Case Study: Racial Equity Impact Analysis of Minneapolis Public School District's Changing School Options

By Jermaine Toney, Research Consultant, Applied Research Center

Summary

In 2008, the Minneapolis Board of Education, prompted by a community-based alliance called the Education Equity Organizing Collaborative, adopted the use of a “Race, Cultural and Economic Equity Impact Assessment” for informing decision-making related to its Changing School Options plan, a proposal for reorganizing school enrollment and transportation routes in order to cut operating costs. Use of the Equity Assessment framework resulted in the selection of a reorganization option that mitigated adverse impacts on communities of color that otherwise may have occurred had other options been pursued. To minimize disruption, the district’s final selected option approved school boundary changes but provided American Indian students with the flexibility to select their own schools. And, communication between the Somali Action Alliance and the school district staff resulted in maintaining Pratt School as a pipeline towards Sanford Middle School, which has a solid performance record and reputation for educating Somali students at this critical developmental age. This case study illustrates the need for, implementation of, and resulting impact of Racial Equity Impact Assessments and how they can be applied in the realm of public education.

Background: The Emergence of the Equity Impact Assessment

In Spring 2008, the Education Equity Organizing Collaborative (EEOC) was approached by the Minneapolis Board of Education to support a proposed $65 million dollar school funding referendum that was up for consideration on the November ballot. EEOC was seen as an important civic player because it was a multi-racial and multi-ethnic collaborative made up of a number of community organizations advocating for equity in public schools, including MIGIZI Communications (an American Indian organization), Somali Action Alliance, ISAIAH (a multi-racial faith-based coalition), Coalition of Black Churches and the Organizing Apprenticeship Project.

EEOC said they would first need to conduct a racial, cultural and economic impact analysis of how school children, including students of color and American Indian students in the district would be affected by the various action options under consideration. EEOC, in turn, commissioned the Organizing Apprenticeship Project, a local non-profit organization specializing in analyzing the racial impacts of public policies, to do the impact analysis. This analysis revealed that if voters failed to approve the referendum for additional school funding, the academic achievement gap across different racial groups would widen, while voter approval of the initiative would result in the maintenance, but not expansion, of current disparities. Thus, the racial impact analysis revealed that support for the initiative would be a more favorable position for communities of color.

But before they could throw their full and active support towards passage of the initiative, communities of color needed more than just promise. They asked for real accountability from
the Board of Education to ensure that the school district would deliver on the intended goals of increased revenue for improved services. This was a leverage opportunity for communities of color and a chance to begin to change the power dynamics between the Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) and families of color whose children made up a majority of student enrollment. Students of color made up 70 percent of the overall district student population. The district’s student enrollment is 40 percent African American, 30 percent white, 17 percent Latino, 9 percent Asian, and 4.5 percent American Indian.

Meanwhile, families of color experienced worse school outcomes compared to white families. During the 2006-2007 school year, the state’s comprehensive test exposed that only 31 percent of Minneapolis schools’ Black students were proficient at reading, 35 percent of Latino students, 33 percent of American Indian students, 43 percent of Asian students, while 83 percent of white students were proficient. Students living with poverty faced a similar gap: only 32 percent of students who received free or reduced lunch were proficient at reading.

With EEOC’s active and visible support, the 2008 referendum was approved by a historic margin. The referendum passed by a vote of 131,390 to 53,939. Over 17,200 more people came out to vote “yes” than the previous school funding referendum vote in the year 2000. The tipping point was a larger presence of Minneapolis voters of color. As a response, the MPS Board of Education agreed to two “accountability sessions” with communities of color around the goals of the referendum. However, while planning for this, MPS forwarded another request to EEOC by asking communities of color to support their Changing School Options (CSO), a proposal for reorganizing services in order to save operating costs.

The CSO offered three recommended options to solve the fiscal challenges brought about by declining student enrollment and rising transportation costs. The CSO sought to close schools, rewire pathways in school enrollment options and change school transportation routes. The EEOC reviewed the three recommendations and determined that it was clear that no assessment of the impact of disruption for students of color and American Indian students had been conducted, despite stark academic achievement gaps and demographic dynamics.

