

Case Study: Pajaro Valley Unified School District

Carnegie Summit 2021 Session:

“Educational Opportunity Audits: Engaging Stakeholders, Exposing Inequities, and Taking Action”

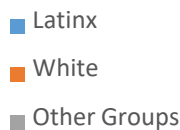
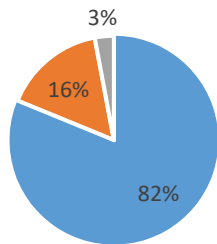
Presenters: Jeannette LaFors, Mayra Lara & Sid Salazar

The Education Trust-West partnered with Pajaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD), a K-12 district in coastal central California which serves 20,400 students in grades TK-12; district residents live in suburban and rural communities. While the majority of students in the district are Latinx, the vast majority of white students attend one high school. The district’s superintendent was in her first year when she partnered with Ed Trust-West to conduct the EEA. While she had the full support of the Board of Directors, many staff expressed doubts that the EEA and Blueprint Planning would result in real change as prior district initiatives tended to fizzle out after initial implementation. To help build confidence in the process, the superintendent was actively and directly involved in the process from beginning to end.

Phase 1: Educational Equity Audit (EEA) & Blueprint Planningⁱ

Student Demographics

Ethnicity



English Learners: 44%

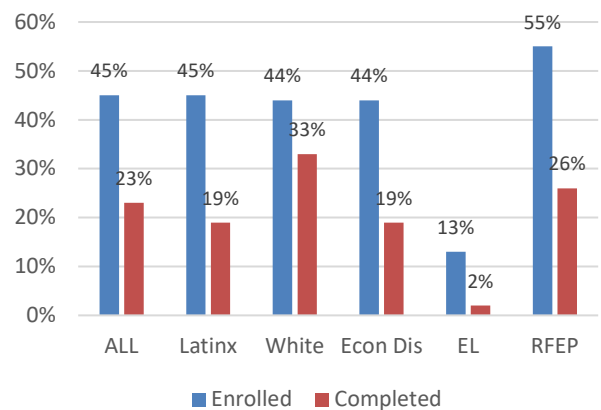
Reclassified English Proficient (RFEP): 23%

Students in Special Education: 14%

Students Qualifying for Free or Reduced Lunch: 75%

Key High-Level Findings from Transcript Analysis

Percentage of Students Enrolled in and Completing the A-G Sequence, Class of 2016



Key Findings from Stakeholder Research

Teachers expressed that they wanted more professional development on differentiated instruction, especially for serving students still learning English and for key strategies to embed language development in the core curriculum.

Students and **parents** expressed that they did not have the information they needed to navigate the path to post-secondary education.

Survey results indicated that while 82% of **students** responded that they planned to attend college after graduation, 67% of **staff** responded that they believed all students were capable of going to college.

Phase 2: Blueprint for Equity Action Planning

With guidance from ETW, the district convened a **Working Committee** of 60 members: teachers, counselors, and administrators from every high school and middle school in the district, along with a core team from the district office, covering all departments, including business services, curriculum & instruction, human resources, technology, and facilities. The Working Committee met over five full days throughout the school year to:

- Review the data and findings from the EEA
- Discuss and determine which findings were of highest priority
- Consider the recommendations outlined in the report
- Develop a set of proposed actions to address the areas of highest priority
- Develop site-based engagement and communication plans to solicit input, feedback, and buy-in

The district also convened a **Steering Committee** of 12 members who included representatives from local community organizations, higher education, and school board members. The Steering Committee met after each Working Committee meeting to:

- Review the proposals developed by the Working Committee
- Provide feedback and input into the proposed plans
- Identify community resources to support the district's plan

Members of the Working Committee had the opportunity to work in site-based teams, as well as to meet with colleagues in similar roles across the district. They found this collaboration time to be very useful, especially when they had the opportunity to work with colleagues from their feeder schools.

The full-day format allowed for the committee members to go deep with their discussions and thinking. There were key questions and tensions that had to be surfaced and addressed, including questions like:

- *Are we focusing too much on college preparation? What about vocational classes?*
- *How are adults' implicit biases about students impacting opportunities and access?*
- *How do alternative schools fit into this discussion about increasing expectations for all students?*
- *How do we ensure that English learners are not left behind?*
- *How do we get input from more people not in the room?*
- *Is the district really going to follow-through on this plan?*
- *How do we keep ourselves accountable to the plan?*

After each session, the ETW facilitators met with the district leaders to debrief the session, review feedback from the participants, and make any necessary changes to the process to ensure that any issues or questions were addressed in an authentic and sufficient way. For example, based on concerns articulated by some committee members, facilitators devoted a significant amount of time to help the committee develop a district-wide communication plan, with specific strategies for each site and stakeholder group.

At the conclusion of our time together, PVUSD created a detailed plan that aligned with the district's LCAP goals and included a three-year roadmap with action items for the district's high schools, middle schools, elementary schools, and the district office.

Phase 3: Implementation

Accomplishments

The first year of Implementation was mostly devoted to communication and planning. But one year into the Implementation Phase, PVUSD achieved the following outcomes as a result of the Blueprint Plan:

- **New Graduation Requirements:** PVUSD passed new graduation requirements, starting for the Class of 2023, to be more aligned with college and career readiness standards. Students will now be required to take two years of a world language (other than English) *and* one year of a visual or performing art.
- **Supports for students:** The district now uses a modular credit recovery model so that students only need to re-take the portions of a course for which they had not met standards, rather than repeating an entire course in a traditional credit recovery model. And teachers now update their online grade books weekly, so students and parents have more timely information about students' progress through classes.
- **Support for Counselors:** After discovering inconsistencies across course titles and numbers throughout the district as part of the equity audit, PVUSD hired a head counselor to: 1) develop a district-wide course catalog, 2) ensure that all college prep courses were approved and correctly listed in the University of California course approval portal, and 3) ensure that transfer students' courses were correctly labeled in the student information system.

Key Learnings

It is imperative that district leaders are clear about their support for the plan and that they devote resources for its implementation. Some of the strategic steps that PVUSD undertook to ensure an effective and thoughtful implementation included:

1. Re-convene the Working Committee to review progress on the actions outlined in the plan, make revisions when necessary, and ensure an accountability loop for those responsible for implementation. (PVUSD does this twice a year.)
2. Ensure that all departments – business services, human resources, etc. -- continue to be involved in the plan, not just education services. The broader the involvement and engagement, the more likely the plan will be implemented well and sustain personnel changes.
3. Engage the unions early and often in the development process, as well as in the implementation phase. The superintendent of PVUSD holds weekly meetings with the unions to build a strong and collaborative relationship. Some of the action items in the plan required changes to the negotiated contracts; these positive relationships were critical for ensuring a smooth implementation.

PVUSD COLLEGE & CAREER READY ROADMAP 3 YEAR ACTION PLAN

Our journey down this roadmap will assure all students are college and career ready. The set of actions highlighted on this map ensures accountability while leaving enough flexibility to pivot as the educational landscape changes. Each year of actions builds upon the prior to move our students toward becoming college and career ready. This roadmap summarizes important steps PVUSD will take over the next three years to catalyze improvements throughout the system. We owe our gratitude to the many voices who helped bring this roadmap to life.



ⁱ Demographic Data Source: California Department of Education, DataQuest, 2016-17 (accessed April 2017)
 High-Level Findings from Transcript Analysis Source: The Education Trust-West analysis of PVUSD data, 2017