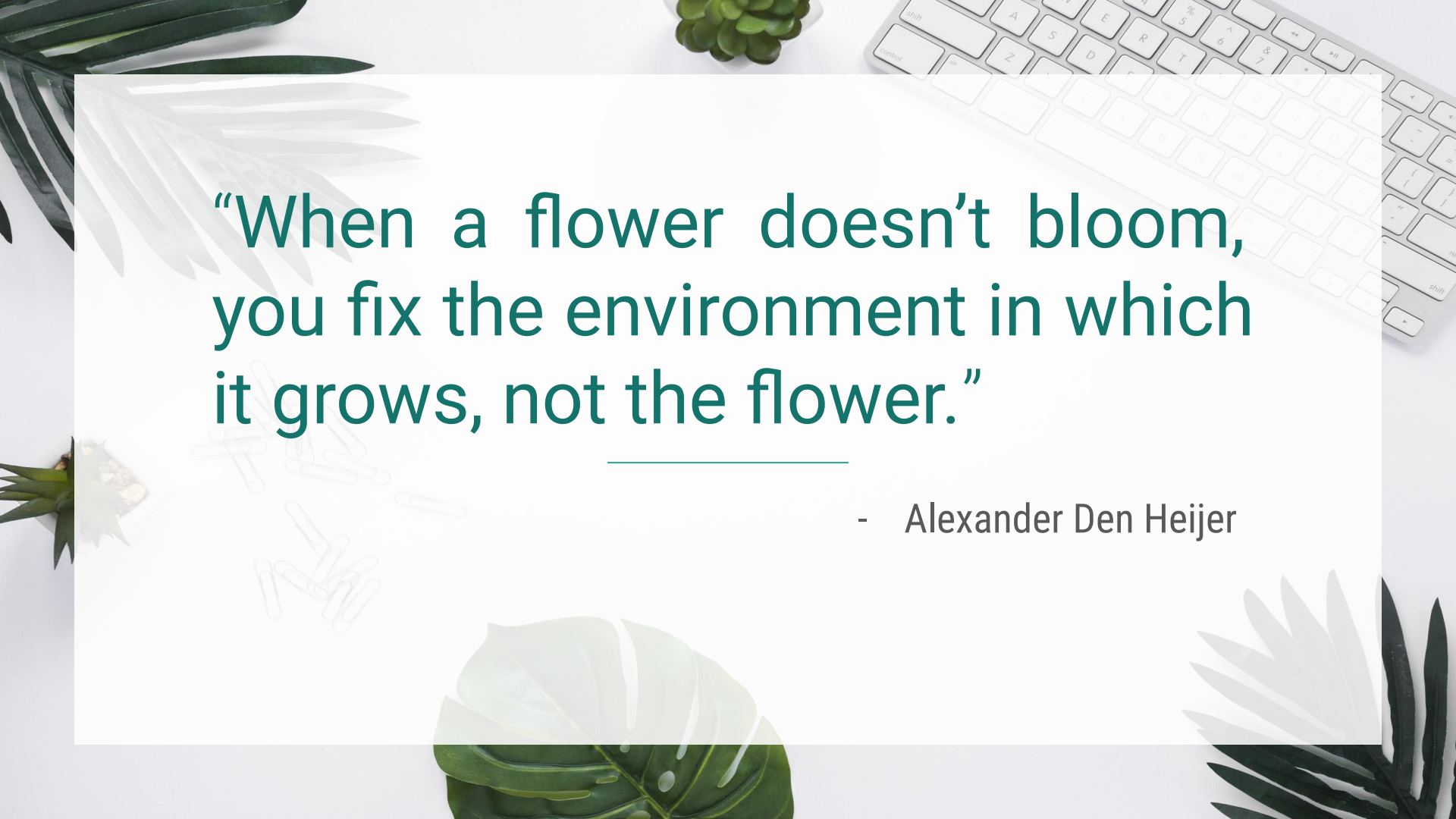
Stacie Alexander, Vice-Principal  
Cabrillo High School - Long Beach USD





# Discussion Topics

- Resources
  - Student & Staff Support
  - Flexibility & Adaptability
  - Equity: Lessons Learned
  - Return to Normal?
  - Our Work
-



“When a flower doesn’t bloom,  
you fix the environment in which  
it grows, not the flower.”

