

An Introduction to Racial Equity Assessment Tools

Governing For Racial Equity
March 2014

Terry Keleher
Race Forward



About Race Forward

- Race Forward advances racial justice through research, media, and practice.
- Race Forward brings systemic analysis and an innovative approach to complex race issues to help people take effective action towards racial equity.
- Race Forward publishes the daily news site Colorlines and presents Facing Race, the country's largest multiracial conference on racial justice.



Racial Justice

Racial Justice
is the systemic fair treatment
of all people
that results in
equal opportunities and outcomes
for everyone.



Implicit Bias

- Implicit biases are pervasive
- People are often unaware of their implicit bias
- Implicit biases predict behavior
- People differ in levels of implicit bias

-- *Project Implicit* (www.projectimplicit.net)



Examples of Implicit Bias

- Doctors are less likely to prescribe life-saving care to blacks.
- Managers are less likely to call back or hire members of a different ethnic group.
- NBA referees are more likely to subtly favor players with whom they share a racial identity.
- Teachers call on boys more often than girls.

Source: racial bias examples from <http://writers.unconsciousbias.org/unconsciousbias/>





AP Associated Press AP - Tue Aug 30, 11:31 AM ET

A young man walks through chest deep flood water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005. Flood waters continue to rise in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina did extensive damage when it

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3:47 AM ET

Two residents wade through chest-deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery store after Hurricane Katrina came through the area in New Orleans, Louisiana. (AFP/Getty Images/Chris Grayther)

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Implicit Bias is: Individual AND Institutional

- A lot of racial inequities occur without intention or malice. It does not require “racists.” Implicit bias helps explain how racism can be subtle in appearance but significant in impact.
- In institutions, the bias of individuals is routinely replicated through collective decisions and actions. It becomes compounded unless it’s consciously counteracted.
- “Implicit Bias...offers the idea that discrimination and bias are *social*, rather than *individual* issues, and that we can thus all participate in promoting equality.”

--*American Values Project*



Implicit Bias and Public Policy

- Most policies are *facially* neutral (race silent) but not *racially* neutral—they have negative or positive racial impacts.
- Negative racial impacts may or may not have been intentional. Positive racial impacts often require intentionality.
- When racial impacts are not consciously considered during the lawmaking/decision-making process, there is more likelihood that negative racial impacts will result--implicit bias is the default.



Choice Points: The Crossroads to Change



Choice Points

- Choice points are decision-making opportunities that influence outcomes.
- The cumulative impacts of many small choices can be as significant as the impacts of big decisions.
- When we're conscious of choice points and the related impacts, we're less likely to replicate implicit bias and the status quo, and we open new possibilities for equitable change.



Choice Points: Examples

Personal	Institutional
Consumer decisions: where to shop, what to buy, or boycott?	Planning: what to change and prioritize in programs/workplans?
Volunteer work: what causes to get involved in?	Budgeting: what items to prioritize, add or cut?
Charitable contributions: what organizations to support?	Personnel: who to hire, retain, promote, or develop as leaders?
Socializing: who to spend time with?	Policy Development: what to propose or modify?
Voting: which candidates or causes to support?	Practices: routines/habits to continue, change, or cut?



Using Choice Points: Organizational Example

- **Citizen Action of New York (CANY)** has adopted a standard set of questions to consider when analyzing social issues they want to address. This helps them think about how different racial groups are affected and whether to explicitly address racism in their framing of the issue.
- This deliberate practice serves as an **equity prime**—a reminder that evokes consideration and consciousness of racial/gender impacts and racial/gender equity—during an important choice point; thereby helping to counteract unconscious bias.



Choice Points in the Criminal Justice System

- The criminal justice system has many decision-making points and decision-makers where discretion is exercised.
- “For a single defendant, these biases may surface for various decisions makers repeatedly in policing, charging, bail, plea bargaining, pretrial motions, evidentiary motions, witness credibility, lawyer persuasiveness, guilt determination, sentencing recommendations, sentencing itself, appeal, and so on. Even small biases, at each stage may aggregate into a substantial effect.” -- UCLA law professor Jerry Kang
- To change an entire system, we have to examine how decisions are made throughout the system, at every choice point, by every decision-maker.



