



BERKELEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



LONGFELLOW MIDDLE SCHOOL

Vision 2020 Project

Summary • Listening & Input Campaign



May 2020

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I. PROJECT OVERVIEW

A. GRANT PROJECT SUMMARY

This report and visioning process for Longfellow Middle School (LFMS) is supported by a grant from the Berkeley Public Schools Fund (BPSF). For several years, members of the Longfellow community and Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) leadership have recognized the need for a sustained engagement and planning process for the purpose of addressing a number of overlapping needs at the school. These needs can be thought of in three categories:

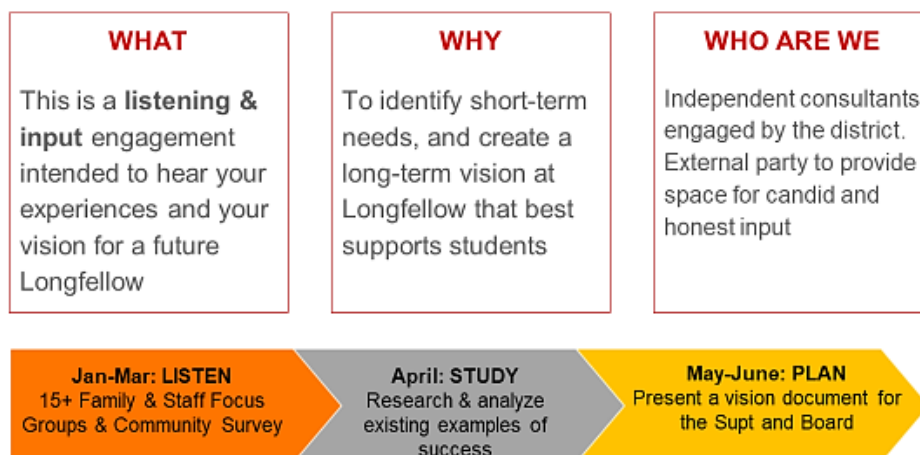
- Addressing short-term challenges faced by the school
- Developing and implementing a long-term vision for Longfellow
- Addressing through policy a number of issues related to citywide student assignment at the middle school level (enrollment)

The BPSF grant application was approved in late October 2019 and proposed using funds to engage teachers, students, and families in three types of work over the 2019-20 school year:

1. Research, Data Analysis, and Literature Reviews
2. Interviews, Surveys, Community Meetings, and Focus Groups
3. Off Site Visits

Starting in November 2019, the project workplan was organized around three (3) sequential phases as follows:

Longfellow Middle School • Vision 2020 Project



B. LISTENING AND INPUT CAMPAIGN 2020

From January to March 2020, we designed and held a series of twenty-four (24) family, community, and staff focus groups and interviews – exceeding the original plan for 15 sessions. This listening campaign was designed to capture the range of voices, opinions, and stakeholders for Longfellow Middle School today, with particular care and sensitivity to its rich and diverse populations and the different ways for meaningful engagement.

Traditional parent/family engagement groups and vehicles of such as Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) or School Site Councils (SSC) may not be comfortable, welcoming, or appropriate for all participants because of language barriers, power dynamics, and cultural norms. Thus, in addition to a series of parent/community forums publicized broadly and open to all families and



stakeholders, we intentionally constructed a series of “invitation groups” for families representing specific identities, experiences, and backgrounds. With these invitation groups, we considered the barriers to participation and the unique opportunity for candid conversations in a safe and supportive environment.

1. Parent/Family & Community Listening & Input Sessions

Translators available for multilingual groups

- Parents and Families of African descent (African American, Black)
- Parents and Families of Arabic and/or Muslim descent
- Parents and Families of Latinx descent
- Parents and Families of Asian and/or Pacific Islander descent
- Parents and Families of Special Education students (students with IEPs)
- Parents and Families of AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) students
- Parents and Families of TWI (Two-Way Immersion) students
- Parents and Families of UMOJA students
- Parents and Families of Sylvia Mendez Elementary School (TWI students, prospective Longfellow Middle School students)
- Open – Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
- Open – School Site Council (SSC)
- Open – English Language Advisory Committee (ELAC)
- Open – general parent/family listening session

For our LFMS staff and educator focus groups, we designed a series that would capture standard and unique groupings to provide a range of history, opinions, and perspectives on Longfellow’s past, present, and future. With sensitivity to constructing confidential and safe spaces, we held the time and space for the following staff listening and input sessions:

2. Staff and Educator Listening & Input Sessions

- Counselors and Student Supports
- Instructional Aides
- Classified Staff (e.g., security, front office, custodial)
- Special Education Teachers
- Department Chairs (subject matter)
- Humanities Department
- STEM Department
- Electives
- Teachers of Color (2 sessions)
- Long Tenured Teachers (10+ years)

The stories, observations, advice, and recommendations from these 24 focus groups represent a deep and rich qualitative data set that reflects the adult stakeholders of Longfellow Middle School. After conducting this series from January to March, we reviewed the data to develop a framework of emerging themes for further exploration. Our next phase of data and discovery included holding student focus groups (e.g., by grades and identities) and a school-wide survey for all parents and families to take online, in-person, or by paper (available for review in English and Spanish). Unfortunately, the start of the Coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic, the Bay Area/Berkeley shelter-in-place executive order, and the closing of all BUSD schools started on March 13, 2020 and paused all immediate next steps with the project and all school activities.



C. BUILDING UPON PRIOR FAMILY/COMMUNITY WORK

It is important to note that the work and findings of this project and listening campaign are not the starting point. Over the past several years, dedicated parents, families, and Longfellow staff have spent significant time and resources to gather and analyze data to advocate for the changes that are raised and echoed in this report. These stakeholders have authored numerous memos, position papers, and requests to the BUSD school board, superintendent, and central district leadership – raising the same issues and framework of inequity, systems change, and quality improvements. Our work and preliminary findings build upon and reinforce the findings and messages of their extraordinary efforts.

D. SPRING 2020 – PROJECT PIVOTS

Concurrent with the COVID-19 pandemic and school district shutdowns, several other Longfellow Middle School changes arose. Altogether, these closures and shifts required our project to pause and pivot:

1. School Leadership Transitions

Almost simultaneous with the COVID-19 school shutdown, Principal Stacey Wyatt announced her resignation. The BUSD administration quickly announced the appointment of Paco Furlan as succeeding principal; Mr. Furlan is currently on sabbatical and quarantined in Spain for COVID-19, with an expected return date to California in mid-summer 2020. Additionally, Vice Principal Doreen Bracamontes announced her departure from Berkeley Unified in April 2020.



2. COVID-19 (school shutdown, distance learning)

The COVID-19 shutdown is an unprecedented and wide-reaching phenomenon. With all California schools closed and all in-person functions suspended until further notices from the federal government, the CDC, the State of California, and local county/city governments – students and families have been quarantined with shelter-in-place orders and public education has worked to convert to distance learning and online meetings.

3. Pivot: Summarize Listening Campaign

The first pivot in our project is to pause and summarize the data from our 3-month listening campaign to provide the district and school community with preliminary information and themes that will help their transition and visioning (especially during the COVID-19 pandemic conditions).

4. Pivot: Next Steps with New Principal

The second pivot in our project will be to partner with the incoming Principal Paco Furlan to support his transition and to continue assessing the vision needs for Longfellow. Toward that end, we recommend that the online school-wide survey be a possible tool that Principal Furlan could use to initially engage parents, families, and community members (versions ready for implementation in English and Spanish).

