



Equity Toolkit



In January 2018, the Pennsylvania School Boards Association made the important decision to develop and adopt an equity statement. In it, PSBA defines equity as the fair and just distribution of resources based upon each student's individual needs, guaranteeing that all children have equal access to a high-quality education.

The PSBA equity statement highlights the responsibilities of public schools that ensures the individual needs and concerns of students are met to eliminate the commonwealth's achievement and opportunity gaps. For the complete statement passed by the PSBA governing board, visit: psba.org/member-services/equity-services/.

Research demonstrates that access to high-quality educational experiences can impact positive economic, political and social life outcomes for all students. However, equitable educational opportunities are not available to all students. Data shows that across the country and statewide in Pennsylvania, students experience educational inequities driven by certain factors that may include:

- Socioeconomic status
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Identity and orientation
- Language fluency
- Immigrant status
- Disability
- Access to current learning technologies including high-speed internet

PSBA has called for Pennsylvania to develop an education system that strives to overcome institutional barriers. Our students may carry the weight of poverty, trauma, racism and other forms of prejudice that effect performance. A focus on equity recognizes that students come to their classrooms bringing unique gifts, experiences and identities that should be affirmed and supported in their learning environments.

Based on this belief, PSBA has asserted its commitment to move equity forward in Pennsylvania schools by introducing an equity services and programming area as part of the tools and support available to members. PSBA now offers customized workshops, as well as focused resources to guide school boards in their knowledge growth and ability to embed equity into district practice.

This content you're accessing is the PSBA Equity Toolkit. It serves as a foundational resource for districts intended to help education leaders:

- Acknowledge and understand their district's current place along the equity system continuum.
- Set goals for moving their district to the next step along the continuum.
- Analyze district policies, programs and practices with an equity lens, using critical questions to reexamine data, student outcomes and equitable opportunities.
- Identify action steps necessary to build a foundation for equity in their schools.

We stand beside you in the work you will do, developing equitable practices and programs to improve student opportunity and achievement.

Thank you for your continued focus on excellent and equitable education in Pennsylvania!

Sincerely,

David Hutchinson
2019 PSBA President





Equity Tool Kit

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Equity System Continuum

How equity is acknowledged, understood and incorporated into an entity's school structures has an impact on the success of equitable practices and programs on student opportunity and, therefore, achievement.

Typically, districts and other school entities have acknowledged, understood and incorporated equity into their school structure along the following continuum:

Where does your district or school entity exist on the continuum?

EQUITY SYSTEM CONTINUUM



- The first three system approaches may include only the voices of a few. The fourth approach intentionally includes the voices of all, specifically the voices of those who have been disadvantaged, ignored or marginalized.
- The first three system approaches begin to recognize and identify the need for systemic change. The fourth approach acknowledges that the current system is not working for all children, therefore requiring systemic re-evaluation and transformation.



Approach One: Equity as a misunderstanding

In this approach, equity is not yet defined, understood, or shared by most school leaders. School leaders often confuse equity with equality or equity with nondiscrimination. There are distinct differences among these terms. **Equality** is treating all students the same and giving them the same supports. Nondiscrimination promotes equal opportunity and treatment for all students and staff based on local, state or national identifiers such as race, color, age, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin or handicap/disability. However, **equity** is the just and fair distribution of resources based on each student's needs. A focus on equality alone does not address the different and often inequitable experiences and opportunities of students in classrooms and schools. Equity is often discussed in compliance to state and national laws and policies that mention equity, but equity is not yet an integral part of the entity's conversation or practice throughout.

For example, districts or other school entities implement practices and programs focusing on compliance with nondiscrimination, and civil rights, state and federal laws, and guidance documents (i.e., IDEA, ESSA, Title I, McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act). Because of these laws, districts are starting to identify the needs of students, the barriers students face, and the academic and opportunity disparities between students.

Although compliance with nondiscrimination and government legislation prompts some conversation among administration or community groups, school directors as well as district professional and support staff may not be included in these equity-focused conversations. Adequately defining equity through an inclusive conversation among all stakeholders is the next step beyond basic nondiscrimination compliance.



Approach Two: Equity as a topic

In this approach, equity is identified as an important aspect of the school system. Educational leaders know the difference between equity and equality. Yet, equity is a distinct topic within the education system, like curriculum, teacher preparation, transportation and school discipline. Educational stakeholders may understand the importance of equity, but they approach equity as separate from other aspects of their education system. The district may explicitly state a focus on equity as it intersects with a limited range of topics or see equity as important to a limited set of students – usually centered on a particular race or socioeconomic condition.