Using Choice Points to Advance Equity and Inclusion

1. Where are the decision-making points that affect outcomes?
2. What decisions/actions may be reinforcing the status quo, implicit bias and current inequities?
3. What alternative action options could produce different outcomes?
4. Which action will best advance equity and inclusion?
5. What reminders, supports and accountability systems can be structured into routine practices to keep equity as a high priority?



Cultivating Equity Mindfulness

- We can choose to create the space and support to act...

...Consciously

...Consistently and

...Courageously

on our values.



- We can practice pushing the “pause button” to interrupt our patterns, fears and biases. We can develop “equity muscles and memory” to override old habits and responses.
- We can learn to prime ourselves and others to take mindful action.



Pair & Share: Using Choice Points

- 1. Identify a choice point:** What is a choice point in your own work where you have some influence on a decision or course of action that may affect racial/gender outcomes?
- 2. Generate some options:** For that choice point, identify some alternative actions that could lead to different and more equitable outcomes.
- 3. Select a new course of action:** Decide which option could leverage the most equitable change.



Institutionalizing Racial Equity

Implicit Bias	Explicit Equity
Unaware of choice points	Builds in decision-making guides that evoke consideration of equity
Exclusive of stakeholders	Fosters active engagement and empowerment of stakeholders
Not attentive to race, gender, income and other inequities	Gives distinct, specific and sufficient attention to key disparities/inequities
Ignores barriers to access	Supports and implements strategies to remove barriers
Does not consider racial impacts	Systematically analyzes potential impacts on disadvantaged groups



Explicit Equity (“Equity-Mindedness”)

- **Proactively seeks to eliminate inequities and advance racial equity** in policy and program development, budgeting, planning and decision-making.
- **Thoughtfully considers the impacts** of proposed decisions on different racial/ethnic groups, with added attention to stakeholders who are most disadvantaged or marginalized.
- **Identifies clear goals and objectives**, measurable outcomes, and tasks and timelines. Develops mechanisms for successful implementation, documentation and evaluation, with ample staffing, funding and support for success and sustainability.



Equity Primes as Debiasing Tools

- Judicial Bench Cards
- Equity-Driven Planning
- Pocket Guide to Budgeting
- Equity Impact Assessments



History: Assessing Impacts

Environmental Impact Statements (EIS): required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, are a decision-making tool that describes the positive and negative effects of proposed actions “significantly affecting the quality of the human environment,” and identifies alternative actions that can be taken to mitigate adverse impacts.



History: Preventing Problems

Voting Rights Act, Section 5
Preclearance: 1965 Civil Rights legislation designed to outlaw discriminatory voting practices. Section 5 of the Act requires that the U.S. Dept. of Justice to "preclear" any attempt to change "any voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure with respect to voting..." in any "covered jurisdiction."



History: A Mandate for Systemic Racial Equity

Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, United Kingdom: established a statutory *general* duty for government authorities to promote race equality by:

- 1) eliminating unlawful discrimination;
- 2) promoting equality of opportunity; and
- 3) promoting good relations between persons of different racial groups.

The general duty was expanded in 2010 to include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.



History: A Mandate for Systemic Racial Equity

- The United Kingdom also required government agencies to use Racial Equality Impact Assessments (REIAs).
- They defined these as “...a way of systematically and thoroughly assessing, and consulting on, the effects that a proposed policy is likely to have on people, depending on their racial group...The main purpose of a race equality impact assessment is to pre-empt the possibility that your proposed policy could affect some racial groups unfavourably.” (UK Race Relations Act, 2000)



Why Use REIAs?

- To engage stakeholders in decision-making, especially those most adversely affected by current conditions.
- To bring conscious attention to racial inequities and impacts *before* decisions get made.
- To avoid or minimize adverse impacts and unintended consequences.
- To prevent racism from occurring in the first place—to get ahead of the curve of rapidly replicating racism.
- To affirmatively advance racial equity, inclusion and unity.



