# Actionable Tools

Now is the time for readers to check for the most common Systemic Inequity Traps in your own school or district. We invite you to use the templates to identify and plan how to shatter these harmful practices and policies.

Chapter 1: Symbolic Data Systems

Equity Hook: The Emperor Has No Clothes!

Template 1.1 Directions: Refer to Figure 1.1 as an example. Fill in the template with crystal clear language defining your achievement floor for every student, and the beliefs that provide rationale for that floor.

Template 1.1. What's Your Floor?

Belief #1

Belief #2

Belief #3
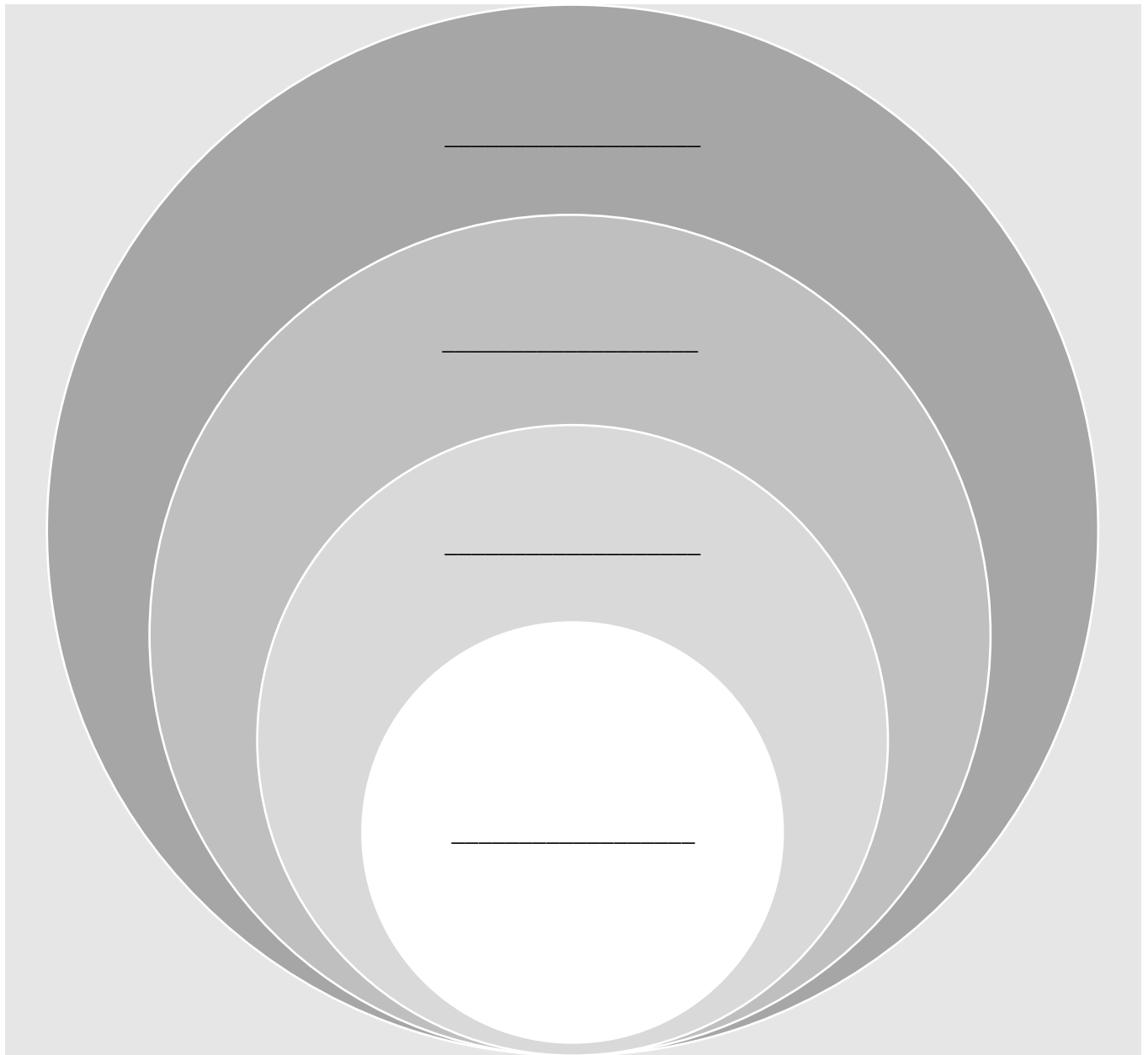
Your School or District Floor
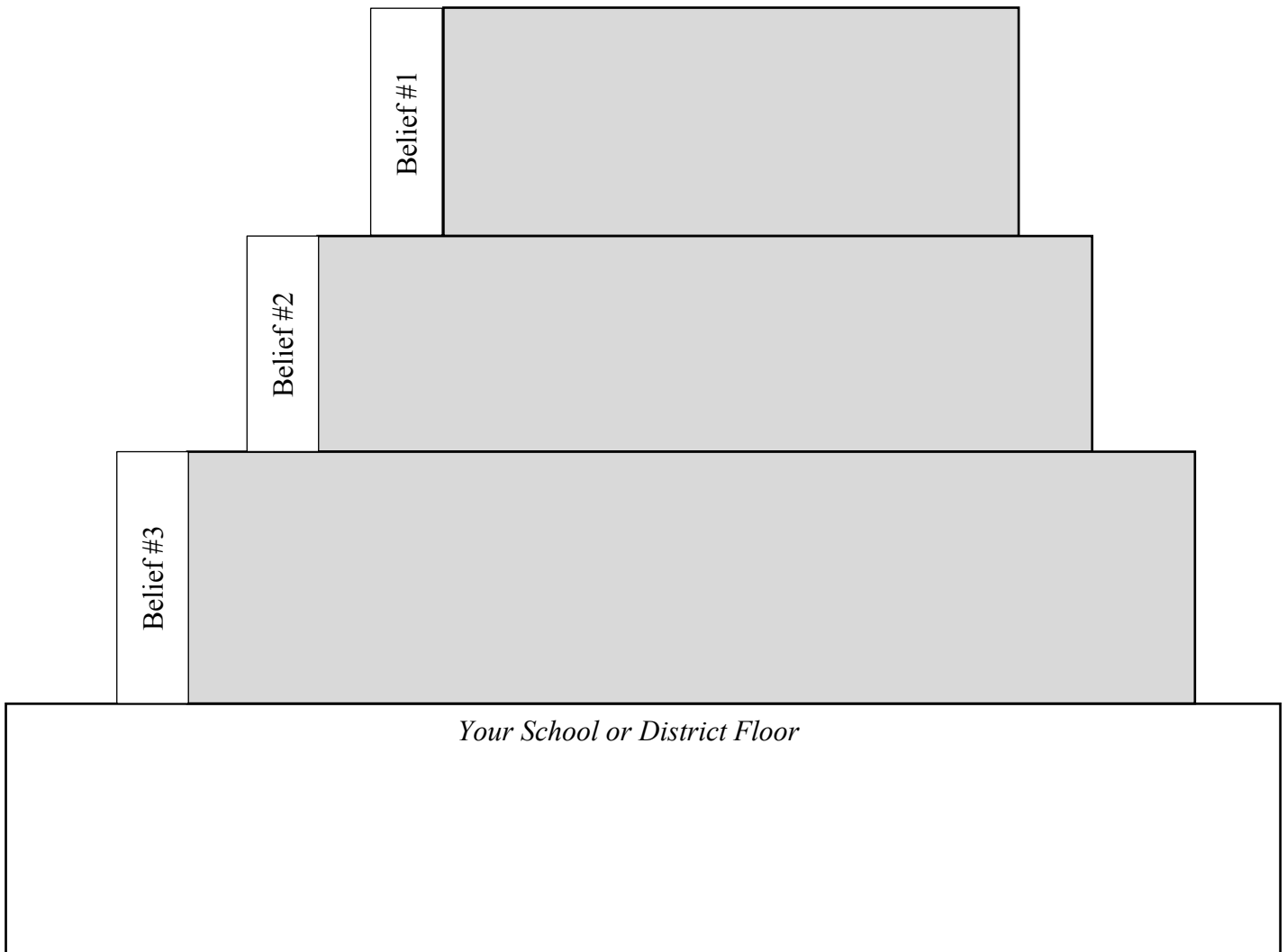
Template 1.2 Directions: Refer to Table 1.1 as an example. Decide what achievement questions are the most important. Then fill in the first two columns now, and the final column at the end of the year.