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- Alexander Den Heijer

# Resources

- Access to Food
  - Technology: Chromebooks, Hotspots, Wifi
  - Curriculum & Textbooks Online
  - Mental Health Support
  - Free COVID Testing & Vaccinations
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# Support for Students & Staff



## Students

- Daily Check-ins with teachers
- SEL Lessons (pilot w/ 15 volunteer teachers)
- Peer & Teacher-led Tutoring
- Free Telehealth Services (counseling)
- Family Resource Centers (district-wide)



## Teachers & Staff

- “Thankful Thursdays” Newsletter
- Open Door” Policy
- SEL Check-ins at start of meetings
- SEL Support from School Psychologist
- Wellness Sessions
- “Permission”, Flexibility, & Grace





# Flexibility & Adaptability

- Learning new information systems and technology platforms
  - Infusing technology into daily lessons
  - SEL activities included in daily lessons
  - Adapting grading practices & policies
  - Zoom cameras - on or off?
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- Ever-changing health & safety guidelines & protocols
  - Working from home (& all those complexities)
  - Returning to campus
  - Personal & family challenges throughout the pandemic

# EQUITY: Lessons Learned



## Equity is a LENS...

by which we need to view “all the things”. We should always asking ourselves “who is being left out?” of the conversation, policy, practice, etc.



## This work is ESSENTIAL!

Equity work may be slow moving, but must remain a never-ending focus for all school leaders!

## It's not about EQUALITY!

Giving schools sites & students the “same” resources &/or support (esp when solely based on enrollment numbers) maintains the system.

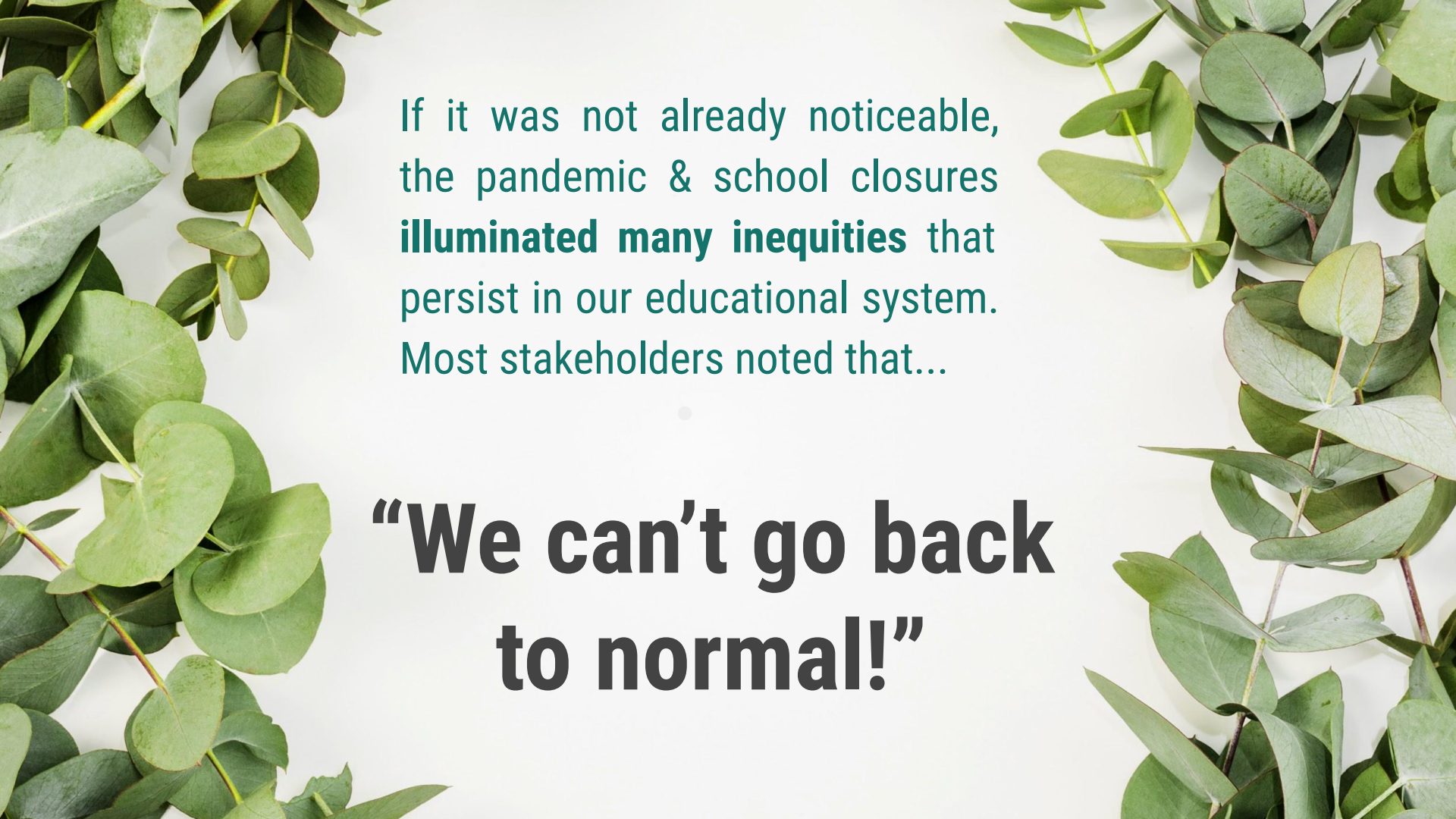
## Determine the ROOT CAUSE!