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Across numerous focus groups and conversations with Longfellow Middle School (LFMS) parents, families, staff, and stakeholders, we heard a complex mosaic of stories and experiences in Berkeley schools. For more than 25 years, the middle school landscape in Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) has been one of persistent inequity, alleviated by periods of up and down school reforms. As socio-economic, housing, and demographic trends shift the city and district toward a rapidly increasing upper-middle class that is more white and less diverse, the historical African American, immigrant, and lower-income families that used to attend BUSD schools have been moving out of the city in large and growing numbers. Compounding the problem of gentrification is BUSD's student enrollment system, built upon previous era guidelines and principles with different processes at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.



Longfellow focus group stakeholders shared that at BUSD's middle schools, an ongoing scenario that often privileges "equality over equity" has resulted in the conditions surrounding their school – the one middle school that consistently experiences resource gaps, constant turnover, climate and culture problems, and a wears a reputation that parents, families, and staff consistently call out as Berkeley's "ghetto school" or "the poor black and brown school." Respondents note that this reputation factor is borne from a district processes cycle and triggers a spiral that is reinforced every year by the systems themselves.

Consider the following *chain reaction of a cycle and a spiral*, described in parts by many of the listening campaign participants: a poor school reputation causes parents and families to turn away and to "not choose" Longfellow; this causes empty spaces at Longfellow (often coupled with waiting lists at the other middle schools, King and Willard); which then results in filling Longfellow's empty spaces with late enrollment, students with higher-needs and other challenges, and out-of-district transfers; which then causes an annual under-budgeting and under-staffed process at Longfellow in the spring and summer, before the start of school; which triggers quality issues at the start of school with slow hiring, many substitutes, and staff

turnover; with problems that continue and grow throughout the year, contributing to the reputation of unplanned, underbudgeted, and understaffed; and then starts the cycle and spiral all over again. It is this bigger picture that any reform effort must address in order to have a chance at sustainable success.



With our focus groups, most participant observations discussed areas for improvement at the school level – understandable since families, students, and staff are most familiar with site-level experiences. However, to view the Longfellow dilemma as primarily “site-level problems” misses much of the big picture, misses how the school’s change efforts sit inside a powerful and recurring system, and may not be the best place for BUSD to begin.

American urban education reform has shown that trying to address a school’s inequity situation with site-level change alone has often failed – even if the site effort sustains improvement for a few years. Ironically, those incredible school leader individuals who can turn a school around for a number of years often distract us (inadvertently) from addressing the root causes of district system inequity – i.e., we may think we’ve fixed the problem and then delay the real system fixes that we need. A new leader or a new program outfit is not enough for long-term change. As with all systems of privilege (and especially those that value “equal treatment” over addressing real inequity with intentionally unequal resources and procedures), it will take significant process design, intentional resource redistribution, and courageous leadership from the board and district to transform for true and durable equity.

From the initial listening campaign and district research, the following key lessons emerged as critical for the BUSD Board, Superintendent, and district leadership to address immediately:

- *Lesson 1: Combine School Site Changes for Quality with District Systems Changes for Equity*
 - District systems can combine to produce inequity for specific schools
 - Student assignment and choice enrollment system can be a primary driver for inequity
 - Equity audit must interrogate district systems and processes built on harmful principles of equality, neutrality, and outdated desegregation concepts
 - District systems must adjust and wrap around any specific and intentional efforts to improve struggling schools, which could disrupt equal distribution of resources and first-in-line processes
- *Lesson 2: Build a School Site System that avoids Overreliance on Individuals or Programs*
 - Modern urban school reform often relies heavily on specific leaders and/or a “program outfit” (e.g., STEM, Dual Immersion, Arts, Technology, “magnet”)

- Popular and packaged school transformation programs often focus community attention on getting more resources and immediate tangible outputs (e.g., facilities)
 - LFMS listening campaign revealed many stories of relying on specific individuals
 - Smart leadership and innovate program focus are necessary, but not sufficient for long-term transformation
- *Lesson 3: Identify & Prioritize School Site-Level Areas for Improvement*
 Community and staff focus group participants had many recommendations for site-level practices that could improve. District and LFMS leadership can focus immediately on the following interconnected categories and themes, while simultaneously improving the district systems to support these site changes.
 - Leadership –Design and Architecture of School Staff for Roles & Processes
 - Staffing – Hiring, Retention, and Substitutes
 - Educator Collaboration and Continuity of Care
 - Instructional Leadership and Data
 - Cultural Competency (including PD)
 - Classroom Management (including PD)
 - School Climate & Culture
 - Communications (internal and external)
 - Family and Community Engagement
 - School Supports, Special Education/IEPs, AVID, After School
 - TWI and Non-TWI Students
 - Specific Program Requests (e.g., Umoja; foreign languages; maker space)



Finally, there are two (2) graphic models that we will refer to throughout this paper: the first is a district systems picture of how central processes (Finance/Budget, HR/Staffing, and Enrollment/Student Assignment) can combine in harmful ways to perpetuate inequity, and how that cycle is reinforced by an enrollment system that relies on reputation. The second is a site-level picture of the areas that focus group participants raised for Longfellow improvement – how those areas are all connected and require simultaneous work to improve together. Longfellow needs leadership to understand and work on both – to build a school of high and enduring quality and to eliminate the inequity processes of BUSD’s ecosystem.

