



# Leadership Cherry Creek

## October 2022 Executive Summary

Members of the Leadership Cherry Creek Class of 2022 received an in-depth view of the Cherry Creek School District's approach to Inclusive Excellence during their October 13 meeting held at Smoky Hill High School. Assistant Superintendent Michael Giles joined other members of the district's Equity, Culture and Community Engagement Department team to explore the core mission of the office through interactive, round-robin sessions with LCC members.

During the meeting, Directors Ron Garcia y Ortiz and Omar Montgomery joined Partners Jasper Armstrong, Lisa Drangsholt, and Matthew Pedregon, as well as Indigenous and Native Student and Community Liaison Jeffrey Chavez, to help facilitate the discussion. Break-out group sessions focused on specific topics rooted in equity, culture, curriculum, and race.

"Our current definition of equity is ensuring that each student has the opportunity to thrive in this district," Giles said before the meeting began. "Equity must be centered in every part of this organization. We are committed to creating a culture of inclusion across the Cherry Creek School District."

During the breakout sessions, ECCE representatives explored how the core mission of the district incorporates inclusive excellence at all levels, with a goal of equal opportunity and more focus placed on the system rather than students. They detailed the difference between equality, or sameness, and equity, or fairness, and described how the district is working to develop equity-mindedness – a demonstrated awareness of and willingness to address equity issues among institutional leaders and staff.

They also explored how the office pursues these goals through a multifaceted approach, one that includes partnering with individuals, departments, and agencies to create collaborative relationships, educational equity, and instructional support and resources. Each one of the small presentations stressed importance of incorporating student voice into the office's work, through inclusion, transformation, integration, and empowerment.

The ECCE presenters went on to share that the office strives to be aspirational in building a solid foundation for equity across the district. All of the speakers and small-group leaders encouraged the Leadership Cherry Creek participants to:

- Observe through a responsive lens;
- Inquire about the four pillars at their schools;
- Continue to advocate for inclusive excellence.

“We have to be focused and we have to continue to aspire to do better,” Giles said. “That’s what keeps us coming to work every day.”

At the outset of the meeting, Smoky Hill High School Principal Andre Bala spoke about the broader culture and activities at the school, and also detailed its own work in promoting equity and engagement. Bala, who started in the role of SHHS principal at the beginning of the 2022-23 school year, said the school’s stress on equity, engagement, and opportunity mirrors the broader work at the district level.