Inequities persist when we resolve the symptoms of a problem, without addressing the underlying causes & systems that support them.

## Find your TEAM!

Equity work can not be accomplished alone. We need a team of staff & students who can support & implement the vision



The image features a white background with decorative greenery, likely eucalyptus, framing the top and sides. The leaves are various shades of green, some with silvery undersides. The text is centered in a dark teal color.

If it was not already noticeable,  
the pandemic & school closures  
**illuminated many inequities** that  
persist in our educational system.  
Most stakeholders noted that...

**“We can’t go back  
to normal!”**





# Rethinking “Normal”

1

## Continued Access to Essential Resources

- *Chromebooks available for home use*
- *Low-Cost/Free wifi & hotspots (cities should consider providing this)*
- *Continued online learning opportunities & tutoring options*
- *Free meals at school for all; city-wide food distribution*

2

## Focus on Mental Health & Social Emotional Support

- *Care/Wellness Centers*
- *Use of Restorative Practices*
- *Access to Counseling Services (regardless of insurance or ability to pay)*

3

## Self-Care

- *Stay home if you don't feel well! The days of working while sick are over!*
- *Create boundaries for working at home (esp emails & texts)*
- *Move beyond the “spa” & take what YOU need to care for yourself!*
- *Consider student workload - determine what is “essential” to learning*

## ESSENTIAL TAKE AWAY

We often place the responsibility on students to “break barriers” by providing additional supports & services, rather than addressing the necessary changes in adult mindsets, behavior, and daily practices to dismantle the systems that created and maintain the inequities that persist.

**THIS IS OUR WORK!**

# *Reflections on Disrupting Educational Inequities During the Pandemics*



Justin Young

**Check in before we start- where are you mentally, physically, and emotionally right now?**

1- “Awesome!”

2- “Meh, okay....”

3- “Don’t even ask!”