Template 1.2. Annual Achievement Questions and Answers

Questions	What Data Will Answer?	End of Year Answers

Template 1.3 Directions: Refer to Figure 1.2 as an example. Then determine the levels of your school system with the greatest opportunity to help or to hinder historically lower achieving students from getting to X. Place them on the figure to define which entities will review results of assessment rounds and make actionable agreements in response.

Template 1.3. Levels of the Nested Data System

Template 1.4 Directions: Refer to Table 1.2 for an example. If you were to implement the most substantive data systemic solution you can imagine, reflect on what could go wrong in your school or district, then complete the template.

Template 1.4. Anticipated Challenges and Systemic Solutions for Nested Data Systems

What Could Go Wrong	Data Ritual Solutions	Person Responsible

Template 1.5 Directions: Refer to Table 1.3 for an example. Take an honest stock of your existing data system. Then complete the template.

Concerns that Your Data System Could Be More Symbolic than Substantive	Rationale for Concern

Template 1.6 Directions: Refer to the concerns you listed in Template 1.5 and complete the blank blocks comparing symbolic aspects of your data system with those of elements described as most impactful to students in this chapter.

Compromised Design

$1^0\Delta$ *between the equity design and compromised design*

Equity Design
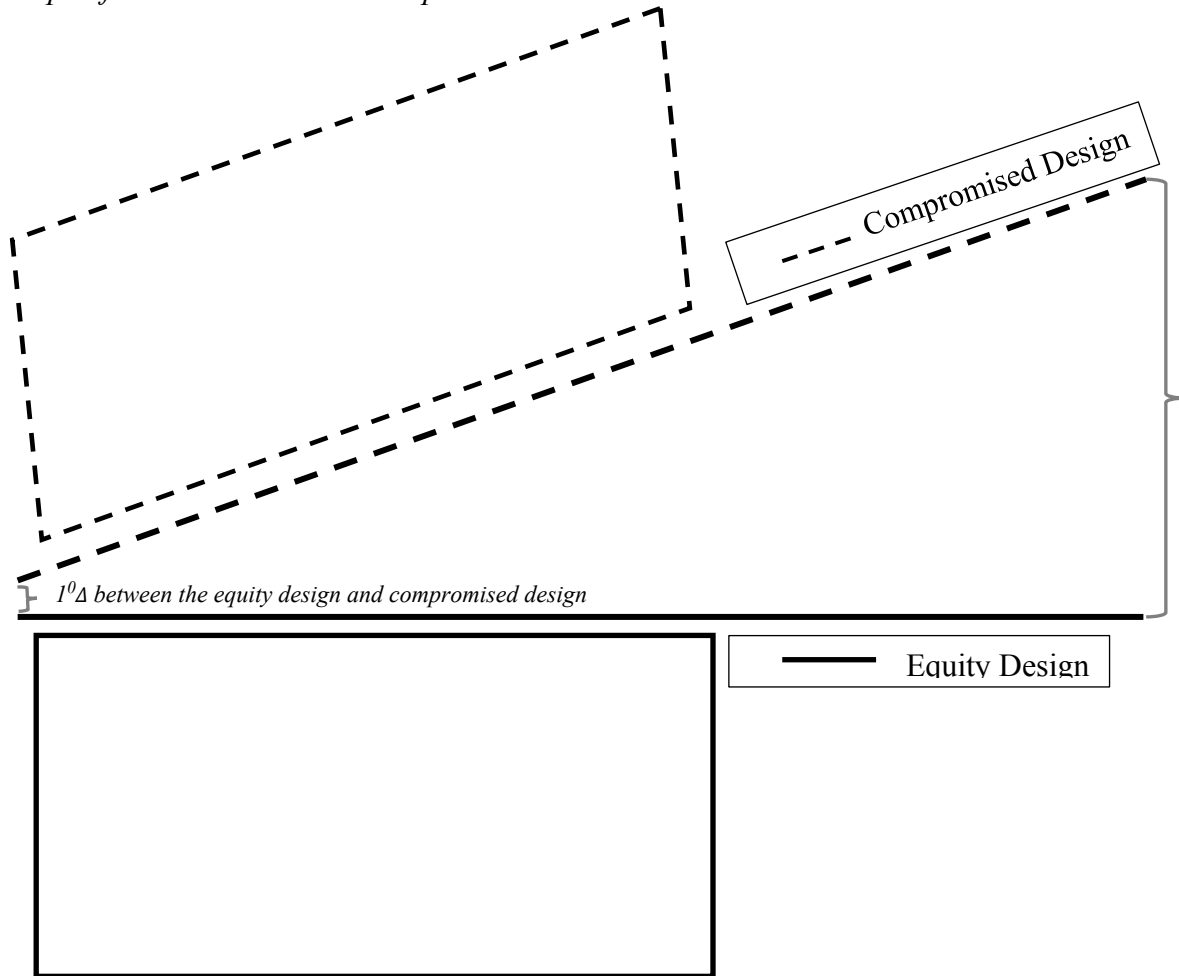
Chapter 2: Baby Steps Planning
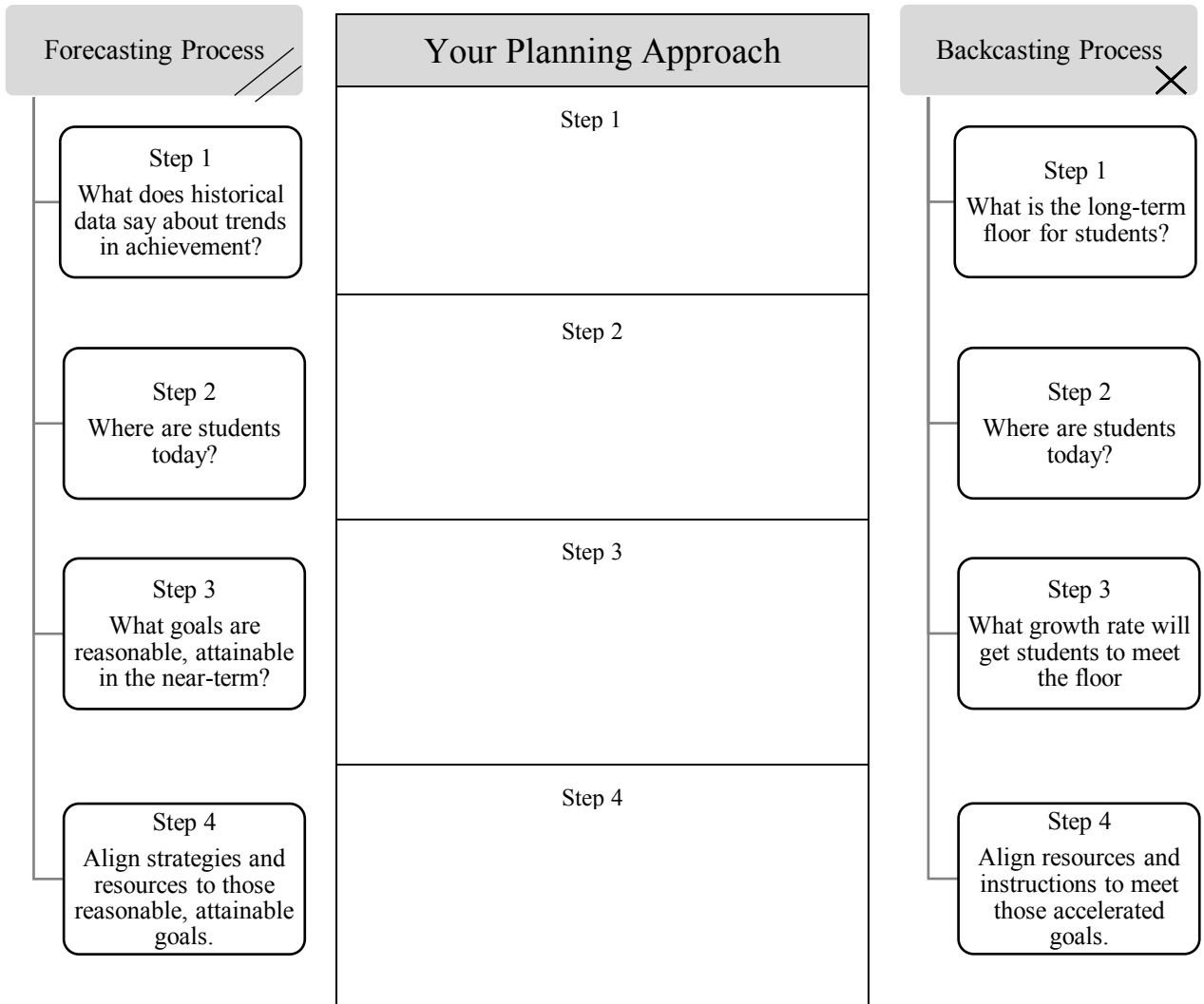
Equity Hook: Backcast, Don't Forecast