The EEOC had already built a relationship with key members of the school board during the referendum campaign. The Minneapolis School Board had a Race and Equity Subcommittee, which at the time, had no clearly articulated mission or goals committed to equity. EEOC asked the subcommittee to go back to their fellow Board members and get Board support to request that district administration conduct an Equity Impact Assessment of existing CSO recommendations to examine possible adverse impacts and disruptions for students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The EEOC provided the board with a tool to use as a framework for assessment—OAP’s *Pocket Guide to Budget Proposals: Racial and Economic Equity*, a set of Assessment Questions that OAP had previously used and shared with state lawmakers to assess the racial impacts of state budget proposals (See Appendix 1). OAP had received previous training and consulting from the Applied Research Center, a national racial justice think-tank and a key promoter of racial impact assessments.

EEOC urged the board to use assessment questions in this guide as an initial framework, which could help point to other relevant questions that may need to be considered for this context. EEOC leaders advised the board that it was good governance to have access to this
information prior to deciding the final CSO plans so that the benefits or harms could be evenly distributed across different racial groups and so that unintended adverse consequences could be avoided. The Board was very supportive of the equity impact analysis and voted unanimously to authorize the district staff to use the assessment. They were eager to know, on the front-end of decision-making, how the changes would affect their constituents.

The school district administration promised to do the assessment. But when they came back to the Board at a subsequent meeting to present their findings and recommendations, it became clear that no equity impact assessment had been conducted. Therefore, EEOC recommended that the Board reject the administration’s proposal and to order them to actually do the equity impact assessment. The Board voted unanimously to send the plan back to the drawing board, despite some embarrassment to school administrators. This was an unusual move since the Board more typically went along with administration recommendations. By voting down the inadequate plan, it put the Board in the driver’s seat, forcing the administration to finally conduct the equity impact assessment.

**Implementation: How the Equity Impact Assessment was Conducted**

The MPS administration created a team for the equity impact analysis that was composed of a mix of departments, including student accounting; academic and English language learning; finance; transportation; facilities; and a contractor who helped with research, analysis and writing.

The EEOC’s initial contact with the district’s research and planning staff around the equity impact assessment got off to a rough start. Some members of the analytic team saw a gap between what EEOC was requesting and what the District would be putting together. Jill Stever-Zeitlin, the school board member responsible for coordinating the analysis and formerly with McKinsey Consulting, said the administrative staff’s sentiment was, “we can’t do that, especially in the amount of time we have, and do a good job around high standards for analysis.”

To get around this, Stever-Zetlin pulled together a face-to-face meeting with key board members and the working team. The question turned to scope of work given the recommended changes. People started to see that this could actually work—that there was a way to do a good job with accuracy on modeling the impact of the changes and meet the high research standards.

Yet, there was another concern. Some members of the staff team who were aware of OAP’s previous racial impact analytic work feared that OAP would publicly critique the district’s work. That put some staff members into defensive mode. However, the face-to-face meeting between members of the EEOC leaders and with the staff team helped diffuse this tension. The meeting revealed a shared commitment to equity. The team saw there were mutual advantages to surfacing the truth, and to use the data to prevent disparities.

EEOC leaders wanted to make sure that community organizations around the table had accurate information so that their communities could thoughtfully decide which option to support. It took two meetings to work through some of the tensions, but it was well worth the time since people involved established a community partnership and a pathway for making
the analysis doable and useful. Since the plan’s options had already been crafted, the main
task was to pull together the data to see how each proposed option would impact different
students and communities.

A central element of the equity impact analysis was to determine the attendance numbers
before and after a boundary change was put into place. To capture this, the following two
methodological steps were taken:

- **Pull data on current student enrollment differences by resident zone**: paying close attention to the proportion of students of color, English language learners, enrollment trends over the last five years for kindergarten and certain grades, and attrition within the public schools. Key sources for this information were the Minneapolis Public School’s Department of Student Accounting and Department of Research, Evaluation and Assessment.

- **Model three top options through moving school boundaries**: The school district administration analyzed three proposed options: Plan A established solid zones, Plan B rebalanced zone capacity, Plan C minimized disruption. Once this was done, they listed the number of magnet programs in each zone, the closure of schools in each zone, the programs closed and the number of students that would have to move; and the schools and students that would not move. Given the adjustments, they looked at the price tags of each option and the number and percentage of students that would be disrupted (students who would have to change schools). Key sources were the Minneapolis Public Schools’ Department of Facilities; Department of Academic Affairs; Department of English Language Learning; Department of Finance; and Department of Transportation.