# The Three Pandemics' Impact on Educational Inequities

- Many of the inequities that came to light during the pandemic had already existed before the COVID-19 Pandemic, but had just been brought to light and spotlighted as a result of the pandemic
  - Racism
  - Technological inequities
  - Who attends school and who does not
  - Home environment
  - Enrollment
  - Mindset among students, staff, parents, and community



# Setting the Stage To Disrupt Inequities and Lead for Academic Excellence

- Two of my favorite John Lewis quotes resonate with me about the work we did

*“We all live in the same house, we all must be part of the effort to hold down our little house. When you see something that is not right, not fair, not just... do something about it. Say something. Have the courage. Have the backbone. Get in the way. Walk with the wind. It’s all going to work out.” - John Lewis*

*“Patience is a dirty and nasty word.”- John Lewis*

- “Negotiated” and navigated the political waters of remaining a part of the Leadership Network during the spring of 2020 and this past school year as a result of the pandemics
- Collaborative inquiry cycles to discover existing inequities
  - Admin team, staff team, PLCs



# What We Did to Disrupt Systemic Inequities Over the Past 16 Months As a School Site and District

- Modeled behaviors and mindset for our staff- inequities among staff
- New Support/Intervention Period for the 2021-2022 school year to support students
- Daily embedded intervention time and PLC time
- Shared instructional strategies and social-emotional supports during PLC meetings and staff learning time



# What We Did to Disrupt Systemic Inequities Over the Past 16 Months As a School Site and District

- Learning Centers- to help address home inequities and technological inequities
- Chromebook and hotspot distribution campaign-1000 Chromebooks distributed (before we transitioned to 1:1 at the beginning of 2021, 350 hotspots)
- Daily lunch distribution
- 200 home visits (10% of RCHS student body) to engage and connect students in virtual learning as well as hybrid learning
- Community and student vaccine clinics in partnership with Yolo County





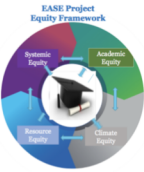
# What We Did Not Do

- Monitor and analyze data about inequities with fidelity and use that in ongoing work to continue disrupting inequities
- Monitor the mindset of staff about student support and disrupting inequities and address it if and when needed
- Meaningful PLC work about supporting students over the 16 months of virtual and hybrid learning and planning for our return or next year
- Provide long-term, high impact instructional and social-emotional support for staff as they return
- Provide longitudinal support to students and families



# Lessons Learned Over the Past 16 Months

- We cannot go back to the “old way” or “education as usual”
  - Student support systems, instructional strategies, bell schedules, PLC time and everything we do
- Inequities during the pandemics were illuminated, but many existed before the pandemic, and many widened
- We cannot go it alone, teams are essential to disrupt existing educational inequities and proactively disrupt new ones from occurring



# Lessons Learned Over the Past 16 Months

- Students do not want to stare at a screen everyday
  - During a student panel, multiple students indicated that they did not want to participate in live streaming and wished they could just write again
- Staff need to continue to be supported on supporting students, especially in this new normal in innovative ways, just like we expect them to be innovative
  - We have to teach and lead by example with lots of support and scaffolding for teachers to learn just like we would do for our students



# Are We There Yet?

- The work in disrupting inequities is never- ending
- Our public educational system mirrors the inequities that exist in American society, often overlapping and cohabitating in our communities' schools
- Disrupting inequities cannot be viewed as a “*checklist*”
- Look through the lens of equitable for everything we do in education, otherwise why are we doing the work if it is not about equity?





# Getting Into Good Trouble to Keep Moving

- **Good trouble-** Doing the just thing is worth it, even if it gets you in trouble, because it is the just thing to do
  - "Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble."- John Lewis
- We are at an awesome crossroad
  - We can take the lessons and experiences we have gained over the past six months to take great strides, or we can go back to the old way and start from square one
  - Let's get into that **good trouble** to make it happen





# A Closer Look at Academic Equity



PRACTICES THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE AT  
FREMONT ACADEMY



Representing Schools, People & Community



## The Premise



*Our responsibility as educators transcends high school and college graduation. The true measure of our impact is the nature of our graduates' career and life outcomes after they leave our system.*  
*(Anumba)*