Template 2.1 Directions: Think about the approach to planning that your school system uses.

List the major Steps in the center column. Then, describe your process compared to the Steps in

Forecasting and Backcasting. Is your process getting your students to X? Why or why not?

How might you modify your approach to get better student outcomes, by design?

Template 2.1. How Does Your Planning Approach Compare?

Forecasting Process	Your Planning Approach	Backcasting Process
Step 1 What does historical data say about trends in achievement?	**Step 1**	**Step 1** What is the long-term floor for students?
Step 2 Where are students today?	**Step 2**	**Step 2** Where are students today?
Step 3 What goals are reasonable, attainable in the near-term?	**Step 3**	**Step 3** What growth rate will get students to meet the floor
Step 4 Align strategies and resources to those reasonable, attainable goals.	**Step 4**	**Step 4** Align resources and instructions to meet those accelerated goals.

Template 2.2 Directions: Refer to Table 2.2 as an example. List your major funding sources for the previous school year and the plans for expending those funds. What do you notice about the list? Now check last year's achievement to see how the plans impacted the goal to get students to X.

Template 2.2. Reflection on Your Plans Getting Students to X

Funding Source	Plans for Expenditures

Activity Directions: Refer to Figure 2.2 as an example. Locate a blank calendar. Determine how many years you want your calendar to run. Be bold and declare a deadline for getting to X. Then, prepare the funding backdrop for your own Backcasted achievement plan by plotting your funding sources and spending deadlines on the calendar. Add to this calendar each time another funding opportunity comes your way so it becomes habit of mind to plan to use a Backcasting approach from a meaningful target.

Chapter 3: New Tracking

Equity Hook: A Rose by Any Other Name…

Template 3.1 *Directions: After pondering the implications of the two guiding equity leadership principles, initial the box beside each statement that you feel committed to and ready to lead. Jot down any reflections that come to mind.*

As an Equity Leader, I commit to ensuring that:

____ All program design decisions will be anchored on a commitment to provide every student with the premium education available to any student, regardless of zip code, race, ethnicity, or other circumstances.

Jot down your thoughts.

_____ Decisions that impact the educational experiences we provide students will rest on the fundamental goal of getting to "X marks the spot;" that is, where distance between achievement every student group is eliminated, and we can no longer predict student outcomes by demographics.

Jot down your thoughts.

Template 3.2. Is Your Program at Risk of Becoming New Tracking?

Directions: When reflecting on the presence or absence of each criterion in your school or district, do not consider whether the condition is intentional or not, or whether your design responds to a currently legitimate concern. Simply respond to actual conditions.

Program Design Areas	New Tracking Characteristics	Your Responses	
Content and Materials	Are some student groups systematically excluded from grade-level core curriculum (materials and instructional rigor)?	No	Yes
Placement and Movement	Is there long-term exclusion (entire school year, or multiple years) from the premium program for some student groups?	No	Yes
Student Placement Profile	Has the practice resulted in segregation of racial/ethnic or other historically lower achieving groups over time?	No	Yes
Student Academic Success	Are students NOT placed in the premium program disproportionately experiencing academic failure?	No	Yes
Student Perception	Are students in a less premium program stigmatized for their assignment to that program?	No	Yes
		Total # No	Total # Yes
Personal and Professional Reflections as an Equity Leader			

Template 3.3 Directions: Refer to Table 3.2 and respond to engage in the exercise below.