**Findings of the Equity Impact Assessment**

The equity analysis revealed that Plan A held a financial cost of $8.5 million, while potentially disrupting 9,200 students (of whom 39 percent were students of color). Plan B cost a little less, $8.2 million, and disrupted fewer students, 8,550 students (of whom 43 percent were students of color). Finally, Plan C had a higher price tag, $9 million, but disrupted even fewer students, 4,920 (only 22 percent were students of color). Of the three options, the assessment showed that Plan C was the better plan for all kids facing disruption—students of color, American Indian students, English language learners, low-income students and white students (See Appendix 2).

Still, the final solution meant that major schools would be closed for Somali students and that American Indian students would be forced to cross school boundaries. More important, having the data broken down by race and culture showed each community how the CSO would impact them.

American Indian learners comprised only 5 percent of the district's student population but 26 percent of those students who would have been adversely impacted by the plan. From a
geographic perspective, it was specifically the East Phillips and Little Earth of United Tribes community, residing in the Southeast/Southcentral part of town, which would have been hurt most by the boundary change.

The Somali community would have been adversely impacted by the proposed closure of two schools. This change would have severed a vital pathway to Sanford Middle School, an anchor institution that is critical to their community.

**Impact of the Equity Impact Assessment: Initiating a Process to Ease Disruption**

Having a more accurate picture of the potential racial impacts of the various plans under consideration, the school district now had the opportunity to make appropriate changes in their proposals, and significantly, to actively engage the direct stakeholders in some collective problem solving.

The projected disproportionate adverse impacts on the American Indian community led the school board to adjust the proposed changes in rules and boundaries. To address this, the District decided as its solution to take a flexible approach to proposed boundary changes. For example, if an American Indian parent currently had a student at Anderson School (which was beyond the boundary that the district had drawn) instead of being required to now attend Sullivan School, they actually gave the parent a choice. The parent could keep their child at Anderson or switch to Sullivan.

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

Communication between district staff and American Indian organizations—including MIGIZI Communications and Little Earth of United Tribes—resulted in more opportunities for students from the same communities to have the option to stay in the same school together, important for maintaining community cohesion.

Similarly, communication between the Somali Action Alliance and the school district staff resulted in maintaining Pratt School as a pipeline towards Sanford Middle School, which has a solid performance record and reputation for educating Somali students at this critical developmental age.

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

This Racial Equity Impact Assessment is a critical tool for realizing equity in school decision-making.
making, practices and outcomes. By putting attention to racial equity up front, before proposals are implemented, institutions can become much more transparent and accountable to the communities they serve in regards to equity. The difference the racial impact assessment made—producing a participatory process and a better solution that was least disruptive on communities of color—was very significant for thousands of families and school children.

**Lessons Learned**

“We must be vigilant around equity issues. The system will act like the system, going right back to old behavior real quickly. This is why we must have campaigns but also we must have policies that institutionalize equity. No matter who sits in the school board chairs, equity impact assessments of major decisions will be a mandate of institutions.” -Elaine Salinas, MIGIZI Communications

1. **Stakeholder engagement from the outset of planning and decision-making is critical.** Those most affected by the issues being addressed need to be actively and authentically engaged in the decision-making process. Pushing the need for the Equity Impact Assessment prior to the adoption of changes allowed parents to shape how they would be impacted. Significantly, they were able to exert influence before decisions were made, rather than after the fact. This vigilance requires capacity.

2. **Multi-racial alliances and analyses are needed.** When communities come together across racial and cultural lines, this can be a powerful element in driving change. Instead of competing across racial lines, a multi-racial and multi-ethnic approach to analysis and decision-making can help surface solutions that can benefit people across all races, but especially racial groups that are currently or potentially most disadvantaged.

3. **School district and community collaboration is well worth the investment.** Face-to-face meetings and the development of understanding, trust and working partnership pay off in producing better solutions. Each partner can have important organizing and educational leadership within their respective communities, thereby bringing more perspectives, knowledge and expertise towards creating mutual workable and equitable solutions.

4. **The use of race equity research tools is critical to success.** Having concrete frameworks and guides for conducting Racial Equity Impact Assessments helps ensure that important questions are considered thoughtfully and systematically.

5. **Exemplary practices need to start somewhere.** Though the use of the Racial Equity Impact Assessment in the case study was applied to a specific decision, it served as a model for demonstrating the value of its use. The District—and hopefully other institutions—can explore and implement other applications of this practice to foster system-wide benefits.