Governance

King County, WA: Equity and Social Justice Initiative asks all departments to use a “fair and just principle” to achieve equitable opportunities for all, and to use an “Equity Impact Review Tool” to consciously address the elimination of racism in the areas of:

- 1) policymaking & decision-making
- 2) organizational operations, and
- 3) community engagement and communications.



Governance

Seattle: Race and Social Justice Initiative asks all departments to use “Racial Equity Analysis” questions for policy development and budget-making. Questions include how proposed actions support:

- economic equity and contracting;
- immigrant & refugee access to services;
- public engagement and outreach;
- workforce equity; and
- capacity building.



Policymaking

Oregon Criminal Justice and Child Welfare Bill: House Bill 2053 would allow any lawmaker to request a study analyzing the impact of child welfare and criminal justice laws on racial and ethnic communities.



Stakeholder Engagement is Key



Racial Equity Impact Assessment

What are Racial Equity Impact Assessments?

A Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) is a systematic examination of how different racial and ethnic groups will likely be affected by a proposed action or decision. REIAs are used to minimize unanticipated adverse consequences in a variety of contexts, including the analysis of proposed policies, institutional practices, programs, plans and budgetary decisions. The REIA can be a vital tool for preventing institutional racism and for identifying new options to remedy long-standing inequities.

Why are they needed?

REIAs are used to reduce, eliminate and prevent racial discrimination and inequities. The persistence of deep racial disparities and divisions across society is evidence of institutional racism--the routine, often invisible and unintentional, production of inequitable social opportunities and outcomes. When racial equity is not consciously addressed, racial inequality is often unconsciously replicated.

When should it be conducted?

REIAs are best conducted during the decision-making process, prior to enacting new proposals. They are used to inform decisions, much like environmental impact statements, fiscal impact reports and workplace risk assessments.

Where are they in use?

The use of REIAs in the U.S. is relatively new and still somewhat limited, but new interest and initiatives are on the rise. The United Kingdom has been using them with success for nearly a decade.

EXAMPLES OF RACIAL JUSTICE EQUITY IMPACTS

Equity and Social Justice Initiative

King County, WA

The county government is using an Equity Impact Review Tool to intentionally consider the promotion of equity in the development and implementation of key policies, programs and funding decisions.

Race and Social Justice Initiative

Seattle, WA

City Departments are using a set of Racial Equity Analysis questions as filters for policy development and budget making.

Minority Impact Statements

Iowa and Connecticut

Both states have passed legislation which requires the examination of the racial and ethnic impacts of all new sentencing laws prior to passage. Commissions have been created in Illinois and Wisconsin to consider adopting a similar review process. Related measures are being proposed in other states, based on a model developed by the Sentencing Project.

Proposed Racial Equity Impact Policy

St. Paul, MN

If approved by the city council, a Racial Equity Impact Policy would require city staff and developers to compile a "Racial Equity Impact Report" for all development projects that receive a public subsidy of \$100,000 or more.

Race Equality Impact Assessments

United Kingdom

Since 2000, all public authorities required to develop and publish race equality plans must assess proposed policies using a Race Equality Impact Assessment, a systematic process for analysis.

Racial Equity Impact Assessment **GUIDE**

Below are sample questions to use to anticipate, assess and prevent potential adverse consequences of proposed actions on different racial groups.

1. IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDERS

Which racial/ethnic groups may be most affected by and concerned with the issues related to this proposal?

2. ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

Have stakeholders from different racial/ethnic groups—especially those most adversely affected—been informed, meaningfully involved and authentically represented in the development of this proposal? Who’s missing and how can they be engaged?

3. IDENTIFYING AND DOCUMENTING RACIAL INEQUITIES

Which racial/ethnic groups are currently most advantaged and most disadvantaged by the issues this proposal seeks to address? How are they affected differently? What quantitative and qualitative evidence of inequality exists? What evidence is missing or needed?

4. EXAMINING THE CAUSES

What factors may be producing and perpetuating racial inequities associated with this issue? How did the inequities arise? Are they expanding or narrowing? Does the proposal address root causes? If not, how could it?