- *Identify two struggling and two strong students in your school or district.*

- *Discretely shadow these students through one day at school. Sit in class, observe them outside of class, during the day, and beyond the day if they are in any program at school.*

- *As you observe your students, assess which of the 11 points best describe the education each student experiences in a day.*

- *Then complete your final counts, and jot down your insights in the spaces provided at the bottom of the table.*

Template 3.3

Each column contains 11 total points	
Count the total # of New Tracking points experienced by each student • Struggling Student 1_____ • Struggling Student 2_____ • Strong Student 1_____ • Strong Student 2_____	Count the total # of Acceleration points experienced by each student • Struggling Student 1_____ • Struggling Student 2_____ • Strong Student 1_____ • Strong Student 2_____
Jot down your observations/questions from your counts.	
What are your personal and professional reflections as an Equity Leader?	
"As an Equity Leader, I will take the following actions to shatter the systemic inequity trap of "New Tracking" in my school or district."	

Chapter 4: The Christmas Tree Effect

Equity Hook: The Thing of the Thing

Template 4.1 Directions: List the priority initiatives in your school or district beside the shaded box that corresponds to the number of efforts you have. Think about how people in your school system would respond to the number you selected. Explain.

School systems can...

deeply attend to **ONE** focus area

engage in some way with **TWO** focus areas

feign attention to at least parts of **THREE** focus areas

not even pretend to be engaged in **FOUR** or more areas of focus

Template 4.1. The Capacity of School Systems to Effectively Impact Student Outcomes

Template 4.2 Directions: Gather a trusted team of people representing a variety of roles in your school system. Use the questions from template to kick-start a conversation about the conditions in your school system related to the investment people have in getting students to X Marks the Spot.

Template 4.2 Discussion Questions About the School System Investment in *Getting to X*

Do you believe students are invested in school and their academic future? Explain.
Do you believe staff is personally invested in the school system and its mission to provide every student with a premium education? Explain.
What suggestions do you have to address the issues you have identified?
What else should be considered?

Template 4.3. Directions: Share the levels of Equity Leadership Expertise on Table 4.3 with a selected group. Ask them to respond to the questions and then collect their responses and graph them on Template 4.3. What insights can you glean from the completed graph?
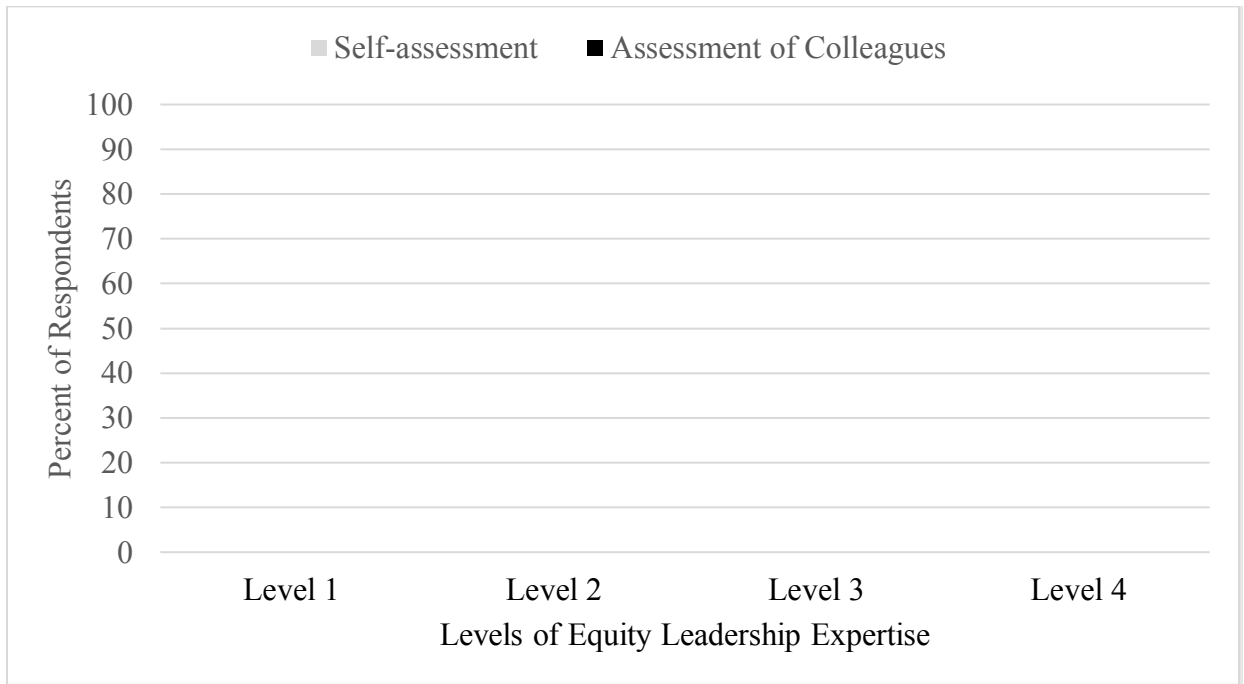
Template 4.3 Results of the Equity Leadership Expertise Self-Ratings