DIAGRAM 1: DISTRICT-LEVEL SYSTEMS • CYCLE & SPIRAL

CYCLE of DISTRICT SYSTEMS Combine to Produce Inequity

ENROLLMENT & STUDENT ASSIGNMENT The Reputation Effect & Spiral Slide

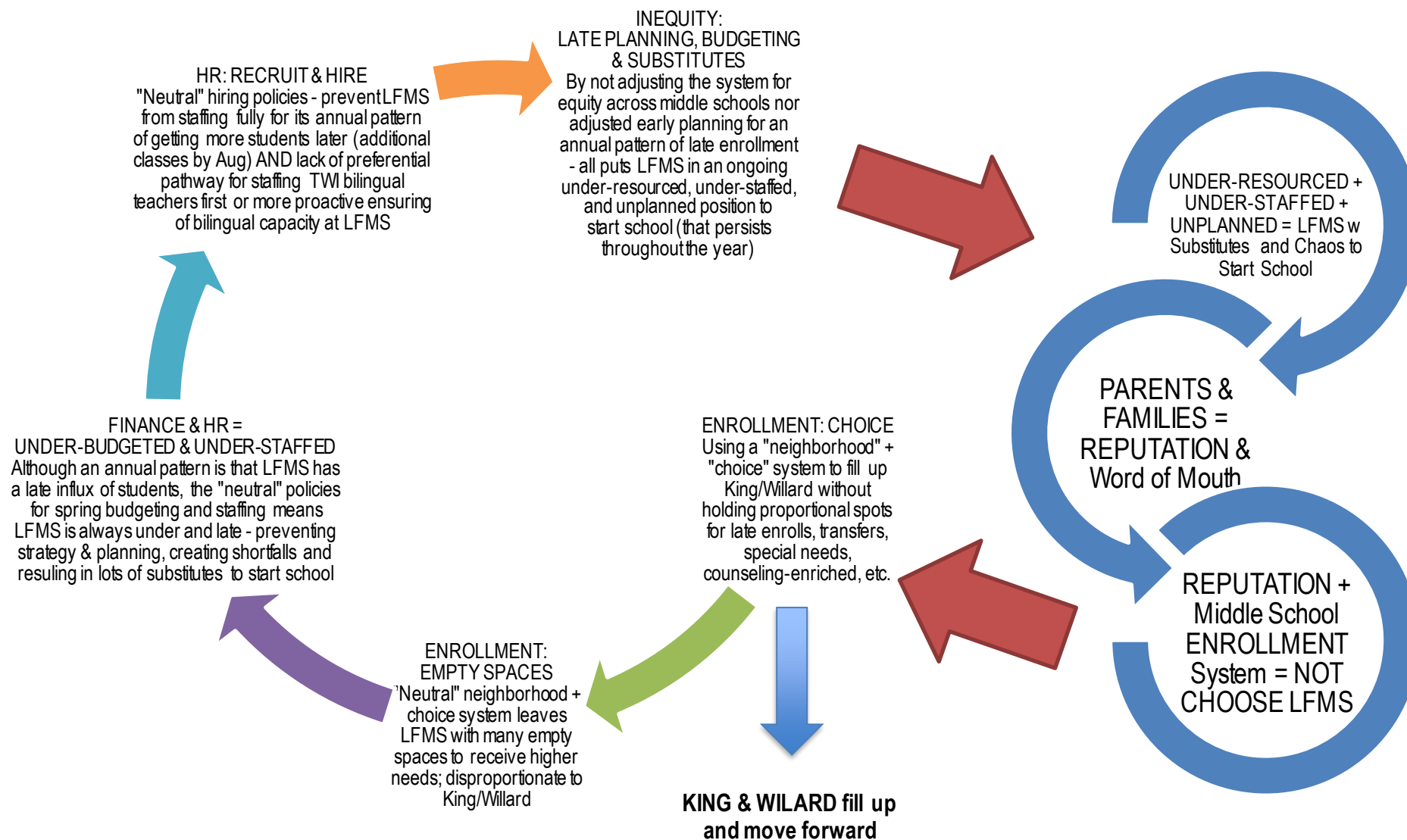


DIAGRAM 2: SITE-LEVEL SYSTEM • AREAS for IMPROVEMENT



III. SYSTEMS CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION FOR EQUITY

The main message from this listening campaign is that any effort to turnaround, improve, or transform Longfellow Middle School **must** be combined with a significant equity audit and courageous change of district-level systems and processes. The lack of concurrent district system changes to the outdated neutral/equal processes in budgeting, human resources, and enrollment can undermine any positive changes at a fragile school site that depends too heavily on specific individuals or a program outfit.

A. PRINCIPLES OF DISTRICT SYSTEMS CHANGE

The following are some general principles of systems change to remember – supported by our focus groups’ feedback and stories about Longfellow over the years.

1. Site Improvements & Leadership are Necessary, but Not Sufficient

Focus group participants talked about the idea that there are “no silver bullets.” While school reformers, community observers, and district leaders often hope that a packaged programmatic solution (e.g., STEM, Dual Language, Linked Learning) and dynamic leaders (e.g., principals) will turn the school’s inequity around, those solutions can be temporary and ultimately undone by the system processes.

2. Site Changes Alone are often Fragile

Modern school reform efforts often rely on a charismatic change agent (e.g., new principal and team) and/or a program outfit (e.g., STEM, Arts, Linked Learning, Dual Immersion, Blended Learning) with the hope that individual leaders and a new school branding will solve persistent district system inequity problems

Yet LFMS stakeholders said they were often surprised by how “fragile” the school’s historical improvements have been – i.e., how quickly a period of success unravels. Whether the improvements came from dynamic principals, specific outstanding teachers, or a fresh programmatic focus (e.g., magnet school, technology and arts, dual-immersion) – the lack of intentional district systems for equity meant that small changes were able to upset the school’s gains and spiral downward quickly. In

Longfellow’s case, parents and staff talked about watching the school’s improvement patterns that go up and down over the years (or disappear shortly after a leader departed); and often cited specific changes that rippled across the school (e.g., bringing counseling-enriched Seneca-led programs and a handful of students that the school was not prepared to support).



3. Systems Change may not require Large Funding (\$\$\$)

An encouraging note reinforced by some listening campaign participants is that some of the most impactful systems and process changes may not necessarily require large financial resources to implement. More than dollars, these changes often require political courage (at the school board and superintendent levels), clear communications (from all district leadership), and real collaboration (between departments, schools, and community members). With the COVID-19 pandemic and massive proposed cuts to public education in the 2020-21 budget, it becomes more important to find ways to change for equity without enormous resources.

4. Equality & Neutrality are not Equity

In many popular graphics about equity (including those shared by our Superintendent), we see that “unequal supports and processes” are needed to ensure that inequity is addressed – different sizes of steps and ladders are needed for all of our children “see above the fence.” While many community stakeholders understand the equity vs. equality concept in theory, it is often difficult to put this into practice – especially when longtime beneficiaries of equal/neutral processes start to see their privileges disappear (e.g., the NIMBY effect). Equality or neutrality is a strongly-held value for many people – including the idea that we treat every school or parent/family the same with our resources and our processes. To many, these values “make sense” and “seem fair.” It is often about first-come, first-serve or equal amounts for each person. It emerges when families say, “I bought a home in this neighborhood to get into this school” because it “makes sense,” and homeowners are “entitled to the school closest to them” (despite reinforcing inequity patterns of school quality tied to zip codes).



We cannot change systems to support equity if we are locked into those frames of “neutral policies” and “equal treatment” in how we budget, how we recruit and staff, how we assign students to schools. We will undermine equity efforts at the school level if we do not change “neutral first-come first serve” processes in facilities and repairs, information technology and connectivity, nutritional food services, and professional development for teachers. To get past inequity, you must combat the trap of equality and neutrality – and acknowledge that there is actually no “neutral.”

5. Systems Change requires Evolving to Current Realities

Participants raised another variation on the equality/neutrality issue – understanding equity in the context of real-time realities in Berkeley. For some, outdated systems built on policies and demographics of the civil rights era (e.g., 1960s and 1970s) are also undermining equity today. For example, what was progressive and revolutionary in 1970s desegregation battles is no longer appropriate for today’s sophisticated understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion (e.g., quotas; proportional distribution of African American students; a social justice picture that is primarily black and white, without the incorporating the range of today’s matrix of race, ethnicity, housing,

income, refugee/immigration status, gender/sexual identity). Focus groups noted that when we build critical system policies like enrollment and student assignment on these outdated ideas – they may wear a well-intentioned title of “progressive” or “social justice,” but they often have the opposite effect for real equity for today’s families.

6. Systems & Processes Combine to Create Deeper Inequity

While each district system can create problems on its own, it is often the combination of these processes that makes inequity exponentially more difficult (see DIAGRAM 1). Consider that you could perpetuate inequity in silos with: budgeting (e.g., give all schools the exact same amount, regardless of student needs), hiring (e.g., leave all schools to recruit and hire on their own), and enrollment (e.g., have a choice system that heavily prioritizes local neighborhood and siblings). Each of these “neutral” processes creates inequity by themselves. However, in concert with each other, their effect is overwhelming to schools that are already struggling and fragile.

7. School-Site Efforts must have concurrent Systems Changes to Wrap & Support

Many families and staff raised a specific pattern where intentional changes and quality improvements at the school level were not supported by any concurrent change to the district systems and processes – ultimately undermining the site change effort. In several stories, stakeholders shared how the district publicized and raised the profile of a “new school day and change” – but then failed to actually examine and change “equal/neutral” processes to support those changes and have fidelity to the school’s “new day.”

