

cross-referencing systems data to inform equity

STORIES FROM THE NETWORK

ImpactTulsa | Tulsa, Okla.



*from
A guide to racial and ethnic
equity systems indicators*

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ImpactTulsa is using systems indicators to reveal disparities and develop a systems-focused, racial equity-based data strategy.

These indicators are featured or discussed in this story:

- Race/ethnicity of teachers and administrators relative to student body
- Teacher qualifications
- Internet and computer/device access and technical support
- Inclusive communities and neighborhoods
- Health
- Transportation equity
- Legal system
- Housing

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creating statistically-informed models

- ▶ In 2018, Tulsa Public Schools approached ImpactTulsa for help with understanding how factors outside of school impact student success. Tulsa Public Schools wanted to look at data specifically — a request that would evolve into ImpactTulsa’s now robust systems-focused, racial equity-based data strategy.

“I knew that neighborhoods and housing are components of child well-being and, unfortunately, systemic inequity, especially for communities of color,” ImpactTulsa Director of Research and Analysis Dr. Delia Kimbrel said, describing the origins of the joint project between Tulsa Public Schools and ImpactTulsa. Kimbrel worked in housing and neighborhood sectors prior to her current role and built research and data processes and systems for these sectors.

Once partnered with Tulsa Public Schools, ImpactTulsa formed a collaborative group of cross-sector partners that became known as the Child Equity Partner Group, who then decided on which systemic indicators to track. These indicators reflect neighborhood socioeconomic status, public health, public safety, access and transportation, all of which, Kimbrel said, “help us see what influences the environmental conditions of communities” and the “differential investments, policies, practices and decision making that has often been made on the basis of race.” From there, the organization uses the data to make connections to student success outcomes.

The Child Equity Partner Group formed in 2018, and in 2019, ImpactTulsa deployed six strategy action teams. In these teams, cross-sector partners work with Child Equity Index data, identify and test strategies and use the index to inform the implementation of both universal and targeted approaches.

Data models and findings from the Child Equity Index sparked discussions within the organization on systemic inequity — conversations that elevated the importance of systems indicators and ultimately jumpstarted their racial equity-based data approach. Today, the Child Equity Index is one of several data projects that reflect the organization’s goal “to develop a strategic data framework for centering racial equity in data collection and reporting processes.” This is a process, Kimbrel said, that “involves ensuring that data and outcomes are keenly disaggregated and captured through an intersectional lens.”

“But disaggregation is just the start. For us, a true racial equity-based data approach also involves prioritizing data collection at the institutional, systemic and structural levels and avoids solely relying on individual-level data for explaining disparities.”

– Dr. Delia Kimbrel



the strategies

- ▶ Formally adopting systems indicators at ImpactTulsa has been a gradual process overall — “we’re chipping away at the list,” Kimbrel said. While the Child Equity Index project was the impetus for tracking adjacent-sector indicators, there wasn’t an equivalent for education indicators, so adoption there has been slower. ImpactTulsa is currently tracking teacher and administrator race/ethnicity, teacher qualifications and internet and computer access.

Collaborative initiatives are one way the organization expands their range of tracked indicators. A few new initiatives centering on youth and community engagement will require new tracking mandates related to parental and community governance, while a couple of forthcoming college and career initiatives will necessitate a more comprehensive tracking of internship opportunities and postsecondary enrollment and completion. ImpactTulsa is also trying to find ways to incorporate school and per-pupil funding into their Child Equity Index data modeling.

Kimbrel noted the organization’s participation in StriveTogether’s Racial and Ethnic Equity Planning and Action teams as a positive influence in helping them develop

a more comprehensive data strategy. While ImpactTulsa is still in progress with institutionalizing their formal strategy, the organization is currently tracking many of the indicators put forth by StriveTogether’s Racial and Ethnic Equity Action team.

“I would also say that our adoption and prioritization of collecting systems indicators data developed out of need and necessity,” Kimbrel said, referring to the organization’s work on addressing the digital divide in their community.

Using the Child Equity Index data, the Tulsa Planning Office developed Child Equity Index and geographic information system maps, which revealed geographic disparities in internet access — concentrations of residents without connectivity. This information was used twofold: presented to school district partners to inform remote learning strategies in response to COVID-19 and used to inform the launch of the **City of Tulsa’s Internet Access Taskforce**, where ImpactTulsa serves as a convening and research partner.



collecting data

- ▶ In terms of the technical aspects of data collection and data agreements, the organization relies heavily on publicly available data from the census. Census data and the American Community Survey were “huge” sources for the Child Equity Index and ImpactTulsa’s work on the digital divide, Kimbrel said. The state website also provided publicly available data on teacher and district diversity in the county.

She also acknowledged the importance of relationship building with adjacent and cross-sector partners, as well as with school district partners. “We have a great relationship with the City of Tulsa, Tulsa Planning Office and Tulsa County Health Department. A lot of this data, especially for the adjacent sectors, is publicly available; you just have to work with the right departments in requesting it.”

With school district partners, comprehensive data-sharing agreements and memorandums

of understanding are essential. Kimbrel said that some school districts may not collect or have data readily available, “so it definitely takes working with them and sometimes even supporting them with getting this data.”

ImpactTulsa also has a memorandum of understanding with the Oklahoma State Board of Education.

What’s helpful is that many of the school districts participate in ImpactTulsa’s collaborative and strategic convenings as well, which makes data access and requests easier: everyone’s on the same page, actively working toward a common goal.

“It helps that the districts see us as helping extend capacity and provide data analysis support that would otherwise be limited.”

– Dr. Delia Kimbrel

results

- ▶ The blossoming of the organization’s research strategy has resulted in statistically-informed data analytic models used to narrow disparities and address systemic inequities. These models help the organization better understand opportunity gaps that exist in their community. The following are a few examples:

- An attendance analysis and predictive model for understanding the demographic, academic, geographic and socioeconomic status factors of attendance and chronic absenteeism;
- Partner effectiveness analytic models for understanding the effects of partner programs and interventions on student success outcomes and the progress of interventions on different demographic groups;
- The Child Equity Index Neighborhood Model that measures the relationship between student and neighborhood factors on academic outcomes, using more than 40 indicators; and

- Racial Equity Data Frameworks for centering racial and ethnic equity in data collection and reporting processes, ensuring that data and outcomes are disaggregated by race and systems-level data collection is prioritized over individual-level data.

In discussing the details of these projects, Kimbrel brings it back to the importance of a systems perspective:

“When we see racial disparities across individual- or people-level outcomes, we must ask, ‘What might that suggest about the system?’ So our approach should truly center racial equity if we truly aim to transform systems.”

– Dr. Delia Kimbrel

conclusion

- ▶ While ImpactTulsa has developed the resources and know-how for finding and accessing data — or creating the necessary partnerships and memorandums of understanding — a few key areas stand out as places that need growth. College, career and postsecondary data access, Kimbrel said, is one of them. Another growth area is getting on a regular schedule for collecting data. “COVID-19 has definitely altered our schedule,” Kimbrel said of how the pandemic shifted priorities.

She said that because the work on many of the indicators is just developing, they need a system for regularly examining the outcomes

from the data, creating collaborative strategies to address them and linking the information back to their overall racial equity strategy.

ImpactTulsa is also looking to the national organization for support in this work: trainings on how to capture this data with school districts, how to have data conversations with partners and how to develop strategic initiatives as a result of the collected data and new information, for example.

“The end goal cannot be just collecting this data. It has to be, ‘And what we will do about it?’”

– Dr. Delia Kimbrel