5. CLARIFYING THE PURPOSE

What does the proposal seek to accomplish? Will it reduce disparities or discrimination

6. CONSIDERING ADVERSE IMPACTS

What adverse impacts or unintended consequences could result from this policy? Which racial/ethnic groups could be negatively affected? How could adverse impacts be prevented or minimized?

7. ADVANCING EQUITABLE IMPACTS

What positive impacts on equality and inclusion, if any, could result from this proposal? Which racial/ethnic groups could benefit? Are there further ways to maximize equitable opportunities and impacts?

8. EXAMINING ALTERNATIVES OR IMPROVEMENTS

Are there better ways to reduce racial disparities and advance racial equity? What provisions could be changed or added to ensure positive impacts on racial equity and inclusion?

9. ENSURING VIABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Is the proposal realistic, adequately funded, with mechanisms to ensure successful implementation and enforcement. Are there provisions to ensure ongoing data collection, public reporting, stakeholder participation and public accountability?

10. IDENTIFYING SUCCESS INDICATORS

What are the success indicators and progress benchmarks? How will impacts be documented and evaluated? How will the level, diversity and quality of ongoing stakeholder engagement be assessed?



Using a Racial Equity Impact Analysis in the Minneapolis Public Schools

By Jermaine Toney and Terry Keleher

Jermaine Toney
Research Consultant, Applied
Research Center, and doctoral
student in economics, New School
for Social Research

Applied Research Center
32 Broadway Suite 1801
New York, NY 10004
212.513.7925
jtoney@arc.org

Terry Keleher
Thought Leadership and
Practice Specialist

Applied Research Center
322 S. Michigan Ave. Suite 1032 #A924
Chicago, IL 60604
312.376.8234
tkeleher@arc.org

Prompted by a community-based alliance called the Education Equity Organizing Collaborative, the Minneapolis Board of Education agreed, in 2008, to use a racial impact assessment to inform decision making related to its Changing School Options initiative¹ The initiative was a school board proposal to cut school district operating costs by reorganizing school enrollment and transportation routes. The school board's use of the community-driven "Race, Cultural and Economic Equity Impact Assessment" resulted in the selection of a plan that mitigated any adverse impact on communities of color.²

The Minneapolis School Board Equity Impact Assessment

The Minneapolis Board of Education sought, in spring 2008, the Education Equity Organizing Collaborative's support for a proposed \$60 million school funding referendum on the November 2008 ballot.³ The collaborative, being a multiracial and

¹For an in-depth discussion of racial impact statements and their uses in advocacy, see William Kennedy et al., *Putting Race Back on the Table: Racial Impact Statements*, in this issue.

²Minneapolis Public Schools, *Race, Cultural and Economic Equity Impact Assessment of Changing School Options* (2009) ((1) Minneapolis Public Schools, *Changing School Options Revised Plan and Variations: Pre-reading for 7/14 Board Work Session*; (2) Minneapolis Public Schools, *Changing School Options Revised Plan and Variations: Appendix to Pre-reading for 7/14 Board Work Session*; and (3) Minneapolis Public Schools, *Changing School Options, Revised Plans and Variations, Appendix B, Attendance Boundary Maps*) (all on file with Jermaine Toney).

³See Organizing Apprenticeship Project, Education Equity Organizing Collaborative (n.d.), <http://bit.ly/1bxR6PV>.

multicultural alliance of community organizations advocating equity in public schools, was seen as a civic player. The collaborative's partners at the time included Migizi Communications (an American Indian organization), Somali Action Alliance, Isaiah (a multiracial faith-based coalition), the Coalition of Black Churches, and the Organizing Apprenticeship Project (which supports community organizers and racial justice advocacy and convened and staffed the collaborative).