The most prominent example cited over and over was the district’s move to create a dual-immersion pathway from Sylvia Mendez Elementary School (consolidating all the district TWI elementary programs to one PreK-5 site) to Longfellow Middle School (placing TWI exclusively at LFMS as the value proposition). If LFMS is the district’s only dual-immersion language middle school, then HR hiring and placement practices must shift and adapt to support that programmatic decision – e.g., directly all bilingual recruits to Longfellow first; adjusting credentialing requirements to ensure bilingual instruction at Longfellow; pro-actively pursuing programs, internships, and exchanges with universities (including Spain, Latin America). Instead, parents and staff reported that the district promoted TWI at Longfellow but did not significantly change any processes to ensure the program was supported with appropriate staffing. If we change a school’s program but continue with existing “neutral” human resources practices, the programmatic change will likely struggle.



B. EQUITY AUDIT & FIRST TIER OF SYSTEMS (DIAGRAM 1 CYCLE)

Across the listening campaign focus groups, we heard and saw many examples of central district processes that both intentionally and unintentionally place Longfellow Middle School in a deficit. The district can start with an “equity audit” – i.e., interrogate the central system, district departments, and fundamental processes to understand how they all combine to perpetuate inequity. We recommend that the first tier of systems to examine are: Budgeting/Finance; Human Resources; and Enrollment (Student Assignment).

Some initial questions to ask to all department and process are:

- System Change Costs – What would changes require in terms of financial resources?
- Political & Social Capital Costs – Who currently benefits from the district system processes and the equality or neutrality rules? How are these practices protected by families and educators who benefit from their school assignment or teaching assignment?
- Outdated Thinking – Which processes are designed and based upon an outdated model of equality, desegregation, or demographic picture? Where do we need to update the process to reflect today’s reality of socio-economic and cultural realities?

1. Budgeting & Finance Systems

KEY QUESTIONS: How does the annual and multi-year district budgeting system hurt Longfellow Middle School? How does the annual and multi-year school-site budgeting system account for Longfellow Middle School’s well-known pattern of late enrollment, numbers of students (and students with high needs), and staff turnover?

- District Budgeting in Silos
At the district level, there are budget processes with large and structures for considering high-need students (e.g., students concentrated at schools such as Longfellow Middle School). The current set-up “budgets in silos” – there are separate committees for portions of the overall budget (e.g., BSEP, LCAP).



Additionally, the LCFF and LCAP (Local Control Funding Formula, Local Control Accountability Plan) is routinely looked at as the primary source of funding to address equity and high needs students. Launched in 2013 from the Governor’s office and managed by the CA Department of Education and county offices of education, LCFF is built upon an equity weighted student formula that provides more monies for specific students (low-income, English learners, foster youth) and monies for historically challenged school sites (supplemental, concentration funds).

BUSD does not utilize a process that builds the entire budget altogether. Budgeting in silos carries huge risks and vulnerabilities to undermine any equity budgeting formula. Consider the following potential problems:

- *Moving Controversial Items to LCAP?*

Committees can move controversial and difficult items to LCAP for cutting; often framing the move as “equity-focused” (to serve high needs students appropriately) but actually a political and eliminating move (knowing that LCAP is the smallest budget of the overall picture)

- *Anything that Serves Longfellow Students?*

There is also potential for misunderstanding about what LCFF/LCAP monies are intended for. Line items and positions that should be basic general supports or services for all schools and students may often get discussed to be moved to LCAP (especially for Longfellow). Committee members can argue that “they/this are serving LCAP unduplicated students over there” – without a deeper examination of whether it is a specific support intended for LCFF funds (e.g., specific such as English learner interventions vs. general for all, like lunchtime support or literacy coaches)

- *Thinking LCFF “takes care of it all”?*

The demographics and economics of BUSD are shifting rapidly and the number of Title I schools continues to shrink. Thus, while BUSD has a significant population of students with needs, it does not qualify for several high-need allocations such as LCFF concentration funds. As one parent noted – “we don’t get concentration money, but we need to act like we do and provide additional resources to schools like Longfellow.” At a fundamental level, LCFF does not “take care of it all” – it is a floor, not a ceiling. Without intentional, affirmative, and unequal allocations to LFMS to account for inequity, LFMS will always be under-resourced against its actual needs and in comparison, to the other middle schools.

- Budgeting Calendar and Formulas

Another place for equity auditing is the district’s annual process and timeline for school site budgeting. Given the pattern of LFMS enrollment, empty spaces, and late influx – LFMS needs a budgeting process and modification that understands this annual pattern, while trying to fix the overall system.

For example – if BUSD knows that LFMS always gets an average surge



and influx every year of approximately 30-60 students through the summer (often high-needs and requiring more supports) – then the budgeting process in January through March should promote equity and build in additional resources, staff positions, and line items for that ongoing scenario. This allows the site leadership to plan, budget, recruit, hire, train, and design for the next school year early and appropriately – i.e., based on how many students, what their student and family needs will be, and aligned with the school’s focus and programmatic vision.

2. Human Resources Systems

KEY QUESTIONS: How does the HR system of hiring, placing, positioning, and professionally developing educators disadvantage Longfellow Middle School? Where could the HR system pro-actively address the inequity of staffing across middle schools? Where could the HR system ensure fidelity to the district’s intentional reform vision for Longfellow Middle School (i.e., TWI)?

- Recruiting & Staffing
Neutral HR recruiting policies (e.g., every school recruits its staffing) do not address the inequity that already exists in how the system has handicapped LFMS (i.e., not taking into account that the district has created a deeply inequitable situation). Having all schools do their own recruiting for the most part disadvantages schools that struggle with their reputation, conditions, and climate. The district system could implement several practices to support and help schools like LFMS with pro-active and early recruiting, incentives such as additional supports and trainings, etc.
- TWI-Specific HR
Further, because BUSD has designed LFMS as its exclusive dual-immersion middle school pathway – the human resources system should change and adapt to support that school-level reform effort. Pro-active recruiting for bilingual educators and priority placement for any bilingual candidates could be part of an overall systems wrap and support to LFMS – having the district ensure fidelity to its reform and promise to the community.



As parents and staff have remarked, the district named TWI as an equity strategy at LFMS. This promise cannot be fulfilled if the district systems and policies do not prioritize it (i.e., actively recruiting bilingual teachers and directing them to LFMS first). TWI families note that there should be an aggressive recruitment strategy; community leaders had asked whether our system

could have adapted hiring guidelines to ensure that LFMS have the best possible bilingual staffing in place when school starts (e.g., emergency credentials for professional fluency candidates; international exchange programs that waive credentialing hurdles)

- Hiring Processes

Staff and families shared that BUSD's HR reputation is that there are significant bureaucratic and quality hurdles in hiring, onboarding, and induction. Teachers report that BUSD recruiting conducted is late (relative to other districts), the hiring process is bureaucratic and cumbersome, and oftentimes, basic information is missing (e.g., salary information not available even when teachers are signing on). These stories of low-quality process can cause major loss of candidates (especially for highly valued hard-to-staff candidates such as bilingual capacity). Candidate loss is disproportionately harmful for a school like LFMS that cannot use "reputation and climate" to recruit & retain (landing teachers despite bureaucracy and low salaries)

- Professional Development & Learning

Equity for LFMS also requires a customized professional development process where opportunities prioritize LFMS and specialized training is made easy (e.g., getting more substitutes to cover for LFMS teachers to receive more training that will help with their student population)



3. Enrollment Systems

KEY QUESTIONS: How does the middle school student assignment system result in annual practices that affect the planning, resources, staffing, and reputation of Longfellow Middle School?

