



7 Questions Your District **Needs to Ask** to Understand and Address **Equity**



Fix Systems, Not Students: 7 Must-Ask Questions for District Leaders on Equity

As Mackey Pendergrast, New Jersey Superintendent of the Year, [said on a recent webinar](#), **“When it comes to equity, ambiguity is the enemy. We have to see something clearly in order to address it.”**

Advancing equity takes focus and commitment. It also requires us to ask the right questions. Reflective, probing questions can help build a "data story" that identifies gaps in student achievement and explores adult capacity around equity. Only then can you take meaningful action to build the inclusive, equitable schools that our students deserve.

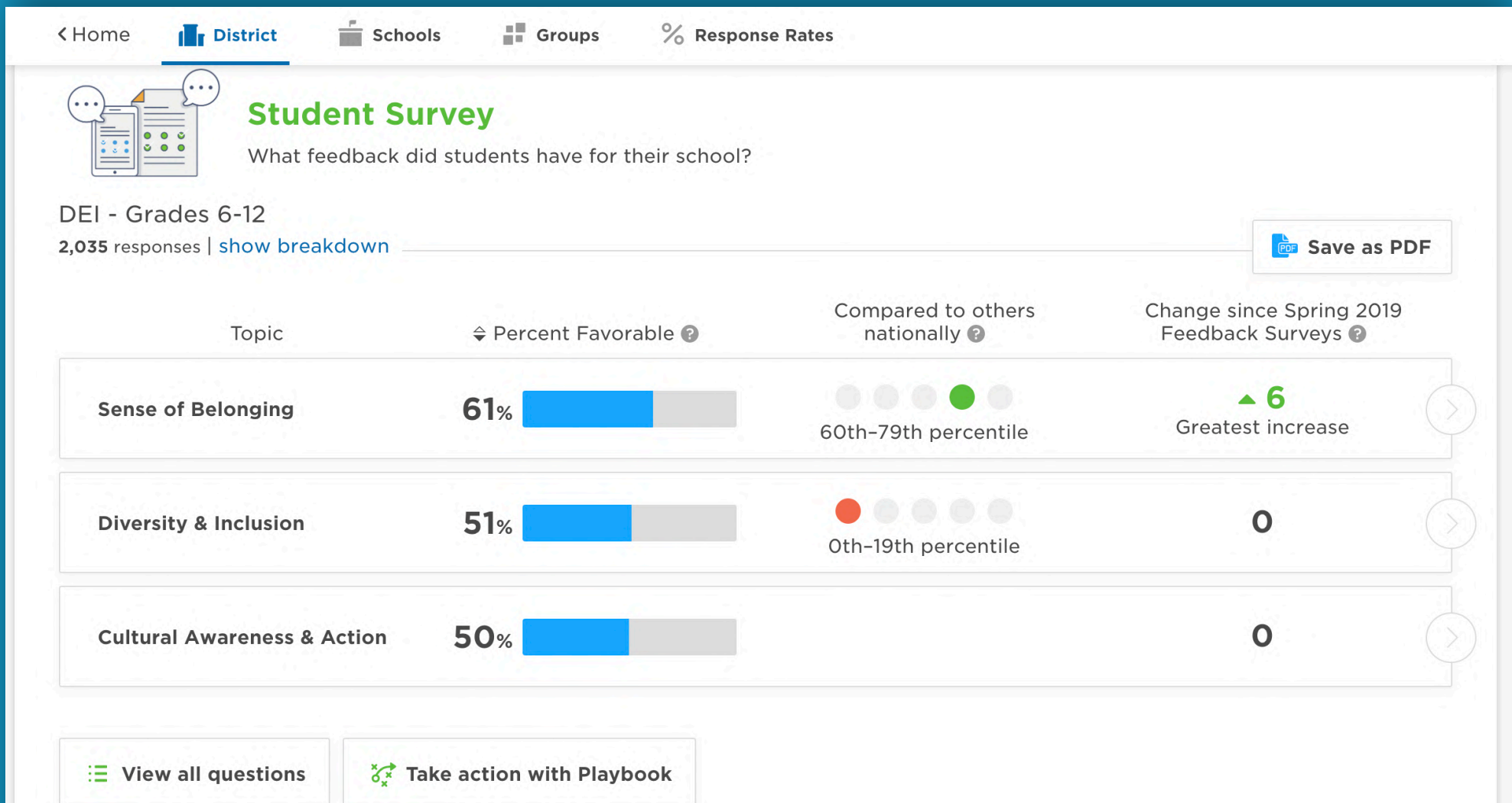
In this guide, we'll look at 7 key questions to get started with an equity audit in your district:

1. How are our students, teachers, and staff thinking and feeling about equity and inclusion at school?
2. What academic achievement gaps might exist between groups of students?
3. What gaps might exist in the social-emotional development of different groups of students?
4. What groups of students may be over- or under-represented in our disciplinary and behavioral data?
5. How might our attendance and chronic absenteeism rates differ by student group?
6. What is our intervention enrollment by race/ethnicity?
7. Do our caring adults have an asset-based system for supporting each and every student?