The collaborative advised the school board that a racial, cultural, and economic impact analysis of how students of color, American Indian students, and other schoolchildren would be affected by approval of the referendum would have to be done before the collaborative could support the referendum. The collaborative commissioned the Organizing Apprenticeship Project to conduct the racial impact analysis because the project had analyzed the racial impact of state legislative and budgetary proposals.⁴ The project had, in turn, received training and consulting from our Applied Research Center, a national racial justice think tank and promoter of equity tools such as legislative report cards on racial equity and racial impact assessments.

The school district's enrollment for the 2008–2009 school year was 40 percent African American, 30 percent white, 17 percent Latino, 9 percent Asian, and 4.5 percent American Indian.⁵ Even though students of color constituted 70 percent of total enrollment in the district, there was a wide gap in reading proficiency test scores between students of color and white students.⁶ In the 2006–2007

school year only 31 percent of the district's African American students were proficient in reading, while 35 percent of Latino students, 33 percent of American Indian students, and 43 percent of Asian students were proficient in reading. In comparison, 82 percent of white students were proficient in reading.⁷ Only 32 percent of low-income students, that is, those who received a free or reduced lunch, were proficient in reading.⁸

The Organizing Apprenticeship Project's racial impact analysis revealed that if voters failed to support additional school funding, the academic achievement gap across different racial groups would widen.⁹ Voter approval of the referendum would result in the maintenance, but not expansion, of disparities. The collaborative actively and visibly supported the referendum. Voters approved the referendum by a historic margin, with significant support from voters of color.

That same year the Minneapolis Board of Education again sought support from the collaborative, this time for the Changing School Options initiative, a proposal to save operating costs by reorganizing services. The initiative offered three options to solve the fiscal difficulties brought about by declining student enrollment and rising transportation costs: school closures, rewired pathways in school enrollment options, and changed school transportation routes.

This time the collaborative asked the Minneapolis School Board to conduct an equity impact assessment of the initiative's proposed options. The collaborative supplied an assessment framework: the Pocket Guide to Budget Proposals: Racial and Economic Equity Assessment

⁴See Kennedy et al., *supra* note 1 (discussing Organizing Apprenticeship Project type of racial impact statement and how it has been used elsewhere).

⁵Minneapolis Public Schools, Summary Statistics: Racial/Ethnic Breakdown from 1978–2009 (Dec. 28, 2009), <http://bit.ly/169zc3M>.

⁶Dave Heistad, Research, Evaluation and Assessment, Minneapolis Public Schools, Achievement Gap Trends (n.d.), <http://bit.ly/18FWqCn>.

⁷*Id.* at 7.

⁸Research, Evaluation Assessment Department, Minneapolis Public Schools, Spring 2010 MCA-II and MTELL District Summary Results 5 (July 1, 2010), <http://bit.ly/17czk0O>.

⁹Jermaine Toney, Organizing Apprenticeship Project, Weighing the Racial Equity Impacts of [Minneapolis] Schools Referendum (Sept. 30, 2008), <http://bit.ly/15QJa86>.

Questions.¹⁰ The Organizing Apprenticeship Project previously used and shared the Pocket Guide with state lawmakers to assess the racial impact of state budget proposals.

The Pocket Guide has five assessment questions:

1. How does the proposed action (policy, budget, or investment decision) impact racial and economic disparities in Minnesota?
2. How does the proposed action support and advance racial and economic equity in such areas as education, contracting, immigrant and refugee access to services, health, workforce and economic development?
3. Have voices of groups affected by the proposal, budget, or investment decision been involved with its development? What solutions were proposed by these groups and communities?
4. What do you need to ensure that proposals are successful in addressing disparities—what resources, what timelines, and what monitoring will help ensure success for achieving racial and economic equity?
5. If your assessment shows that a proposed policy, budget, or investment decision will likely increase disparities, what alternatives can you explore? What modifications are needed to maximize racial and economic equity outcomes and reduce racial and economic disparities?¹¹

The board voted unanimously to authorize the district staff to use the assess-

ment. The board was eager to know how the proposed changes would affect their constituents. The assessment also gave the board an opportunity to ensure that the initiative's benefits or harms would be evenly distributed across different racial groups.