As the district begins to consider major reforms to its middle school enrollment system, this report will identify some guiding questions for the school board, superintendent, district leaders, and principals. In the following chapter (*Section IV*) and Diagram 1, we examine the "spiral" effect that many focus group participants shared through stories and anecdotes. For initial consideration, we recommend the following audit inquiries.

- Origins & Values

How did the district design its middle school enrollment system (e.g., mix of neighborhood and district-wide choice)? Why does it differ from the elementary enrollment system? How does it fit with the district's high school system?

- Middle Schools & Student Spaces

Considering the variations between the 3 middle schools, how did the system consider the proportion and distribution of spaces/slots? Does the current system balance the schools proportionally for high-needs, challenges, and other factors that require capacity, resources, and planning?

- Reputation & Choice

How does the district and its enrollment system protect against inequity that develops from letting "reputation" determine a school's enrollment, resources, planning time, staffing capacity, and opportunities for students?

C. COMBINATION OF SYSTEMS INEQUITY (DIAGRAM 1 CYCLE)

Diagram 1 is built from the range of focus group stories about how each of these district systems produces inequity and then, how they combine to reinforce and deepen the problems. If you follow the cycle that starts at the Enrollment: Choice step – you can see how low-choice and under-subscribed enrollment period begins a toxic cycle of budgeting and human resources steps that ultimately produces an unplanned, under-budgeted, and under-staffed school situation at the start of the school year.



These problems do not disappear in the first quarter – instead, they grow exponentially and cause more problems as the year goes on (e.g., recruiting pool is smaller during the school year, especially for high quality candidates and hard-to-staff positions). The reinforcing problem of "not staffing appropriately for TWI" grows louder and more damaging through out the year, especially as students miss out on instruction and learning loss increases. The "reputation" of the school enters a "freefall" as the school year progresses – and by the time enrollment opens for families to choose, the school is in a significantly precarious position and starts the "non-choice" cycle all over again.

D. EQUITY AUDIT: OTHER DISTRICT SYSTEMS

Diagram 1 shows how Enrollment, Budgeting & Finance, and Human Resources are three major systems that combine for a cycle that traps Longfellow. There are other district departments, policies, and practices that contribute to inequity and the LFMS conditions. For each one, we should ask our initial Equity Audit questions and build process-specific interrogations for how they combine with other systems. Below are some starters for guiding

questions in our audit:

1. Facilities: How do our processes for facility repairs and improvements either prioritize or relegate LFMS? Do we still use a first-in/first-out process for repairs when we know that LFMS needs repairs more than a hills-school? How do bond measures build in equity considerations?
2. IT/MIS: What are our processes for prioritizing technology repairs, hardware, and connectivity for LFMS?
3. Family & Community Engagement: How do we understand the unique value of family and community engagement for communities such as the families that attend LFMS? How does FCE differ for communities of color, immigrant communities, and historically disadvantaged communities? How do diverse communities engage in ways and styles that differ from traditional structures (e.g., PTA; SSC; formal committees with agendas, meetings, and officers)? How are traditional structures of family engagement not successful with engaging or welcoming diverse communities?
4. Professional Development: As noted above, what are the specific practices that district HR employs to provide additional and customized supports for schools such as LFMS (different from general approach to all schools and teachers)?
5. Philanthropy/Partnerships/PTA: How does the district help to close the “social capital gap” between LFMS and other better-resourced and better-connected schools? How does the district address the inequity of offline private philanthropic pathways that are built on social and financial capital?

IV. THE ENROLLMENT + REPUTATION SPIRAL (DIAGRAM 2 SPIRAL)

Looking at Diagram 1 on the left side, we see the district systems cycle that can place a school like Longfellow at a severe disadvantage. From that position, the game shifts to the right side of the diagram – a spiral that continues throughout the school year and ultimately starts the cycle all over again. To understand this entire trap, it is important to see the inherent challenge with “choice” that is not designed nor managed to prevent severe inequity. In a nutshell, if the district allows a landscape of widely varying quality amongst schools (in a network, for a grade-level like middle school) – there is the constant risk that the schools with negative reputations will spiral and freefall because under-enrollment will set them on a downward path.



A. THE “GHETTO BLACK/BROWN” MIDDLE SCHOOL: TWO NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY SCHOOLS AND ONE SCHOOL OF NON-CHOICE

Across all our focus groups, we heard variations of this story. “Longfellow is called the ghetto school.” “Longfellow is the place for poor families.” “Longfellow is a crazy mess and has

nothing to offer.” “Longfellow is where black and brown families go.” “Longfellow gets the hand-me-down supplies and equipment of other schools.” One parent asked a particularly insightful question – “Is Berkeley Unified okay with today’s middle school picture, where you have two neighborhood schools of high quality and then one school that is of choice, but really not of choice?” Across the board, even when families did choose Longfellow, they understood the long-term “reputation” of the school.

B. REPUTATION & FAMILY/PARENT CHOICE

In our focus groups, we asked every group of parents and families, “Why did you choose Longfellow Middle School for your kids, or did you not choose the school?” While many participants did not actually choose LFMS, just as many did and cited one or more of the following reasons:

- Location/Proximity: LFMS is close to our home and easy to get to
- Size: LFMS is a small school and my children do better in a more personal environment
- TWI: We have been in the TWI elementary program and this is the only choice for continuing TWI (dual immersion instruction)
- History & Tradition: Our family has gone to LFMS and it is our school (e.g., parents, grandparents, siblings, cousins)
- Diversity & Cultural Value: We want our kids to go to a school that has a diverse mix of races, cultures, and backgrounds. We want our kids to go to a school that has significant numbers of kids that look like them.

C. CHOICE AND FRAGILITY

Many participants also noted that “Longfellow WAS a school of choice for many years!” They cited the times and periods when Longfellow was selected by families for the quality of teachers, the dynamic and visionary leadership of specific principals, and the program offerings (e.g., Arts and Technology magnet in the early-mid 2000s). To be balanced, LFMS has not always been on the “enrollment spiral”

Yet these stories also reveal the school’s fragility, especially when the district systems do not help, but hinder. There is no silver bullet in a person or a program that could overcome the combination of systems that create and reinforce inequity. One could see that those reprieves from inequity can last several years (e.g., during a powerful principal leadership tenure), but they can crumble quickly with an event such as a principal or teacher/hero departure, the loss of a major funding stream, or even a tough year of student behavioral issues. The fact that so much progress and success could erode so fast is even



more reason to attack inequity at the root cause for any hope of sustained improvement – at the board and district department system levels.

D. BREAKING THE WHEEL AND STARTING WITH ENROLLMENT

Looking at the cycle and spiral of Diagram 1, where would we begin to break this wheel of inequity? Do we start at many places all at once; do we start with a fundamental lever and watch it ripple across the rest of the picture?

The past 40 years have seen some interesting trends and patterns. Many districts, foundations, and urban education reformers start with new leadership and school program outfits at the site-level, sometimes coupled with a new facilities build – e.g., a new principal that is bringing blended learning to the school and launching with new technology lab. They start at the spiral – hoping that the kick-start of “something new” will bring reputation up and families back.