Template 4.4 Directions: How does your school system develop the capacity of leaders to make sound decisions about ways to close gaps in student outcomes? Compare your system practices with the suggested guiding principle on Template 4.3. Make notes of your comparison of the last two columns. What are your insights?

Template 4.4 Developing Staff Capacity in Your System

Plan Questions	Answer	Guidelines from the Research and Best Practice	How your school system matches up	Areas your school system should strengthen
What?	Equity Leadership Expertise	For each role, providing deep, thoughtful professional learning on how to think about the challenge of getting to *X*, accompanied by a few high-impact, lower-prep strategies shared by everyone in that role		
Who?	TLC	Teachers, Counselors (plus other wrap-around service providers), and Leaders		
Where?	Job-embedded	On campuses, in classrooms, or counseling centers (Individuals demonstrate improved learning outcomes when the learning context mirrors the implementation environment.) The more exposures, in same and similar settings to one's own, the deeper the learning and transfer		

Plan Questions	Answer	Guidelines from the Research and Best Practice	How your school system matches up	Areas your school system should strengthen
When?	5+ year cycles	• Leaders preview content the year prior to expected implementation • Next, Summer kickoff institute for staff • Then, practice and feedback during school year • Finally, review-reflection-refinement at the end of the year		
How?	Continuous Improvement	• Non-threatening practice and feedback, in small chunks, throughout the year o Ex. Lesson Study, Guided Planning, Facilitated Learning Walks, Data Inquiry Cycle, side by side coaching/mentoring • Six hours of *new* information per year (ideally during summer) with four hours of doing (planning, trying strategies w feedback) for every hour new information= 24 total hours per year each for T, L, and C. • No less than five years to mastery, without a change in direction or additional requirements		

Chapter 5: Misaligned Leadership

Equity Hook: Equity Leadership Columns

A strong Equity Leadership Column is an absolute prerequisite to taking any action to meaningfully improve outcomes for historically lower achieving student groups. This is such a non-starter that we provide the following exercise knowing that it may be too risky to complete it in a group. You decide how best to respond to this.

Activity Directions: Reflect on your own school system. Who are the people in key positions of power or influence that could advance or impede your plans. These are the members of your Equity Leadership Column. We recommend between three and six names on your list, depending on your district dynamics.

1. Place their names on real or virtual post-its.

2. Now, build a column by stacking the post-its to form a column by placing the names in accordance with their role.

    a. Superintendent and Board at the base

    b. District office above the base

    c. Site leaders above District Office leaders

    d. Site staff and students, if they fit the criteria, are always at the very top

    e. If parents or community members are part of your column, place them where they fit best in your system.

3. Ready? Here is the sensitive part.

    a. If the name on a post-it represents someone who is a truly aligned part of the Equity Leadership Column, leave them where they are on the column.

b. If the name on a post-it represents someone who is misaligned--not on board, disruptive, or causing any cracks in the column, move their post-it so it is not nicely stacked. Move that piece of the column off center so that the column looks weak and destabilized.

4. Finally, reflect on the surprising finding of the 300+ cases in our Study of Studies over 25 years. Every single school or district with impressive achievement results for historically lower achieving students had a strong, aligned Equity Leadership Column. And every single case with poor results had a misaligned column.

   o Given this truth, and the configuration of your post-it column, what are the appropriate actions for you to take as an equity leader to influence conditions so that your students can get to *X Marks the Spot*.