

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION & ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

WHY: (Introduction/Purpose Statement): The Board believes that students are the center of all we do and that every student benefits when schools implement strong diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) policies and practices. These benefits include academic, cognitive, civic, social-emotional and economic.

The District acknowledges its responsibility to foster a barrier-free learning environment and to embrace diversity by actively eliminating practices that perpetuate the disparities that exist among our students, their families and in the community where they learn and live.

We recognize that biases and barriers can result in inequitable opportunities for groups of students based on their real or perceived personal characteristics such as but not limited to race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sex, or by any other distinguishing characteristic.

We believe that every student can learn and has a right to an equitable educational experience as well as a sense of belonging at school. We will intentionally act to reduce racial intolerance, homophobia, transphobia, inequities and academic disparities and to establish a climate of high expectations for all learners.

WHAT: (Policy Statement): We strive to achieve an inclusive education by identifying and understanding the root causes of inequities so that we can take concrete steps toward equitable schools. We will create a culture of deliberate inclusion by striving to eliminate barriers, and disrupt systemic inequities for every student, faculty, staff, and family.

This policy considers the entirety of the educational process by addressing the following essential elements: governance, teaching and learning, family and community engagement, workforce diversity, diverse schools and learning opportunities, and student supports, discipline and wellness.

Definitions:

1. **Diversity** is the existence of differences among people that includes but is not limited to race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sex, or by any other distinguishing characteristic.
2. **Equity** is the concept of being just, impartial, and fair that is found, achieved and sustained in our educational systems. Educational equity ensures that every student has equal access to courses, teachers, and school environments. Educational equity means differentiating resource allocation to meet the needs of every student so that they succeed academically, socially and emotionally.

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3. **Inclusion** is the authentic and empowered participation and a true sense of belonging. In an inclusive school, the social and instructional space is deliberately and intentionally designed such that every student has access to the curriculum and there are many opportunities for students to be successful.
4. **Accessibility** is giving access to everyone along the continuum of human ability and experience, even if that means special accommodations must be made.

HOW: (Procedures): With this policy, we clarify roles and responsibilities for different parts of our community.

BOARD COMMITMENT: The Board will lead and inspire by example by examining personal biases, building empathy and respect for others, and being comfortable with vulnerability.

The Board will actively model our commitment to equity by:

1. attending equity training a minimum of once per elected term per Board member. Board members will commit to attending subsequent Board-approved equity trainings offered at the local, state and national level.
2. ensuring that the Superintendent incorporates DEIA into the District Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan will be published, reviewed annually and performance metrics will be used to measure progress.
3. the Board will maintain a District DEIA Committee for the purpose of advising the Board and the Superintendent with regard to matters of equity in our schools. The DEIA Committee shall be comprised of a broad group of diverse stakeholders as listed below. The Board shall hold at least an annual meeting with the DEIA Committee.
4. providing a minimum of two Board member as a representative to the DEIA Committee.

DEIA COMMITTEE: A standing DEIA Committee will be formed, with diverse representation of all stakeholder groups:

- DEIA Coordinator/Consultant
- Students
- Family member/caregiver
- District/building administrators
- Teachers
- Student Support Staff, including school psychologist, social worker or counselor
- Other District staff (operational personnel, etc.)
- Board member(s)

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The Committee will:

1. lead and inspire by example by examining personal biases, building empathy and respect for others, and becoming comfortable with vulnerability.
2. engage, include and collaborate with our families, students, residents, communities, and stakeholders as this Committee recognizes that active involvement is essential to effective and equitable governance.
3. assist the District in creating and implementing DEIA plans. Additionally, the Committee will annually review District policies, practices and programs and provide suggestions as to how they could potentially be modified to better promote DEIA.
4. invite and include people from diverse backgrounds to examine topical issues and develop solutions that address root causes and systems rather than one-time fixes.

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION: District Administration will lead and inspire by example by examining personal biases, building empathy and respect for others and being comfortable with vulnerability.

The Administration will:

1. review existing policies, programs, professional development and procedures to ensure the promotion of equity. Ensure that all applicable new policies, programs and procedures will be developed using an equity lens.
2. identify clear DEIA goals, objectives and measurable outcomes. Provide a common vocabulary and protocol for evaluating and producing policies, programs, practices and decisions, which result in equitable outcomes.
3. actively recruit, employ, support, and develop diverse administrative, instructional and support personnel.
4. actively train and support all administrators, teachers, and staff in implementing this policy including creating equitable learning environments and all school-related activities;
5. identify and provide professional development to address the role and presence of bias, prejudice and racism. Provide staff with opportunities for professional development on cultural proficiency.
6. develop reporting, investigation, communication and accountability processes related to actions of bias.
7. engage with staff, students, parents/guardians and the entire community to build and sustain a culture emblematic of the ideals of this Policy.

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8. allocate resources appropriately to accomplish these goals.

FACULTY AND STAFF: Faculty and Staff will lead and inspire by example by examining personal biases, building empathy and respect for others, and being comfortable with vulnerability.

Faculty and Staff will strive to advance inclusive and culturally responsive teaching and learning through, but not limited to, curricula in all content areas; books and instructional materials; multiple assessments; professional development; classroom grouping policies and practices; full and equitable opportunities for every student to learn.

Faculty and Staff will:

1. implement an education framework that embeds the ideals of diversity, equity, and inclusion by creating student-centered learning environments that:
 - A. affirm cultural identities;
 - B. develop students' abilities to connect across lines of difference;
 - C. elevate historically marginalized voices;
 - D. empower students as agents of social change; and,
 - E. contribute to individual student engagement, learning, growth, and achievement through the cultivation of critical thinking.
2. take steps to eliminate the use of hurtful terms and phrases within District schools that perpetuate negative stereotypes and minimize student opportunities.
3. incorporate diverse perspectives, books and materials and texts so that the curriculum will be reflective and appreciative of the rich cultural heritage of District students.
4. encourage academic discussion about racism and bigotry, aligned with District training.
5. create coursework, programs and activities that are accessible to all students, regardless of their disability status, native language, income level or any other basis.
6. regularly evaluate the achievement of the student body, analyze data for disparities in terms of gender, socioeconomic status, cognitive ability, and race/ethnicity, to determine whether any students are being dis-served by the programs provided.
7. negotiate, reallocate, and sometimes re-imagine resources, opportunities and supports when equal distribution of these things (one size fits all) results in inequitable outcomes that do not adequately meet specific needs and interests of all groups of students.
8. identify and implement targeted supports that ensure equal opportunities for students to be successful (academically, socially & emotionally).
9. engage with family and community members in the development and implementation of culturally appropriate and effective partnerships between home and school.

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FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: The District will strive to foster family and community engagement practices that are based on mutual trust, confidence and respect.

As part of this effort, the District will:

1. encourage participation from all stakeholders in community building conversations.
2. offer opportunities for every student to actively participate in experiences that prepare them for a lifetime of civic engagement and contribution to social justice.
3. communicate internal DEIA efforts and progress with the larger community.
4. invite families to:
 - A. share traditions and cultural assets with teachers to support the integration of these values within curriculum; and,
 - B. participate in decision-making around programs, policies, and learning activities that impact the school community.

Approved (New Policy): October 19, 2022