# The Background of the Problem



- Challenging Virtual Learning Platform during the pandemic
- Decreased student engagement
  - Socio emotional concerns
  - Student employment to support their families
- Increased chronic absenteeism
  - Decreased over all attendance rate
  - Inability to track and locate some students
- High failure rate



# Examining the Root Cause/s



- Administered Needs Assessment Surveys to:
  - Parents
  - Students
  - Certificated Staff
  - Classified staff
- Focused on
  - Needs
  - Motivation
  - Engagement
  - Resources
  - Attendance



# Findings



- Our students want us to “make learning FUN”
- They are willing to support us to re-engage their peers
- Students were dealing with socio-emotional challenges
- Motivation is low among students
- Some students are have full time employments to support their families
- Some parents need training on how to support their students at home
- Some require technological support
- Teachers need “Gift of Time” and PD tailored to their needs





# Students' Voices



- Make Learning Fun! Involve us to re-engage others

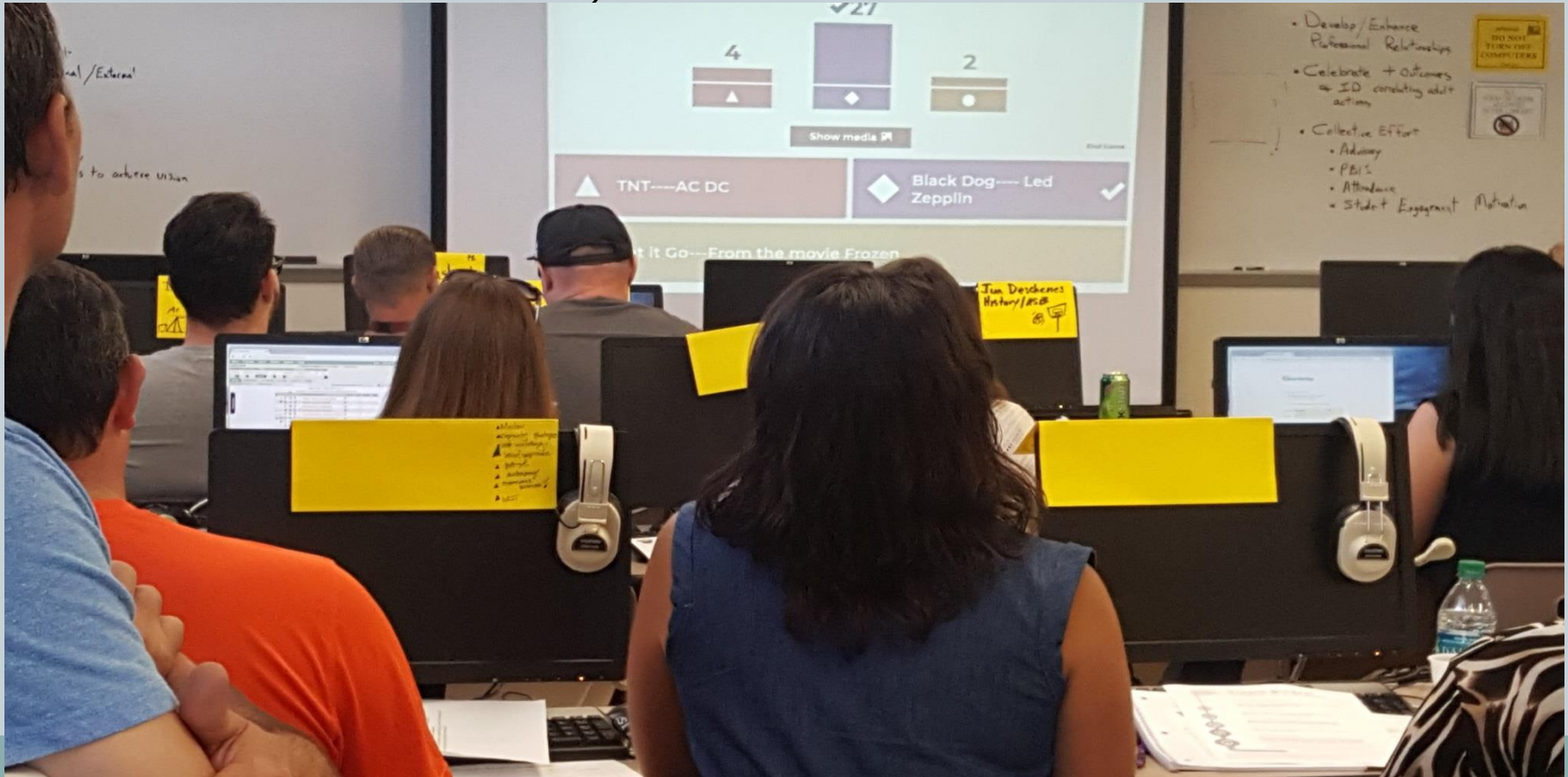




# Staff Voices



- Meaningful involvement, Gift of Time, Collaboration
- Access to resources; Provide PD on areas of need





# Parent and Community Engagement



- Provide resources; maintain open communication



# Actions Taken to Address Needs



- Implemented Re-Engagement strategies
  - Math Dept. lead the way
  - Implemented Independent Study (IS) Program
  - Expanded credit recovery program (Edgenuity)
  - Involved staff members to connect with students and families
- Provided additional resources to students and staff
  - Additional Funding from The Coronavirus Aid Relief, and Economic Security (CARES Act) and AB 86
  - In Class intervention
  - Tutoring; Princeton Review for AP students
  - Secured additional resources, technology, Apps, etc.
- Developed and implemented parent training sessions on identified areas of need





# Equity via Re-Engagement



- Identified students who were disconnected
  - Sporadic attendance
  - Not completing assignments
  - Failing grades
- Assigned five students each to a staff member
- Staff contacted students and families at least once a week or as often as needed