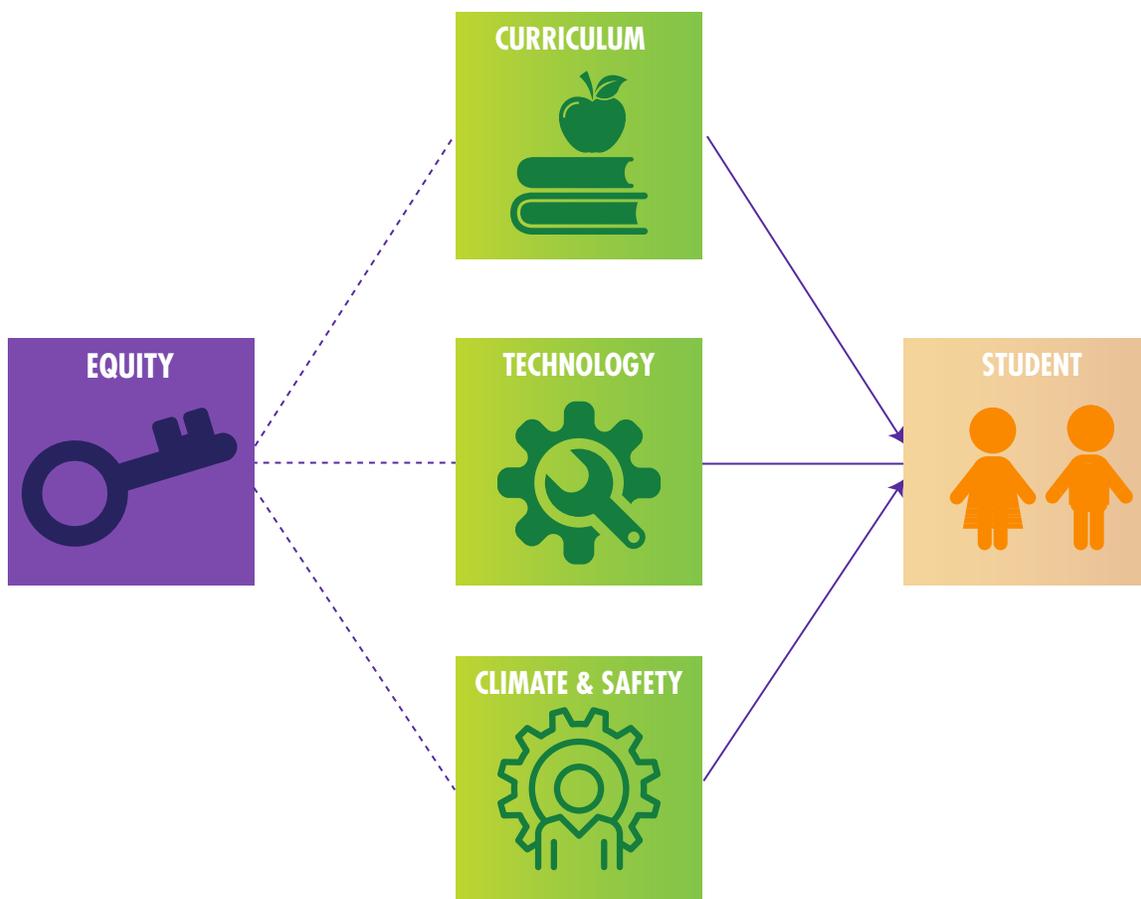
For example, districts or other school entities identify digital equity, teacher equity and inequitable funding as equity. This is an important step in moving forward on the continuum and creating an equitable system. The next step should be to recognize the impact of equity on other aspects of the education system that may not have seemed immediately apparent.



Approach Three: **Equity as a recommendation**

In this approach, equity influences several aspects of the education system but is not yet incorporated into the structure of the education system. Equity serves as a recommendation for school leaders and begins to inform decision-making and practices for those who choose to focus on equity principles, like cultural proficiency for district professional and support staff. But an equitable lens is not yet infused into the foundation of the system.

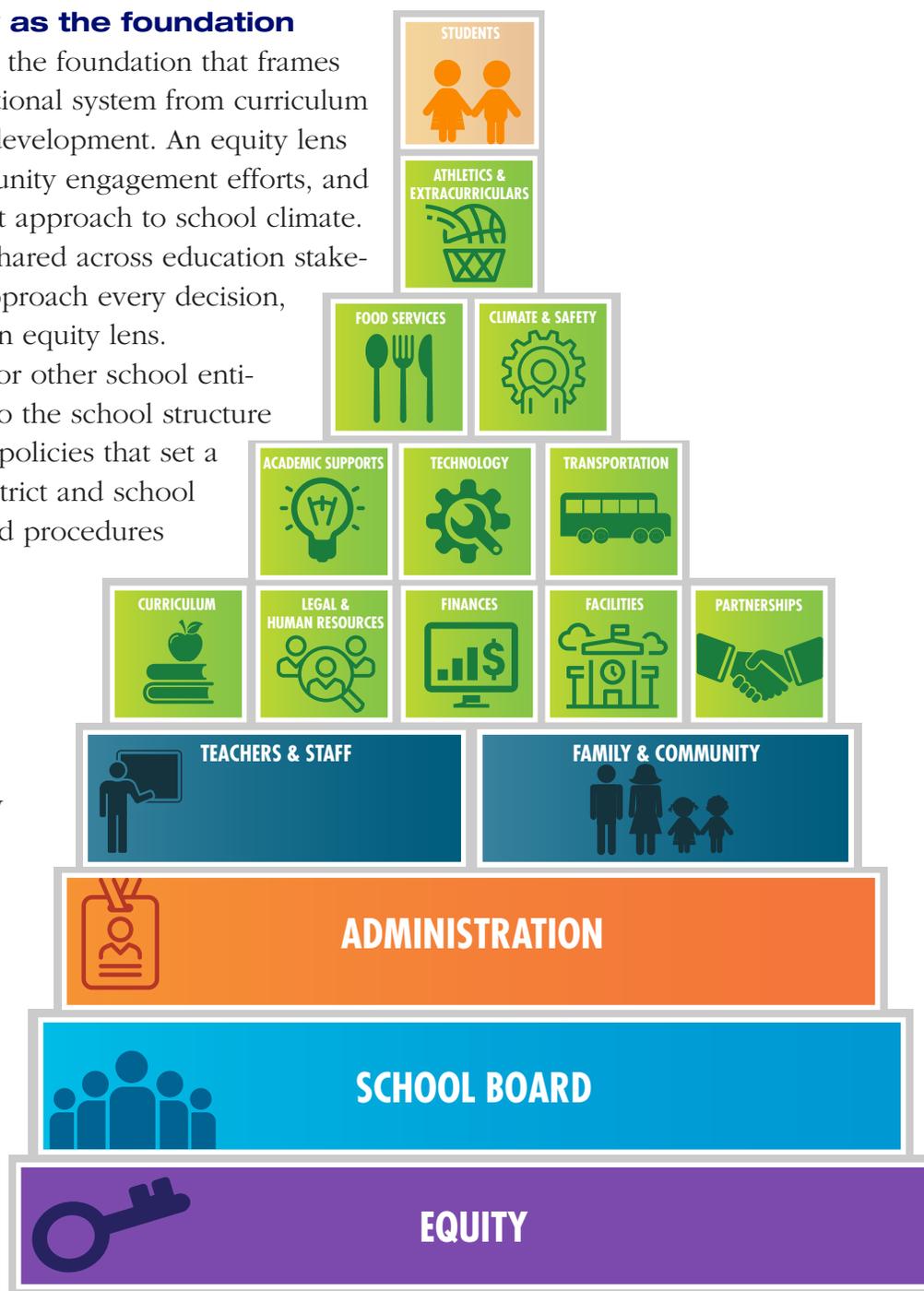
For example, districts or other school entities may develop an equity group, or hire an equity director to address inequity in school discipline practices, curriculum development or school programs. However, the appointed equity group or equity director are not empowered to make substantive changes to the education system. Equity groups and/or directors are seen as advisors rather than decision-makers. The next important step will be to empower these groups or individuals to make decisions.