Explore more equity resources from Panorama:

- [District Leader's Guide to SEL and Equity: 32 District Leaders Share Advice](#)
- [Panorama Equity and Inclusion Survey](#)
- [Combating Unconscious Bias and Systemic Racism in Schools: Interview With Tracey Benson](#)
- [See Panorama's Equity Dashboards](#)

1. How are our **students, teachers, and staff** thinking about feeling about equity and inclusion in school?



“How are our students, teachers, and staff thinking and feeling about equity and inclusion in school?”

Why

- Students, teachers, and staff are often an untapped source of information on equity.
- Students and educators are on the frontlines of daily school life. Their experiences and voices matter, and influence overall school climate.
- With student feedback, reflect on important areas such as: belonging at school, diversity and integration, and awareness of issues of race, ethnicity, and culture.
- With teacher feedback, reflect on important areas such as: professional development needs around equity, readiness to address issues of diversity, and cultural awareness and action.

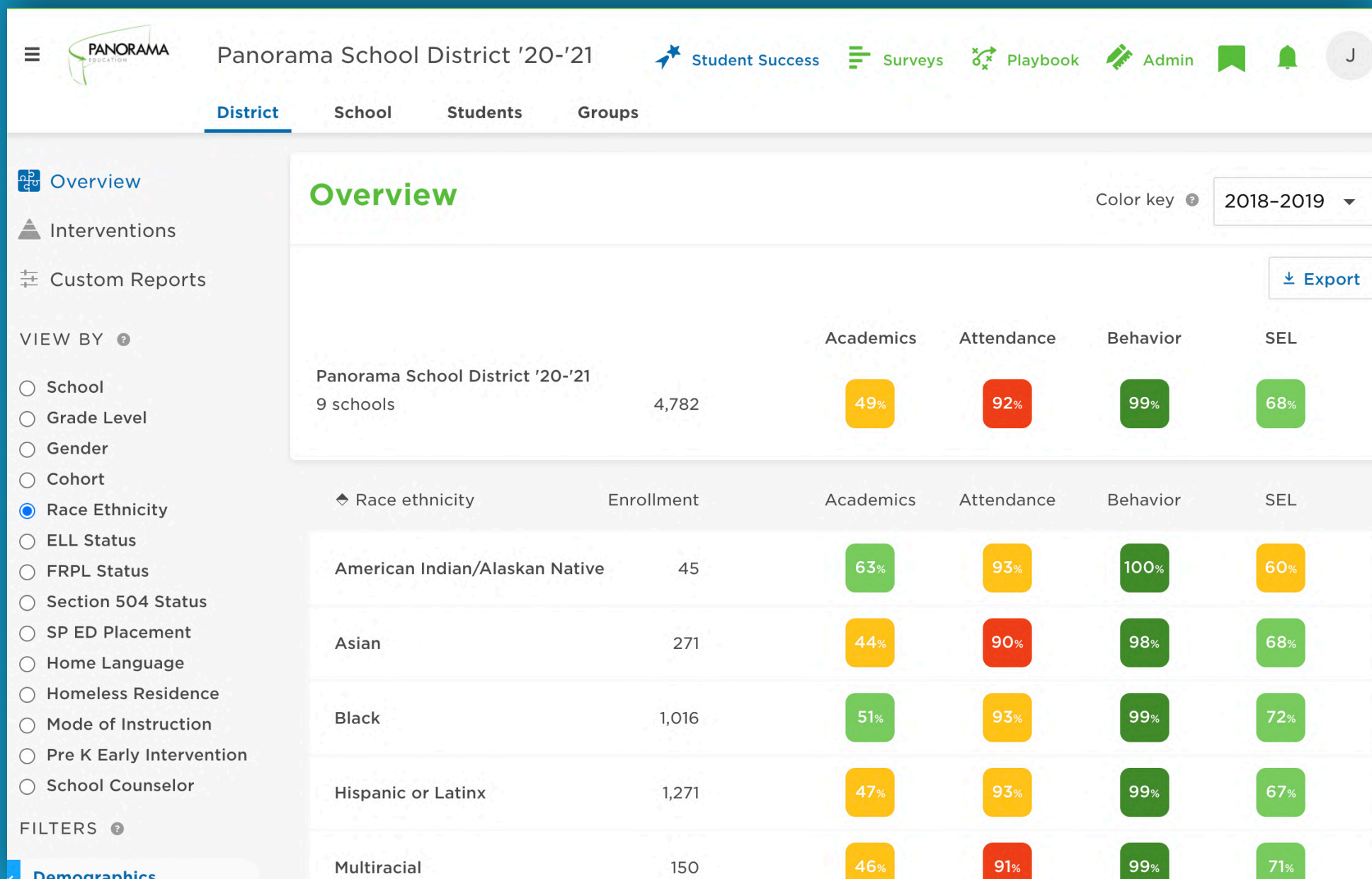
How to answer this question with Panorama:

