

Hi Cape Elizabeth Community!



Thank you for taking the time to learn about the Cape Elizabeth School Department equity audit. I'm Jo Persad, a consultant working with the school department to look at practices of diversity, equity and inclusion in your schools. Simply put, an equity audit is an assessment of how prepared/adept an institution is to ensure people of all backgrounds have equal opportunities to thrive and attain success. This audit is in support of Cape Elizabeth's goal to ensure every student is prepared to think critically and engage meaningfully as a local and global citizen.

The audit has 5 phases. We are currently in Phase 4 which resembles Phase 1. Similarly to how I began the audit by asking various stakeholders for input on creating the equity audit's focus, in Phase 4 I am returning to the community to ask you to share your experiences. Phase 4, appropriately named the Discovery phase, is about discovering the community's feelings, thoughts, and attitudes regarding equity at Cape Elizabeth. Members of the Cape Elizabeth community will be charged to become specific about their experiences and sentiments toward equity, climate and culture, and curricula to name a few. This is your time to make your voice heard! And I am looking forward to listening. Additionally, I hope that these focus groups lead to the germination of regular and continued conversations among Cape Elizabeth Community Members.

Since having one-on-ones is not feasible, we'll gather in affinity-based focus groups (groupings based on a shared characteristic e.g. parents/guardians, teachers, students.) We understand that these are base levels of affinity and that many of us have intersecting identities. For this reason, we know that if we are truly to garner the perspectives of the Cape Elizabeth community we must ensure that identities outside of the dominant are explicitly included. The verbiage of "intersection" is intentional. As this is an intersecting identity, this means you are welcome to attend all of the groups where your identity is represented. We are not sequestering you or asking you to exclusively identify with only one characteristic. While we are not able to have focus groups for all of our intersecting traits, we do hope you see the effort we are making to be inclusive. They are also welcome to join any of the other intersecting focus groups.

These focus groups are meant to be a forum to share your experiences openly. In an effort to have the focus groups remain authentic, I will not provide questions in advance. I ask that we all come with an open heart and honest spirit. Not only is there no "right" answer, there is nothing I'm "looking for." For these reasons, I assure you there are no answers to premeditate about. Whatever your truth is, is the answer.

This dynamic exchange is invaluable as your opinions and personal stories provide a nuance that makes the audit come alive; by making the static data personal and immediately relevant to the lived experience. The information provided during these groups is essential to personalizing my recommendations at the end of the audit. Focus groups are slated to take place between 10/25 and 11/6. I hope you will decide to participate. **If you are a parent or community member interested in participating in a focus group, please [complete this survey](#). CEMS & CEHS students will be receiving more information about student focused groups from the schools.**

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at [info@frootconsulting.com](mailto:info@frootconsulting.com).

Thank you for your willingness to be heard,



-Jo Persad

(See FAQs below for more information.)

## FAQ:

*How long are focus groups?*

- I anticipate that focus groups will last 45 minutes to one hour.

*Are you going to try and convince us or the kids of anything?*

- Focus groups are exclusively for listening and learning not convincing. I will ask questions, listen, and hold space.

*Will meetings be recorded?*

- For data collection purposes, meetings will be audio recorded, the recordings will be destroyed at the end of the audit, and will not be shared.

*Will identifying information be used?*

- No names will be used. A title such as teacher, student, family member, or admin, may be used. However, as it is a small district, descriptors e.g. 9th-grade science teacher, will be withheld.

*Do participants have to agree to confidentiality?*

- Yes, participation requires an agreement to the confidentiality of participants' names and stories.

*What if I have students at more than one school?*

- If we have the time and ability to have a separate session for those who have students at more than one school we will. If we do not, we ask that you choose a single session to attend. At the end of the focus group, I will ask if those who have students across multiple schools can stay a few extra minutes to talk about the differences they see across the schools as well.

*Will the focus groups be held on Zoom or in person?*

- At this time meetings will be held in person.

*Will BIPOC students and family members have an [affinity focus group](#)?*

- Yes. They are also welcome to join any of the other intersecting focus groups.

*Will students and family members of students with an [IEP have affinity groups](#)?*

- Yes. They are also welcome to join any of the other intersecting focus groups.

*Will students and family members of students who are [Multilingual Learners have affinity groups](#)?*

- Yes. They are also welcome to join any of the other intersecting focus groups.