Approach Four: **Equity as the foundation**

In this approach, equity is the foundation that frames every aspect of the educational system from curriculum adoption to professional development. An equity lens informs family and community engagement efforts, and is considered an important approach to school climate. The practice of equity is shared across education stakeholders. School leaders approach every decision, practice and policy with an equity lens.

For example, districts or other school entities incorporate equity into the school structure through action plans and policies that set a collective direction for district and school leaders. These policies and procedures hold decision-makers accountable for closing opportunity gaps and prioritizing equity across the system. Districts are in constant pursuit of equity. They seek to grow knowledge, build capacity, train school leaders and staff, implement best practices, include diverse voices, and produce community partners to eliminate barriers and create opportunities for students to learn.





Equity Lens Approach

Analyzing Opportunities, Practices and Policies with an Equity Lens

The equity lens approach addresses key questions districts and school boards should ask to better recognize and mitigate inequities within their policies and practices. Analyzing decisions (i.e., actions, practices, policies) with an equity lens is a **cyclical process**. School leaders are called upon to **constantly re-evaluate decisions** to make sure they are not creating or exacerbating barriers to opportunity for students



PSBA Equity Lens Framework was adapted from the Portland Public Schools Equity Lens Framework





Equity Lens Approach

Analyzing Opportunities, Practices and Policies with an Equity Lens

Equity Lens: Equity lens is a decision-making tool to make sure school leaders are not creating or exacerbating barriers to opportunity and to help develop more equity-focused policies and programs.

How to use the equity lens approach: An assessment of the purpose (WHAT), the outcomes (DATA), the reasons for disparity gaps (WHY), the inclusion of stakeholders (WHO), and the solutions to eliminate disparities (HOW) are necessary steps to evaluate decisions with an equity lens, remove barriers and promote educational equity.

	MAIN QUESTION	QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER	EXAMPLE
WHAT	What is the decision (i.e., action, practice and/or policy) in question?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is this decision important for the success of your students in your district? Does the decision align with the law? 	<p>Student achievement scores have shown significant disparities in grade 4 math. Data from neighboring districts and best practices models suggest that adding additional instructional opportunities significantly increased math scores.</p> <p>The district decides to implement a targeted after-school math program two days a week (45 minutes per class) to improve the math scores of students who have demonstrated struggles in math. About 50 students sign up for the targeted after-school math program.</p>
DATA	What does the data show regarding the impact of the decision (i.e., action, practice and/or policy) on student achievement, opportunity and school climate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which groups benefit from the decision? Which groups are harmed or do not participate? Does the policy or practice worsen existing disparities or develop unintended consequences? 	<p>(Note: For this example, we will only focus on attendance, measuring participation or access to the program. However, districts should also use the data to assess achievement and the experiences of students in the after-school math program.)</p> <p>Attendance: Out of the 50 students that signed up, 30 students consistently attended the program. These 30 students tended to be middle-class, white and female. Of the 20 students that did not show up, most were low-income, male and students of color. Racial, income and gender disparity gaps exist.</p>



	MAIN QUESTION	QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER	EXAMPLE
WHY	If there are disparity gaps between groups, why do these disparities exist?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the barriers (political, mandated, financial, programmatic, emotional, managerial, etc.) for groups negatively impacted by the decision? 	<p>(Note: In most scenarios a decision will elicit multiple barriers to opportunity. For this example, we will only address two potential barriers.)</p> <p>Barrier #1: Programmatic (schedule, method, program) & Financial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transportation: After-school buses are not available in the elementary school. Most of the students who attended had a guardian to pick them up from school. Students without adequate transportation cannot stay after school. <p>Barrier #2: Emotional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural Competency: Students have expressed that they don't like math, and a number of students of color indicated that they don't believe that the math teacher likes them.
WHO	Who (individuals, groups) is missing in the discussion to address disparities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you listened to and involved stakeholders and students from the communities affected by this decision? 	<p>Discussed the attendance data with the students who did not show up and their families to address the disparities and to determine better alternatives.</p>
HOW	How will you mitigate the disparities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are best practices identified by research, the law, practice and community input to address the disparities caused by the decision? Are the practices economically viable for your district? Are the practices culturally competent? Do the practices address implicit bias? How will you measure success? 	<p>(Note: Each new decision will have to go through the equity lens approach)</p> <p>Transportation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make after-school buses available for students attending the math program. <p>Cultural Competency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively recruit teacher candidates for the after-school program who have exhibited strong cultural competency skills.