These site-focused efforts often need philanthropic dollars (which are time-limited and encumbered budget lines) and depend heavily on specific individuals and funders. Packaged and popular school transformation program outfits often direct a community’s focus toward “resources” – i.e., getting more funding to the school for turnaround and showing clear



markers of progress that the community can feel immediately (e.g., new buildings; high-end materials; hiring additional staff on a short-term basis) This type of effort is attempting to “fix the wheel” at the “reputation and word of mouth” part of the spiral – i.e., to turn around the under-enrollment and lack of choice with the promise of a “new day” and changing the look and feel of the school. Often, these will bring significant improvements to the site level and can sustain real change for a good period of time.

BUSD can “break the wheel” by attacking the problems at many places simultaneously – not just at the spiral, but within the cycle. And while the enrollment system may be a relatively large place to begin, it might be the trigger toward reforming the other systems – changing how we integrate choice, neighborhood, quality, resources, and equity through student assignment.

V. SCHOOL SITE-LEVEL SYSTEMS CHANGE

As noted, a majority of the focus group feedback highlighted site-level problems and areas for improvement. Pinpointing the district systems change requirements does not mean ignoring or absolving the site-level issues and areas for improvement. A school is also a system – with inter-

related issues and root causes. For the next era of Longfellow, we need to work on both systems (district and school site) concurrently, and to engage continually in a cycle of inquiry and improvement at both levels.

To build Diagram 2, we gathered the data from a wide range of focus group participants – families, parents, staff, and community stakeholders who had much to share about where they feel the site could improve. As we organized these observations into major themes, we also saw how there were mostly related to each other – e.g., how we define a staff member’s role affects her professional development which could include her cultural competency and ability to provide support services to high-needs students. These topics and stories are all related to each other; yet for leadership’s purposes, we need to begin with some design, sequence, and planning so that we do not get overwhelmed trying to address everything all at once.

Below are the focus group highlights – organized into categories and themes:

A. LEADERSHIP – DESIGN AND STRUCTURE OF SCHOOL STAFF FOR ROLES & PROCESSES

It is no surprise that strong and visionary principal leadership is always cited as a top-level change agent. Many focus group participants talked about the periods when Longfellow had dynamic, thoughtful, organized, and powerful leaders – individual contributors who had instructional rigor, effective management, high social-emotional intelligence, and sophisticated systems thinking.

Both family and staff participants discussed the need at Longfellow for a strong “design and architecture” for the school – i.e., understanding the who, what, and why for a wide variety of daily tasks and processes. Staff talked about often “not knowing what lane I’m in” or “who should be doing what.” Sometimes, longtime veteran teachers would “step in to do something out of their lane, just because they know how and can do it quickly – but it doesn’t

feel intentional or planned, just pitching in because they can and not necessarily teaching anybody else to fish.”



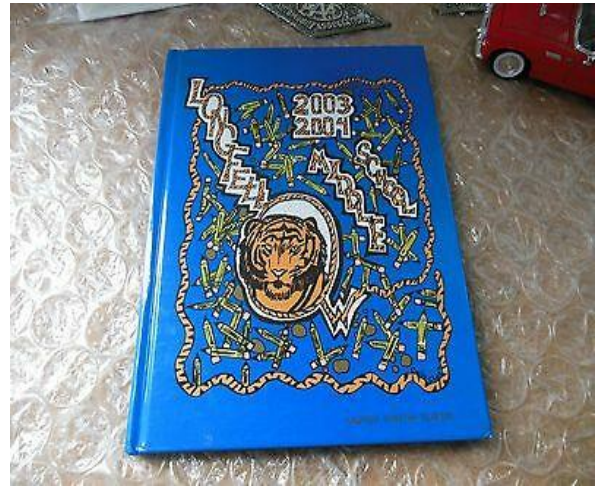
Sometimes, the lack of design and planning is technical and practical – e.g., needs for improvements in master scheduling, student counseling, department or grade-level collaboration time. Science teachers shared the very practical problem with short prep periods and time between classes when “setting up a science classroom takes much longer – could we figure out how to

stagger classes and design it so we can prepare best for the students?” Overall, Longfellow participants talked about a general gap in the school’s design and understanding for operating, replaced by a “people filling in wherever they can” feeling that is “explained as

being organic.” For some, “it hangs together at the last minute because people jump in and it gets done, but it doesn’t feel like we planned for it.”

1. Staffing – Hiring, Retention, and Substitutes

The lack of design and structure shows up heavily in how the school is staffed. Parents and teachers talked about the problems of hiring, retention, and turnover – and the high level of substitutes that are taking over classes for long periods of time. Often, these issues are not communicated clearly and are surprising to staff members themselves. The problems multiply as short-term staffing creates obstacles for planning, collaboration, and quality. Parents and families grow increasingly frustrated with the lack of consistency, quality, and accountability.



2. Educator Collaboration

In addition to problems with master scheduling and technical time design, focus groups talked about the lack of a collaboration culture amongst the educators. Setting the scheduling problems aside (i.e., consistent time for collaborations across subjects, grade levels, themes, identities, roles) – educators discussed the issues between staff roles (e.g., under-using instructional assistants who are often best-situated to understand and communicate with high-needs students; need for better partnerships between the adults) and across pre-defined lines (e.g., teachers and staff in TWI and non-TWI). Without a vision and design that enables staff to collaborate (especially across lines and roles) – there are many missed opportunities to build a high performing team.

3. Overreliance on Individuals and Continuity of Care

Parents and families often talked about the “incredible and caring staff” or “deferring to the knowledgeable educators,” but then cited only a few specific (and often long-time) teachers. Along with the stories of superstar principals from the past, these stories reveal a trend of relying on a few individuals for the quality (and hope) of the school. The risk with this set-up is “what happens when that individual leaves?” In the case of a few teachers in 2019-20, it established some widespread panic amongst parents who knew of impending departures – continuing the reputation and word-of-mouth issues for LFMS.

The flip side of this coin emerged from conversations with LFMS staff who noted that past “superstar teachers and departments” also created a difficult set-up for new staff, especially when there was no attention paid to continuity of care for a department or succeeding team. For example, while the science department was praised for its past

teamwork and pedagogical practices, that quality and care does not seem to have been documented nor transitioned to the next generation – thus, LFMS has had to recreate and start from scratch in many places. The risk with any cult of individuals and a lack of transition planning is that everything will disappear with one or two people. It is an individual-based model that may work for a period of time for a group of people – it is not a system nor a durable model for the long term.

4. Instructional Leadership and Data

Focus groups also discussed the need for more consistency and rigor in structures such as the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) and grade-level teams. Poor design and structures have led to infrequent or intermittent meetings, lack of agendas, and the absence of data-driven inquiries (e.g., ILT has not held a meeting that looks at the school's student data to build strategies, responses, and planning).

B. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

Focus group participants raised many issues around the knowledge, skills, and capacities of LFMS staff – both veteran and new. For some, it was quality with actual content or language (e.g., understanding math; ability to speak and teach in Spanish); for others, it was the skills for creating learning conditions and community. With the current student and family population, our Longfellow focus groups raised the importance of these areas for deep and customized professional development regarding:



1. Cultural Competency

Because LFMS is one of the few schools in BUSD that has a significantly diverse population of African American, Latinx, Asian and Pacific Islanders, working class families, refugee and immigrant families, families of Middle Eastern and Arabic descent, and special education/counseling-enriched students – it is absolutely essential that all staff have a high degree of cultural competency and fluency. The ability to talk about race, class, gender, sexuality, immigrant status, and special needs is critical. The talents and expertise required for understanding intersectionality and how to support teaching and learning across multiple identities is complex – BUSD needs to adapt, support, and customize the professional development time and training for any educator that works at Longfellow.