1. Ask students, teachers, and staff to reflect on their experiences of equity and inclusion in school via surveys. Administer the research-backed [Panorama Equity and Inclusion Survey](#) on an annual or bi-annual basis.
2. Once the survey window closes, your results will be available in Panorama. Explore results at the district, school, and classroom levels against national benchmarks. Review scores for individual topics and questions.
3. Identify/bookmark areas for celebration and improvement. Use the data to inform [professional development](#), build an equity and inclusion action plan, and start a dialogue in your district or school.



[Read about how the Morris School District \(NJ\) integrates student voice data on equity into their Equity and Inclusion Action Plan.](#)

2. What **academic achievement gaps** might exist between groups of students?



“What academic achievement gaps might exist between groups of students?”

Why

- Understand your district's progress against national and state achievement trends.
- Spur dialogue about school- and district-level policies that may be giving some students greater access to resources than other students.
- Investigate graduation and dropout rates across race/ethnicity, socioeconomic, and gender lines.
- Understand whether some cohorts of students are performing better on math and ELA assessments than other student groups.
- Understand if groups of students may be over- or under-represented in advanced course enrollment or gifted and talented programs.

How to answer this question with Panorama:

1. From the District or School dashboard in [Panorama Student Success](#), use the “View By” filters such as Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LEP Status, or FRPL Status to narrow down your academic “on track” data by demographics.
2. Panorama will instantly show the percentage and number of students who are “on track” for academics within that demographic (e.g., the percentage of on-track males vs. females).
3. If you are on the School dashboard, click on the student group (e.g., males) to display a roster of all of the students in that group for further investigation.



[Read about how Boston Public Schools \(MA\)](#) uses Panorama Student Success to uncover and eliminate opportunity gaps for students within an anti-racist multi-tiered system of supports.

3. What gaps might exist in the social-emotional development of different groups of students?

Panorama School District

Student Success | Surveys | Playbook

District | **School** | Students | Groups

Overview Color key ? 2018-2019 Export

	Academics	Attendance	Behavior	SEL
Lincoln Middle School All students 976	84%	95%	99%	85%

VIEW BY ?

- Grade Level
- Gender**
- Cohort
- Race Ethnicity
- LEP Status
- FRPL Status
- Section 504 Status
- SP ED Placement
- Home Language
- Mode of Instruction
- Pre K Early Intervention
- School Counselor

FILTERS ?

Demographics

Gender	Enrollment	Academics	Attendance	Behavior	SEL
Female	473				86%
Male	502				84%

Excellent: 80% or more on track

86% of Gender: Female students with data are on track in SEL in the 2018-2019 year (401 of 469). 4 students do not have SEL data.

PANORAMA EDUCATION

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“What gaps might exist in the social-emotional development of different groups of students?”

Why

- Unpack your [social-emotional learning \(SEL\) data](#) to see if there are gender and race differences in how students rate their social and emotional competencies.
- Follow up by asking: What is our system telling students about their abilities to manage emotions or form relationships—and how might that show up in how they perceive their SEL competencies?
- Start conversations about district policies, practices, or SEL programs that may not be inclusive of all students.
- Explore educator biases and assumptions that could be harming groups of students. How might teacher perceptions of students' SEL differ from what students are saying?

How to answer this question with Panorama:

1. From the District or School dashboard in [Panorama Student Success](#), use the “View By” filters such as Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LEP Status, or FRPL Status to narrow down your social-emotional learning “on track” data by different demographics.
2. Panorama will instantly show the show the percentage and number of students who are “on track” for SEL within that demographic (e.g., the percentage of males vs. females who reported favorable SEL scores).
3. Or, use Panorama’s survey data heat maps. Go to the “Comparisons” tab in your survey data dashboards to see a disaggregation of topic scores by demographic group.