- Staff worked with the teachers regarding students' progress
- Participating staff members received CLN stipend for additional services rendered

# Staff Initiated Intervention



- Math teachers reviewed semester 1 grades
- Higher than previous failing rate
- Decided to provide opportunity for students to show mastery beyond the semester timeline
- Analyzed each students' situation and identified what they need to make up to pass the class
- Signed agreement
- Grade changed upon satisfactory completion





# Academic Equity: The Independent Study (IS) Program



- Changing times, illuminate the changing needs of students
- Established the IS program for students who are fit for the program
- Patterned after PUSD's Independent Charter School- School of Extended Educational Options (SEEO)
- Supported by an intervention teacher
- Faster credit recovery
- Students worked at their own pace based on their schedules
  - Students who were working were able to fit school into their daily schedule
- Facilitated the graduation of 10 seniors from the Class of 2021



# Parent Involvement/Empowerment



- Focus: Parent Education on Identified areas of Need

## Parent Workshops

### Plan

- ▣ **Purpose:** Parent empowerment/involvement via parent education
- ▣ **Frequency-** Twice a month
  - ▣ 1st and 3rd Mondays
- ▣ **Time-** 4-5 pm
- ▣ **Who-** Dept Chairs

### Topics Include

- ▣ Accommodations/Mo difications
- ▣ Academic and socioemotional Support
- ▣ Parent Empowerment
- ▣ College 101 Knowledge/Transition
- ▣ Transcript/A-G

# Parents/Family Component

- Staff provided workshops based on the outcome of parent survey





# Implications



- Addressing inequities should be a data driven collaborative process aimed at a change in practice
- Change is an inevitable process
  - The nature of teaching and learning will forever continue to evolve
- Students, staff and parent voices must be incorporated into the process
- Educators must examine their mindset and beliefs
- Educators must purposefully and strategically wear equity lens in examining systems, policies and practices
- In everything, **BE EQUITY MINDED** and **STUDENT centered**
- **Take Action**

# Ultimate Result



- Student Success = Society's Success