2. Classroom Management

Many participants also raised the issue of under-developed classroom management skills, resulting in problems with disproportionate discipline practices, classrooms out-of-control, unsafe or ineffective learning environments, and too much “wanting to be friends.” Families and parents spoke about specific teachers and classrooms, where

their children reported on chaotic and unsupervised time that lacked instruction and order. For many participants, these conditions mean students are not getting time for learning.

3. Spanish Fluency

Finally, a recurring critique from focus group participants was the lack of strong and rigorous Spanish-speaking and teaching skills for the TWI program. As the district's stake in the ground around dual immersion programming, the TWI program at Longfellow fails in its fidelity and undermines the efforts for both high quality instruction and an equity value proposition for the school.

C. SCHOOL CLIMATE & CULTURE

Related to cultural competence and classroom management, the overall school climate and culture was mentioned repeatedly throughout the focus groups. Because the lack of structure and chaotic conditions are not contained to a classroom or time period, the issues from poor classroom management often spill out into the hallways and the rest of the school.

Some participants could cite specific issues or incidents that really “set the school on a slippery slope” – for example, both parents and staff talked about the decisions several years ago to bring counseling-enriched programming onto the Longfellow campus through a partnership with Seneca. For some, this decision also brought a small group of highly challenging students that the Longfellow staff was unprepared to support. “A group of 5 students was able to disrupt the entire school and teachers and other staff left that year... it really affected the school's entire environment and culture, and parents started to decide against choosing Longfellow. It felt like the start of the decline.”

Focus groups talked about two areas that could improve the school's climate and culture:

1. Family and Community Engagement

At the heart of a community school is a sophisticated understanding of family and community engagement. Beyond mainstream models of PTAs and SSCs, many schools with significant populations of communities of color, immigrant families, and high-need students have relied on a cornerstone of meaningful family and community engagement. Oftentimes schools of privilege or resources rely on traditional vehicles and groups (PTA) and may not see the value of dedicated family and community engagement specialists. At Longfellow, almost every participant indicated the high value and great need for more resources and personnel to liaison and communicate with the school's diverse and rich range of families, students, and community members – in order to build relationships, make meaning, and ultimately improve conditions for teaching and learning. Almost uniformly, participants agreed that the district's Family and Community Engagement office and efforts could be strengthened, and that positions and resources for engagement should be prioritized at Longfellow Middle School.

2. Communications (internal and external)

Relatedly, many participants talked about the lack of high quality and consistent communications (including greater transparency to help parents and families prepare). Parents often spoke about the lack of communication – e.g., “we know teachers are leaving soon but nobody says anything” or “we still have a substitute in the second semester but have not heard anything about planning.” Like the critiques about leadership and school design, a loose approach to communications has proven problematic. Longfellow’s complex reputation and challenges requires tight technical communications for both internal staff and externally with families and community. Consistent technical tools such as emails, newsletters, physical notices, social media – all of these must be improved so that staff, families, and communities can be more informed and build confidence with the school.



Communications and family engagement are also reflected in the front office practices – e.g., when the front office is open, what the front gate and window look like (welcoming or not, closed or open), whether there are bilingual capabilities for an increasing population that does not speak English, etc. All these elements are often a parent’s first touch with the school, and Longfellow’s limited hours and closed windows are difficult for many families.

D. SCHOOL SUPPORTS – SPECIAL EDUCATION, AVID, AFTER SCHOOL

With several focus groups designed specifically for parents and families of students in special education, AVID, and other support services, we were able to hear the praise and critiques for Longfellow’s ability to serve students with different needs. While some families chose Longfellow specifically because of the publicized services and programs (e.g., counseling enriched programs; high number of IEPs and assumed proficiency with supporting special education needs), there is an overall desire for improvement. With IEPs, families would like more rigor and communication from Longfellow leadership and designated educators. Observations for after school range from satisfaction with the range of offerings to dissatisfaction with classes that are popular but intermittent. Overall, the focus group comments discuss the potential of LFMS – there are building blocks and the school is publicized for having these supports, but the rigor and quality still need much development.

E. PROGRAMS AT LONGFELLOW

1. TWI (Two Way Immersion)

Two-Way Immersion (TWI) is the largest programmatic puzzle for Longfellow Middle School. Since BUSD decided to consolidate its dual-immersion pathways to Sylvia Mendez Elementary School and Longfellow Middle School, there has been much controversy and dissatisfaction from the parents and families who have chosen this

route. In many ways, the LFMS TWI program has failed to live up to its promise of high-quality instruction and preparation. TWI students have classes with substitutes for most of the year, and teachers are often unprepared or unable to teach with professional fluency in Spanish and English. The minimum requirements of two (2) classes in dual language per grade is often not met. Many families feel that they were promised a true dual-immersion experience for choosing Longfellow, but there has been no fidelity to the program.

In theory, TWI was consolidated and promoted at Longfellow as part of an equity, reputation, and quality value proposition – to make Longfellow attractive to many families and improve the disproportionate enrollment picture (avoid empty spaces). Understandably, many families are now already choosing to go elsewhere and to advise Sylvia Mendez families to choose other middle schools because the current TWI program does not meet their expectations. Thus, the primary “programmatic value proposition” of Longfellow Middle School (a reason why families would choose LFMS during enrollment) has failed in many ways, and the reputation spiral effect continues to spin and push Longfellow downward. A key question for district and school site leadership is this – how much of this failing and challenge rests with the site leadership AND how much is started, reinforced, or neglected by the district systems and processes? Most likely, the answer will lie in between and involved shared responsibility and solutions at both levels.

Many of the family and community focus groups touched upon TWI as the main “program outfit or value” associated with Longfellow. While the “low quality” and “broken promises” of the current TWI program permeated our conversations with TWI families, our conversations with non-TWI families raised different problems. TWI is not a school-wide program and involves a minority of the student population (approximately 20%), but it has become the highest profile value associated with Longfellow. This begs the question – what is the program value for the majority of students and families who are not in TWI? What happens when TWI participants are mostly white and Latinx, and a large number of Latinx, African American, Asian & Pacific Islander, and Arabic students are not in TWI? What high profile value is the school offering or providing to non-TWI students who make up the majority of the school?



Moving forward, the LFMS leadership has a tricky road – e.g., how to improve the value proposition of TWI and have fidelity to its programmatic value, while also designing a high profile and high value proposition for the majority of the school that is not enrolled in TWI (did not go through the PreK-5 TWI pathway)? How will the school

improve both at the same time – a high quality TWI program AND an equally high-quality program focus for non-TWI students?

2. Future Program Explorations

Our focus groups began to offer some ideas for non-TWI programmatic values that could evolve into a school-wide focus. Drawing upon the rich and diverse population of Longfellow and the cultural history of being a school strongly associated with Berkeley's African American community, participants praised the strengths and possibilities of:

- Building upon the emerging Umoja program which provides an important path for studying history, literature, arts, and social studies through an African American lens and framework
- Building and strengthening a foreign languages program that does not require elementary TWI pre-requisites – i.e., how to offer linguistic programs for the rest of Longfellow?
- Building a design and manufacturing pathway with the emerging “maker space” (e.g., 3-D printer design and production), in the mode of Linked Learning and school-career pathways
- Building a community school with a global futures focus and curriculum that incorporates cultural competency, foreign languages, racial/ethnic history, and neighborhood-service and community-building

VI. LOOKING FORWARD & NEXT STEPS

Today in 2020, both Berkeley Unified School District and Longfellow Middle School sit at an unprecedented, uncertain, and overwhelmingly challenging moment. In the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic and school shutdown due to sheltering-in-place, the domino effects of the economy, unemployment, housing, safety, racial and poverty-based unrest, and exponentially growing inequity – how does the school system move ahead



with distance learning, massive budget cuts, and significant modifications to the school day and physical plants? The district is facing at least \$7 million in immediate cuts and reductions due to the shortfalls for the State of California. The first months of distance learning have been challenging, with large numbers of BUSD students lacking technical equipment and connectivity, and/or opting out of participation without the structure for quality teaching and learning. Parents and families are under enormous stress with lack of childcare, families sheltering-in-place indefinitely, and fears for health and safety associated with any return to school and crowding.