PSBA Equity Lens Framework was adapted from the Portland Public Schools Equity Lens Framework





Equity Action Plan: Pursuing and Achieving Equity

Action Steps to Build a Foundation for Equity in Your Schools

The Pennsylvania School Boards Association (2018) defines **equity** as the just and fair distribution of resources based upon each individual student's needs. Equitable resources include funding, programs, policies, initiatives and supports that target each student's unique background and school context to guarantee that all students have equal access to a high-quality education.

Pursuing equity requires that schools assess actions locally to overcome institutional barriers and create opportunities so that each and every child has the tools and supports necessary to achieve their highest potential. **Achieving equity** ensures that students' identities will not predetermine their success in schools.¹

The Equity Action Plan was developed by the Pennsylvania School Boards Association to assist school entities to build a foundation for equity in school practice and structure.

The Action Plan includes **7 steps** which school leaders can use to pursue equity.

Grounding each step, school leaders must include and affirm the voices of students, families and communities. These steps can be approached non-sequentially, except for the last step.

Include and
affirm the
voices of
students,
families and
communities

Identify and understand your district's demographics.

Analyze the data.

Define equity for your district and community.

Embed educational equity training into all levels of professional development for administration, staff and board.

Pursue and practice cultural awareness and proficiency.

Analyze policies and practices with an equity lens.

Develop an action plan and/or policy to incorporate equity into your district structure.

¹ See PSBA Equity Statement, 2018.



Before school entities begin the process of developing an equity policy (specifically), we suggest that school leaders dig in, work through, and incorporate the other steps into practice. For an equity policy to be effective, equity needs to be understood, acknowledged, shared and practiced consistently throughout the school community. These steps help to build capacity in the pursuit and achievement of equity.

Equity Action Plan: Pursuing and Achieving Equity Action Steps to Build a Foundation for Equity in Your Schools

Include and affirm the voices of students, families and communities

Student achievement is linked to the positive engagement of students and families in the education process.² Students, families and communities are considered “stakeholders and partners” and serve as essential resources.³ Their input helps evaluate the effectiveness of school practices, provide context to the experiences of students, and develop necessary and innovative supports to serve the needs of students. School leaders must actively involve stakeholders specifically from communities that face barriers to engagement.

At every step of the action plan, districts should be actively engaging students and families. Their insight is valuable to incorporate equity in school practice and community engagement. Practicing inclusivity and transparency with your community develops trust among stakeholders.

Identify and understand your district’s demographic data

It is important to understand the demographic makeup of the broader district community to develop an effective equity-focused approach that supports the needs of students, families and communities.

Analyze your data

Practicing equity requires an analysis of data, both quantitative and qualitative, to measure the success as well as the disparities within a district’s education programs and practices. Data should measure how students perform academically, engage in school, and feel about their learning, safety and connections within school. Data also identifies existing opportunity gaps between groups of students, and between families and communities. Data also should support the process of identifying barriers that exist within the district.

² Lee, J. & Bowen, N. (2006). Parent Involvement, Cultural Capital, and the Achievement Gap Among Elementary School Children. *American Educational Research* 43, 193-218; Belfeld, C. R. and H.M. Levin, H.M. (2007). *The Price We Pay: Economic and Social Consequences of Inadequate Education*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press; Sheldon, S. B., & Jung, S. B. (2015). *The Family Engagement Partnership Student Outcome Evaluation*. Johns Hopkins University, School of Education; Jeynes, W. H. (2012). A meta-analysis of the efficacy of different types of parental involvement programs for urban students. *Urban Education*, 47, 706-742.

³ Willms, J. D., Friesen, S., Milton, P. (2009). What did you do in school today? Transforming Classrooms through social, academic, and intellectual engagement. (First National Report). Canadian Education Association; Willms, J. D. (2001). Student Engagement at School: A Sense of Belonging and Participation, Results from PISA 2000. Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development; Mitra, D. (2008). *Student Voice in School Reform*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.



Define equity for your district and community

Equity and equality are not synonymous. Equality is treating all students the same, where students receive the same access to opportunities and resources. Equity recognizes that our students' experiences are different and require different supports, resources and funding to ensure that all students demonstrate academic growth and achievement. Having a clear definition of equity that is shared, understood, and practiced by members of your community sets the foundation for the comprehensive and consistent practice of equity.

Embed educational equity training into professional development for faculty, staff and board

Equity training and professional development are necessary to pursue and achieve equity. School leaders must be aware of the definition of equity and its importance in providing a high-quality education for all students. Most importantly, school leaders must be aware of the tools, research and resources to practice equity. School leaders must also assess their role in perpetuating or dismantling inequity in schools and classrooms.

Pursue and practice cultural awareness and proficiency

For school practices to be effective, systems must acknowledge and affirm the experiences and values of diverse cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnicities, religions and other factors⁴. Equity requires leaders to recognize and address their own biases and stereotypes about their students to create a positive and inclusive educational environment.