6. **Further experience and refinement is needed to improve the use and value of Racial Equity Impact Assessments.** It is important to note that even though the results in this case were positive, in some respects, the MPS conducted an incomplete analysis. Their racial equity impact assessment only analyzed the solutions already developed before
this process was put in place. Ideally, racial equity impact analysis would have been used to generate the initial options to then further assess.

7. **Communities of color and American Indian communities must have ongoing capacity for vigilance in monitoring policy and school practices.** For example, late in the process, the school district was pushed to reopen schools and reassign students to schools when there was a sudden surge in school enrollment in southern part of city, particularly the southwest side. Meanwhile, the EEOC was focused on advocating for racial equity at the state policy level and did not have the capacity to weigh in on this new local development. These new changes by the school district ended up having a disparate impact on some students, particularly Latino students in English language learning courses. Many were moved from Ramsey to Folwell School. Had the EEOC had more capacity, they could have intervened and possibly prevented this from happening.

8. **Equity Impact Assessments need to be institutionalized.** EEOC is in early conversations about institutionalizing equity impact assessments at the board level so that no matter who is sitting in the board positions, equity practices will be a mandate for reaching what is often a core mission-driven aspiration to provide the highest quality services possible for all students. According to Terry Keleher at the Applied Research Center, “Building the use of equity tools into standard protocols can be a way to institutionalize equity’ so that it doesn’t simply depend on the good will of committed staff, but becomes the institution’s standard operating practice.” Racial equity tools need to be part of a broader and prioritized commitment and strategy for achieving equitable outcomes.

Endnotes

Contacts for Case Study:

- Julia Freeman, Senior Organizer Organizing Apprenticeship Project  
  [freeman@oaproject.org](mailto:freeman@oaproject.org), Office: [612 746-4224](tel:6127464224),

- Elaine Salinas, President, MIGIZI Communications, Inc.  
  [elaine@migizi.org](mailto:elaine@migizi.org), Office: [612-721-6631](tel:6127216631), ext 205

- Hashi Shafi, Executive Director, Somali Action Alliance  
  [hashishafi@gmail.com](mailto:hashishafi@gmail.com), Office: [612 455-2185](tel:6124552185),

- Jill Stever-Zeitlin, Minneapolis School Board  
  [jill.stever-zeitlin@mpls.k12.mn.us](mailto:jill.stever-zeitlin@mpls.k12.mn.us), Office: [612-688-0180](tel:6126880180)

About the Author: Jermaine Toney is a Research Consultant with the Applied Research Center. He holds a master’s degree in public policy and he is a doctoral student in economics at the New School for Social Research in New York. Previously, he worked as lead researcher with the Organizing Apprenticeship Project in Minnesota, where he authored a report on Weighing the Racial Equity Impacts of the Minneapolis Schools Referendum, the Pocket Guide to Budget Equity, five editions of the Minnesota Legislative Report Card on Racial Equity, and several policy briefs on racial equity.
Pocket Guide to Budget Proposals: 
Assessment Questions on Racial and Economic Equity

1. How does the proposed action (policy, budget or investment decision) impact racial and economic disparities in Minnesota?

*Example:* Minnesota’s Sentencing Guidelines Commission has forecast the racial and economic impact of changing sentencing law. Simply lowering both first-degree and second-degree drug offenses (triggered by charges involving possession of small amounts of drugs and nonviolent crimes) one severity level would result in a reduction of 750 prison beds. One-third (32 percent) of these would have been used by people of color. This analysis demonstrates how one simple policy change can have an unanticipated positive impact on racial disparities in Minnesota, even as it control costs in tough economic times.

2. How does the proposed action support and advance racial and economic equity in such areas as education, contracting, immigrant and refugee access to services, health, workforce and economic development?

*Example:* According to Minnesota Department of Education, every inmate who completes an Adult Basic Education program (like high school GED or vocational training) and does not commit a crime after being released, has a stronger chance to reintegrate, saving Minnesota taxpayers $28,000 annually. Incarceration rates are disproportionately high among low-income people and people of color, especially young Black men. Actions should expand common-sense opportunities, reducing barriers and strengthening Minnesota’s workforce, rather than remove essential bridges to equity and prosperity.

3. Have voices of groups affected by the proposal, budget, or investment decision been involved with its development? What solutions were proposed by these groups and communities?