[Learn how Washoe County School District \(NV\) uses SEL data to uncover and investigate inequitable policies and practices in the district \(article by Washoe’s Director of Research and Evaluation\).](#)

4. What groups may be over- or under-represented in our disciplinary and behavioral data?

Panorama School District

Student Success | Surveys | Playbook

District | School | Students | Groups

Overview | Interventions | Custom Reports

VIEW BY: School, Grade Level, Gender, Cohort, Race Ethnicity, LEP Status, FRPL Status, Section 504 Status, **SP ED Placement**, Home Language, Homeless Residence, Mode of Instruction, Pre K Early Intervention, School Counselor

FILTERS

Demographics

Color key 2018-2019

Export

	Enrollment	Academics	Attendance	Behavior	SEL
Panorama School District 9 schools	4,768	60%	92%	99%	68%
Sped placement					
Home Instruction	1		100%	100%	100%
Majority Regular Education	643	43%	89%	98%	71%
Majority Special Education	28	40%	86%	91%	64%
Separate Class	23	75%	83%	100%	57%

“What groups of students may be over- or under-represented in our disciplinary and behavioral data?”

Why

- Understand if disciplinary actions—such as office referrals, suspensions, and expulsions—are applied equitably across all demographic groups.
- Investigate if what you are seeing in your community mirrors (or differs from) national trends on [discipline disproportionality](#).
- Start important conversations about educator beliefs, mindsets, and policies that may be contributing to disproportionate discipline rates.

How to answer this question with Panorama:

1. From the District or School dashboard in [Panorama Student Success](#), use the “View By” filters such as Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LEP Status, or FRPL Status to narrow down your behavior data by demographics.
2. Panorama will instantly show the percentage and number of students who are “on track” for behavior within that demographic (e.g., the percentage of on-track males vs. females).
3. If you are on the School dashboard, click on the student group (e.g., males) to display a roster of all of the students in that group for further investigation.



[Read about how West Allis-West Milwaukee School District \(WI\) approaches Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports \(PBIS\) with an equity mindset.](#)

5. How might our attendance and chronic absenteeism rates differ by student group?

Panorama School District

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District
School
Students
Groups

Demographics

Gender

Female

Male

No Data

Race Ethnicity

Asian

Black

Hispanic

Multiracial

White

No Data

Grade Level

9

10

11

12

LEP Status

No

Yes

FRPL Status

Free

Full Price

Reduced Price

Overview

Viewing **25** of **1,772** students who match these attributes:

Gender ×
Male

Attendance ×
Critical

Clear all

Save

Share

Export

Print

TIMEFRAME ?

Q1

Q2

Q3 (current)

YTD

Academics

Attendance

Behavior

SEL

	Academics	Attendance	Behavior	SEL
<input type="checkbox"/> Joseph Barton	D+	28	0	6
<input type="checkbox"/> W William Bowers	F	37	0	6

"How might our attendance and chronic absenteeism rates differ by student group?"

Why

- Students can't learn unless they are present for school (virtually or in person!). Understand if there are groups of students who are attending school less than others.
- Chronic absenteeism is one of the strongest predictors of students falling off track for graduating high school, poorer social-emotional outcomes, and lower achievement in reading and math.
- Use the data to dig deeper into the factors that may be contributing to attendance disparities. For example, cross-reference your findings with SEL and academic data to begin to understand root causes.

How to answer this question with Panorama:

1. From the District or School dashboard in [Panorama Student Success](#)*, use the "View By" filters such as Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LEP Status, or FRPL Status to narrow down your attendance data by demographics.
2. Panorama will instantly show the percentage and number of students who are "on track" for attendance within that demographic (e.g., the percentage of on-track males vs. females).
3. If you are on the School dashboard, click on the student group (e.g., males) to display a roster of all of the students in that group for further investigation.

**Panorama can support with tracking virtual and hybrid attendance. Our platform can integrate with your Student Information System's unique attendance codes.*



Learn more about [using Panorama to address chronic absenteeism](#), then read how [Nye County School District \(NV\)](#) improved their attendance rate with Panorama data.