Analyze policies, procedures and practices with an equity lens

Equity lens is a decision-making approach that ensures district leaders are not creating or exacerbating barriers to opportunity. Education leaders should be trained and practice an equity lens to develop more equitable policies and programs.

Opportunity gaps among students lead to divergent academic outcomes. Opportunity gaps can be attributed to barriers created by district policies, practices and procedures that create inequitable access to educational opportunities. “Nondiscriminatory” policies and practices are different from equity, both in legal application and practical implementation. Policies and practices that do not explicitly target groups of students may still disadvantage them.

For example, creating a Saturday school program to support students in math achievement does not appear to discriminate. However, students who do not have access to cars or reliable public transportation on the weekends face barriers to participate, and this could disparately impact low-income students. It is important to analyze policies and practices with an equity lens as this approach may surface previously unacknowledged barriers to opportunities and engagement.⁵

⁴ See Arizona School Boards Association, 2017.

⁵ See PSBA Equity Lens Approach.



Develop an action plan and/or policy to incorporate equity into your district structure

Equity should serve as the foundation that permeates all aspects of the educational system.⁶ Equity-focused action plans and policies can produce systemic change that benefits students. Having a clear plan of action is essential to grow knowledge, build capacity, include diverse voices, promote accountability, implement effective practices, produce partnerships and eliminate barriers to learning.

There is a distinct difference between an action plan and an equity policy. Action plans can serve as the blueprint to moving equity forward in a school or district — they provide the step-by-step elements for building the foundation and implementing equity in programs and activities. Action plans can be specific and time-sensitive, but do not hold the district legally liable. A policy is a foundational statement that charts the course of action and documents the board’s direction for the district. Policies carry the weight of local law and provide the board’s guidance for embedding equity into district identity and practices. Policies do not include specific procedures and are not time-sensitive. The success of equity-focused action plans or policies require stakeholder participation at all levels to make sure that the needs of the students are acknowledged and addressed.

⁶ See PSBA Equity Systems Infographic.

PSBA Equity Action Plan tool adapted and excerpted from Arizona School Boards Association “Leading for Equity: A Practical Framework for Board Discussion and Action.”





Equity Action Plan: Pursuing and Achieving Equity

Action Steps to Build a Foundation for Equity in Your Schools

Include and affirm the voices of students, families and communities

Purpose

Student achievement is linked to the positive engagement of students and families in the education process.¹ Students, families and communities are considered “stakeholders and partners” in their school communities and serve as essential resources.² Their input helps to evaluate the effectiveness of school practices, provides context to the experiences of students, and develops necessary and innovative supports to serve the needs of students. School leaders must actively involve “stakeholders” specifically from communities that face barriers to engagement.

At every step of the action plan, districts should be actively engaging students and families. Their insight is invaluable in the incorporation of equity in your school practice and community. Practicing inclusivity and transparency with your community develops trust between all stakeholders.

Key Questions

- Are students, families and communities partners in establishing school norms and practices?
- Are teachers, schools and districts providing multiple, safe, structured and flexible opportunities for dialogue and engagement with students, families and communities?

¹ Lee, J. & Bowen, N. (2006). Parent Involvement, Cultural Capital, and the Achievement Gap Among Elementary School Children. *American Educational Research*, 43, 193-218; Belfeld, C. R. and H.M. Levin, H.M. (2007). *The Price We Pay: Economic and Social Consequences of Inadequate Education*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press; Sheldon, S. B., & Jung, S. B. (2015). *The Family Engagement Partnership Student Outcome Evaluation*. Johns Hopkins University, School of Education; Jeynes, W. H. (2012). A meta-analysis of the efficacy of different types of parental involvement programs for urban students. *Urban Education*, 47, 706-742.

² Willms, J. D., Friesen, S., Milton, P. (2009). What did you do in school today? Transforming Classrooms through social, academic, and intellectual engagement. (First National Report). Canadian Education Association; Willms, J. D. (2001). Student Engagement at School: A Sense of Belonging and Participation, Results from PISA 2000. Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development; Mitra, D. (2008). *Student Voice in School Reform*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.



- Have we identified subgroups of students, families and communities that may experience barriers to school practices?
- Have we asked students, parents and communities of all subgroups how we can serve them better?
- Does our district listen to, respect, and address student, parent and community feedback?
- Do students and families from all subgroups participate in leadership opportunities (i.e., parent and teacher organization)?
- Does our district have effective partnerships with community leaders, businesses and organizations?

Practice

School Board

- Set up an expectation that a diversity of students, families and community members is included in decision-making on substantive school and district issues.
- Provide multiple methods to gather public feedback to prevent barriers to engagement from students, families and communities.

Administration

- Set up multiple listening sessions across the district and/or parent group meetings asking students, families and the community about their experiences with the district and how it can be improved.
- Encourage and invite diverse members of the school and community to serve on decision-making committees and to attend school board meetings.

Teachers

- Develop practices where students serve as co-facilitators.
- Create an environment where student opinion is valued and sought out.

Resources

Garcia, M. E., Frunzi, K., Dean, C. B., Flores, N., & Miller, K. B. (2016). *Toolkit of Resources for Engaging Families and the Community as Partners in Education: Part 1: Building an understanding of family and community engagement* (REL 2016–148). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific. Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=4509>

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Student Problem Identification and Resolution of Issues Together (SPIRIT). Retrieved from <https://www.justice.gov/archive/crs/pubs/pubspiratlbrochureapproved2003.htm>



Identify and understand your district's demographics

Purpose

It is important to understand the demographic makeup of the broader district community to develop an effective equity-focused program that supports the needs of your students, families and communities.