*Example:* Too often, communities affected by budget decisions are treated as part of the problem rather than part of the solution. Neighborhoods, communities, including communities of color and low-income communities know best what they need. When Minnesota’s mobile home residents were told by lawmakers that they could not have storm protection because of high water tables under area parks, they designed a $10,000 culvert-style shelter later approved by FEMA and now used all over the state of Minnesota. Just one example of what is possible when lawmakers make room for low-income communities and communities of color to co-construct the solutions, while supporting equity.

4. What do you need to ensure that proposals are successful in addressing disparities—what resources, what timelines, and what monitoring will help ensure success of proposal for achieving racial and economic equity?

5. If your assessment shows that a proposed policy, budget or investment decisions will likely increase disparities, what alternatives can you explore? What modifications are needed to maximize racial and economic equity outcomes and reduce racial and economic disparities?
Appendix 2

Weighing Potential Equity Impacts and Costs of Minneapolis Public Schools’ Changing School Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>K-8 Plans</th>
<th>Financial</th>
<th>Student Disruption Maximum</th>
<th>Equity Dynamics of Disruption*</th>
<th>Desegregation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plan A: Establish Solid Zones</strong></td>
<td>$8.5 million</td>
<td>43%; 9200 students</td>
<td>79% of special ed.; 51% of ell; 39% of soc; 52% of white; 44% of free lunch</td>
<td>15 schools in 30-70% zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plan B: Rebalance Zone Capacity</strong></td>
<td>$8.2 million</td>
<td>40%; 8550 students</td>
<td>79% of special ed.; 42% of ell; 43% of soc; 33 of white; 41% of free lunch</td>
<td>14 schools in 30-70% zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plan C: Minimize Disruption</strong></td>
<td>$9 million</td>
<td>23%; 4920 students</td>
<td>0% of special ed.; 14% of ell; 22% of soc; 25% of white; 22% of free lunch</td>
<td>15 schools in 30-70% zone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Disruption means the percent of subgroup moving schools

Source: Minneapolis Public Schools, Changing School Options, July 2009.
Appendix 3

Instructive Data Sources

**Minnesota**

Minneapolis Schools Department of Research, Evaluation and Assessment  
[http://rea.mpls.k12.mn.us/](http://rea.mpls.k12.mn.us/)

Minneapolis Schools Department of Student Accounting  
[http://studentaccounting.mpls.k12.mn.us/](http://studentaccounting.mpls.k12.mn.us/)

Minneapolis Schools Department of Facilities  
[http://facilities.mpls.k12.mn.us/](http://facilities.mpls.k12.mn.us/)

Minneapolis Schools Department of Academic Affairs  
[http://academicaffairs.mpls.k12.mn.us/](http://academicaffairs.mpls.k12.mn.us/)

Minneapolis Schools Department of Transportation  
[http://transportation.mpls.k12.mn.us/](http://transportation.mpls.k12.mn.us/)

Minneapolis Schools Department of Finance  
[http://financeandbudget.mpls.k12.mn.us/](http://financeandbudget.mpls.k12.mn.us/)

Minneapolis Schools Department of English Language Learners (Multilingual)  
[http://ell.mpls.k12.mn.us/](http://ell.mpls.k12.mn.us/)

Minnesota Department of Education  
[http://education.state.mn.us](http://education.state.mn.us)

**National**

National Assessment of Educational Progress  
Appendix 4

Summary of Five Stages to Generating a Racial Equity Impact Analysis in the Minneapolis Public Schools

Stage 1—Initiation: Leadership makes request for Racial Equity Impact Analysis and sets in motion the key foundations to guide the analysis.

1.1. Making the initial request. In 2009, Minneapolis Public Schools requested that the Education Equity Organizing Collaborative (EEOC) support their Changing School Options (CSO) initiative, a proposal that sought to change school boundaries, adjust educational services, enrollment and transportation in order to save operating costs. EEOC was asked to support CSO because it was an important civic player, a multi-racial and multi-ethnic collaborative made up of a number of community organizations advocating for equity in public schools. The collaborative was made up of MIGIZI Communications, Somali Action Alliance, ISAIAH, Coalition of Black Churches and the Organizing Apprenticeship Project.

1.2. Receiving the answer. The EEOC said they could not support the CSO without an equity impact analysis being done. Prompted by the EEOC, the Minneapolis Board of Education adopted the use of a “Race, Culture and Economic Equity Impact Assessment” for informing decision-making related to its Changing School Options.

Stage 2—Estimation: Gathering the team and developing methodology to generate the analysis and create alternatives.

