

## EQUITY, INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION

The following outlines the ongoing processes for achieving educational equity, the elimination of barriers and biases, particularly institutionalized racism and cultural biases, and the obstacles that limit a student's chance to graduate high school prepared for college, for a career, and for life.

### A. Definitions

**Antiracism**: The work of actively opposing racism.<sup>1a</sup>

**Antiracist**: A conscious decision to make frequent, consistent, equitable choices daily. These choices require ongoing self-awareness and self-reflection as we move through life. In the absence of making antiracist choices, we (un)consciously uphold aspects of white supremacy, white-dominant culture, and unequal institutions and society. Being racist or antiracist is not about who you are; it is about what you do.<sup>2</sup>

**Bias**: Each of us has unique preferences, perspectives, and ideas. The blend of our individual patterns in the world creates an essential diversity. Our unique perspectives can also interfere with our ability to be impartial and unprejudiced. This is bias. Our biases can be the root of our thoughts and actions, yet we rarely talk about the impact they have in our decision-making and community work. Biases aren't always bad. Every culture has biases related to norms, values, and community. When we view others through our preconceived notions and stereotypes, biases become problematic.<sup>3</sup>

**Cultural Competency**: Cultural competence refers to an ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures. Cultural competence comprises four components: (a) Awareness of one's own cultural worldview, (b) Attitude towards cultural differences, (c) Knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews, and (d) Cross-cultural skills. Developing cultural competence results in an ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures. Cultural competence is a developmental process that evolves over an extended period.<sup>3</sup>

**Cultural Responsiveness**: Cultural responsiveness requires that individuals be culturally competent. This competency means having an awareness of one's own cultural identity and views about difference, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families. It is the ability to understand the within-group differences that make each student unique, while celebrating the between-group variations that make our [world] a tapestry.<sup>4a</sup>

**Dignity for All Students Act (DASA)**: New York State's Dignity for All Students Act (The Dignity Act) seeks to provide the State's public elementary and secondary school students with a safe and supportive environment free from discrimination, intimidation, taunting, harassment, and bullying on school property, a school bus, and/or at a school function.<sup>4b</sup>

**Diversity**: Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. It is all-inclusive and recognizes everyone and every group as part of the diversity that should be valued.<sup>5</sup>

**Equity**: Equity is the guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all while striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of all groups.<sup>6</sup>

**Inclusion**: Inclusion is authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.<sup>5</sup> Inclusion builds a culture of belonging by actively inviting the contribution and participation of all people.<sup>7</sup>

**Marginalized**: Historically marginalized refers to individuals who have not been able, due to societal constraints, to compete fairly in society.<sup>8</sup> Marginalization in education is a form of acute and persistent disadvantage rooted in underlying social inequalities.<sup>9</sup>

**Racism**: Racism is different from racial prejudice, hatred, or discrimination. Racism involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices.<sup>5</sup>

- a. **Individual Racism**: Individual racism refers to the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism. Individual racism can be deliberate, or the individual may act to perpetuate or support racism without knowing that is what they are doing.<sup>5</sup>
- b. **Cultural Racism**: Cultural racism refers to representations, messages and stories conveying the idea that behaviors and values associated with white people or “whiteness” are automatically “better” or more “normal” than those associated with other racially defined groups. Cultural racism shows up in advertising, movies, history books, definitions of patriotism, and in policies and laws. Cultural racism is also a powerful force in maintaining systems of internalized supremacy and internalized racism. It does that by influencing collective beliefs about what constitutes appropriate behavior, what is seen as beautiful, and the value placed on various forms of expression. All of these cultural norms and values in the U.S. have explicitly or implicitly racialized ideals and assumptions (for example, what “nude” means as a color, which facial features and body types are considered beautiful, which child-rearing practices are considered appropriate).<sup>5</sup>
- c. **Structural Racism**: Structural, or systemic, racism is a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other social norms, conscious or unconscious, reinforce and perpetuate racial group inequity.<sup>5</sup>
- d. **Institutional Racism**: Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups.<sup>5</sup>

**Restorative Justice:** Restorative justice is an evidence-based practice effectively used to reduce suspensions, expulsions, and disciplinary referrals. Restorative justice focuses on righting a wrong committed and repairing harm done. The goal is to place value on relationships and focus on repairing relationships that have been injured.<sup>1b</sup> It places decisions in the hands of those who have been most affected by a wrongdoing, and gives equal concern to the victim, the offender, and the surrounding community.<sup>5</sup>

## **B. Disrupt and Eliminate Systemic Inequities**

The Board of Education affirms that each and every student has a right to an equitable educational experience and a sense of belonging at school. Therefore, the Board and district officers will intentionally act to reduce gaps in access, opportunity, and achievement and to establish a climate where every learner can grow and reach their full potential. The district strives to be inclusive and free of bias, but we are a reflection of a broader society in which inequality and bias exist, and that is particularly true for students of color. Our students and staff of color experience the sting and pain of racism routinely, and educators must acknowledge this.

