

# Measuring lesson-giving equity

**A new record-keeping tool could help close gaps before they open**



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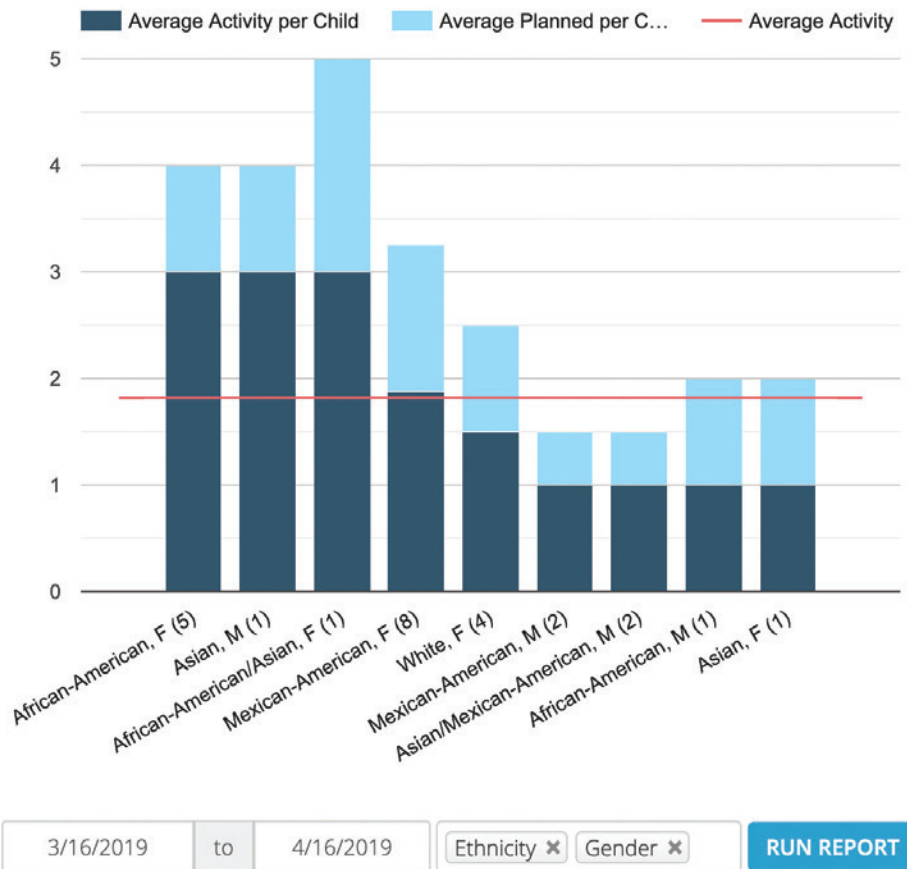
*“Among the revelations the child has brought us, there is one of fundamental importance, the phenomenon of normalization through work. Thousands and thousands of experiences among children of every race enable us to state that this phenomenon is the most certain datum verified in psychology or education.”*

—Maria Montessori, *The Secret of Childhood*

But how can children reach normalization if they’re not offered the work in the first place?

In our practice as Montessorians, we strive to see and support each child in our care. We observe, take notes and experiment with our presentations. We look for a child’s interest and use that as the key to connecting them to the world.

We inevitably discover experiences of inequality and hardship. In response, we prepare ourselves and our classroom environments as best we can to meet the needs of our community. But at the end of the day, we are often left wondering if it will be enough to fill the opportunity gap.



*What do the data tell you, and what will you do with it?*

The so-called “achievement gap” was uncovered by academic assessments. But summative, standardized assessment has proven incomplete in capturing a true picture of the whole child, and it can’t tell us much about how where “gaps” came from or what to do about them. Often the assessment is too late, not capturing the right metric, and not actionable by the teacher. We need the right information at the right time.

This challenge inspired Genevieve D’Cruz, a Montessori Coach at Lee Montessori Public Charter School in Washington, DC, to start measuring equity by manually tracking presentations by gender, background, and ethnicity. She wanted an early indicator,

to share with her team of guides and coaches, of how her community was serving different groups of children.

Genevieve saw the potential for this approach to be automated inside of Transparent Classroom, her online record-keeping platform. Her next step was to share her work with the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector (NCMPS) and Transparent Classroom. This led Elizabeth Slade at NCMPS to organize a larger collaboration. Elizabeth assembled a group of 20 Montessori guides, administrators and coaches to sit down with Transparent Classroom during the NCMPS Public Montessori Symposium in March. The

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initial meeting was a brainstorming session about Genevieve's work and what it might look like in an online record-keeping platform such as Transparent Classroom.

We wish you could have been there. Questions and ideas flew around the group.

Arriving from the hearts and minds of this community of practice, an Equity Report is now available in Transparent Classroom. It shows all the lessons given to children in a classroom, grouped by gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or grade. Planned lessons are overlaid to show how upcoming

A coach observed a need, took steps to address it herself, and rallied others around her cause. What started off as a small idea could now have an impact on thousands of classrooms around the world seeking equity for their children. We all have the power to make a difference. We invite you to join us in working to better build a more equitable future for our children.

## What started off as a small idea could have an impact on thousands of classrooms around the world seeking equity

“What if that report also let a guide group by IEP or SPED?” “What if this report could land in a guide's inbox at the start of each week?” “What if guides could receive push notifications that told them when a group was being underserved?” There was so much wisdom and passion in that room, just looking for a place to go.

When we struggle alone with big, complex problems like equity, we often feel overwhelmed and tempted to give up. When we come together with others that share our passions, we find solidarity and strength; our solutions and ideas can take flight.

An idea did fly. In the days that followed, Transparent Classroom worked with Genevieve and others to draw sketches, answer questions, and further refine what the first small piece of this grand vision might look like.

lessons will impact the distribution of activity. If you use Transparent Classroom, please check it out and let us know what you think.

Releasing this report is only the first step. The Montessorians who met after the Symposium have volunteered their time and energy to continue evolving this and other features supporting equity in the public sector in partnership with Transparent Classroom. We are considering extensions such as showing the data for all classrooms in a level, adding tags like IEP/SPED, and more proactively putting the information in this report in front of guides.

Our group will continue meeting regularly to make improvements to this report and to dream up other features that will advance equity in the classroom. If you want to be part of this conversation, let us know at [michelle.boyle@public-montessori.org](mailto:michelle.boyle@public-montessori.org).

*Michelle Boyle holds an AMS Primary credential and a conventional teaching credential, and co-founded the first public Montessori charter school in Memphis, Tennessee.*

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