6. What is our **intervention enrollment** by race/ethnicity?

Panorama School District

Student Success
Surveys
Playbook

District
School
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Overview

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Attendance

Custom Reports

VIEW BY

- Grade Level
- Gender
- Cohort
- Race Ethnicity
- LEP Status
- FRPL Status
- Section 504 Status
- SP ED Placement
- Home Language
- Pre K Early Intervention
- School Counselor

FILTERS

Demographics

Grade Level

- 6
- 7
- 8

Gender

- Female
- Male

Cohort

- 2023
- 2024

Interventions

2018-2019 ▼

Lincoln Middle School

All students - 976 students

All interventions ▼

- **79%** Receiving Tier 1 only
- **20%** Receiving Tier 2
- **2%** Receiving Tier 3

▼ Compare

Race ethnicity	Enrollment	Tier 1 only	Tier 2	Tier 3
Asian	40	85%	15%	3%
Black	88	67%	33%	1%
Hispanic	357	73%	25%	4%
Multiracial	18	89%	11%	0%
White	471	84%	15%	1%

“What is our intervention enrollment by race/ethnicity?”

Why

- Understand if some groups of students are being over-identified as needing tiered or intensive supports.
- Recognize potential imbalances across tiers to diagnose the health of your [multi-tiered system of supports \(MTSS\)](#).
- Start conversations about whether intervention processes and systems are equitable; begin a review process and identify opportunities to interrupt bias.
- Report these metrics to your leadership team to stay accountable to an equity-based MTSS.

How to answer this question with Panorama:

1. From the School or District dashboard in [Panorama Student Success](#), click on “Interventions” on the left hand side. This will pull up the intervention reporting dashboard.
2. Select the “Race Ethnicity” demographic filter under “View By.”
3. From here, the dashboard will display intervention enrollment by race/ethnicity and by tier—providing both the number of students and percentages for comparison.
4. To break down the data even further, filter by the type of intervention (e.g., ELA, Math, SEL) at the top right.

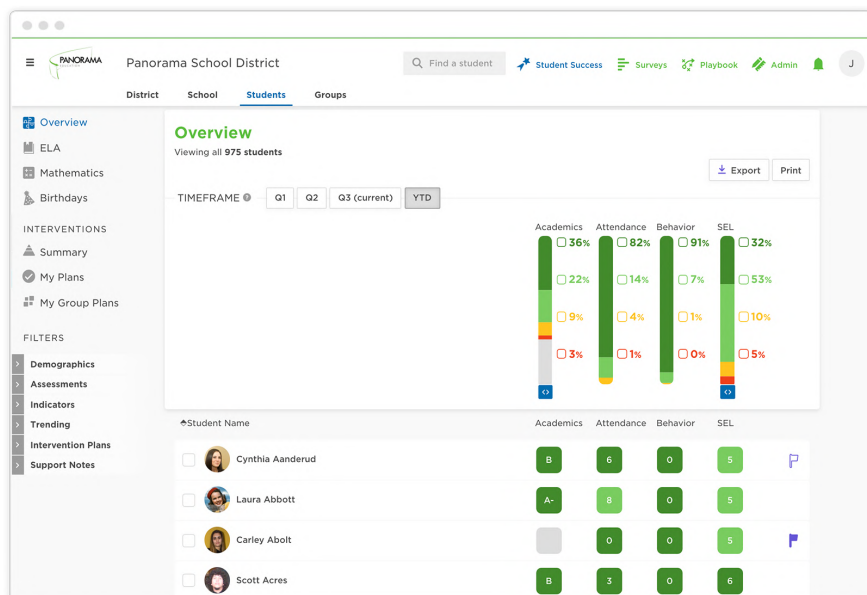


[Read about how the Director of Equity and Intervention at Oxford School District \(MS\) and her MTSS team use Panorama to ensure no child slips through the cracks.](#)

7. Do our caring adults have an **asset-based system** for supporting **each and every student**?

This last question brings it all together. You have an abundance of equity data across academics, behavior, attendance, and SEL. These data are useful on their own—but they’re **much more powerful together**.

The magic happens when administrators and educators can triangulate data across multiple domains to unpack inequities and think collaboratively about strategies for promoting equity and inclusion.



[Panorama Student Success](#) helps you systematically **understand and act on disparities** in your district. Data across academics, behavior, attendance, and social-emotional learning (SEL) can help adults have honest, data-driven conversations about whether students are being served equitably.

SEE A DEMO

▶ [Hear how](#) Cathy Woods, director of on-time graduation at Everett Public Schools (WA), uses Panorama to **“see when we’re not meeting the needs of an entire group of students.”**



About Panorama Education

Panorama helps educators monitor how students are doing across academics, attendance, behavior, and college readiness, and then coordinate action to support each child.

Panorama's platform also helps educators collect data about non-academic factors that are key to each child's success in school and in life, such as social-emotional skills, safety, and family engagement.

Today, 1,500 districts and 17,000 schools serving 10 million students trust Panorama, including the New York City Department of Education, Dallas Independent School District, and San Francisco Unified School District.

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