Additionally, Longfellow Middle School is also going through its own uncertainty within this larger context. Concurrent with COVID-19, the school is experiencing the transition of its principal and assistant principal leadership who are set to depart by the end of the school year (June 2020). Although an incoming principal has been named and brings a wealth of experience with dual

immersion programming in Berkeley Unified (Paco Furlan), he is also currently on sabbatical, and sheltering-in-place outside of the country in Spain until the summer or when international regulations would allow him to return to the United States safely.

Amidst this confluence of crises, how do we move forward with the equity challenge of Longfellow Middle School? The road map below reflects the stories, opinions, and recommendations of our focus groups and offers some guidance for the next phase of visioning and district system reform.

A. DISTRICT SYSTEMS – EQUITY AUDIT TASKFORCE

To start the next steps, the Superintendent and Associate Superintendents can designate a small central district task force to perform equity audits of 4 major department systems and their processes. Using the Longfellow Middle School “cycle and spiral” (Diagram 1) as a key frame, the taskforce would detail and analyze current practices to understand how they initiate, reinforce, or perpetuate the inequity picture across BUSD schools and middle schools in particular. With greater complexity, the taskforce examines how each department contributes to inequity within its own processes; and then how the departments combine to deepen inequity as a system. We could begin with the following departments and processes:

1. Enrollment & Student Assignment
2. Finance & Budgeting – School Site Budgeting
3. Finance & Budgeting – District Budgeting, including LCFF and BSEP
4. HR – Recruiting, Hiring, Placement
5. HR – Professional Development and Learning
6. Facilities

For each major department and process, we would start with a set of equity audit questions (as laid out in this report). For example:

Department & Process	Equity Audit – Guiding Questions based on the Cycle & Spiral of LFMS
Enrollment & Student Assignment	Q: How are student slots filled or held (reserved) across the middle schools? Q: How do we ensure proportional slots across middle schools for higher-needs, late enrollments, or out-of-district transfers?
Finance & Budgeting – School Site Budgeting	Q: How do we provide schools with their initial budgets and staffing in January and February in order to plan for the following school year? Q: Do we account for known patterns in our school-site budgeting and staffing process so that schools with annual late surges are able to plan early and effectively?
Finance & Budgeting – District Budgeting, including LCFF and BSEP	Q: What are the vulnerabilities and risks from planning district budgeting in separate silos or tracks (committees)? Q: What is the level of understanding about LCFF, LCAP, and what weighted student formula funding is intended for? Q: How does the district account for its high-needs schools as there are fewer

Department & Process	Equity Audit – Guiding Questions based on the Cycle & Spiral of LFMS
	Title I designated schools and no LCFF concentration funds?
HR – Recruiting, Hiring, Placement	Q: What is the process for teacher recruiting, hiring, and placement – especially for middle schools? Q: What is the process for recruiting and placing bilingual teachers? What special outreach and accommodations does BUSD employ for ensuring there are bilingual instructors in the district’s dual immersion programs?
HR – Professional Development and Learning	Q: What is the process for assessing a school’s specific and customized professional learning needs? Q: What differentiated supports does BUSD provide to schools that require deeper and more frequent PD (e.g., substitutes; collaboration time)?
Facilities	Q: Does the BUSD process for facilities use and equity approach (i.e., not equal amounts to every site; not first-in-first out)? Q: How does BUSD prioritize facilities upgrades, repairs, and renovations for high-needs sites?

By using Longfellow as a North Star and central touch point, the taskforce will focus the audit and ground it in real patterns, stories, and data from the past 10 years – taking it out of the theoretical and into the actual. At each step, we ask ourselves – how have we interacted and behaved to produce these results at Longfellow?

B. SITE-LEVEL STEPS

At the Longfellow site, there are several initial steps that the leadership can take to continue the visioning process while major transitions are also underway. Some of these are common to any principal transition; others are specific to the study process that started this year. All of it sits in the real-time context of the COVID-19 pandemic and crisis.



1. Support and Advice for New Principal

Provide Principal Furlan with additional resources and supports as he moves back to the country and begins his tenure during COVID-19 with a distance learning campus. This could take the form of additional administrators, advisors, coaching, etc.

2. Immediate & Urgent Focus on Schooling for COVID-19 Pandemic

With Principal Furlan’s transition during the pandemic, the school will need to focus on the basic essentials of school structure and operations to build a foundation. This will require major initial attention on designing the following:

- a. Distance Learning and Accessibility (including technology and connectivity)
- b. Teaching and Learning Structures – Use of Distance Learning

- c. Health and Safety Procedures at LFMS – How to Structure Physical Build
- d. Modifications to School Day and Classes – Groupings, Grades, Days

3. Family & Community Survey

The listening and input campaign has already designed and drafted a comprehensive online survey for Longfellow families and stakeholders (in both English and Spanish). This could be implemented as part of the principal's first engagement effort and fits with the current social distance and distance-learning environment.

4. Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) – Data and Study

Starting in the summer, the Principal and Longfellow ILT (and others – to make "ILT Plus") could also begin a distance process of online meetings that use school and student data to study, interrogate, and strategize. This begins a consistent cycle of inquiry and also opens the study phase of the original grant project. Although the idea of visiting other schools and programs might not be feasible during COVID-19, the study of other models, theories, and programs can happen. The "ILT Plus" is an ideal group to designate with this phase – starting with the study of data, and then evolving into a study of models (some identified in this report).

5. Principal and Leadership Transformation Team

In addition to the ILT Plus, the new Principal could form a small but mixed team of school, district, and community leaders to tackle the categories and topics identified in this report for site-level change. This report offers a starting point in Diagram 2 – presenting major buckets of the related challenges that were identified by focus group participants. These buckets were designed after zooming in and zooming out from all the comments, observations, reflections, and advice. Notably, it is difficult to address all things at all times and feel that everything is related to everything – making it impossible to start anywhere. All of these issues are interrelated as part of the school "system" and the design and organization here gives the Principal and leaders a potential path for addressing them.

Inevitably, both the district and the school will have to focus on the major crises of the COVID-19 pandemic and how to “return to school” in unprecedented times. We have never faced this type of trauma that affects everything from employment and economics to housing and health, framed by the inequities of race, gender, immigration, politics, and identities. The Longfellow Middle School story highlights a long history of inequity and will undoubtedly be deepened by the pandemic and its effects on vulnerable students, families, and community members. Across all of our focus groups, participants shared their stories and observations of pain and disappointment. As we begin to reconstruct and build “what school will be,” we need to take the opportunity to build it for quality and for equity. Thus, consider this guiding theme: How we rebuild the district for Longfellow Middle School in the face of COVID-19 will speak volumes for what Berkeley Unified envisions for its future. Let’s take the opportunity to review, repair, rethink, renew, and reimagine for all our families.

