

# PARTNERING FOR PROGRESS

## Culture and Climate Assessment Antioch Unified School District

### DISTRICT CONTACT

**Dr. Darnise Williams**, Superintendent

[darnisewilliams@antiochschools.net](mailto:darnisewilliams@antiochschools.net)

(925) 779-7500

### PURPOSE

USC Rossier School of Education will provide a Culture and Climate Assessment (CCA) to Antioch Unified School District (AUSD) as the Superintendent leads the district through a successful transition focused on listening, learning, and connecting with educators, families, and community members throughout the district. This work aims to help AUSD realize its vision “to prepare all students for success in college, career, and life by fostering inclusive learning environments that nurture academic excellence, resilience, and social-emotional growth.”

Over the course of the 2025-27 school years (e.g., November 2026 – June 2027), USC Rossier School of Education staff will carry out a five-phase climate and culture assessment designed to support the district in advancing its entry plan goals and long-term priorities. This team will offer practical recommendations and tactical strategies or practices that can be deployed to aid the progress beyond each phase of the advising efforts.

Concrete deliverables will include a constituent summary report, a districtwide survey instrument, progress reports, a strategic roadmap, and implementation tools—equipping the district with clear, evidence-based guidance to strengthen governance, instructional excellence, student-centered decision making, and community trust.

## OBJECTIVES

During the 2025-26 and 2026-27 school years, USC Rossier School of Education experts will have supported Antioch Unified School District in accomplishing the following aims:

1. **Facilitating Inclusive Constituent Engagement** by conducting structured listening sessions, surveys, and interviews with students, staff, families, and community members to surface key perspectives, concerns, and aspirations.
2. **Develop a District Roadmap** by translating constituent insights and district data into a clear, actionable roadmap that highlights immediate priorities, early wins, and long-term focus areas aligned with district goals.
3. **Provide Evidence-Based Progress Monitoring** by delivering a mid-year progress report that evaluates implementation to date, identifies successes and barriers, and offers research-informed recommendations for refining district strategies.
4. **Strengthen Strategic Alignment and Implementation** by reviewing academic, governance, and operational systems, and provide actionable strategies that ensure alignment with the district’s vision, mission, and entry plan goals.
5. **Synthesize Findings into Actionable Recommendations** by producing a final report that consolidates evidence, captures systemwide progress, and offers prioritized recommendations with short-, medium-, and long-term implementation timelines.
6. **Build Sustainable Leadership and Community Trust** by supporting district leaders in fostering transparent communication, shared ownership of goals, and ongoing collaboration across governance, schools, and the broader community.

## TIMELINE

The timeline in which advising services will be offered is negotiable and contingent upon contract approvals by AUSD and USC. This scope of work proposes a launch date in November 2025, followed by continuous engagement (as described in five phases below) through June 2027, concluding no later than June 30, 2027.

## PHASE 1: STRATEGIC LISTENING SESSIONS

### November 2025 – March 2026

USC Rossier staff and AUSD administrators will convene and/or attend scheduled meetings with representatives of all constituent groups to listen and document existing perspectives on the district’s success and opportunities for growth. Rossier staff will 1) join one-on-one and group meetings with board members, cabinet, principals, union leaders, teachers, staff, parents, and

students; 2) document community forums and family engagement sessions to capture concerns, successes, and aspirations; 3) review past climate study results that include data from broader groups (students, families, staff); 4) observe leadership team meetings and district operations to better understand culture and practices; and 5) define key research questions and priority areas with stakeholder input.

**Deliverable:** Constituent summary report that illustrates key themes, successes, barriers, and opportunities to improve learning opportunities and outcomes across the district.

## **PHASE 2: INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT**

**April 2026 – July 2026**

Based on the results provided in the constituent listening summary report, USC Rossier staff will create tailored survey instruments for students, parents/caregivers, faculty/staff, and community members; and pilot test instruments to ensure accessibility and clarity.

**Deliverable:** Validated surveys and protocols, approved by AUSD leadership.

## **PHASE 3: DATA COLLECTION**

**August 2026 – December 2026**

USC Rossier staff will distribute surveys across student, family, educator, and administrator groups, ensuring voices of marginalized and underserved communities are centered. Sample targets will include: 1000 students, 500 family/caregivers, 300 faculty/staff/admin, and 200 community members.

**Deliverable:** Interim participation report and preliminary data summaries.

## **PHASE 4: DATA ANALYSIS**

**January – March 2027**

USC Rossier staff will Perform descriptive and comparative statistical analyses of survey data; conduct thematic coding of interview/focus group transcripts; integrate qualitative and quantitative findings to identify trends, inequities, and opportunities; and benchmark findings against comparable districts.