Key Questions

- What are the demographics of our students, teachers, administrators, parents, neighborhood and community?
- How have our demographics changed over time?
- Do our staffing demographics reflect our student, parent and community demographics?
- Does our school and community leadership reflect our student, parent and community demographics?
- Do practices reflect the diverse needs of our community?

Practice

School Board

- Request an annual review about staff, student and community demographics.

Administration

Use archival data such as the U.S. Census, American Community Survey (ACS), National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS), PAYS survey, school safety report data, Home Language surveys, English Language (EL) family interview assessments, and other data sources to assess your district's demographic makeup.

District demographic makeup can be segmented into the following groups:

- District/school student body
- School staff and leadership (administration, teachers, staff, school boards)
- Municipality/neighborhoods
- Community participation (PTO, volunteers, police, colleges/universities, businesses, commissioners/leaders, other)

Discuss the impact of the following variables on both students and staff. How could these variables affect student achievement, inclusive school climate, equitable access to resources, and professional growth? Additionally, if possible, assess demographic changes from decade to decade.



DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

VARIABLES	SUB-VARIABLES
Enrollment	
Age	
Income	Income ranges, Poverty, Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (FRPL), Tax collection
Gender/Gender Identity	Male, Female, Transgender, Other
Race/Ethnicity	Black, White, Hispanic/Latino/Latinx, Asian (Southeast Asian, South Asian), Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, American Indian/Indigenous, Multiracial, Other
Nationality	
Culture	Nationality, Immigrant status, Language (English language proficiency), and Religion
Religion	
Housing	Homelessness, Type of housing (multifamily, single-family, attached, detached, mobile home), Cost of housing, Housing tenancy (renter/ownership), Occupied housing, Vacant housing, Subsidized housing
Education Attainment	
Disability Special Education (Section 504 Plan/IEP)	
Transportation	Access to Cars, Use public transportation, Walker
Technology	Access to internet outside of school buildings, Devices
Communication	Phones, Email, Language needs, Translators, Apps
Other	

Note: Feel free to add variables and sub-variables based upon the context of your district.

Teachers

- Request student and family demographic data in order to better understand student and community contexts.



Analyze the data

Purpose

Practicing equity requires an analysis of data, both quantitative and qualitative, to measure the success as well as the disparities within a district's education programs and practices. Data should measure how students perform academically, how students engage in school, and how students feel about their learning, safety and social connections at school. Data also identifies existing opportunity gaps between groups of students, and between families and communities. Data should also identify barriers that exist for students, families, communities, and district professional and support staff.

Key Questions

- How are all students performing on academic indicators (tests, projects, graduation, postsecondary)?
- How are all students and their families engaging in and accessing educational opportunities in the district?
- How do all students feel about their educational experiences?
- Have we disaggregated the achievement, opportunity and engagement data by school, classroom, race, gender, income, special education, etc.?
- Are there disparities in performance, engagement and access to opportunities between groups of students and families?
- Have we identified the barriers to achievement, opportunity and engagement?
- Is there equitable access to effective teachers?

Practice

School Boards

- Request a summary, briefing or report of the academic and behavioral trends in the data.
- Ask questions about the implications of data and the conclusions drawn from different data sets.

Administration

Conduct an equity audit/questionnaire. An equity audit provides education stakeholders (districts, schools, administrators, teachers and staff) with a “clear, accurate, and useful understanding of the degree of inequity in their own schools and school districts”.³ The purpose of an equity audit is to expose weakness and strengths in district, school and classroom to move towards positive and transformative change.

Equity audits can be used to measure quantitative and qualitative data and assess

- achievement
- programs and policies
- staffing
- school climate and culture

³ Skrla, L., Scheurich, J. J., Garcia, J., & Nolly, G. (2004). Equity Audits: A Practical Leadership Tool for Developing Equitable and Excellent Schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly* 40(1), p. 141.



Equity audits identify achievement and opportunity gaps such as:

TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES MEASUREMENT INDICATORS	VARIABLES
Achievement Gap (quantitative)	Achievement: The academic disparity or differences between groups of students.	Standardized tests, Exams, Graduation/Dropout rates, Retention rates, Postsecondary access, SAT/ACT, etc.	School, Classroom, Neighborhood, Race/Ethnicity, Gender, Income, EL, IEP, etc.
Opportunity Gap (quantitative/qualitative)	Opportunity: Disparities in educational delivery by the education system lead to different academic, social and economic outcomes between groups of students.	Perceptions, Disciplinary referrals and suspensions, Attendance, Rigorous courses (AP, Gifted), Curriculum, Funding, Honors, Career and technical education, Effective teachers, Extracurriculars, Technology, Transportation, Communication, Parent-teacher conferences, Volunteers, School board meeting attendance, School climate, Facilities, etc.	School, Classroom, Neighborhood, Race/Ethnicity, Gender, Income, EL, IEP, etc.
	Engagement: Disparities in participation between groups of students and their families.		

Disaggregate data using an intersection of variables to assess district’s achievement and opportunity gaps. It is not enough to assess the data through a single variable, such as evaluating students based on one aspect of a student’s group identity.

For example, disaggregating data by race in isolation from socioeconomic status or gender, ignores the multiple identities of students. Instead, the data should combine variables. Data should be disaggregated by race, EL, IEP/Section 504 plan, socioeconomic status, school, grade, classroom and other combinations that the data allows.