2.1. Assembling the team for research. The Minneapolis Public Schools administration assembled a team for the Racial Equity Impact Analysis that was composed of a mix of departments, such as student accounting, academic and English language learning, finance, transportation, facilities; and a contractor who helped with research, analysis and writing. The team was charged with structuring the analysis to make visible the potential impacts on all students, particularly students of color and American Indian students.

2.2. Drafting options and methodology. Three options were established. Plan A sought to establish solid zones, Plan B sought to re-balance zone capacity, Plan C sought to minimize disruption on students. Once there were options, the primary scope of the equity impact analysis was to figure out what were the attendance numbers before and after a proposed boundary change. To capture this, the following two methodological steps were taken:

• Pulling data on current student enrollment by resident zone. The analysis paid close attention to the proportion of students of color, English language learners, enrollment trends over the last five years for kindergarten and certain grades, and attrition within the public schools. Key data sources for this information were Minneapolis Schools Department of Student Accounting and the Department of Research, Evaluation and Assessment.

• Revealing the racial dynamics of changing school boundaries. The analysis listed the number of magnet programs in each zone, the schools closed in each zone, the programs closed and the number of students that would have to move, the schools that would stay open and students that would not move. Given the dynamics, the analysis estimated costs for each option and the number and percent of students that would be disrupted (i.e. have to move). Key data sources for this were Minneapolis Schools Department of Facilities; Department of Academic Affairs; Department of English Language Learning; Department of Finance; and Department of Transportation.
Stage 3—Selection: Reviewing the positive and negative impacts, benefits and burdens and costs of alternatives; and selecting the option that holds the least negative impact, lowest burden.

3.1. Reviewing the solutions. The equity analysis revealed that Plan A held a financial cost of $8.5 million, while potentially disrupting 9,200 students (of whom 39 percent were students of color). Plan B cost a little less, $8.2 million, and disrupted fewer students, 8,550 students (of whom 43 percent were students of color). Finally, Plan C had a higher price tag, $9 million, but disrupted even fewer students, 4,920 (only 22 percent were students of color). Of the three options, the assessment showed that Plan C was the better plan for all kids facing disruption—students of color, English language learners, low-income students and white students.

3.2. Selecting the equitable solution. Plan C would become the option that would move forward, selected by members of the EEOC and ultimately voted on by members of the Minneapolis School Board. Still, the final solution revealed that a major school would be closed for Somali students and that American Indian students would be forced to cross school boundaries.

Stage 4—Implementation: Making appropriate changes to minimize harm in implementation and actively engaging direct stakeholders in collective problem solving.

4.1. Modifying the solution for American Indian learners. The potential adverse impacts on the American Indian community led the school board to adjust the proposed changes in rules and boundaries. To address this, the district decided to take a flexible approach to proposed boundary changes. For example, if an American Indian parent had a student at Anderson School (which was beyond the boundary that the district had drawn), instead of being sent to Sullivan, they actually gave the parent a choice. The parent could actually keep their child at Anderson.

4.2. Improving the solution for Somali learners. The Somali community would have been adversely impacted by the proposed closure of a school, severing a pathway to a middle school, an anchor institution that is critical to their community. To minimize disruption in implementation, communication between the Somali Action Alliance and the school district staff resulted in maintaining Pratt School as a pipeline towards Sanford Middle School, which has a solid performance record and reputation for educating Somali students at that critical development age.

Stage 5—Evaluation: using qualitative and quantitative techniques to evaluate the impact; consulting with key stakeholders and tracking outcomes of the impact of the decision on racial equity outcomes over time.

5.1. Further experience and refinement was noted as a way to improve the use and value of Racial Equity Impact Assessments. It is important to note that even though the above results were positive, the Minneapolis Public Schools conducted, in some respects, an incomplete analysis. Their racial equity impact assessment only analyzed the solutions already developed. Ideally, a Racial Equity Impact Analysis would have been used to generate the initial options to then further assess.

5.2. In order to have ongoing Racial Equity Impact Analysis, it must become an institutionalized practice. According the school board member, Jill Stever-Zeitlin, “Had the Minneapolis Public School District not done the Racial Equity Impact Analysis, we would not have known the upcoming impacts. In general, it is just good practice to be aware of the impact of a district’s decisions—to see and think about impact of decisions. This has to be more of a discipline, not a one-time thing. It has to be embedded in all the work—part of operating as a school district. Not just responding to a community group request but it has to be part of how the district does business.”