**Deliverable:** Preliminary findings brief for district leadership.

## **PHASE 5: REPORTING & ROADMAP DEVELOPMENT**

### **April – June 2027**

USC Rossier staff will draft a comprehensive report including key findings and themes, current practices vs. aspirations, gaps and inequities, and actionable recommendations.

Recommendations will include both short-term actions (policy adjustments, training, communication strategies) and long-term strategies (structural changes, resource allocation, inclusive practices). The report's findings and recommendations will be presented to the school board and community stakeholders.

Lastly, USC Rossier staff will assist district leadership in developing a “road map” for the development, launch, and review of strategic efforts to be carried out in the school district community. Five (5) essential goals of these strategies will be to assist the district leadership team with 1) cultivating community engagement; 2) generating buy-in among leaders, educators, students, and community members; 3) improving learning opportunities for all students; 4) holding high expectations for all educators and students; and 5) investing resources to ensure the well-being and successful learning outcomes of every student in the district.

**Deliverables:** Final report with recommendations; presentation to school board and community stakeholders; district roadmap draft.

## Crosswalk: Superintendent’s Entry Plan Goals & Board Goal #3

Phases and Objectives	Entry Plan Goals Addressed	Board Goal #3 Alignment
<b>Phase 1: Strategic Listening Sessions</b>	<p>Family, Community, &amp; Public Relations (Goal 5): Listening sessions with families, staff, and community.</p> <p>Build a Strong Governance Team (Goal 1): Transparent communication with board and leadership.</p>	Provides qualitative input for the districtwide culture and climate study; surfaces concerns about safety, belonging, and support.
<b>Phase 2: Instrument Development</b>	<p>Analyze &amp; Address Critical Issues (Goal 4): Tools created to identify barriers and opportunities.</p> <p>Academic Excellence (Goal 2): Ensures survey items address learning conditions, supports, and equity.</p>	Produces validated surveys to gather systemwide feedback on safety protocols, culture, and climate.
<b>Phase 3: Data Collection</b>	<p>Effective Student-Centered Decision Making (Goal 3): Centering diverse student, family, and staff voices.</p> <p>Family, Community, &amp; Public Relations (Goal 5): Broad engagement process.</p>	Advances Goal 3B by implementing the culture and climate study; captures perceptions of safe and supportive learning environments.
<b>Phase 4: Data Analysis</b>	<p>Academic Excellence (Goal 2): Identifies trends and inequities in academic/learning climate.</p> <p>Analyze &amp; Address Critical Issues (Goal 4): Surfaces systemic barriers and performance gaps.</p>	Provides evidence for system solutions to strengthen safe and supportive environments and refine districtwide safety plan.
<b>Phase 5: Reporting &amp; Roadmap Development</b>	<p>Build a Strong Governance Team (Goal 1): Strengthens board-superintendent collaboration through evidence-based recommendations.</p> <p>Effective Student-Centered Decision Making (Goal 3): Aligns strategies with student needs.</p> <p>Family, Community, &amp; Public Relations (Goal 5): Final report and public presentations build trust.</p>	<p>Final report fulfills Goal 3B (climate study) and informs 3A (system solutions, safety protocols, safety plan updates).</p> <p>Roadmap guides sustainable improvements in safety, climate, and culture.</p>

## LOGISTICS

Given that listening sessions will be held in-person and online, Antioch Unified School District will be responsible for logistics concerning the provision of meeting space, AV equipment, refreshments, recruitment, and participation for the event. For online meetings, USC Rossier will provide the online platform through their Zoom account. Online sessions will not be recorded. AI software, such as Zoom’s AI Companion tool, may be used for meeting summary purposes. AUSD is responsible for logistics concerning recruitment of participants, meeting arrangements, and participation of district employees, students, and constituents for the advising services. Any further logistics needs will be discussed and agreed upon.