The data should be able to tell:

- How middle-class black boys are performing on academic indicators.
 - How poor white girls experience their middle school science class.
 - How many 11th-graders took an AP course the following year? Did some groups of student matriculate into AP more than others?
- Discuss implications of data with stakeholders.
 - Develop spreadsheets or tools that help teachers to disaggregate classroom achievement and opportunity gap data.
 - Develop a multi-year plan a plan with stakeholders to address achievement and opportunity gaps between groups of students.



Teachers

- Disaggregate classroom data by academic achievement, documented behavior, and observed engagement or disengagement.
- Analyze the data for gaps and patterns.
- Develop a plan with administration to address the gaps.

Resources

Bernhardt, V. L. (1998, March). *Multiple Measures*. Invited Monograph No. 4. California Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (CASCD). Retrieved from <https://www.bing.com/search?q=intersection+of+data+measuring+achievement&form=PRDLC1&src=IE11TR&pc=DCTE>

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Define equity for your district and community

Purpose

Equity and equality are not synonymous. Equality is treating all students the same, where students receive the same access to opportunities and resources. Equity recognizes that our students' experiences are different and require different supports, resources and funding to ensure that all students experience academic growth and achievement. Having a clear definition of equity that is shared, understood and practiced by the district and community sets a foundation for comprehensive and consistent practice of equity.

Key Questions

- Do our administration, teachers, school board, students, families and community know the difference between equality and equity?
- Is equity a part of our district's vision and mission?
- Have we incorporated stakeholder and student voices from different subgroups to define equity and develop equity-focused practices to meet the needs of students and communities?

Practice

School Boards

- Co-develop an equity statement for the district.
- Request data to demonstrate adoption of equity in the district.

Administration

- Determine the extent to which staff and school leaders understand equity.
- Discuss the difference between equality and equity with staff, school board, students, families and community.
- Define equity for the district, bringing in a diverse array of administration, school directors, teachers, parents, school support staff, community stakeholders and students representing different subgroups.
- Share the equity statement with the teachers, students, families and community. Create opportunities to educate stakeholders on equity and the importance of equity to improve the academic and social outcomes of students.

Teachers

- Co-develop an equity statement for the district.
- Discuss equity in the classroom.
- Encourage students to participate in the development of an equity statement.
- If statement is already developed, hang the statement in classrooms and check for understanding with students.



Resources

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Embed educational equity training into all levels of professional development for administration, staff and board

Purpose

Equity training and professional development are necessary to pursue and achieve equity. School leaders must be aware of the definition of equity and its importance in providing a high-quality education for all students. Most importantly, school leaders must be aware of the tools, research and resources to practice equity. School leaders must also assess their role in perpetuating or dismantling inequity in schools and classrooms.

Key Questions

- What types of equity trainings does our district need to provide for the educational needs of students?
- Has our entire district (administrators, school board, teachers, staff) undergone any form of equity training? What type of training?
- If yes, were the trainings in question one time only or ongoing?
- Are there opportunities for staff to contemplate, discuss and present feedback about what they learned at the trainings?
- How will we incorporate teachings and strategies from training into our school practice?

Practice

School Board

- Participate in equity training either as a board or with other district faculty and administration.
- Allocate funding for district equity training.

Administration

Develop a professional development plan to provide ongoing equity training for the *entire* district. Equity-informed trainings do not need to act as a standalone training. The principles and tenets can be reinforced and incorporated into other professional development opportunities offered by the district. Equity principles should be infused across district training and professional development.

The following are examples of training that should be approached with an equity lens:

- Student Discipline and Positive Behavior Supports
- Curriculum Development and Mapping
- School Safety and Security
- Trauma-Informed Services
- Title I Parent and Family Engagement
- School Climate

Note: Equity training is not synonymous with nondiscrimination training.



Prioritize equity training when recommending and choosing Act 48, Act 45 and graduate-level coursework.

- Provide a safe space for staff to have honest conversations about the training, specifically regarding discussions about class, race, ethnicity and gender.
- Provide professional staff with equity-focused literature, research, webinars and podcasts to further knowledge.

Teachers

- Request and engage in offered equity training both in the district and beyond.
- Identify equity training that best strengthens your ability to serve students and make equity (including trauma-informed, cultural competency, LGBTQ support, differentiated instruction for exceptional students, etc.) a priority for Act 48 opportunities and graduate-level coursework.
- Incorporate strategies from the trainings into classroom practice.



Pursue and practice cultural awareness and proficiency

Purpose

For school practices to be effective, systems must acknowledge, respond and affirm the dignity, experiences, voices and values of peoples of diverse cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnicities, religions and other diversity factors.¹ Equity also requires school leaders to recognize and address their own biases and stereotypes about their students to create a positive and inclusive educational environment.

Key Questions

- Are our school environments welcoming to and respectful of students and families from all the populations we serve?
- Are our curriculum materials culturally relevant to our students?
- Do administration, teaching staff, school board and district-level community committees reflect the cultures and backgrounds of the students and families we serve?
- Is professional development about the cultures and backgrounds of students we serve a priority for teaching and non-teaching staff?
- Are school leaders consistently checking their own cultural biases and stereotypes regarding our students and families?

Practice

School Board

- Ensure cultural relevancy and awareness is included in any discussion of curricular materials, including their adoption.

Administration

- Provide professional development for staff on cultural awareness and competence, and implicit bias (See Embed Professional Development).
- Implement multiple opportunities for the district to engage with diverse communities in your district.
- Promote and include curricular material that is reflective and honors students' backgrounds, histories and cultures.
- Encourage and invite diverse members of the community to participate in district-level committees, attend board meetings and participate in school activities.