Though initially reluctant to conduct the analysis, the school administration eventually created an interdepartmental team and secured a contractor to help in the research, analysis, and writing of the assessment. Some team members saw a gap between what the collaborative was requesting and what data the school could realistically compile for the assessment. The school board member assigned to coordinate the analysis convened a face-to-face meeting with key board members and the working team. They all began to see an accurate way to model the impact of the changes by using high research standards.

The collaborative wanted to ensure that community organizations had access to accurate information. But some members of the school staff research team feared public scrutiny and critique of the school's racial impact analysis. Again, face-to-face meetings between collaborative leaders and the staff team helped diffuse this tension. The meetings revealed a shared commitment to equity and an agreement to use data to bring out the truth in order to allow the board to choose an implementation plan that would prevent disparities. This partnership opened a path for a doable and useful analysis.

The main task in using the assessment tool was to pull together data to see how each identified option for implementing the initiative would have an impact on different students and communities. The district team gathered data on student enrollment differences by resident zone; the team paid close attention to the proportion of students of color, English language learners, enrollment trends over

¹⁰Jermaine Toney, Organizing Apprenticeship Project, Pocket Guide to Budget Proposals: Racial and Economic Equity Assessment Questions (March 18, 2009), <http://bit.ly/1ak9gTZ>.

¹¹*Id.*

the last five years for kindergarten and certain grades, and attrition within the public schools. The team also analyzed by resident zone the number of magnet programs, the proposed school closures, the programs proposed to be closed, the number of students who would and would not have to change schools. And the team looked at the cost savings of each option and the number and racial percentages of students who would be disrupted, that is, students who would have to change schools.

The district's racial equity analysis revealed that Plan A, which established solid school boundaries, saved the district \$8.5 million while potentially disrupting 9,200 students. The plan disrupted 39 percent of students of color compared to 52 percent of white students. Plan B, which rebalanced zone capacity, saved a little less than Plan A, \$8.2 million, while disrupting only 8,550 students. Under this plan, 43 percent of students of color were disrupted compared to 33 percent of white students. Plan C, which minimized disruption, had the largest savings, \$9 million, and disrupted the fewest: 4,920 students. Plan C caused the disruption of 22 percent of students of color compared to 25 percent of white students.¹² Plan C was clearly the best plan for all kids facing disruption—students of color, English language learners, low-income students, and white students. Still, this final option meant that major schools serving Somali students would be closed while many American Indian students would be forced to change schools.

Because the equity analysis broke down the data by race and culture, each community was able to see how the school initiative's options would have an impact on it. American Indians constituted only 5 percent of the district's student population, but 26 percent of those students would have been adversely affected by the plan. The Somali community would have been adversely affected by the proposed

closure of two schools; the Somalis' access to an anchor school critical to their community would have been affected.

The school district, with an accurate picture of the potential racial effects of the different options, now had an opportunity to make appropriate changes in the school district's proposals and to engage direct stakeholders in collective problem solving.

The district, in consultation with American Indian leaders, tackled the disproportionate adverse impact on the American Indian community by taking a flexible approach to the proposed new boundaries. For example, an American Indian parent whose child's school would now be outside the new boundary could choose to keep the child at the old school or send the child to a school within the new boundary. This flexibility allowed for more parent choice and gave the community the chance to preserve community cohesion. According to one leader,

this almost never happens. Normally, the parent has to follow what the new rules of the game are. This time, the policy was not so arbitrarily implemented because it had the flexibility to take on parent choice. This approach was more empowering for the parents and American Indian community in general. The American Indian community is used to being victimized by policy. This choice flipped that script on its head.¹³

Similarly, communication between the school district and Somali Action Alliance resulted in maintaining an elementary school that fed into a middle school with a solid performance record and reputation for educating Somali students at this critical developmental age. Without the impact analysis, the feeder school would have likely been closed.

¹²Minneapolis Public Schools, Changing School Options Revised Plan and Variations: Pre-reading for 7/14 Board Work Session, *supra* note 2, PowerPoint slide 14. This document has Plans A, B4, and D. We changed the name of Plan B4 to Plan B, and Plan D to Plan C, for simplicity.