## DELIVERABLES

1. Strategic Listening Sessions and Summary Report
2. Districtwide Survey Instrument, data collection, and analysis
3. Mid-Project Report & Recommendations
4. Final Report & Recommendations
5. Roadmap Draft with Implementation Strategies
6. Electronic versions of Handouts/Materials

## PAYMENT

The total cost is **\$180,000** paid to the University of Southern California Rossier School of Education. The total includes all materials, personnel costs, online hosting costs, and any other miscellaneous costs associated with the project. The payment schedule shall be as follows:

## PAYMENT SCHEDULE

	Amount	Due Date
Payment 1	\$60,000	Expected within 30 days after Phase 1 is completed
Payment 2	\$60,000	Expected within 30 days after Phase 3 is completed
Payment 3	\$60,000	Expected within 30 days after Phase 5 is completed

## ABOUT USC ROSSIER SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

The USC Rossier School of Education is part of the University of Southern California, one of the world's leading private research universities. Located in the heart of Los Angeles, USC offers students a rich urban environment in which to learn, as well as many international opportunities for research and study. At USC Rossier, we work to prepare leaders to achieve educational equity through practice, research and policy. We work to improve learning opportunities and outcomes in urban settings and to address disparities that affect historically marginalized groups.

## UNIVERSITY CONTACTS

### **John Pascarella, Ph.D.**

Professor, USC Rossier School of Education  
Chief Academic Officer, USC Race and Equity Center

**Office:** (213) 740-0159

**Email:** [pascarel@usc.edu](mailto:pascarel@usc.edu)

[John Pascarella](#) is an expert in teacher education, racial equity, digital media literacy, and educational leadership. With over two decades of experience across K-12 schools, higher education, and nonprofit sectors, he has led large-scale equity initiatives, secured 2.3M+ in funding to support public and independent schools, advised policymakers, and facilitated high-impact professional learning for educators, school leaders, and nonprofit organizations. His public scholarship and education advocacy efforts draw on deep expertise in adaptive leadership, culturally responsive pedagogy, racial literacy, and organizational change management. His op-eds have appeared in *Education Week*, *The Hechinger Report*, and *LA School Report*. John has regularly addressed public school boards and has made media appearances on the Dr. Phil Show and Ethical Schools podcast. He is an elected board member of the California Council on Teacher Education and serves on the steering committee for the California Alliance of Researchers for Equity in Education.

### **Pedro Noguera, Ph.D.**

Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean  
Distinguished Professor, USC Rossier School of Education

**Office:** (213) 740-0224

**Email:** [pnoguera@usc.edu](mailto:pnoguera@usc.edu)

[Pedro Noguera](#) is the Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean of the Rossier School of Education and a Distinguished Professor of Education at the University of Southern California. A sociologist, Noguera's research focuses on the ways in which schools are influenced by social

and economic conditions, as well as by demographic trends in local, regional and global contexts. He is the author of 15 books. His most recent books are *Common Schooling: Conversations About the Tough Questions and Complex Issues Confronting K-12 Education in the United States Today* (Teachers College Press) which was the winner of the Association of American Publishers 2022 Prose Award, with Rick Hess, and *City Schools and the American Dream: Still Pursuing the Dream* (Teachers College Press, 2001) with Esa Syeed.

**Kendrick B. Davis, M.S.E., M.L., Ph.D.**

Professor, USC Rossier School of Education  
Co-Director, USC STEM Center

**Office:** (213) 740-0224

**Email:** [kdavis01@usc.edu](mailto:kdavis01@usc.edu)

[Kendrick Davis](#) advances equity in STEM education by equipping educators with innovative tools, training, and research designed to inspire and prepare the next generation of diverse STEM leaders. His research focuses on the intersection of science, equity, and policy, with a particular emphasis on STEM education and workforce development in advanced technologies. Before co-founding the USC STEM Center, Dr. Davis conducted national assessments of higher education and K-12 climates, fostering cross-school collaborations to enhance STEM education. He also curated professional learning experiences for faculty and led initiatives on complex issues, including criminal justice reform prevention, aligning these efforts with broader goals of reducing educational barriers.

**Nasser Cortez, Ed.D.**

Associate Professor, USC Rossier School of Education

**Office:** (213) 740-0224

**Email:** [nasserco@usc.edu](mailto:nasserco@usc.edu)

[Nasser Cortez](#) is an experienced education specialist for students with mild/moderate and moderate/severe disabilities. Along with his education specialist credentials, he holds California credentials in Elementary Multiple Subjects, Secondary English Language Arts, and Autism Authorization. Dr. Cortez teaches in the Master of Arts in Teaching and undergraduate minor program in the Rossier School of Education, which include courses on bilingual-bicultural experiences in America, with a focus on Latino communities; assessment, curriculum, and maintaining an effective classroom environment for students with disabilities. He primarily works with future teachers who are earning their Multiple Subjects, Single Subjects and Education Specialist (Mild/Moderate) credentials. Dr. Cortez is an advocate for inclusion, and his classes focus on developing inclusive educators, classrooms and schools.