Teachers

- Know your students' backgrounds and cultures.
- Provide curricular material and practices that are reflective and honor your students' backgrounds, histories and cultures.

¹ See Arizona School Boards Association, 2017.



Resources

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Analyze policies and practices with an equity lens

Purpose

Equity lens is a decision-making tool to make sure school leaders are not creating or exacerbating barriers to opportunity and to help school leaders develop more equity-focused policies and programs.

Opportunity gaps between students lead to divergent academic outcomes. Opportunity gaps can be attributed to barriers created by our policies, practices and procedures that make it difficult for some students to gain access to educational opportunities compared to other students. Neutral and/or “nondiscriminatory” policies and practices are different from equity, both in legal application and in practical implementation in educational systems. Policies and practices that appear to not target specific groups of students may still disadvantage groups of students.

For example, creating a Saturday school program to support students in math achievement does not, on the surface, discriminate. However, students who do not have access to cars or reliable public transportation on the weekends face barriers to participate, disparately impacting low-income students. It is important to analyze policies and practices with an equity lens to remove barriers to both access to opportunities and active engagement (See PSBA Equity Lens Approach).

Key Questions

- Does our district have a process or framework to evaluate all decisions, practices and policies with an equity lens?
- If not, consider the PSBA Equity Lens Approach or an alternative. Answer the following questions when evaluating all decisions, practices and policies:
 - What is the decision (i.e., action, practice and/or policy) in question?
 - What does the data show regarding the impact of the decision (i.e., action, practice and/or policy) on student achievement, opportunity and school climate?
 - If there is a disparity gap between groups, why do these disparities exist?
 - Who (individuals, groups) is missing in the discussion to address disparities?
 - How will we mitigate the disparities?

Practice

School Board

- Evaluate existing programs, practices and policies and any new policy proposal with an equity lens.

Administration

- Develop an equity lens approach to evaluate district and school level decisions.
- Provide training to administrators, teachers and staff on how to evaluate decisions using an equity lens.
- Use best practices and research to mitigate the disparities due to the practice.



Teachers

- Contemplate actions and curriculum through an equity lens.
- Use best practices and research to mitigate the disparities due to the practice.

Resources

Educational Equity. Maryland Association of Boards of Education. Retrieved from <https://www.mabe.org/about/equity-initiatives/>

Oregon Equity Lens. Higher Education Coordinating Commission. Retrieved from <https://www.oregon.gov/highered/about/Documents/State-Goals/HECC-Equity-Lens-2017-reformat.pdf>

Racial Equity and Social Justice Lens. Portland Public Schools. Retrieved from <https://www.pps.net/Page/2305>



Develop an action plan and/or policy to incorporate equity into your district structure

Purpose

Equity should serve as the foundation that permeates all aspects of the educational system (See PSBA Equity Systems Continuum). Equity-focused action plans and policies can produce systemic change to provide a high-quality education that benefits all students. Having a clear plan of action to incorporate equity throughout the district is essential to grow knowledge, build capacity, include diverse voices, promote accountability, implement effective practices, produce partnerships and eliminate barriers to opportunities to learn.

There is a distinct difference between an action plan and policy. Action plans can serve as the blueprint to moving equity forward in a school or district – they provide the step-by-step elements for building the foundation and implementing equity in district programs and activities. Action plans can be specific and time-sensitive, but do not hold the district legally liable. A policy is a foundational statement that charts the course of action and documents the board’s direction for the district. Policies carry the weight of local law and provide the board’s guidance for embedding equity into district identity and practices. Policies do not include specific procedures and are not time-sensitive. The success of equity-focused action plans or policies require stakeholder participation at all levels to make sure that the needs of the students are acknowledged and addressed.

Key Questions

- Does our district recognize the difference between an action plan and policy?
- Before considering a policy, are we working through all the previous steps?
- What equity issues, concerns, goals, priorities do we need to address through systemic action (action plan or policy) to mitigate our district’s opportunity gaps and therefore achievement gaps?
- In the development of an action plan or policy, have we included the voices of diverse subgroups of students, families and communities?
- How will we educate and share the action plan/policy to the school community?
- How will we determine success?
- How will we hold stakeholders accountable to the district’s equity goals and needs?

Practice

School Board

- Participate in the district equity group/team to assess the priority needs of the district/school for an equity action plan or policy.
- Set up an expectation that a diversity of students, families and community members is included in the equity team and group.
- After working through all the previous steps, pass a comprehensive equity board policy and/or work to update board policies that have an equity focus and lens.
- Pass budgets with equity at the forefront, adhering to the equity action plan and/or policy.



Administration

- Develop an equity group/team (students, administrators, board members, teachers, community members, families and students) to assess the priority needs, objectives, procedures of the district/school for an equity action plan or policy. This equity/group team should be representative of the district’s families and student body. (Note: It is not necessary to tackle every inequity in the district at once).
- Use research and conduct study groups throughout the district and community to establish action steps and/or components of the policy to address the needs of the students in the district/school.
- Define key terms.
- Build accountability measures, monitor progress and set budget goals that adhere to the equity action plan and/or policy.
- Build capacity – continuously discuss the plan/policy with students, staff, school board, families and communities.

Teachers

- Participate in the district equity group/team as well as study groups.

Resources

Allentown School District Strategic Framework 2017-2021. Allentown School District.

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The Aspen Education & Society Program and the Council of Chief State School Officers. (2017). *Leading for Equity: Opportunities for State Education Chiefs*. Washington, D.C.



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