The Board of Education and district staff will:

1. lead and inspire by example by examining personal biases and the ways we may be privileged or unaware, building empathy and respect for others, becoming comfortable with vulnerability, and creating a culture of deliberate inclusion and diversity;
2. acknowledge historical institutions, such as racism, sexism, classism, ableism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression or “isms,” that have deliberately and systemically limited the educational and societal advancement of marginalized groups;
3. promote and publicly announce actions that address systemic inequities at both the building and district levels;
4. develop a shared district and community understanding and working definitions of equity, inclusion, and diversity;
5. invite and include people from diverse backgrounds to examine issues and develop solutions that address root causes and systems of racism, discrimination, and marginalization;
6. address access, opportunity, and achievement gaps at every level of our district through review of policies, procedures, and practices to ensure success for every student;
7. eliminate practices, including policies and procedures, that result in predictably lower academic achievement and decreased success in other valued outcomes for any student group, especially those historically marginalized groups, compared to other students or groups;

8. model antiracist language and actions;
9. enhance reporting, investigation, training, communication, and accountability processes associated with the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) to ensure acts of racism, antisemitism, and other “isms” are adequately and appropriately handled;
10. provide professional development to address the role, presence, and impact of bias, prejudice, and racism on learners, to increase knowledge of the causes of distrust/mistrust in historically marginalized communities, and to dismantle narratives and structures that promote discrimination and problematize students, especially students of color; and
11. provide resources to families and district staff regarding national and local events that may impact students, to demonstrate to the district community that we care, and we have an obligation as educators and human beings to address injustice, ignorance, and racism.

### **C. Ensure Systemic Equity**

To ensure educational equity is implemented systemically, the district will develop the individual and organizational knowledge, attitudes, skills, and practices to create culturally responsive learning and working environments that expect and support success for each and every student.

The district will:

1. provide every student, regardless of race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, all types of disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, socio-economic status, immigration status, housing status, caregiver status, and primary language(s) with equitable access to high quality and relevant instruction, curriculum, support, facilities, and other educational resources, even when this means differentiating resources to accomplish this goal;
2. ensure each school building is welcoming and inclusive to every individual who enters;
3. intentionally seek and include the input of currently and historically excluded individuals for the development and implementation of culturally responsive teaching, learning practices, curriculum, and assessments;
4. provide materials and assessments that reflect diversity, and which are geared towards the understanding and appreciation of culture, class, language, ethnicity, and other differences that contribute to the uniqueness of each student and staff member;
5. engage family and community members in the development and implementation of culturally appropriate and effective partnerships between home and school;

6. establish, support, and sustain building-level and district-wide equity and inclusion committees consisting of a variety of school and community stakeholders (including students, parents, staff, administrators, Board Trustees, and community members) to strengthen community dialogue regarding equity, inclusion and diversity initiatives;
7. review existing policies, programs, professional development, curriculum, and procedures to ensure the promotion of equity, and ensure that all applicable new policies, programs, professional development, curriculum, and procedures are developed using an equity lens;
8. remedy the practices, including assessment, that may lead to the over- representation of student groups in areas such as special education, and the under-representation of such groups in programs such as enrichment and Honors/Advanced Placement courses;
9. increase the diversity and cultural competency of our personnel through recruitment, employment, support, and retention to build upon the diversity of our community;
10. ensure a positive, supportive, and academically rigorous school environment that engages all students and includes multiple pathways for success;
11. create multiple pathways to success in order to meet the needs of students, and actively encourage, support, and foster academic achievement for each and every student;
12. utilize restorative justice practices as the first step in disciplinary action when appropriate;
13. provide translation and interpretation services as needed to reduce communication barriers that may exist due to language differences; and
14. ensure language used in all communications and within district buildings is inclusive of all gender identities.

**D. Use Data and Metrics**

The district will ensure that information related to students (disaggregated when applicable by race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, English Language Learners, and special education) is used as a data set in school improvement efforts, including, but not limited to, the following:

1. access to educational opportunities;
2. student achievement data at each school;
3. student enrollment at each school;

4. student suspension/discipline data for each school and student average daily attendance data for each school;
5. the amount of federal funding allocated to each school;
6. the extent of family and community engagement and involvement; and
7. feedback solicited from employees, families/caregivers, and students for perceptions on school culture/climate.

#### **E. Implement an Equity Lens**

The purpose of an equity lens is to be intentionally inclusive as the district makes decisions. It poses questions that help the decision-makers focus on equity in both the process and outcomes. These questions are designed to create a more inclusive perspective, drawing attention to how the decision holds the potential to affect marginalized groups. By applying an equity lens, the district intends to:

1. identify clear goals, objectives, and measurable outcomes;
2. provide a common vocabulary and protocol for evaluating policies, programs, practices, and decisions for antiracism and equity; and
3. produce policies, programs, practices, and decisions which result in more equitable opportunities and outcomes.

The district will apply an equity lens when making any decisions that will have an impact on students by answering the following questions:

1. What is the action or policy in question?
2. What does the data show about the impact of the action on student achievement, opportunity, and climate?
3. If there are disparity gaps between groups of students, why do they exist?
4. Which individuals are missing in the discussion to address disparities?
5. How will the district mitigate the disparities?

#### **F. Monitoring and Review**

The Superintendent or their designee, in consultation with the Board, will monitor effectiveness, and report annually on the progress of the district's equity goals outlined in this plan, as well as Policy 0105, and on the district's overall progress in removing barriers and effectively serving each and every student. To facilitate this review, the district will

explain to stakeholders when, where, and how the review will be conducted, who will be responsible for coordinating the review, and their role in the review process.

Sources:

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