

GUIDANCE FOR EQUITY-FOCUSED POSITIONS WITHIN PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS



PSBA defines equity as the fair and just distribution of resources based on each student's needs, guaranteeing that all children have equal access to a high-quality education. For PSBA's full equity statement, please click [here](#).



Across school systems there has been a growing recognition of the need to prioritize equity. It is important that district leaders develop a strategy to address the inequities within the school community and create opportunities so that every child can reach their full potential. One strategy toward a more equitable school system is developing equity-focused positions and empowering equity-focused personnel.



In K-12 school systems across Pennsylvania, the number of equity-focused staff positions and departments has been significantly increasing to coordinate equity work across the district. However, equity-focused positions are not new even if the focus on equity is increasing in the

consciousness of district leaders. Districts and schools have always had personnel with expertise in culturally responsive programming and who focused on meeting the needs of students and addressing trauma, discrimination and injustice. Educators at all levels, serving in many areas have focused on moving equity forward. However, their job titles and descriptions, plus a lack of understanding by leadership of the needs of equity may limit their equity work. Because of this, equity-focused personnel may not have the resources, support, training or influence to enact the systemic solutions required to meet the needs of marginalized students.

This guidance has been developed as a resource for district leaders to support the work of equity-focused positions in the educational system and has been developed with the feedback and support of current equity-focused personnel throughout Pennsylvania.

The guidance centers on three themes: organizational structure, resources and supports, and building capacity. Equity-focused positions should build bridges between the district, schools and communities to effectively embed equity into the structure of the educational system. It is an important role. Please use this guidance to support conversations about development, support and empowerment of an equity-focused position. This guidance also serves as a supplement to PSBA's Equity Director Job Description for Equity Directors or Equity Coordinator positions. For more information on that job description, please email memberservices@psba.org.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Educational equity should serve as a central component of the foundational structure upon which all aspects of the educational system are built and maintained. An equity-focused structure is essential to grow knowledge and skills, provide necessary resources, include diverse voices, promote accountability, implement effective practices, produce partnerships, and address barriers to learning and participation. Therefore, it is essential that equity directors are positioned and empowered by the superintendent and the school board to advocate and coordinate equity work across the district and in the community.

How will the organizational structure ensure that the equity-focused position(s):

- » has support from the district superintendent and the school board?
- » has access to cabinet-level positions if the position itself is not housed in the district leadership?
- » is considered a leadership role with a measure of autonomy and authority?
- » receives support in the development of systemic plans, documents and guidance to create and sustain the equity work in the district?
- » plays an integrative partnership role that effectively collaborates with departments, principals and district leaders in the district to implement equity programming?
- » is able to engage and collaborate with students, families and communities to support the equity work in the district?



RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

Equity-focused positions are charged with coordinating the equity work in the entire district, which is challenging. Equity work acknowledges that the educational system has not always been inclusive, just or fair for all students. Equity work requires analysis – identifying and inventorying past and current inequities as well as addressing the hurt and pain that students, families and even staff have experienced due to inequity. And equity work creates opportunities. District and school leadership professionals focused on educational equity should have expertise and knowledge on a range of district systems including curriculum, finances, personnel, data, school governance, special education and instruction. Often those serving in equity-focused positions have demonstrated success in representing and working with groups that have experienced marginalization both inside and outside of the educational system. To support equity-focused positions, it is necessary that the district allocates resources in the form of staffing, funding, professional development and emotional supports, including trauma-informed resources. The following questions should be considered in supporting equity-focused positions:

- » What specific budget line items or allocations of funds will supports the work of the equity-focused position(s) and equity programming?

- » What access will the equity-focused position(s) have to tools, departments and teams that support continuous collection and analysis of system data for measuring progress of equity in the district?
- » What staff support and liaisons throughout the district will the equity-focused position(s) have to help coordinate and implement equity in the district?
- » What access will the equity-focused position(s) have to professional development and collaborative networks to expand their knowledge on equity-focused structures, practices, procedures and programming?
- » What trauma and mental health supports will be allocated for the equity-focused position(s) so that they are able to sustain his or her own mental health while supporting students, teachers and community members experiencing trauma and/or marginalization? (This is referred to as secondary trauma)



BUILDING CAPACITY

Equity requires a conscious and intentional effort to educate school directors, administration, staff, students and the community about equity and why it is important for student achievement. Educational stakeholders should also understand the role of an equity director and/or coordinator to build capacity for the equity work. Professional development is essential to make sure that all stakeholders are operating from the same understanding and working together to advance equity within the district.

How will the district coordinate with the equity-focused position(s) to:

- » embed structures for continuous professional development of equity principles for all administration, board directors, faculty and staff?
- » educate stakeholders on the role of an equity director?

This resource is intended to frame planning discussions while determining the structure of a new position, the essential responsibilities and functions, and how such a position is introduced into a district organizational structure. A draft job description should be created to support the determinations of how the position will operate in the local school district and should be supported by performance expectations of the role.



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