¹³Telephone Interview by Jermaine Toney with Elaine Salinas, President, Migizi Communications (Jan. 19, 2012).

The difference that the racial impact assessment made—affording community participation and a better solution—was significant for thousands of families and schoolchildren. According to a school board member,

had the district not done the Equity Impact Analysis, we would not have known the upcoming impacts. In general, it is just good practice to be aware of the impact of a district's decisions—to see and think about impact of decisions. This has to be more of a discipline, not a onetime thing. It has to be embedded in all the work—part of operating as a school district. Not just responding to a community group request but it has to be part of how the district does business.¹⁴

Lessons Learned

The Minneapolis Public Schools' experience in developing an equity impact assessment with community participation has much to teach us. We advocates who plan to do equity assessments should keep in mind five points.

1. **Stakeholder engagement from the outset of planning and decision making is critical.** Those most affected by the proposals at issue must be actively and authentically engaged in decision making. In Minneapolis parents were able to exert influence and shape how they would be affected *before* decisions were made rather than *after* the fact.
2. **Multiracial alliances and analyses are needed.** Communities coming together across racial and cultural lines can be powerful in driving change. Instead of competing racial lines, a multiracial and multiethnic approach to analysis and decision making can generate solutions that benefit people across all races, espe-

cially racial groups that are currently or potentially most disadvantaged.

3. **School district and community collaboration is well worth the investment.** Face-to-face meetings and the development of understanding, trust, and a working partnership pay off in producing better solutions. Collectively partners bring more perspectives, knowledge, and expertise to creating workable and equitable solutions.
4. **The use of race equity research tools is critical to success.** Having concrete frameworks and guides for conducting racial equity impact assessments helps ensure that questions are considered thoughtfully and systematically. Racial equity tools are most effective when they are part of an ongoing broader institutionwide and communitywide strategy for achieving equitable outcomes.¹⁵
5. **Equity impact assessments need to be institutionalized.** Building the use of equity tools into standard protocols can help support and sustain success so that their use is not simply dependent on the goodwill of individuals. Institutions and organizations committed to providing high-quality service to all people can explore ways to integrate racial equity tools at multiple decision-making points, and by multiple decision makers, in order to advance systemwide benefits: "We must be vigilant around equity issues. The system will act like the system, going right back to old behavior real quickly. This is why we must have campaigns, but also we must have policies that institutionalize equity."¹⁶

Our civil rights legal framework has a strong focus on remedying problems once they have occurred. And, increasingly, lawmakers and jurists are taking a "color-blind" approach to creating and interpreting laws. Yet many laws

¹⁴Telephone interview by Jermaine Toney with Jill Stever-Zeitlin, Minneapolis School Board Member (Jan. 9, 2012).

¹⁵See Kennedy et al., *supra* note 1.

¹⁶Salinas, *supra* note 13.

that are *facially* neutral—silent on race—in their intent, are not *racially* neutral in their impact: racial equity impact assessments—while still needing further refinement and wider application—provide a proactive, participatory, and prospective approach to racial equity efforts. If developed collectively and implemented effectively, they can actually prevent ra-

cial disparities from occurring in the first place. Replacing color blindness with “equity-mindedness”—the conscious and collective consideration of racial impact during decision making—offers hope that we can affirmatively counteract racial bias and advance racial equity and social inclusion.¹⁷

¹⁷Kennedy et al., *supra* note 1.



Using Choice Points to Advance Equity

1. **Identify a Choice Point:** What is one of your points of opportunity to make or influence a decision that may affect equitable outcomes?
2. **Assess Impacts:** What are the impacts of current decisions and actions that may be unintentionally reinforcing bias, barriers or inequities?
3. **Generate Options:** What are some alternative action options that could produce different outcomes? (Try to generate several of them.)
4. **Decide Action:** Which option will generate the most leverage, momentum or gain towards advancing equity and inclusion?
5. **Change Habits:** What reminders or “equity primes” can be structured into you routine practices and protocols to make equity an ongoing priority and habit? What relationships, supports, incentives or accountability measures could help?